

Planning of the website

Project management

Web Skills : 1

One idea that was always kept in the corner of a drawer was to create a website. Building a site can be tedious and enormously time consuming if the requirements are not clearly identified. This is the first publication of the site and it will serve as a knowledge base throughout this project. Follow the guide...

Published Monday July 8th 2019, 10:18
Modified Monday July 8th 2019, 14:33



By Olivier Paudex

The context

Creating a website is good, but what is it for? Especially if you are not a company and have nothing to sell. The desire to share your photos, put your resume online, share your passions, your hobbies, is always beneficial. Taking the time to do this requires a real effort of organization. Personally, I never really had the time to do it until this summer 2019 when I was professionally involved in a website redesign project.

In the case of this professional project, it was of course not me or my colleagues who were going to create the website, but an agency with real pros in the domain. No, my expertise was limited to the analysis, the needs, the requirements that were expected from the project. **In other words, to create the most detailed specifications possible**.

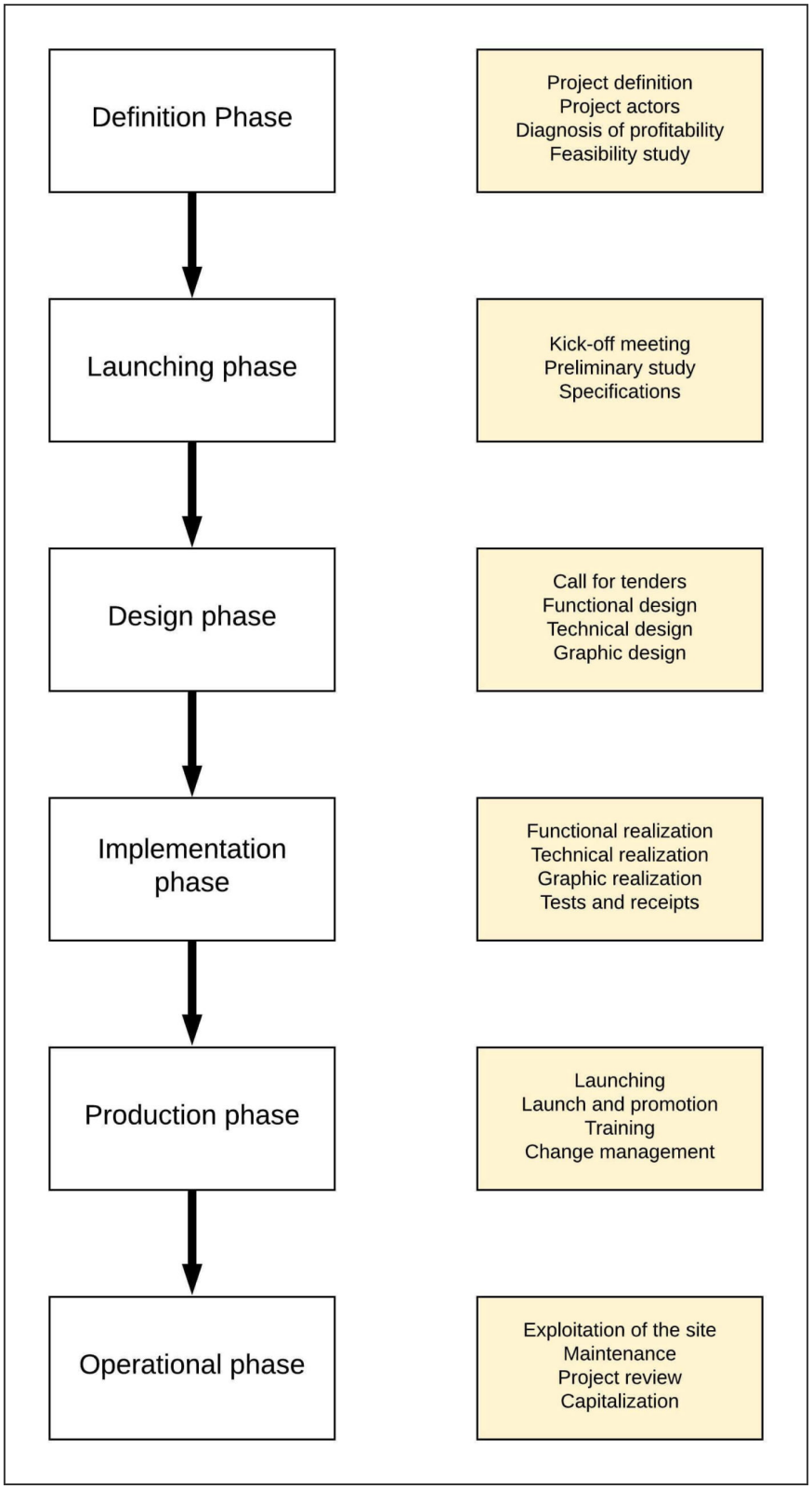
The time spent on the various reflections, the numerous workshops, the brainstormings and all the fashionable expressions used in the project management business which followed one another at a frantic rate, allowed me to find a certain parallelism to create this personal website.

The bases

The first steps in creating a website are often poorly structured. We often start by wanting to **define the design**, before knowing what **the objectives of the site** will be. Another mistake often seen and heard is the lack of clarity in the functioning of the site. You want to display information, but you don't know **the page map** of your site.

The life cycle of a project

This flow chart can be found in many books about project management. It speaks for itself and is a good reminder during the start-up. It also allows you to prioritize the tasks to be accomplished, or even to remove them, if the need is not to be defined.



The lifecycle of a web project

The purpose of this site

To start a website, you must have a clear idea of its purpose. Is the site just going to be **a showroom site, a merchant site** with online sales or **a blog** ? Having an objective from the start is the key to all successful projects. The elements of a showroom site are not the same as a blog, etc....

Here is a list of questions to ask, or to ask yourself :

- What will the website actually do ?
- Does the website have to be responsive, i.e. display on tablets or cell phones ?
- Do I have a company logo? Do I have to create one ?
- Does the domain name exist? If not, is it free ?
- Is the design compatible with the company's image ?
- Should SEO be taken into account ? If yes, the task can be time consuming and requires a person or a specialist in the sector of activity of the company.
- Should I think about creating an app instead of a website ? The answer requires an analysis, but as a general rule, the website is preferred for commercial sites, while apps only make sense if you use the possibilities of a cell phone such as geolocation, the camera. It should also be pointed out that the development of an app is platform dependent (iOS, Android). This of course has a higher cost.
- Estimate the time of the project as well as possible. The more complicated the project seems, the more time it will take to complete. Even if this task cannot be answered without creating a specification, you can estimate in weeks or even months the time of realization.
- A web site must be intuitive. Can we count on a group of testers ?
- Will the website generate orders, should it be coupled with an ERP or a logistics system ?
- Will there be content editors ? Do we need to train the users ? Do we need to create a web unit within the company ?
- Should we think about introducing a notion of comments, or dialogue with the visitor ?

The target

Always keep in mind the target of your website. The design of a showroom website to improve your visibility on a market will not be the same as a personal blog. It will be the same if you address to a young audience, professional or on the other hand to a leisure club. Think about it at all stages of creation.

The tree structure

One of the first steps is to define the structure of the website. To do this, you need to establish **a page map**. This may seem like a complex task, especially if you are just starting out, but some thought and perhaps an analysis of other web sites may provide some ideas. Creating a page plan can be very beneficial over time.

The number of pages should not exceed twenty. When we talk about pages, we do not count posts, products, etc..., but only the structure.

- Create a homepage to promote the company or introduce the owner.
- Create a page to present the products, services or the author of the site (If it is simple, it can be displayed in the homepage).
- Create a page for the terms of use of the site, privacy, GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation).
- One or more product or publication archive pages. A sorting or search form should be included.
- A product presentation page (online sales site), or post display page (blog).
- A contact page with the possibility to send messages.
- A documents page, where visitors can download attachments, forms, brochures, user manuals.
- One or more user account management pages (if the website is open to other contributors or online customers).

The list is not exhaustive, but it provides a good starting point.

The wireframes

Wireframes, or a first draft of the page structure, are part of the deliverables to provide to the client. Or simply, to see for yourself what the design of the pages will be. Wireframes can be drawn by hand or with a specialized tool like **Sketch or Adobe XD**. These are usually quite simple, without color and give an idea of what the website will look like, without wasting too much time.

The technical resources

The technical environment is often the responsibility of the web designer. Even if the skills are lacking, the passage is mandatory. Today, it is much easier to find a partner who will host your website, rather than creating a local server. This is a point not to be neglected.

The name of your domain

Finding a domain name may or may not seem like a simple task. It depends again if you want to link the name of a company to your website or if the name represents a place, an activity, a region. Start thinking about it and check if the desired domain name is still available with a tool like**"whois"**.

The hosting

There is a plethora of hosting providers on the market. The most expensive are not necessarily the best. The criteria for choosing a hosting provider can vary from one project to another. Here are some of them :

- The country where the servers are located.
- The language of the support in case of problem.
- Automatic backup.
- Personalized management through a web interface
- The volume available. Images and photos can take a lot of space.
- The number of websites that can be created on a single domain. Each domain should have at least two websites, **www and staging**. The first is your main site, the second is a test site. Prefer the **staging** name for product licensing reasons. Most plugins can be installed for free on a second site if it has the name **staging**.
- The security protocol. All websites should be **HTTPS** today.
- The free **SSL certificate**. A secure website must have an SSL certificate. Some providers offer it with the domain, others not.

> It should be noted that the responsibility for the domain name, hosting and the invoices that result from it should be in general charge of the owner of the site. Nothing is more tedious than having to manage a domain name or hosting when you are not the owner. If you develop a website for a third party, give them the keys to the hosting.

There is a lot of information to consider when deciding to create a website. This is just an overview of the good basics to take and especially to think about. Managing a real project could be much more complex. But no matter how big or small the project is, planning is a task that needs a lot of time.

It is time to move on to the second phase, **the design of the website**. Not to be confused with the concrete realization of the site, the design allows you to prepare the tools that will be used later to build it.