

# 8 Technical Questions to Ask Before Building a New Website

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**Just give me a  
new website**



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- Varied background in advocacy, policy, & strategic communications
- Creator, paint maker, problem solver



# Stephen Tidmore

- Executive VP of Technology, Mighty Citizen
- 24 years of technical experience
- Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies (CPACC)
- Former Elvis impersonator



# By the End, You'll Know How To:

- Ask the right questions  
(and know which answers to look for)
- Work with your IT team to set reasonable expectations
- Audit your current website and technology to define the scope of your website project



# #1: Do we need to migrate content and if so, what content?



# Square Peg, Round Hole (or no hole)

- Content from the old site will most likely not be a one-to-one match with content on the new site





# New Data

- Will migrated content need to have new pieces of data added after migration?
- If so, who will handle that process?



# Broken Data or Styles

- How will you handle broken URLs?
- Do you need to deal with images or files?
- Does the existing content have inline CSS?



# Knowledge of the Existing Content

- Does someone truly understand the structure and meaning of the content on the current website that needs to be migrated?



#2

Where will the  
new site be hosted?

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# Current Specs

You'll need the following information, at a minimum:

- Visitor Analytics
- Hard Drive space
- RAM
- CPU
- Monthly bandwidth
- Make sure to take into account regular activity and during traffic spikes

# Scalability, Access, and Support

- When will you need to scale up your hosting resources and how often?
- Who will need access to the hosting environment and will they be able to work with the available access levels?
- Does the host support a modern development workflow?
- Who is supporting the hosting environment vs. the website itself?



# Supported Technologies

- What technologies will your host be able to support?



# DNS Hosting

- Where is the DNS zone hosted and who will make updates?



#3

# How does content get published?



# Content Publishing

- Consider your organizational goals and existing procedures for publishing content.
- Is your content up-to-date and relevant now?
- Do you really need an approval workflow built into the CMS?



# CMS Needs

- Is your CMS simple enough for non-technical staff to use?
- Does your CMS have an active community of developers that can offer support?
- Can it be integrated with your CRM, user database, event system, or other third-party platforms?



# CMS Needs

- Is your website actually furthering your goals in any way? If not, what needs to work better?
- Will there be a need for multilingual content now or in the future?
- Need for modular content? Live previews? Permissions based on individual fields?



#4

**What third-party systems  
do we need to  
integrate with?**

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NOT YOUR  
WEBSITE



How many  
third-party systems  
feed into your  
current website?



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# Which tools does your website need to interact with?

- List every third-party system or tool the website will need to interact with.
- Consider how your organization handles donations, lead forms, tracking code, social feeds, newsletter sign-ups, events, payments, etc.





# Simple or Complex Integration?

- Is it just some embed code or a link?
- Is it a one-way data feed?
- Is it a full API integration where the two systems need to talk to each other?
- To help figure out the method of integration ask: Do you need to share data back and forth?



#5

Will a third-party site  
need to be skinned?

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# Title X: Data Collection and Reporting

 YOU COMPLETED 0%



## Title X Data Collecting and Reporting



## Quiz

0/5 answered correctly

# Ask First

- Which third-party sites *should* be skinned?
- Which of those third-party sites *can* be skinned?
- What are the limits for each site?

# Responsibility and Timing

- Who is responsible for skinning each system?
- How long does it take and will this delay the main website project?



#6

Will we need  
single sign-on?

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# Single Sign-On Need

- Do you need single sign-on?
  - Does your new website need to know that visitors to your website have signed in to a different application?
  - This can include letting people log into your CMS control panel using accounts external to the CMS.
  - Do you need gated content?
- Does it need to know information about the logged in user or just that they have signed in successfully?





# Single Sign-On Technology

- Which system will serve as the identity provider?
- What technologies can you support and what technologies are offered by the identity provider (SAML, LDAP, etc.)?



#7

# How will we handle site search?

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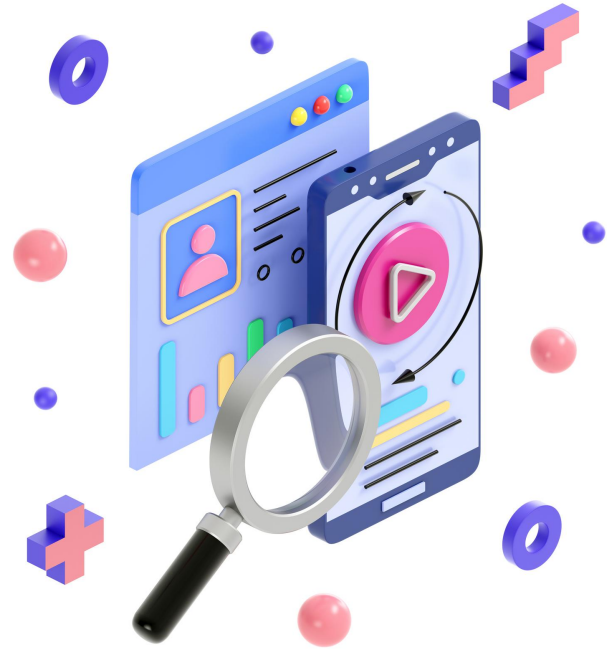
# Search Data Requirements

- Where does the data live that needs to populate the site search engine? Is it in multiple systems?
- Do you need to have the text of files such as PDF files indexed by your site search engine?
- Is any of the content that needs to be indexed only available to logged in users?
- Does the data need to be categorized to offer filtered searches?



# Search Provider Requirements

- Do non-technical users need to modify the properties of the search engine?
- Do you have any budget for a third-party solution?
- Consider the timeline for search indexing and site launch.



#8

What standards are we  
required to follow?

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# Some Possible Standards

- What browsers does your website need to be compatible with?
- Are there any specific security requirements or policies in place in your organization?
- What privacy laws do you need to follow? (HIPAA, GDPR, CCPA)
- Are there performance requirements or expectations?



# Accessibility

- You should be thinking about accessibility from the very beginning of a new web project.
- What level of accessibility do you need to target (WCAG AA minimum)?
- How will you test to make sure you're meeting accessibility standards?
- Consider the values of your organization.



# Summing it up

- Building a new website can be done in a million different ways
- There are a lot of questions you should ask upfront that will help make the entire website process more efficient
- The goal of all these questions is to create a list of technical requirements that can help guide you throughout the website project







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# Questions?

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# Thank You!



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