



Lunamedia

web design and development // hello@lunamedia.co.uk

Working Process

The idea of this document is to give you an overview of how a typical web project taken on by Lunamedia goes from the planning stage to live website and beyond.

It's not intended as a rigid timetable for development, but serves as a pretty solid guideline for what you might expect each stage of the process to entail.

If you have any further queries regarding this document or have any suggestions for improvement, I am always happy to hear your ideas - please email me on hello@lunamedia.co.uk with your feedback - thanks!

1. Nice To Meet You

If we've got this far, you've found the Lunamedia website and have a reasonable idea I can help with your project. Where to next?

Before we can think about potential costs, beautiful user interfaces or creating a social marketing strategy - we need to stop and think. What is it your site really needs to do? What are your aims? Who are your audience, and what do you need to say to them?

It may seem obvious, but without taking the time to answer these critical questions, your website is likely to get lost in the crowd and meet neither your needs or those of your users.

That's why every project starts out with a request to the client to fill out the Client Worksheet available alongside this document. It answers all the questions I need to know to begin formulating a plan of attack for building your site, and gets you in the right mindset for making the most of your web presence.

2. Let's Make A Plan

Once I have your initial feedback, I will already have an idea of how we should start thinking about your site. We will likely be in touch via email, phone, Twitter or whichever channel you prefer, and I will present you with an initial proposal breaking down the deliverables of your project into chunks, making it easy for you to understand exactly what you will be paying for. This is when you'll receive a provisional estimate for the cost of your project.

We can tweak this initial proposal until both sides are clear on what work is going to be done and what it will achieve. Once we have a definitive proposal, a fixed estimate of costs based on this proposal is agreed, and the project scope is frozen at that point before work begins.

Why is this done? Making changes to a web project once development has got underway is a costly business, both in time and money, for both sides. It's something you want to avoid at all costs, and is why we will be so thorough in the planning stage to make sure everything is accounted for and we're both on the same page. It may be surprising, but what seem like even minor changes can in fact involve a lot of unpicking of design and coding work already done - and nobody wants that!

Once we have our definitive proposal, I will request that all materials necessary for me to do the job are provided. This will include anything and everything you think could possibly be useful: any copy you have written, sitemaps, wireframes (even if they're just pencil sketches), visual content such as photos or graphics, login credentials if you already have a website that is being overhauled (eg hosting details, FTP, admin passwords)... anything. It's always better to have too much material than not enough.

3. Sign Here Please

On agreement of project goals and deliverables as dictated by the definitive proposal we've been so lovingly crafting up to this point, a deposit is due of 50% of the agreed project cost. You'll be provided with a copy of the proposal and simple contract document which is signed by both sides. It's protection for us both and standard industry practice.

This deposit and any subsequent invoices due are processed through my secure online invoicing system, for which you'll be provided a unique login to review your invoices/ payments at anytime you wish.

Payment is made via bank transfer, details for which will be provided or via PayPal using a PayPal account or any major credit card.

We'll set up a Dropbox shared folder at this point so we can share and update any important files in a secure and easily accessible environment.

All of the useful plans and project assets we've gathered so far will be stored here - think of it as a central repository for everything to do with your project.

4. Design Phase

Now we now what your site is supposed to actually do, the next stage of the process is to begin fleshing out what it will actually look like in action.

Depending on the project, this may involve a wireframing stage in which simple digital diagrams of sample pages from your site are created in order to get an idea of where page elements will be placed, and how a user might interact with and travel through your site.

Next comes the exciting part where you get to see what an approximation of what your site will actually look like - the Photoshop comps. These will be detailed renderings that will be pretty close to what your final site pages will look like. Typically at least 2 will be prepared - a homepage design and a sample interior page.

These comps will be made available for you to review and approve. Again, with the proper preparation in place we should be in good shape to progress more or less immediately to the next stage.

5. Coding Phase

At this point the designs are converted into working code, usually comprising the XHTML, CSS, PHP and images that combine to bring your site to life.

An install of the content management system we have selected for use on your project is set up on my local server for development purposes. Structure will be put in place, and the site content provided earlier in the process will be brought into the system.

If any content is not available at this stage, dummy content can be used for site building purposes. However it is strongly recommended to have as much of the content you wish to see on your site at launch ready by this stage - this is the biggest cause of delays and subsequent extra costs likely to arise in developing any web project.

Installation and configuration of any plugins, modules and extra functionality is integrated into your site and tested on the development server.

6. Nearly There

Once work is completed, your site will be uploaded to a live server, using a dummy test domain and a live URL is made available for you to review your working site.

Your site will have been tested across the major browsers to ensure a smooth user experience - namely, the latest versions of Firefox, Safari and Chrome, and Internet Explorer versions 7 and 8.

Please note Internet Explorer 6 is no longer considered a secure or modern web browser and is not catered for as standard.

At this point both sides should be happy with a job well done and we can sign off the site.

Payment of the 50% balance of the project cost is due at this point.

7. Launch

Your site is now ready to go live on your own domain. All relevant files and database(s) will be moved to the correct server and any logins and password for accessing the admin area of your site will be provided.

Any instruction necessary on how to run your site is also made available, as well as info on how to keep the software updated, and any loose ends tied up. Voila!