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**8 Tech  
Questions  
To Ask Before  
Building a  
Website**

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Mighty Citizen

[associationforum.org](https://associationforum.org)

**Just give me a  
new website**



# Stephen Tidmore

- VP of Technology,  
Mighty Citizen
- 23 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 and get an accurate lay of the land
- Audit your current website and technology to define the scope of your website project



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# #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?



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# 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?

Were you with  
the organization  
when the current  
site was built?



# Knowledge of the Existing Content

- Does someone truly understand the structure and meaning of the source data that needs to be migrated?



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#2

Where will the  
new site be hosted?

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# Current Specs

You'll need the following information:

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



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# 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?
- Make sure you don't get stuck with a host or a system administrator that only understands a .NET environment if you're building a new PHP based website.



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# DNS Hosting

- Where is the DNS zone hosted?
- Is there an internal DNS server in your office that needs to be updated as well for launch?



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#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 current 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, or other third-party platforms?



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# 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?
- Who will be maintaining and updating the CMS in the future?





#4

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



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



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NOT YOUR  
WEBSITE



# Which tools does your website need to interact with?

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



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# Simple or Complex Integration?

- Is it just some embed code or a link?
  - Don't make it more complicated than it needs to be.
- 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?
- Will your website and a third-party system both need to know you've logged in successfully?



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**Will a third-party site  
need to be skinned?**

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# 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?



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# #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.)?



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#7

# How will we handle site search?



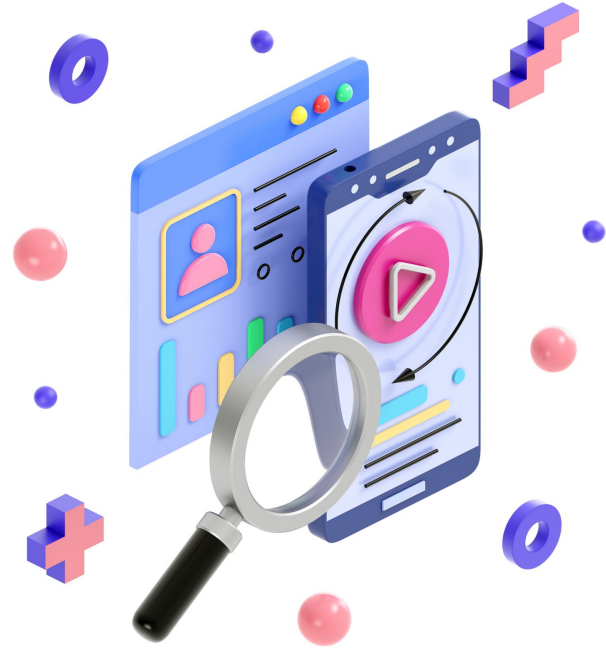
# Search Data Requirements

- 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?



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# 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.



# Questions?

Get the Slides and Other Tools:

**[mightycitizen.com/8questions](https://mightycitizen.com/8questions)**

Bonus tools and templates:

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# Thank you!