

Three Steps to a Better Web Design

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The time will come to create your first website or redesign your existing site. You will have several options for development: hire a web designer, purchase a template website, or create your own. Whichever option you choose, spending some time in the planning stages will make the process quicker, easier and perhaps even cheaper.

Before you develop your website, follow these three steps:

1. Research other websites
2. Choose images
3. Determine functionality

Step 1: Research other websites

Step one begins with researching other websites that appeal to you. The quickest way to find websites of other financial advisory firms is to visit a registry like [NAFPA's Find an Advisor](#) site or [Brightscope's Advisor Pages](#). These sites have links to hundreds and even thousands of other advisor's websites and will give you a good perspective of the range of designs.

If you would like inspiration from outside of the financial services industry, you can visit a site like [Elance](#) and peruse the portfolios of the web designers for ideas. Another option is to visit a website template site like [TemplateMonster](#) to view hundreds of different website variations.

Choose a handful of designs that you like and make note of the similarities. This will help you identify and communicate the elements you prefer. For example, you may notice all the websites are a tone of blue. Or they may all have a minimalist design. Or they may all feature pictures of families. By comparing the sites and noting similarities, you should be able to develop a clear understanding of the type of website you want and communicate those elements to whoever will develop your site.



Step 2: Choose images

It is common for it to take many hours and several rounds of revisions for a web designer to find the perfect images for your website. This process will be much faster if you know what images are available and what you like.

For step two, review stock images to determine which ones you like. It should be clear to you from reviewing other websites in step one which types of photos are appealing to you. For example, you may like landscape photos, photos of families, or photos specific to your local market. Once you have identified a theme for your photos, visit a stock photo site to see what is available. If you are on a budget, visit [iStockPhoto](#) to accomplish this task. If money is not as much of a concern, higher quality photos can be found at [Getty Images](#). Make note of the image numbers so you can easily find them later when you are ready to design the website.

Step 3: Determine functionality

In addition to serving as a “brochure” for your firm, a website is a useful tool for both your clients and prospects. Identify what additional functionality you would like to add to your site before you begin the design process. Such items include blogs, calculators, market snapshots, and client portals just to name a few. The research you do in step one will help you understand what is available and that suits your business. For step three, note the functionality you would like to add to your site. It is easier and less frustrating to incorporate this functionality in the beginning of the web design process than adding it at the end of the process.

Creating your first website or redesigning your existing website is a significant undertaking. By spending the time planning for your website in the early stages, you will increase the chances of getting the exact site that you want and decreasing the chances of wasting time and money unnecessarily. Following these three initial steps will help make the web design experience a more pleasant one for you and your web designer.

Kristen Luke is the Principal of Wealth Management Marketing, Inc., a firm dedicated to providing marketing strategies and support for Registered Investment Advisory firms. Her firm enables independent advisors the ability to market with the same quality and consistency as their larger competitors by providing the resources of an entire marketing department at a fraction of the cost of a single employee. For more information, visit www.wealthmanagementmarketing.net.



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