



** Special thanks to **Kelly Cutler** for providing this Affordable Meetings® Mid-America article. To learn more, attend her presentation at HSMAI's Affordable Meetings® in Chicago, IL on Wednesday, April 14, 3:15pm – 4:30 pm



6 Tips You Must Consider Before Re-designing Your Website

When considering a website re-design or making development changes, always keep user experience in mind. Maintaining the strength of certain website variables, one can make significant changes to a site's design and function without taking away from the site's goal. There are many reasons for a redesign. Some reasons include: an outdated look and feel, inability to manage content effectively, or keeping up with competitors' websites.

Here are 6 tips for things you must consider before a web re-design:

1. **Assess your current situation**

Review your analytics programs to see what parts of the site are performing. This provides initial basis for improvement. Things to analyze are: search engine traffic volume, conversion points, calls to action, etc.

2. **Research your competitor's websites**

If your competitors have just invested in a redesign, then it may well be time for you to have one to. Consider, users can use your competitor's site which has improved navigation, a clearer, more up to date and relevant content featuring all the services and products that your company has, but are not featured on your outmoded site, and a nicer look and feel about it.

3. **Utilize a Content Management System (CMS)**

Many website owners now prefer to use a CMS, such as WordPress, so that the site can easily be updated without requiring technical skills. Depending on the amount and type of updates that are anticipated, a CMS is a smart, time-efficient tool.

4. **Have a plan for 301 redirects**

Ensure the site features a 301(permanent redirect) for visitors and search engines if you are changing the URL for your site. It may be necessary to change the URL either for SEO purposes, or because of technical changes, such as a CMS. Some redesigns feature a link from the old site to the new one.

5. **Make adjustments to the navigation - focus on intuitive structure**

Navigation is one of the most critical elements of a site's usability. If a significant amount of content and/or pages have been added to the site since the last design, it is possible that navigation is no longer optimal. Before designing think about how visitors will want to move through the site, and make it as easy as possible for them.

6. **Incorporate user-interaction as much as possible**

The most successful websites are able to get visitors involved. Blogs are great for this purpose because they allow for comments and discussion. Other possibilities are forums, games, user-generated content, polls, quizzes, etc. By making the website more engaging to visitors you are more likely to get a high number of repeat visitors and increase conversions.

Additional items to remember

Don't forget to add Google Analytics code across all redesigned or migrated pages. Additionally, revisit or implement Google Webmaster Tools, which will provide helpful information about your website, specifically broken links, backlinks and sitemaps. Thirdly, ensure there are no old URLs being linked to on the site. Lastly, remember to update website sitemaps, Google sitemaps, and any feeds that are running.