

What does a business website relaunch really cost?

How to keep expenses under control



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What phases are involved in a website relaunch

The **launch or relaunch** of a business website is a complex task consisting of many individual steps and milestones. Before a webpage may go live, many different sections have provided their input. Setting up these processes in an intelligent fashion helps keeping an eye on the magical triangle of quality, time and costs.

We'll use **our checklist** to explain how a website is put together. This knowledge is important to be able to make informed decisions on potential savings in the first place. And it avoids a procedure that might be cheaper in the short term but will actually result in extra costs in the long run.



„In the vast majority of cases, a website relaunch is a very demanding project with many different parties involved. Usually, the final goal is clear: a modern website, useful features, SEO and compelling content. Professional planning and implementation will help you to stay efficient during the project and to work successfully together. [Contact us!](#)“

Jörg Hanser
Director of Business Development



Rheindigital

1. Analysis and strategy

What happens at this stage:

Each good website is backed up by a **strategy** addressing the following questions:

- What is the **guiding principle**, what are the values of your company?
- What are the **pain points** of your current website?
- Which role does the strategy play in the **channel mix of your company**?
- Which **goals** are you hoping to achieve with the relaunch?
- What are your **target groups** and what kind of user journeys is the navigation meant to support?
- Which requirements do you need the **Content Management System (CMS)** to fulfil that you use to maintain your website?
- Last but not least: **which** values does your **brand** convey, and how may those be transmitted through your web presence?

The best way to address these and other questions can be in a **joint workshop** bringing together the company and the executive agency.



Keeping track of costs:

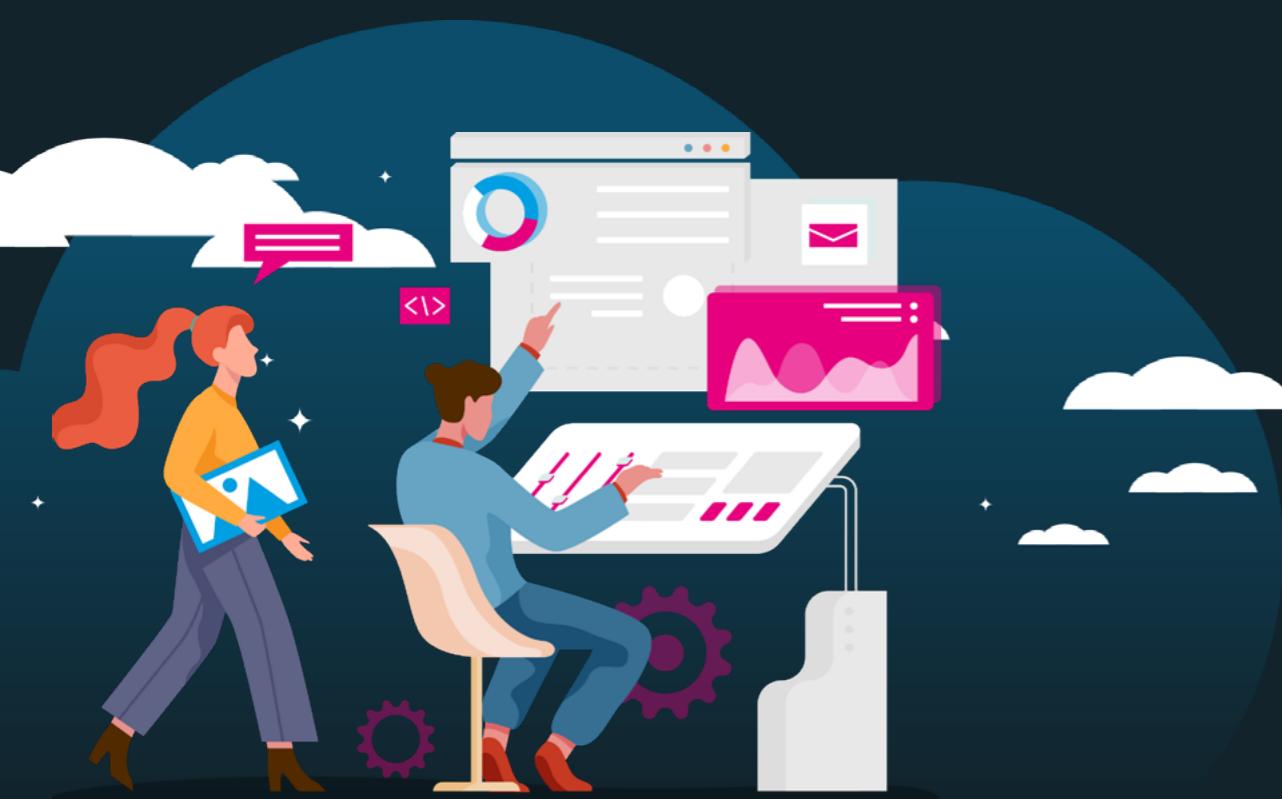
- **Internal coordination:** before you start, launch an intensive consulting exercise within the company on goals, target groups and content of the planned relaunch! For example: do you really need a structural relaunch – or more of a redesign after all?
- Setting down your ideas on paper helps. One way to do this is with a **functionality specifications and a target specifications sheet**: the functionality specs sheet describes the desired content and functionality of the website, while the targets specs sheet notes how the desired features will be implemented, and also, which parameters you want to use to measure the success of your relaunch project. Of course functionality and target specs sheets are not an essential requirement – especially if you are thinking along the lines of agile processes. Our tip: keep track of your project goals, but choose the form that best fits your vision of the project!
- **Choose your provider wisely:** the marketplace of web design agencies features all-rounders and lone warriors. Do think about what suits your requirements. Sometimes it can make perfect sense to go for one-off commissions. A full-service agency with all bases covered may save you time and coordination costs if the project size exceeds a certain level.
- Try and keep your **internal project team** and the coordination processes as slim as possible. And do agree in advance on a **project management method or a mix of different methods**. Agile tools are suitable for a website relaunch, yet integrating elements of a classic waterfall project might make sense.

2. Concept

What happens at this stage:

The conceptual phase is where the framework for your website is laid down, using the findings of the analysis and strategical phase. The aim at this stage is to develop:

- a **wireframe** (a rough layout)
- a rough graphical concept
- a CD-compliant **style guide** (if not already in place) for guidance on the use of logo, colours, typefaces, forms and intervals
- a guiding framework for the desired tonality
- and the imagery.



Keeping track of costs:

- One of the factors driving a website's costs may be **the chosen CMS**. Not only do differing systems result in various programming costs, some CMS simply don't support certain designs and functionalities.
- There is a large variety of CMS, each suiting different requirements. Seek advice and **get information at an early stage on advantages and disadvantage as well as costs** for all systems!
- The kind of templates used for a web design also influence the price. Some CMS require more work to change a template once more after it's been set up. Templates developed in-house may possibly be more economical in the long run. **Ask your provider for advice on this.**
- It pays off to set up a **style guide and pictorial concept** early on. This allows you to lay down the possibilities and limits of the chosen design right at the start. This is an investment that pays off as you go along because the framework guiding the design is clear. You may then allocate clear hourly limits to sub tasks, image research for instance.
- Ask for the results of the conceptual work to be recorded in a **design and feature freeze** (in the functionality/target specs sheets for instance). That way you keep an overview of things should discussions on scope arise during the creative phase.
- **Do take the conceptual phase seriously!** This is where important decisions are made – on page layout or navigational structure for instance – that require a lot of effort to change at a later stage.

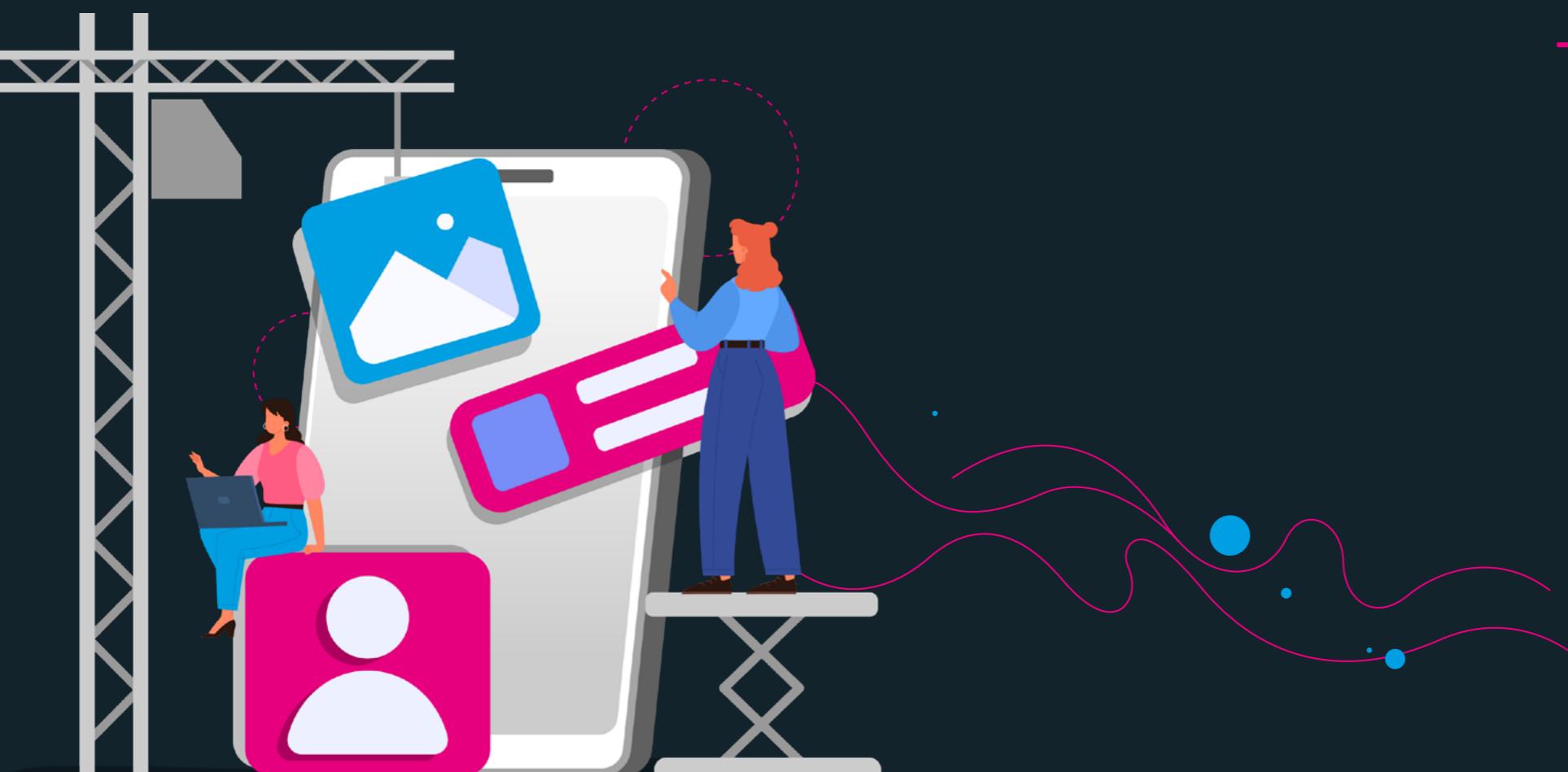
3. Creation

What happens at this stage:

Now things get down to the nitty-gritty: creating designs, texts, photos, videos and micro animations. If you've chosen an agile project management this phase is divided into **intensive sprints**, with short presentations of interim results at the end. **Collaboration tools** such as Figma or Adobe xD allow you to follow progress on-the-job and place comments.

Keeping track of costs:

- Creation lives by dialogue. The faster and more concise your feedback, the easier it is for the agency to implement any changes. Lack of, or unclear feedback may lead to suboptimal or protracted attempts at problem solving. To avoid this take care to line up your team in such a way to keep **decision paths as short as possible**. Which is why you need to ask your agency for a **well organised schedule**, ideally consisting of short sprints with regular coordination meetings.
- An ideal solution for working together are **collaboration tools** such as Figma. These allow you to flag up graphical and textual changes directly and with a little practice even input them yourself. Request your agency to use such a tool! This will keep the number of regular progress meetings and correction emails to a minimum.
- Complexity has a price. Which is why you should limit your web design to **a few themes and modules** that you can always refer back to in sub pages. This is cheaper yet still allows for plenty of creativity.



4. Building a framework

What happens at this stage:

- In an integrated marketing communications concept everything is connected to everything else. Often many other products are developed in sync with the new website: the sustainability road map for instance, the launch of a TikTok channel, the new Intranet. All of these marketing products should be **coordinated** in terms of graphics and content.
- The website relaunch itself requires **working in parallel**: videos or audios have to be produced or re-edited. There are photographic sessions to be planned, texts to be translated, and SEO or SEA measures initiated.



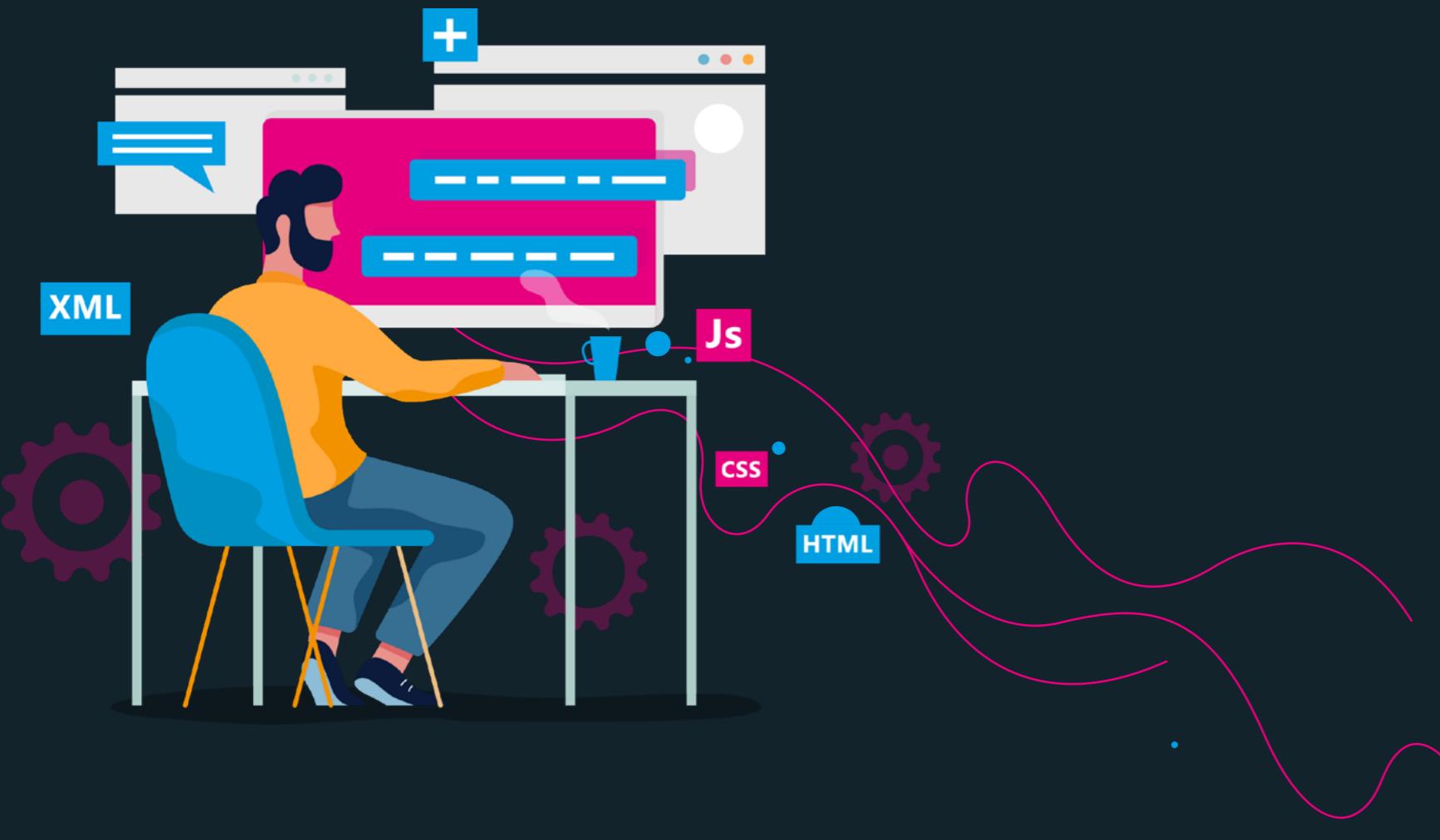
Keeping track of costs:

- Postponing a launch nearly always involves additional meetings and coordination tasks. **Which makes it vital to keep an eye on all communications projects and framework tasks!**
- Plan and budget at an early stage for work on the **foreign-language versions**. In most cases it will save costs if you can draw on in-house translators. It's also helpful to draw up a word list for foreign languages early on. Otherwise production will require a lot of revisions to achieve the desired result in the target languages.
- When it comes to **photos and videos**, it may be cheaper to re-edit an existing video and to set it to new music rather than producing an entirely new set of images. Instead of shooting in-house it can often be a good idea to give individual pages a typographical or graphic make-over. This is faster and cheaper, yet can result in some nice eye-catchers.

5. Technical implementation

What happens at this stage:

As soon as all design elements have been given the green light, **programming** starts, creating the code's front end and back end. Subsequently the page is **tested** on different browsers and devices. This allows to discover and correct potential bugs.



Keeping track of costs:

Next to the conception, the technical implementation is the most expensive part of a website relaunch. If you want to stay within the budget here, you should know which cost screws can be turned.

- One of the factors governing market prices for developers depend on the chosen **CMS** and the programming language. Which is why you should ask in advance which features you really need. Maybe a website in the good-value WordPress system might do the job.
- The scope of the CMS too is relevant for development costs. Check whether you really need all texts and images to be editable? Minimalism is cheaper than a firework of features. The less effort required at the **back end**, the better the programming price. It's helpful to define use cases for working with the website (how do I place a news item for instance?) in advance. This is something that may be addressed in practice during the training accompanying the hand-over of the website. Ideally you and your editors may make subsequent adjustments at the back end on your own.
- At the front end, it's most of all **animations** and other extras that determine the price of any technical implementation. Maybe there are places where you can work with graphics instead of micro animations?
- Finally, **uniformity** is important. Features such as sliders or accordions that may be used at several points on the website don't have to be developed from scratch every time – saving costs.

6. Initial content placement, maintenance & optimization

What happens at this stage:

Once the CMS is in place, all agreed-upon texts may be integrated, before, following one final check, the website **goes live**. However, this doesn't spell the end of the website project. In order to stay attractive for search engines, the website's content should be **maintained and SEO-optimised** on a regular basis. In the time period after the launch date regular technical updates are important to ensure your website's IT safety.

Keeping track of costs:

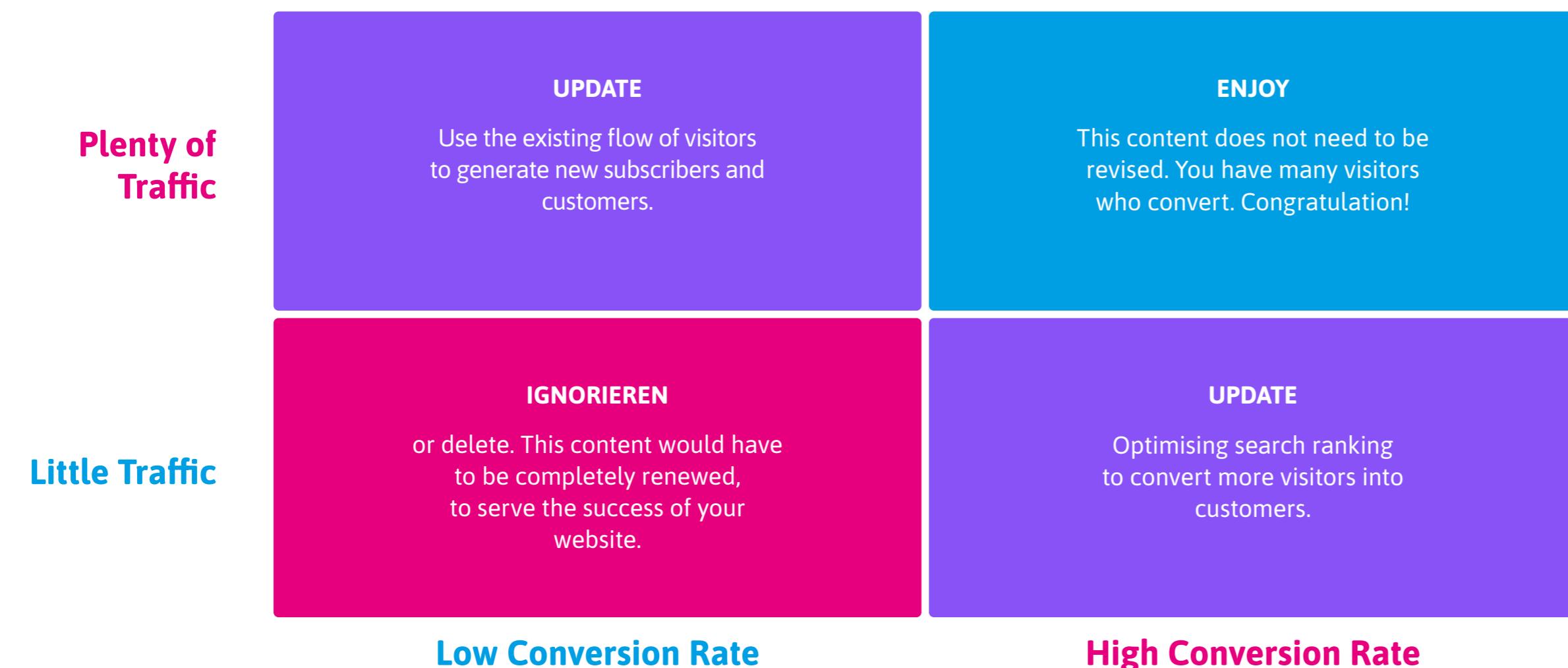
- Keep in mind that **going live does not mark the end** of your relaunch project. For your website to develop and maintain its impact it needs to be maintained on a regular basis, not least for reasons related to SEO issues: search engines reward up-to-date relevant content. Social media marketing can also promote your website's visibility. **Which means: factor in costs for maintenance and upkeep of the website early on!**
- Often agencies will offer what is known as retainer solutions, i.e. the ongoing production of relevant content for the blog or the news section of a website. Buying in this kind of services is often cheaper than training up your own specialised staff.



Why it pays off to plan a relaunch in expansion stages

Expansion stages allow a website project the **chance to breathe**. This means that you don't have to launch every step at the same time.

Thinking along the lines of expansion stages starts with your **current website**. It is worth analysing which material from the old site you want to carry over with you into the new world? Subpages and content that are not performing don't have to be included in the migration. The lower the migration extent the better for your budget. However, good images, texts and ideas already present in your website may possibly be transferred and serve as a base for further development. This saves time in the conceptual and creative phases, as you won't have to start over from zero. A matrix analysis is available for this purpose.



Efficiency at every level

As opposed to print products for example, which usually have a fixed deadline for copy, website projects are by definition **never finished**. Texts, images and videos may be updated at any time. Design features may be adjusted, navigation points or social media services added. This represents a chance for you to **spread the costs for your relaunch project**.

On the other hand, the potentially "forever incomplete" status of website projects may also lead to **over-stretching a relaunch**, resulting in lots more drafts, and lots more meetings than necessary. Which is why you need to define very clearly what exactly will be added or updated following the relaunch. Constantly missed deadlines and the **lack of a feature-freeze phase** will drive up costs.

And obviously the website has to convince your target audience in its basic version too. However, time-consuming assets such as moving images in particular may be **produced and added at a later stage**, without users missing anything. In terms of visibility, a step-by-step approach to updating your website might even work in its favour: search engines rate all new content as current content, which improves the ranking. Also, new content may be used for content marketing on a blog or on social media.

Dos and don'ts for your relaunch

+ Dos:

- + **Based on existing data and in dialogue with your stakeholders**, find out what the aims of the relaunch are. This will allow you to prioritise measures, including cancelling some. Maybe there is no need for a **disruptive break** which might in fact be damaging even.
- + Allow your project partners to advise you in terms of **design and feature minimalism**. Should this be an option you will save a lot of money.
- + **Make informed decisions** on the technological basis, including the website's upgradability and maintenance. While these might appear costly at the start, they will pay off in the mid-term and long run.
- + Make informed, data-based decisions on the **extent of website migration**.
- + Allow your project partners to advise you on the way the project will proceed in advance and **ask questions** if there is something you don't understand. This avoids erroneous cost decisions resulting in important steps of the project such as wireframing or quality control being skipped or overlooked.
- + Line up your **project team** according to the complexity of the project, expected coordination loops and the given corporate culture – always in dialogue with your external partners. If required adapt your team formation according to the phase the project is currently in.
- + Choose the most suitable **project management method** in dialogue with your external project partners, and insure this method is understood by everyone involved. Whether going for the classic waterfall method or agile sprints: where change requests are concerned, always remember that they bring additional costs. And if the financial budget is fixed, it's the factors time or quality that will have to be adjusted.

- Don'ts:

- Making “**Change Everything**” the guiding principle, without being able to justify the individual steps based on data
- Teasing out the **limits of design and technology**: while this might ensure a bombastic stage entrance, it's expensive and doesn't always bring about the desired outcome
- Unthinkingly favouring the **option that appears cheaper at first glance**, a standard layout for instance, without factoring in the costs for adjustments, updates and expansion stages
- Making **uninformed rash decisions** on the required migration extent, which may result in wasted time and additional costings
- Dispensing with advice, **omitting project stages**: while at best saving time, this will harm the quality of the process and the end result
- Having too many or too few participants in the project team, leading to either **inefficiency** or capacity overload
- Sensing a need for short performance intervals plus a high degree of flexibility and requesting **agility, without creating corresponding structures**, methods and budgets

Balancing of costs, time and quality requires a clear idea of

- the indispensable services and resources
- non-essential or add-on services or features
- a suitable type of project management in place – whether classic, agile or hybrid depends on the requirements and the work environment.

The new website: six cost examples

Every business website has a **different** set of requirements – this makes it difficult to put an advance figure on the costs of a launch or relaunch. There are too many factors influencing the commitment required: from the extent of the editorial services as well as the number of selected languages and planned features to the choice of CMS.

Even so we have put together six typical cases. **Do you recognise yours in any of those?**

Case study: "The Microsite"

Mid-sized company, employing 1,200 people

The commission: creating a microsite featuring a new product for an existing company website. The company would like animations and a disruptive design: the idea is for the site's look and feel to be clearly different from previous product pages.

Estimated time commitment: between 30 and 50 days

Case study: "The Booking Platform"

Charitable institution offering seminars across Germany, employing 250 people

The commission: developing a website presenting the institution and the seminars it offers: creating the initial concept, as well as design and editing, as well as setting up a blog. Plus the programming of a detailed and regional search engine and a technical link to an external booking system which can be used to book the classes.

Estimated time commitment: between 60 and 80 days

Case study: "The Refresh"

Mid-sized company, employing 6,000 people

The commission: the website of this medium-sized company needs a visual overhaul. Alongside a freshened-up design the customer would also like to see the implementation of a few small animations and infographics.

Estimated time commitment: between 20 and 50 days

Case study: "The Big One"

Hidden Champion, employing 6,000 people

The commission: building a completely new digital calling card: consultancy and developing the concept, as well as the formats, company logo and CD, including web design, editorial and SEO optimization, search engine marketing and technical implementation. Also accompanying tasks incl. the production of photo and moving image and the setting up of a social media strategy.

Estimated time commitment: between 80 and 100 days

Case study: "The new Sustainability Section"

Global corporation, employing 100,000 people

The commission: The corporation's global website is due a substantial sustainability section with a fresh look. Part of the commission is creating the concept for the new section, designing and editing all pages and subpages.

Estimated time commitment: between 40 and 60 days

Case study: "The Intranet Campaign"

Corporation, employing 20,000 people worldwide

The commission: a new software is scheduled to be rolled out across the corporation which will change many in-house procedures. In order to generate awareness and commitment for this adjustment the corporation is planning a large-scale campaign using the company intranet. The plan is to develop a visual, a figurehead for the campaign, a substantial landing page and a series of explanatory videos.

Estimated time commitment: between 40 and 60 days



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Credits

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