JUMP-START GUIDE

The Jump-Start Guide will help you begin to develop a plan of attack for your website design project. If you've never worked on a website design project before, this guide will provide you with a sort of checklist of things you will most likely need, or need to prepare for.

- **Do you have a domain name registered for your website?**
  If not, start searching to see what domain names are available and try to find one that works for you. You can search for available domain names from any registrar such as GoDaddy.com.

- **Do you have website hosting for your website?**
  If we're developing a custom WordPress theme for you, your hosting is on us for 1 year after completion of your website. 431MEDIA uses GoDaddy website hosting services, and have had no problems with them over the last decade or so. If you prefer to use another host, that's cool as well, but the hosting fees are on you.

- **Does your company have a logo?**
  If you do have a logo, is it in digital format? If you don't already have a logo, now would be a good time to do a little brainstorming to come up with ideas for what might work for your company. If your logo is not in digital format, we can convert most logos to digital format for you.

- **Have you researched your competition online?**
  If you're going to succeed online, you need to keep an eye on the competition and try to come up with ways to stay ahead of the pack. Check out some of your competitors websites and make a list of things/ideas you like and dislike about them. Also, take note of what search phrases you used to bring up these competitors in search engines such as Google, Yahoo, and Bing. These keywords/phrases will be important once we are in the development stage of your website.

- ## How would you search for your company online?

  Put yourself in the customer's shoes for a minute. If you were trying to find products/services offered by your company online, what keywords or phrases would you use? Try to really develop a comprehensive list here, as this will form the groundwork for your content development.

- ## Do you already have content that can be used on your website?

  Some companies are blessed by already having some content on hand in the form of newsletters, brochures, mailers, etc. If you don't have content for your website, now would be a good time to start thinking about what kind of content you want to create. Additional information about products, professional advice, and any unique information about your products/services will help you create valuable content for your website. This content increases your visibility with search engines, but more importantly adds real value to your website. When your website has value, potential customers keep coming back.

Content can include:

Company Bio – Not the most riveting piece of content, but it does introduce your company.

Press Releases – If you have new things happening, create a press release and tell the world.

Pro Articles – You're a pro at what you do. Provide people with pointers on different topics related to your services or products. This is what people are really looking for, and these articles will drive your website up the ranks of the search engine results pages.

Unique Product Descriptions – Never, Never, Never use the generic product descriptions you find on a manufacturers website. The search engines will know you are not the original creator of this content, and this will impact your search ranking negatively. Come up with unique and informative descriptions about every product you sell. This information is important to customers, and is also very important to the major search engines.

Freebies – Any kind of FREE. Everyone loves free stuff. If you can offer some really detailed information about a subject, create a short eBook and offer it for free on your website. Create a contest for a free product or service. It doesn't have to be anything huge. Like I said, people love free stuff, and you will too once it starts growing your business.

Newsletters & News Pages – If your company has a lot going on, tell people about it.

Special Offers – Special offers are kind of like free stuff, everyone loves em. Take advantage of the power of special offers and provide customers with "Online only deals" to get traffic headed your way.

There are numerous other sources of valuable content creation, but these should at least get your creative ideas on the move.

- ## Does your company use Social Media?

  Social Media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn are powerful marketing tools that can really give small businesses a boost. If you're not already using social media, set up a Facebook page for your company and start talking about what you do. People are interested! Facebook also teams with other marketing companies such as Constant Contact and HubSpot to produce live webinars that teach you how to leverage Facebook as a marketing tool. These webinars are highly valuable, and can give you a lot of ideas to better market your business. Best of all, they're FREE! Speaking of free, Facebook is also a great place to promote your contests and other FREE offers!

- **Are you going to sell products/services online?**

  If so, start working on those product descriptions. Like I said before, don't copy the manufacturer descriptions verbatim! In addition to a description for each product, you'll also want to list specific/generic keywords for each item. Think of it as if you're searching for that specific item. What keywords/phrases would you use? Also, you need to come up with a short META description for each item. This description can be similar to the product description, but should be short. Two short sentences should do the job. This description should NOT include any filler words, but should be to the point and very relevant to the product it describes. The META description of the product is what the potential customer will see when your product is listed in the search results. You will also need to come up with keywords/phrases and META descriptions for each category of products you sell.

  Even if you're not going to sell products or services online, it's a good idea to showcase what you've got to offer. You'll want to come up with the same information listed above.

  Also, if you don't already have them, now would be a good time to start getting some good photographs of your products!