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How to complete the task of building a new website without ruining your life or your business.

In our current business climate, having a website is a necessity, but, building a new website can be a treacherous undertaking. You have to deal with you or your company's objectives, if you even have any. Then you have to find the right vendor, to the best of your ability, for the job. And that's just the preliminary work.

Next you have to move on to the planning phase, which includes lots of documents showing site maps, wireframes and proposed content structures. This stage is often overlooked or neglected when building a website. When it is, everyone pays for it later. During this phase you'll want to make sure cover any features and strategies the site needs to accomplish.

Finally you begin to see some site designs. At this point you may be thinking, "Maybe building a new website wasn't such a bad idea after all." Several rounds of revision later, you finally reach the development stage.

Development can be a tough process because while you're being told work is being done, you may not see a whole lot. "What happened?" you think, "They just sent us a fully completed design a while ago! Where is it?"

To help explain this process, we'll use an analogy. Web development can be a lot like repairing or building a car. If you were to sit and watch us work you would see things happening under the hood, but once we close the hood and start the car you may not be able to see what was actually done. All you know is that smoke isn't billowing out a mile down the road.

These steps can help make sure building a new website goes as smoothly as possible.

Set clear goals and design/functional ideas before you approach a vendor. The company may have some great suggestions and ideas once they meet with you, but it will be a much better experience and website if you prepare.

Choose the right company for your business. You may like Agency X's work, but they may not be the right fit for your company. Pick a vendor with similar values and ideals, and also one whose staff you like and can deal with on a personal level.

Stay Flexible. Things can change when building a new website. Designs and content can shift during the process. Keep in mind that "scope creep" is the industry's scariest boogie man. If you to stray from your original goals, be diligent in doing so. Even minor changes can derail a project AND a budget.

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