

AN INTRODUCTION TO

GROWTH-DRIVEN DESIGN

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Introduction

Don't waste any more time or resources on your website. Your website is an important marketing resource, but traditional web design can be a drain on your organization. There's a better way.

Whether an agency or a business, traditional web design leaves you vulnerable. Old models of design can expose your company to a growing number of risks without producing real, measurable results.

The systemic risk of a new site alone is enough to send you running, but it doesn't have to be that way. You can enter into a design process that holds great potential for your business.

Growth-Driven Design is an evolutionary and responsive process that delivers measurable business value through web design. This systematic approach minimizes the pitfalls of traditional web design to provide a data-driven solution and produce high-performing results.

If you're not happy with the results of your current website or have encountered a "website redesign nightmare," this book is for you.

Understand the flaws in the traditional web design process and embrace a process that works, Growth-Driven Design. Open new possibilities for your company with a smarter way to approach web design.

CHAPTER ONE



**Broken: The Failures of
Traditional Web Design**

Your website is your biggest marketing asset; the first place people look for information on your products or services. In addition to being your best sales tool, your website is also your best salesperson. It's been said that potential clients have already moved through 70% of the sales process before making contact with your physical sales team. They already know what you do and if you can help them by looking at your online presence. This is an excellent reason all marketing efforts should drive clients back to your website.

Unfortunately, this critical first point of contact for many companies is broken or dysfunctional.

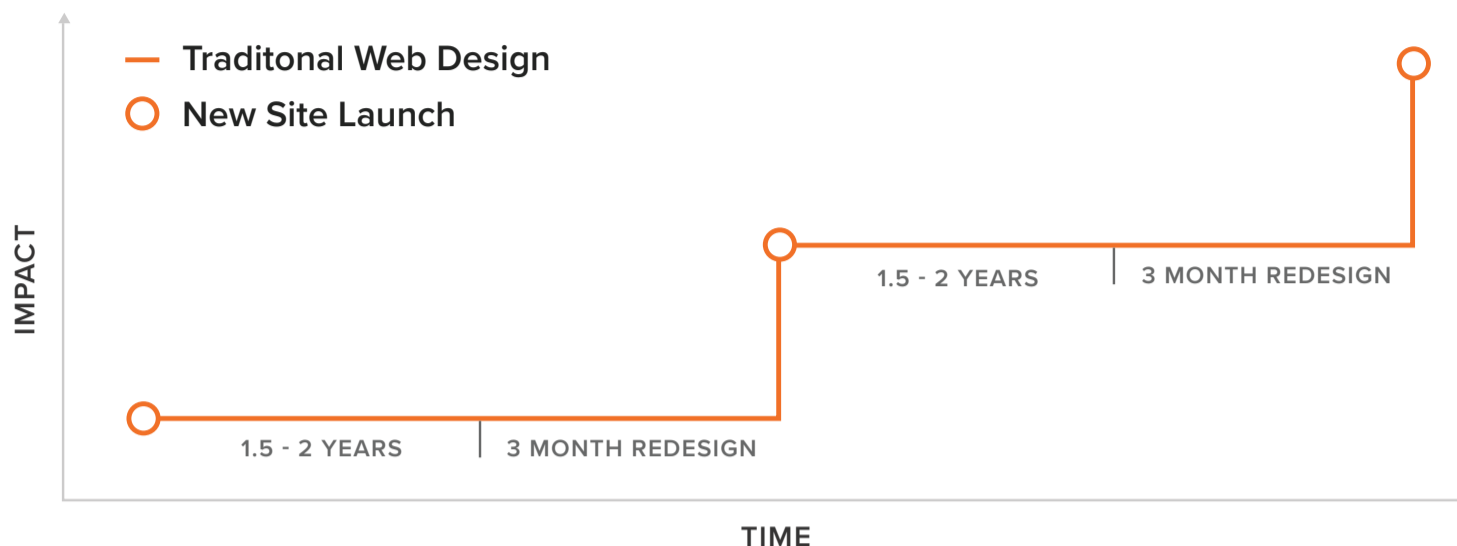
The Traditional Website Design Process

Think back to your last redesign.

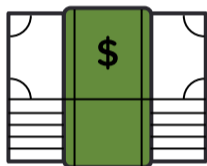
- How was the overall experience?
- What was great and what was frustrating?
- What time/energy/resources were spent before you went live?
- Was the site launched on time and budget?
- Since the launch, how much continuous improvement has happened?
- Are you excited about another website redesign?

Website design doesn't have to be a painful experience! The way the project is approached makes all the difference. Traditionally website redesign has been filled with systemic risk that creates trouble every step of the way.

Traditional Web Design



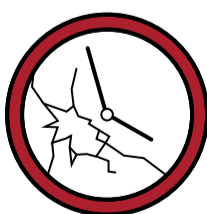
Risks of Traditional Web Design



- **Sizable Up-Front Expense:** A website for the average small to medium-sized business (SMB) typically ranges in cost from \$15,000 – \$80,000. This is a substantial fee for most businesses. Not only is paying for such a large amount in full difficult, but the bill is due before the website has a chance to prove its impact on your business.

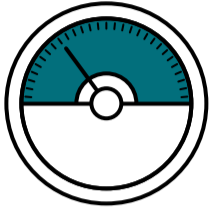


- **Large Time and Resource Commitment:** In addition to a substantial up-front cost, a typical SMB website takes three months to complete while demanding extra energy and resources from your team. This is a large commitment to make without any data on the outcomes for your business.



- **Blown Budgets, Forgotten Timelines, and Minimal Flexibility:** With so many people working on a traditional website project, it's tough to quote fees accurately and determine a reasonable timeframe. So, even if a budget and timeline are approved, the project is often delayed and/or completed over

budget. Stalled projects or higher budgets never look good.



- **Subjective Designs with No Performance**

Guarantee: Measurable results are the main reason SMB's hire professionals to redesign their websites. So, how do they know the design agencies are launching a website that will perform the best in any situation? They can't. They cannot definitively establish that it is the best possible functioning website. The hired agency can comb through usage data, research the company's customer-base and suggest what might be the best approach, but they are essentially implementing an informed guess. Once this proposal is launched, it usually is not tested to see if the suggestion was accurate.

In addition to these risks, once a website launches, it often doesn't receive any major updates for one and a half to two years. So, whether the website is great or completed half-heartedly to stay on budget, this major marketing tool begins to gather dust. There may be small improvements, like updates to blogs and landing pages, but the core and the majority of the site remains untouched.

CHAPTER TWO



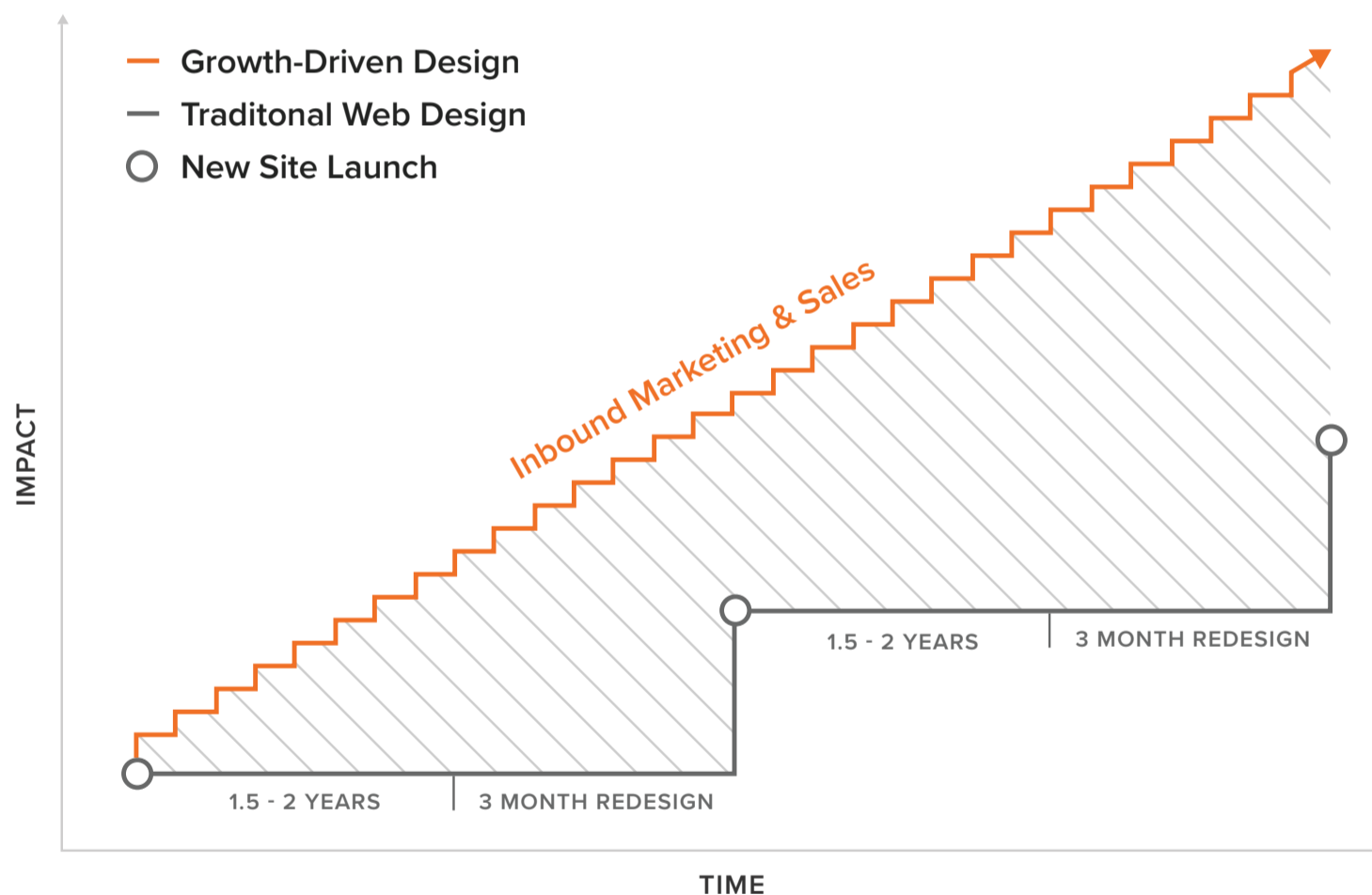
**A Much Needed
Marketing Shift**

Marketers need to take a step back and approach website redesign from a new perspective. How do you create a peak performing website and avoid the pitfalls of the traditional web design process?

Growth-Driven Design: A Smarter Way to Approach Web Design

Growth-Driven Design is a revolutionary approach to building and growing a website through a whole new way of thinking.

Growth-Driven Design vs. Traditional Web Design



The Three Pillars of Growth-Driven Design

Three main ideas form the backdrop to the Growth-Driven Design process.

- 1. Reduce the Risks Tied to Traditional Web Design:** Growth-Driven Design seeks to avoid traditional design pitfalls by systematically

shortening launch time, highlighting real impact, and focusing on continuous learning and improvement.

2. Learn and Grow Constantly: Growth-Driven Design means continuously researching, testing and learning about site visitors to push on-going site advancements. Each improvement helps your site to reach peak performance.

3. Create Feedback Loop with Marketing and Sales: Growth-Driven Design and marketing and sales are tightly interwoven. Learning about site visitors and traffic helps marketers to improve sales tactics and strategies (and vice versa).

CHAPTER THREE



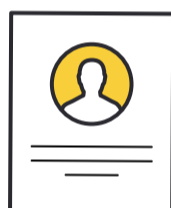
**Growth-Driven Design Phase 1:
Conception to Launch**

Strategy

The Phase 1 strategy stage of Growth-Driven Design is similar to the first step of traditional web design. This phase provides the background needed to drive the website and the Growth-Driven Design process. It is fairly involved and has several different steps.



- 1. Goals:** Establish specific goals based on expectations as well as past examples. A few questions to ask would be: What performance goals should the new website be striving for? How has the website performed historically? What areas need improvement and how will this affect the objectives of the marketing department?



- 2. Personas:** It is important to research and develop profiles for different audiences that may visit your new website. These fictional representations of customers help inform future activities. They often are grouped based on common characteristics of an audience, such as pain points, industries, or job titles.



- 3. Quantitative Website and Analytics Audit:** Begin sorting through site usage and SEO data to determine how the existing website is performing. Review the things that are and are not working and where users are becoming disconnected. This audit will help determine what areas of improvement should be focused on in future web work.



- 4. Qualitative User Research:** Supplement areas of opportunity identified through the audit with user feedback. Reaching out to existing customers and website users to learn more about their needs and wants, will help you find additional ways to improve.

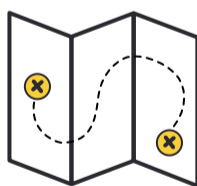
Remember to update your customer personas with the data you gather during this phase.



5. Fundamental Assumptions: Based on the information compiled thus far, you can begin to form basic assumptions about the people who visit your site. Some examples of these inferences might include:

- a. The information your users are seeking.
- b. The type of value propositions that will align with your visitors needs for different services, products, and offers.
- c. The locations and devices your users use to access your website.

Forming these fundamental assumptions can help you to understand the nature and motivations of your users. This influences both the global and page strategies of your future Growth-Driven Design cycles.



6. Global and Page Strategy: Developing both a global website strategy and a detailed plan for every major page on the new site is the final step in the strategy phase. Both parts of the strategy should incorporate all the information gathered up until this point so you can lay out a plan to interest and influence potential customers and best attain your objectives.

Wish List

The second part of Phase 1 is to develop with your team a wish list of visionary, impactful and creative ideas to include on your site.

This brainstorming should begin from a “clean slate”. Pretend that time, money, and skills are not an issue. Forget about the current website and focus on what goals you would set for your new site in an ideal world. A few places to begin brainstorming are:

- Pages or sections that would be impressive or moving for users.
- Resources, tools, and assets that could help your marketing team.
- Modules, functionalities, and features you would like to see.
- Design elements that could be incorporated.
- User experience adjustments based on device, country, etc.

Several hours of brainstorming should generate 50-150+ suggestions for the new website. Not all of these ideas will be integrated from the start, but keep the list as a reference point for where the website could go.

The wish list will help to determine first steps with the website, but also will grow and shrink over time as you reprioritize wants and needs.

Launch Pad Website

Traditional web design ends with the launch of a new website. Growth-Driven Design still is getting started at this point. Instead of dropping the site off with your business, Growth-Driven Design advocates building and launching a “launch pad website.” This is the place from which all future activities and developments will stem.

Launch pad websites will not be perfect because they should be launched quickly. This means that there is no time to get hung up on analysis, features, or content. Your new site will be an improvement from the current site and provide a tangible starting point from which you can build.

The wish list from earlier as well as the type of website you need will largely determine the initial size and complexity of the site. Your wish list, however, should be distilled to the essential 20% required to make an impact on your audience for the launch pad website. After the site is launched, you can continue to learn, grow, and add to the site.

What is This “Essential 20%” of the Wish List?

Earlier in Phase 1, a wish list of all the desired functionalities and action items for the website was created. To get the launch pad website off the ground, this list needs to be analyzed and prioritized to decide which action items will be the first ones implemented on the new site.

With the same team that brainstormed the wish list, filter through each item to discover which 20% of the items will produce 80% of the results desired. With that 20% in hand, further filter the list by asking the following questions:

- Is this item a “need to have” or a “nice to have”?
- Is this item critical at launch or could it be built into our new website in the second or third month?

If your answer to the first question is “nice to have” return it to the main list. If your response to the second question is that it could be built into the site at a later date, return it to the main list.

Narrowing down these action items will ensure a quick site launch.

Creating Hypothesis Statements

Once these action items have been narrowed, it is time to create a “hypothesis statement” for each. This statement provides clarity on the relation of the action item to the original goals, personas, and the impact of this change. See example below.

Example: Action Item 1 — Hypothesis Statement

For [*Marketing Monica*] visiting the [*Pricing Page*], we believe changing [*enterprise pricing*] into a [*request a quote*] will [*boost Marketing Qualified Leads (MQL) conversion by 10%*]. We believe this to be true because [*research or previously validated assumption*].

Following the hypothesis statement for each item, address these four measures:

- 1. Expected Impact:** The expected impact should be recorded as a single numerical value defined by the benefit of the action item to your visitors and how that will influence the completion of your goals.
- 2. Required Effort:** Again a single number should be used to represent the required effort of an action item. This will be determined by the difficulty of executing an action item as well as the amounts of time and resources needed for success.
- 3. Measurable Metrics:** Determine what specific metrics would be best to measure and test your action item to evaluate if your hypothesis is correct. More specific metrics are better.

4. The Definition of Finished: Decide what steps need to be taken to consider this specific item complete. This definition may be helpful in the future when you do a site review for results and efficiency.

Web Process Steps

Completing the list of the 20% of critical action items for your launch pad site means you can begin filtering those items through the standard website implementation process, including:

- Messaging and Content
- User Experience (UX) and Site Architecture
- Inbound Marketing Strategy Alignment
- Wireframes
- Designs
- Development
- Quality Assurance and Testing

Establish Data Collection

The final stage of the launch pad website is establishing both qualitative and quantitative data collection around:

- Goals that were defined during the strategy phase.
- Your fundamental assumptions that also were discovered during the strategy phase.
- Each of your hypothesis statements for your launch pad website.

Establishing data collection tools is an important way for you to continue learning about visitors once your launch pad site is live.

Just Launched a New Website?

If you have already launched a new website but want to use Growth-Driven Design, your existing site can function as your launch pad website. You get to move straight to phase 2, the continuous cycle of Growth-Driven Design.

CHAPTER FOUR



**Growth-Driven Design Phase 2:
The Cycle of Growth-Driven Design**

Continuous Improvement: When your launch pad website is up and running, you are ready to begin the on-going cycle of experimenting on, learning about, and improving upon your website. Finally, you can drag out the long wish list you created earlier in the process. Regularly update these impactful ideas for your website.



Centering in on the Persona: All of this continuous improvement revolves around those who visit your site. You must consistently consider the personas. Each stage of the Growth-Driven Design cycle above should provide value to those who frequent your website. If this value becomes unclear at any point, it's time to take a step back and re-examine your project.

Cycle Step 1: Plan

Planning is the first step in the Growth-Driven Design cycle. This step will involve identifying what items will be the most impactful at the current time and planning to execute them in the current Growth-Driven Design cycle. The planning step is made up of a number of stages.

- 1. Review Performance and Goals:** The first stage of the Planning step is to review the performance of the website thus far and

compare that to your original goals. Here is where you will notice some areas to improve.

2. Complete Additional Research: After reviewing the performance of a new site, you may need to gather further data to help decide the next action items.

3. Connect with Marketing and Sales: Check in with the marketing and sales team to discuss what they have observed about site visitors since the last cycle. These observations can be extremely insightful and contain principles you can apply to your action items.

Example: Marketing wrote a blog that exploded in popularity with your users and brought in more organic and social visitors. Clearly this topic hits home with your users. How can that knowledge be used to supplement your wish list and influence your Growth-Driven Design program?

4. Brainstorm for the Wish List: Now is the time to add new action items to your wish list based off of your new research, data, and information you have gathered.

5. Organize and Prioritize Your Wish List: When the wish list has been updated with all of the new ideas, action items should be organized into several different categories:

a. Conversion Boosts: These activities relate directly to conversion rate optimization (e.g. conversion points, user path, testing value props, and split testing).

- b. User Experience Improvements:** These improvements give site visitors a smoother experience, making it simpler to navigate the site and find answers.
- c. User Personalization:** This category involves changes to the site, content offers, calls-to-action, etc. to engage visitors based on their available data. This could include adaptations based on interests, device, geolocation, persona, and referrals or previous site actions.
- d. Marketing Assets:** These items boost your marketing program through techniques like social accounts, blogs, email lists, etc. Marketing tools can be built into the website to include items of great value to the user and your company.
- e. General Website Updates:** There will be maintenance items that come up occasionally that you can add to your wish list.

6. Plan Your Sprint Cycle: The updated and prioritized wish list will help you pick the most impactful action items to implement in this cycle. The length of the cycle you choose will dictate how many items you can pick to work on. Less is better. Focus on a few items and if you have time when they are completed, pick more.

Cycle Step 2: Develop

When you reach the development step, it means you have identified which action items are most important, and you are ready to implement them on the site.

These action items should be considered experiments to gather information on how they impact the website's performance. Validation tracking through your Google Analytics account should be set-up around the action item metrics to measure your experiment.

The develop phase would be a good time for you and your marketing team to create a marketing campaign (PPC, blogging, social media, etc.) to drive traffic to the part of your site where the experiment is located. This can help expedite the data collection.

Cycle Step 3: Learn

Once the experiments have run long enough for you to collect some good data, you will begin to review it.

This information can help you to validate or disprove the hypothesis you created based on each action item. Did your action item perform the way you expected? Why or why not? What new information can you gather about your visitors that you did not know before? Does this confirm any of the characteristics you had assigned to your visitors?

The data and the information you gather from it are important to keep on file for your organization. Publish your results to a central system for people within your company to view. If you do not have a central location to publish reference papers and trends for your business, this would be a great time to create one. It can prove of great value for future research.

Cycle Step 4: Transfer

Transferring your new knowledge to other parts of your company is the last step in the Growth-Driven Design cycle. Review the information you've gathered from your research and brainstorm how this could impact other areas of your business. This is also a good time to view previous action items to find patterns to describe your users.

Example: You decide to test two variations of a landing page to see which your users find more credible and influential in leading to a conversion. One variation relied on social proof while the other relied on authority. Your experiment demonstrated that social proof was more powerful than authority in getting users to convert.

You now can share this with your other teams so they can incorporate social proof as a part of other marketing activities like email campaigns or sales scripts.

Once you have finished brainstorming how this research could impact other areas of the business, you can hold a meeting to discuss your findings and determine how these ideas could be integrated into tactical action items in other departments.

Now Repeat

Congratulations! You completed the first sprint cycle. Now the cycle will begin again with a new set of action items. This repetition continues over and over again to help make your website better and help you better understand your users. More completed cycles mean a more impactful site.

Where to Go From Here?

You likely have experienced some of the troubles associated with traditional website design if you've made it to this last chapter. The pitfalls of traditional design are often accepted as unavoidable, but they are not!

A website redesign can be an exciting process that is free of headaches. Re-evaluate the way you approach your next website project. Companies who adopt Growth-Driven Design methodology have found success in its flexibility and the results from their participation.

Choose a smarter way to approach your website. Implement Growth-Driven Design today.

Want to Learn More?

MVP has over 30 years of marketing, communications, and design experience for divisions of the Fortune 500 and those on the way. To learn more about MVP Marketing + Design or Growth-Driven Design contact us at info@mvpdesign.com or give Dick Weinrib, our president, a call at **612-332-8939**.

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