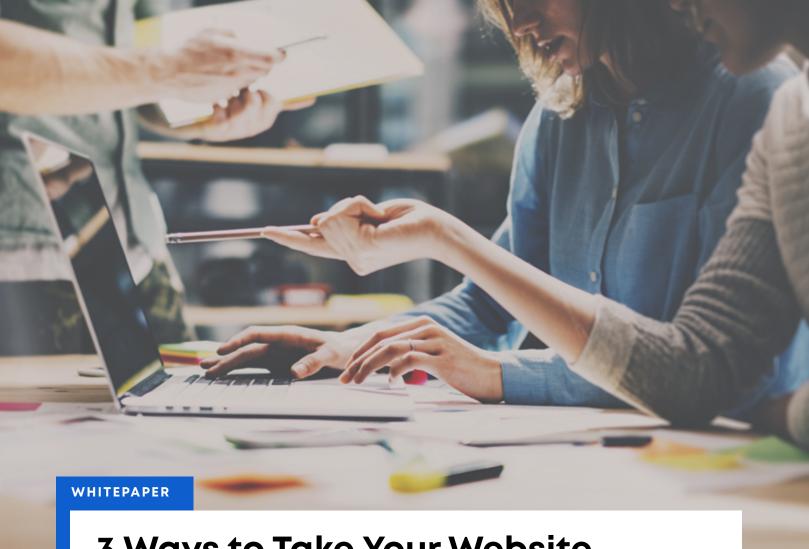# 3 Media Web

3 Ways to Take Your Website Management from Chaotic to Calm

3 Ways to Take Your Website Management from Chaotic to Calm

Voila! You launched your new website. You've tested every form, clicked on every link and checked out every page on mobile and desktop. Your work here is done. Right?

Not so fast. Anyone who has managed a website knows that launching a new site isn't the finish line. Soon after launch, new to-dos and concerns pop up: The CEO wants to add new information to the home page. The contact form isn't sending leads to the sales team. A WordPress plug-in is alerting you that it needs an update. And what do you do about those "broken link" alerts?

Chasing after a long list of unpredictable to-dos and updates is stressful, especially if website maintenance is not your primary job. Our team has spent nearly 20 years managing websites, and we've learned three ways to transform website maintenance from frantic to downright Zen.

Stick to a Regular Maintenance Schedule

The key to feeling in control of your website is staying proactive. Instead of being surprised by new updates and urgent tasks, flip the script. Establish a regular maintenance schedule to put your team in the driver's seat.

Here's a sample website maintenance schedule you could use as a general guide.

DAILY:

→ Review, approve and respond to blog comments and backlinks.

→ Back up your site. Many hosting companies will do this automatically, or you can set up your own system for backing up and protecting your site, like the plug-in **BackupBuddy**.

Establish a regular maintenance schedule to put your team in the drivers seat.

WEEKLY:

→ Double-check that you received all form submissions and that new contacts are making it into your customer-relationship management system. And as you review these new submissions, mark each as "read" in WordPress so you don't have to cover the same ground repeatedly. If your organization receives more than 10 form submissions a day, you might even want to check daily.

→ Check site information to make sure it is up-to-date. For example, delete information about events that are over and replace any outdated graphics.

→ Check that all phone numbers work when you "click to call" on mobile devices.

→ Check for available updates to your site's core platform, theme and plug-ins.

→ If you delete pages from your site, make sure you set up redirects for those old pages that might be indexed in Google.

→ Do Google searches to make sure your indexed pages are all linking correctly.
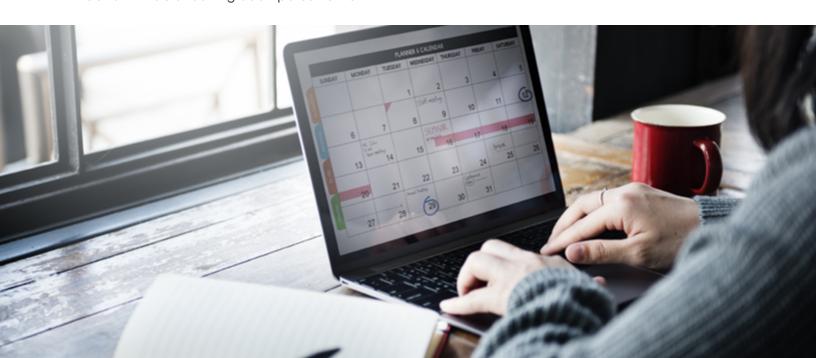
→ Check for broken links.

MONTHLY:

→ Review your website analytics. Look for good signs (traffic increases, popular pages, new referral sources) and red flags (increased bounce rates and load times, dramatic drops in traffic). Compare the behavior of users on desktop and mobile to make sure your site is working well on every device.

→ Run SEO reports (our team likes the Screaming Frog tool).

→ Check for on-site SEO snags like missing meta descriptions, images that need to be optimized and any unnecessary duplicate information.

→ If your site includes e-commerce, make sure the site lets users easily make purchases from any device with minimal headaches.

→ Remove any users and admins who no longer need access to your site's back end.

→ Make sure you're adding fresh, relevant content to the site regularly.

→ Make sure company information is updated. Keep an eye on the Team page to make sure all employees listed are still working at the company.

QUARTERLY:

→ Review your overall site design. Are there pages that need to be refreshed or reworked?

→ Review site content to see what could be improved, updated or removed.

→ Review the website's functionality. Could you use a new module or feature to better support the business?

→ Delete any extra files, like old graphics or outdated PDFs, that could be slowing down the site.

In addition to establishing a schedule, we advise creating a clear workflow for accomplishing each task. Who on the team is responsible for each item, and what's the process for getting it done? Who's checking each person's work?

Keep a Website Checklist

Once you've planned a predictable schedule for your website maintenance, you'll need a list of what, exactly, you're checking on.

This is our team's shortlist of must-check website issues.

✔ **Make sure important information is up-to-date.**

A prospect lands on your website, looking for basic information like your office phone number, an email address or even your hours. If the information they find on your site is outdated or incorrect, they'll get frustrated — fast.

Double-check your key information regularly to avoid losing customers' trust. Confirm your listed hours, phone numbers, email addresses, employee names, and important dates and deadlines. If you post news on your home page, make sure your updates are still relevant.

Keeping this core content accurate shows potential clients you mean business.

✔ **Keep an eye on WordPress feature and security updates.**

If you're using WordPress, your website is built on a flexible, open-source tool. That means the WordPress community is constantly working on important security fixes and feature upgrades. Don't let your website get left in the dust. Every time WordPress offers a new update, install it right away. Missing or ignoring releases can make your site more vulnerable to hacks and errors.

There are three kinds of WordPress updates: Core WordPress updates, theme updates and plug-in updates. The core WordPress updates are the most important, since they affect your site's most basic infrastructure. Install those updates first. Then check for updates to your WordPress theme, or the template that controls the way your site looks. Finally, update your plug-ins.

✔ **Update WordPress plug-ins**.

WordPress websites are so flexible because of the many different plug-ins, or tools, you can install to add features to your site. A few of our favorite plug-ins are Gravity Forms for error-free contact forms, Yoast SEO for on-page optimization and SearchWP for easy website search boxes.

Just as for the core WordPress platform and your theme, the teams who build plug-ins regularly share updates to add functionality and make their tools more secure. Before you update a plug-in, you can read about what the developer has included in the new release. Think of updating WordPress plug-ins like updating apps on your phone. Choosing to update means you're staying up-to-date with the latest advances.

If your site has many different plug-ins, make sure you update them one at a time, checking after each update for any errors or broken code on your site. If you update all the plug-ins at once, it's more difficult to pinpoint the source of any issues that come up.

✔ **Fix broken links.**

Broken links (outbound links on your site that lead to dead pages, or inbound links from other sites that lead to dead pages on your site) can harm your reputation with users and affect how Google ranks your site.

Set up a tool that scans for broken outbound and inbound links (we like **Broken Link Checker** and **Screaming Frog**), and proactively work to fix them.

✔ **Check that all forms are working.**

As a customer, there's nothing worse than filling out a contact form, then waiting for an answer and hearing nothing. Today's users expect near-immediate responses, and broken forms can slow you down. Test forms regularly to make sure messages are getting to the right place, and that the email addresses they're directing to are actively reviewed by someone on your team.

✔ **Optimize the site for fast load times.**

Load times are very important for SEO. Google does not want to send traffic to sluggish sites. Optimizing images is the fastest way to speed up your site. We use **Imagify.io** to optimize images.

Protect Your Site from Common Mistakes

Even experienced website managers sometimes fall victim to errors and mistakes. Here are the red flags we've learned to watch for, and pitfalls we help our clients avoid.

→ Managing your website in-house when you don't have the time or team.

Ongoing website maintenance might sound like rote work that you could easily add to a developer's or marketer's plate, but we've found that maintenance often gets pushed aside in such cases in favor of work that feels more pressing. Many marketers and developers don't have time to stay up-to-date on best practices and new fixes, which means they miss important issues. They also don't have the training to do custom development work when it's needed. Make your web maintenance a priority, and dedicate specific resources to it.

→ Hosting with a company that is not serious about security, stability and performance.

Your hosting company is one of the most important tools in your website toolbox. Do your research to find a partner that is responsive to questions and problems, up-to-date about the latest security concerns and fixes, and proactive about improving your site's performance.

→ Making major site changes without a development or staging server.

If you're making any big updates, protect your live site by making all changes on your development site first. There's no "undo" button on site updates, even if you have a recent backup. Try out changes in a sandbox (testing) environment to ensure you don't break anything on your live site. We use an enterprise WordPress hosting platform called **Pantheon.io** that has three environments built in: development, test and live.

→ Giving away too much power to casual website users in your organization.

Most organizations have a long list of employees with access to the site's back end. You might have blog writers, marketers, editors and designers accessing the site, in addition to your core website administrator. While it's fine to have a large, collaborative team, it's up to the admin to set controls and prevent human error. Take advantage of the user roles and restrictions in your website platform to assign appropriate permissions for each user. Blog writers probably don't need access to the website template, for example. Establishing a hierarchy of users will keep unintended changes in check. We use a plug-in called **Activity Log** to track who logs in and what changes they make.

Make your web maintenance a priority, and dedicate specific resources to it.

Overwhelmed Yet? Work with a Dedicated Support Team

If web maintenance checklists and schedules leave you feeling overwhelmed, you might want to consider an outside web support team. Many organizations hire an outside team to guard against technical headaches and lost time and resources. When you partner with a dedicated web team, your internal IT and marketing employees have time to focus on their work without worrying about keeping the site updated, maintained and secure.

3 Media Web takes web maintenance off our clients' plates. Our web support team offers ongoing day-to-day support, training, maintenance and changes. And we don't just react to problems that come up — we proactively monitor and analyze our clients' sites to sniff out updates and fixes before they become fire drills. That includes checking for and applying all new security-, bug- and feature-related updates.

Take your website management from chaotic to calm. **Contact 3 Media Web** to learn more about our web maintenance plans.

Ready to Take the Next Step?

Marlborough, MA Headquarters

11 Apex Drive, Suite 300A
Marlborough, MA 01752
📞 +1 (508) 845-8900
✉ marlboro@3mediaweb.com

Grand Rapids, MI Office

99 Monroe Building, Suite 200
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
📞 +1 (616) 258-2033
✉ grandrapids@3mediaweb.com