



What is Growth-Driven Design & could it improve your website?

Compared to traditional website builds, Growth-Driven Design gets faster results, requires less risk for businesses & is more user focused, meaning every element of your new website is informed by what your customers actually want.

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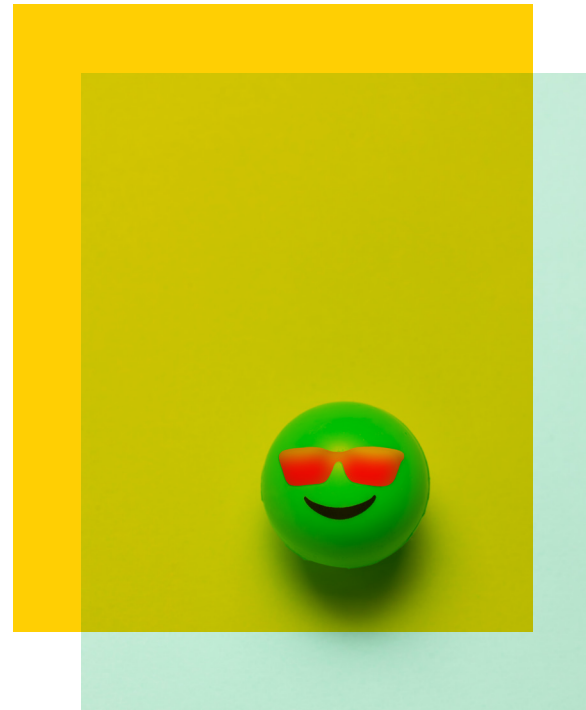
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This page aims to answer all your questions, putting the knowledge in your hands so you can make the right decision for you, your customers and your business, next time you choose to redesign your website.



“...a prospect has already moved through 70% of the sales process before even reaching out to your sales team. Where are they finding the information before talking to someone? – Your website.”

Hubspot

Chapter 1

What is GDD?

Growth-Driven Design is an alternative to traditional website design. Instead of building a full website which takes six months or more, on average, to build with very little direction to improve, a GDD website makes smaller, incremental changes to the site over a period of time, meaning results can usually be seen within 60-90 days.

This shift in how a business views their website can take some getting used to; instead of a single deliverable that will largely stay the same until the next redesign, a GDD website makes small changes to the website's interface and uses continuous improvement strategies.

There are three pillars to growth-driven design that set it apart from more traditional methods:



Lower Risk

It's a systematic approach to web design that shortens the time it takes to launch a new site, and focuses on the impact to users, continuously learning from changes.



Learn & Improve

Constant research, testing & analysing of user data informs ongoing improvements. This leads to a site that visitors want to use and is of peak performance for their needs.




Inform Marketing & Sales Teams

The strategies used by the sales and marketing teams can be hugely affected by the insights gained through growth-driven design: and vice versa—this is a two-way street.

Instead of a nasty (expensive) surprise that doesn't deliver what you wanted – and is so inflexible you won't be able to make changes to it until your next redesign in two years – the GDD model focuses on creating a sturdy foundation in three steps on which to continuously improve your website features. So if the idea of spending countless months (and escalating budgets) on website redesign makes you feel like running for the hills, then growth-driven design might just be for you.

Why is traditional web design broken?

Your website is the most important member of your sales team: it works 24/7 and is the “face” users see before they even reach out and speak to a human at your business. In their guide to Growth-Driven Design, HubSpot states:



“...a prospect has already moved through 70% of the sales process before even reaching out to your sales team. Where are they finding the information before talking to someone? – Your website.”

A lot of businesses take this to mean that: high importance = huge stressful overhaul each time you want to change your website.

This isn't the way it has to be. But because it's what people have come to expect, it feels like to do a “proper” job, there has to be a lengthy, painful ordeal first.

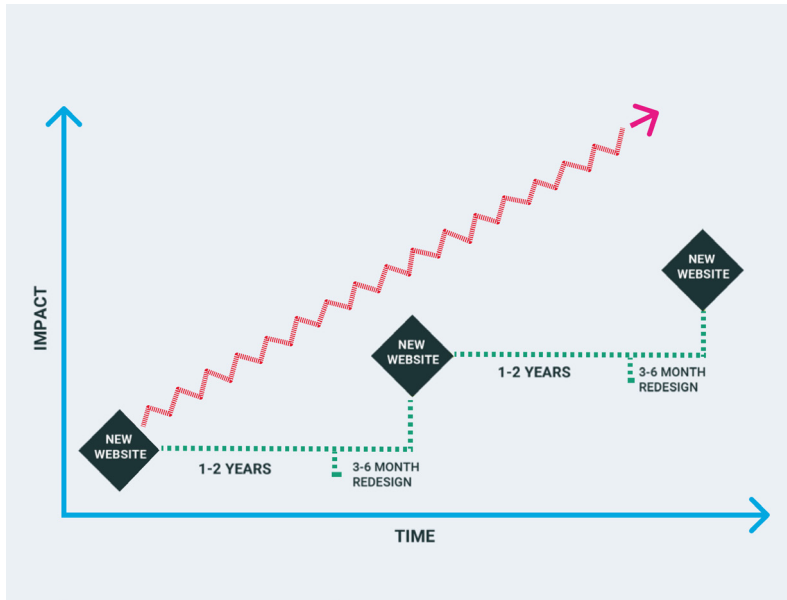
For some businesses, a complete redesign could be the way to go, especially if you have a clear vision for what you want to achieve and the budget to get it done fast. But for many, it's a daunting prospect. The most common problems that can arise from traditional website redesigns are:

- Large upfront cost
- Spiralling budgets once started
- Missed deadlines
- Inability to be flexible/make changes as you go
- Longer waits for results to be seen.

Why is traditional web design broken?

- Businesses don't want to wait months before they can see any positive results.
- If the changes made to the website aren't profitable, businesses want to be able to make tweaks straight away.
- Changing everything at a time means you can't keep track of the changes that are actually making an impact – remember your science experiments at school? Only change one variable at a time before analysing the results.

- Most businesses can't afford to pay large sums upfront – the average traditional website redesign costs between £11,000–£60,000. Paying a chunk of this before work is completed is understandably daunting.

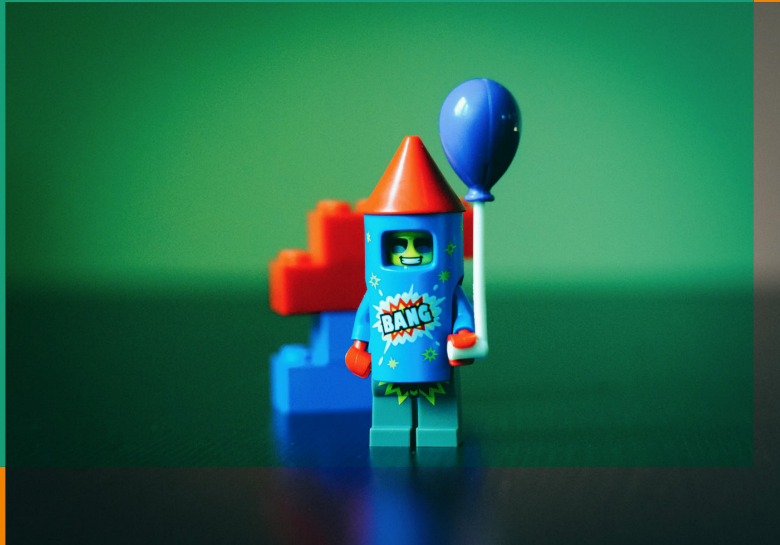


What are the benefits of Growth-Driven Design?

In Growth-Driven Design, the focus is on data- and audience-driven analysis. You are redesigning your website with the intention of making ongoing changes based on visitors' needs and conversions. Here are some of the benefits:

- GDD lets you minimise risk – both financially and emotionally.
- Beginning with a launchpad website, rather than a traditional “set and forget” model, means you can constantly tweak and adapt your site as the needs of your users shape your findings.
- The initial strategy stage and launchpad site development takes just 30–45 days, so it's easier to stay on budget, on deadline and crucially, start seeing positive effects.
- GDD follows a cyclical pattern, typically with regular monthly checks. If you've set yourself a target of spreading the redesign over a year, the following 11 months suddenly feel far more manageable and less daunting.
- By using weekly/bi-weekly sprints where you're constantly testing and reviewing your site's optimisation, it feels like a productive learning journey, rather than an unrealistic, out-of-control quest for perfection before anything gets launched.

Chapter 2: The Launch Phase



The launch phase does what it says on the tin: it launches your website. And fast. There's no room in the launch phase for endless tweaking and striving for perfection, only to discover your pristine site isn't generating any leads. This crucial phase is typically completed in between 60-90 days and is closely aligned with the changes your team wants to make to your website, what the data shows your users want you to change, and best-practice research.

During this phase, your web-design team will be responsible for developing a website strategy for your launchpad, based on all these factors. The strategy will be built through the creation of a wishlist of features for the site which will be created by representatives from your whole team – there's more information on the wishlist in Chapter 3.

Step 1: SMART goals

What are your business goals? Could everyone in your organisation tell you what they are? Sometimes it's too easy to create goals, file them away in a pretty document, and forget about them. In reality, your goals need to underpin every decision you make for your business: without goals, there's no way to tell if you're succeeding.

The goals of your Growth-Driven Design strategy will be unique to your business. We recommend following the SMART goals method, but you can also ask yourself the following questions when digging deep into what it is you really want from this redesign:

- What performance goals you are aiming to achieve through your website?
- What does your historical data tell you about how these goals are currently being achieved?
- Where would you like to improve?

How will your action now impact your goals later?

ClearPoint Strategy recommends thinking carefully about your company's values during this part of the process:

“...a prospect has already moved through 70% of the sales process before even reaching out to your sales team. Where are they finding the information before talking to someone? – Your website.”

This is an excellent tip to help prevent the business from getting greedy or targeting goals that haven't ever been in the make-up of your company: rooting everything in your mission statement will help you stay grounded through this time of evolution.

Step 2: Buyer persona review or creation

Hopefully, you've been putting your buyer personas – semi-fictional representations of your customers – at the core of your marketing, sales and service activity for a long time – but if you haven't, don't worry. We've written plenty of advice on how to build them and even offer a quick 5-Minute Persona Builder for free to help you get started.

Your website needs to feed your business objectives, but it needs to lead with the priorities of your customers, too. This is an essential step. Growth-driven design only works if you're completely focused on your customers and their needs – indeed, this is the inbound way, full stop. You can't expect to run effective campaigns, or launch a high-performing website if you aren't willing to learn who your customers are, what their pain points are, and what they want.

Top Tip

You need to dedicate time to developing your buyer personas in order for Growth-Driven Design to work for you.



Step 3: Audit

Now that you're equipped with your up-to-date buyer personas, it's time to pay some closer attention to your data. You'll have a wealth of this already available to you from your existing site – so use it:

Quantitative Research – Website & analytics audit

It's time to start digging. Quantitative research is a structured way of collecting and analysing data that you've obtained from different sources. We suggest performing a quantitative audit by reviewing:

- How the existing website is performing
- What is, and is not, performing well
- Where users are dropping off/bouncing
- Where there is opportunity for improvement in your future site.

It's through this research that you will identify the specific areas where you can improve your site and support these elements with data. This is particularly important for the later wishlist stage as all decisions made at this meeting will need to be

Qualitative Research – Talking to real people

Once you've reviewed what the data is telling you to change, it's time to check how this compares with what your customers tell you face to face. Technically, the evidence from your website audit should align with what buyers tell you when you pick up the phone to ask them, but sometimes this isn't the case. This is your opportunity to:

- Tease out more details that an analytics dashboard can't tell you.
- Cross reference what customers are telling you they want to be improved, with how users are behaving on your website.
- Truly connect with the real people behind the screen: your customers. Find out who they are, their goals, pain points and how you can help.



Update your buyer personas with specific, targeted information shared by your customers.

Some things can only be learnt, human to human. These phone calls or meetings in person are golden opportunities to learn the whats, whys, hows, wheres and whens behind user decisions, focusing on them alone.

Step 4: Fundamental assumptions

By now, you should be feeling pretty secure in your user knowledge, based on the research available to you. You need to use this information to help develop your fundamental assumptions. These are a closer look at your user and working out why they behave the way they do, what they need and how your products can help.

Here are a few examples of questions you can ask yourself to see what your fundamental assumptions are for your customers:

- What is the job the customer is trying to get done?
- What activity or event pushed them into searching for your solution?
- What different devices and locations will be used to access your site?
- How does your company solve the pain points or unmet needs of customers?
- What information are your users searching for on your site?

What is the unique value proposition for each product, service and offering that you can offer customers which other companies don't?

You will use these assumptions to explain user behaviour, which will help with the global and page strategy step that comes next.

Step 5: Global and page strategy

The final step in strategy development will see you put together a two-part strategy:

- Part one focuses on a site-wide “global” strategy for your entire site.
- Part two focuses on specific page-by-page strategy of your site.

Top Tip

Make sure you use all of the steps above for each of these strategies, creating two comprehensive overviews of the macro and micro-scale elements of your site.



Chapter 3

Wishlist Development

Before you can create your launchpad website, you need to create a wishlist. This consists of all the requirements that your team can possibly think of to improve the existing website, all collected in one place. HubSpot simply defines it as:

“A continually evolving list of the creative, game-changing ideas to solve user challenges, bring them value and ultimately hit business goals.”

You need a good cross-section of your business represented at your first wishlist brainstorming session. From sales and service operators, to the marketing and content team, web designers and developers – make sure you have an even spread of the business covered.

You want the ideas brought to this session to stand for every aspect of the business – there are some things only front-line sales people will know, just as there are things only your web team will be able to share. The key is to come into your brainstorming session with a “clean slate” and to not get hung up on

the existing website. Think about what items should be on the list to achieve your goals in an ideal world if money, time and development skill were not an issue.

Top Tip

Give your team plenty of notice about this meeting, and a secure idea of what you’re expecting – this is to enable them to prep, find supporting evidence and create a comprehensive list over time, rather than rushing.



The kinds of ideas your team needs to produce include:

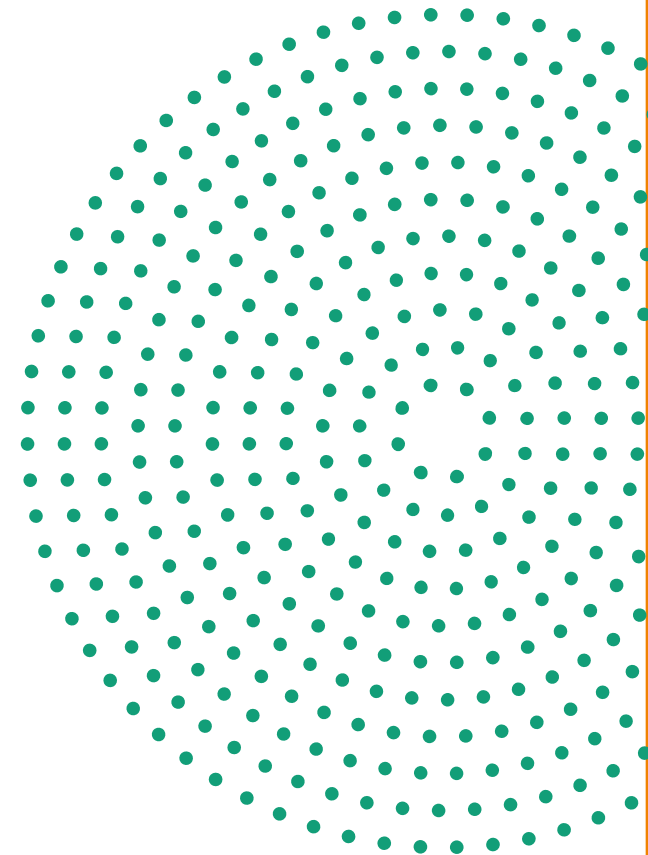
- Key impactful website sections and pages
- Marketing assets, tools and resources
- Specific features, modules and functionality
- Design elements
- Changes in experience based on devices, country and beyond.

It's recommended to run this ideas session for between 3-6 hours to ensure everyone has their say, has the opportunity to question one another, and so a comprehensive list can be compiled. You might have in excess of 200 ideas for the website across your team, from additional products pages, to new functionalities, such as chatbots. But, in order for your launchpad to work effectively, not all of these fantastic new ideas can be implemented all in one go: you need to prioritise.

The next step is to initiate the 80/20 method. Decide which 20% of these ideas are going to create 80% of the impact: how can you be time and effort savvy, to implement changes that can get up and running quickly?

Top Tip

The main objective of the wishlist session is to make sure everybody feels listened to, is given their chance to share, and – even if their ideas don't make it into the initial launchpad – they know their suggestions will be filtered into the new website somewhere down the line. Use your team members who are “on the ground” speaking to your customers every day – their experience is golden and will enable you to head in the right direction when constructing your new launchpad site.



Chapter 4

The Launchpad Website

Once you've decided on your killer content idea, planned what you'll write about and sub divided it into sub topics, it's time to decide which format your pillar page will take. There are generally two schools of thought when it comes to formatting pillar pages: the x10 and the Resource. Both have their charms and both are valuable options to consider – you need to choose which one you feel most

The x10 Content Pillar Page

What is it?

This style of pillar page is similar to an ungated ebook and the more widely used of the two. The content is owned almost entirely by the creator and is an opportunity to deep dive into a core topic e.g. The Beginner's Guide to Wedding Dress Shopping. The reason it's called 'x10' is that you need to be asking yourself 'How can I create something 10 times better than what anyone else is currently doing and try to stand out?'

When to use it

If you have content that is a combination of:

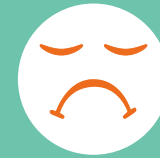
- High quality – you've dotted your Is, crossed your Ts and created original content
- Trustworthy – do all the hard work for them: research, re-research, research
- Useful – give them tips they can modify and use straight away
- Interesting – teach them something they don't already know
- Remarkable – something that will stay with the audience after reading it
- Problem solving – offer accurate information and maybe even some resources
- Inspirational – encourage the reader to take some kind of action
- Emotional – evoking a response such as anger, surprise or humour
- Unique – make your pillar page full of unexpected twists, like a good novel.

The x10 Content Pillar Page



Advantages

Your own content is front and centre stage. Not only does this mean you are established as an authority on your topic, but it means you aren't in danger of plagiarising anyone else's work and getting into trouble with Google for it. Google loves original, organised content, so if you're creating a x10 pillar page, there should be plenty for search engines to adore about your website



Disadvantages

It's a lot of work! Creating 3000+ words of original, well-researched, well-crafted content requires a lot of hard work and the expertise of an experienced writer. If you've already got content you can repurpose – such as an ebook – then great, but if you're starting from scratch, it's a lot of copy to produce in one go.

The Resource Pillar Page

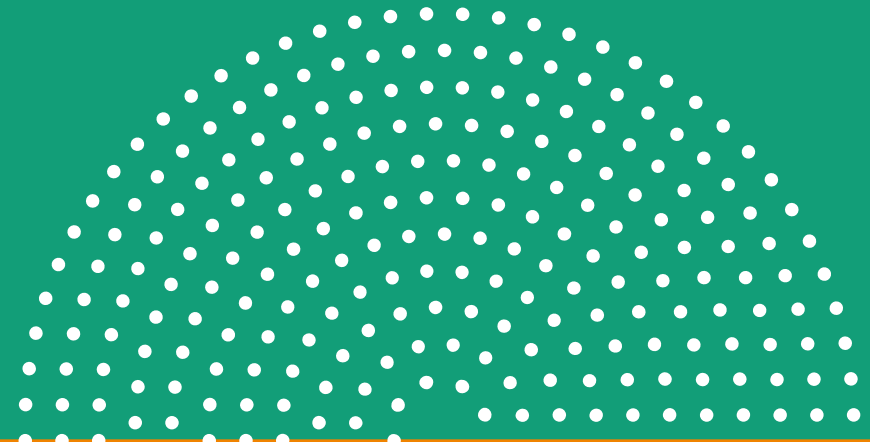
What is it?

The resource pillar page is the less common of the two types. This is because it hyperlinks to external content, as well as internal which doesn't guarantee the user will return to your original page. This is a hotchpotch of fascinating information from across the web, all in one place, making it a 'bookmarkable' reference page that readers will keep coming back to, rather than reading once and being done with it. For example, 'House-Searching Tips for First-Time Buyers.'

When to use it

If you have content that is a combination of: comfortable with, and which suits your content, writing style and customers the best.

- The points from the x10 section still apply – the quality of writing still has to be
- great – but it's not necessary to have the same volume of content
- Organised links to internal and external materials on a core topic
- Lots of great knowledge about useful websites outside of your own
- Sections that are easy to navigate and click on.



The Resource Pillar Page



Advantages

This type of pillar page improves SEO, even though many of the links may send people off your site, which is not optimal for your business. You can generate inbound links from the sources you include on the pages that are yours, but not on the ones that belong to other people.



Disadvantages

Your own voice will not come through as strongly as in a x10 pillar page as there simply isn't as much content from you on the page. The majority of your content will be hyperlinked elsewhere like a huge catalogue of interesting and useful bookmarks for your reader. Rather than celebrating your own knowledge, it acts as a research project you've done on behalf of your audience.

Chapter 5

When to create a pillar page

 “It’s the job that’s never started as takes longest to finish.”

J. R. R. Tolkien wasn’t kidding – actually getting started can be the hardest part when commencing a new, unfamiliar project. We’ve broken the steps down into seven easy chunks (and if you’ve stayed with us this far, taking part in the activities in the sections above, you’ve already completed some of them!)

- 1 Choose a core topic
- 2 Identify sub-topic clusters
- 3 Create and optimise the content pillar page
- 4 Repurpose the pillar page into a downloadable offer
- 5 Create blog posts for the sub-topic cluster content
- 6 Link relevant content to the pillar page
- 7 Create a conversion path to access the pillar page from your website

More about Step 3

If you've got a design team, this is the point where they can work their magic: you will simply hand over your written, image, podcast and video content to them, and they'll upload it to your website to make it look gorgeous. If, however, your job doesn't stop at content and it's actually you who will be building the page, there's a few tips to follow along the way:

- Using your content management system, such as HubSpot, simply add a new landing page to your existing website, ensuring it's a full-width website page.
- Name your page after your pillar page content and begin to edit –this is the fun part!
- Create (or paste in) your copy and other content such as images and videos, according to your branding guidelines – this needs to look like a totally integrated and purpose-built page from your company, not a rip-off of somebody else's.

In Chapter 6, you'll find out more about the best practices for formatting and layout of your pillar page – from navigation options to how to use headers.

...and Step 4 (we're racing through!)

The old saying goes that you can't please everyone... but maybe you can. The website pillar page format won't suit everyone – give them the option of a PDF to download & keep everyone happy.

Top Tip

To optimise the pillar page, you need a conversion opportunity near the top. This is like any other landing page on your site – you have to give the reader the opportunity to gain something from you in exchange for a few details. Instead of removing the navigation bar, as if best practice on standard landing pages, you can leave this on in a pillar page, and simply insert a form which asks for 2-3 fields, such as name and email address. Alternatively, you could add a chatbot or pop-up form to the page to offer this same download opportunity.



The offer should be a PDF page or ebook version of the pillar page – despite the fact the user has to give you their details, PDFs are still surprisingly popular and many visitors to your site will prefer to have a “physical” downloaded copy of your pillar page, rather than browsing the page itself. Giving the option for download right at the top means you're keeping everyone happy, whether they want to download or simply bookmark your page to keep coming back to later online.

Step 5 – The pillar page is only the beginning!

This is a fluid, ever-changing behemoth – the thing about the pillar page is that it's never 'done'.

If you're someone who loves a to-do list you can meticulously tick off, your sensibilities may be challenged by the pillar page! It will be ever growing, ever changing and ever creating more work..

The first job in this ever expanding list, is to create the blog posts that will hold the sub topic cluster content.

Remember:

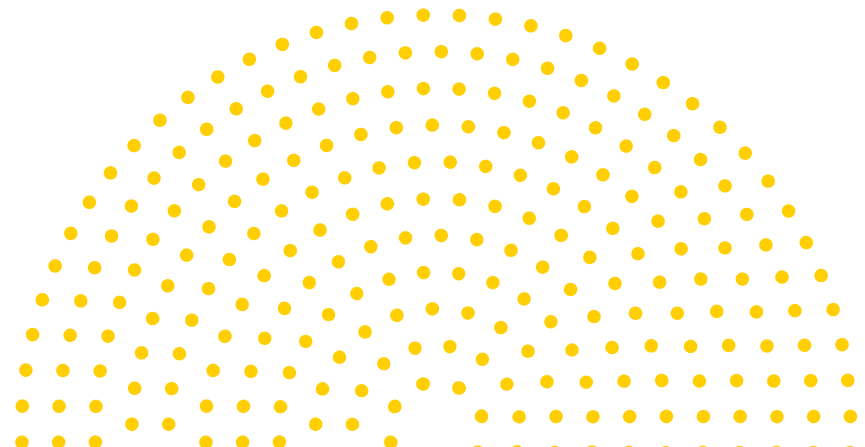
Without external links to related content, which then hyperlink back to the pillar page, you just have a really long webpage... which no-one will find, and no-one will want to read, if they do.

Step 6 – Link, link, link!

Using your blog, steadily build up content relating to each chapter in your pillar page. This rich, original, helpful content is essential for Google to identify you as an authority on your topic and help build you as the one-stop shop for your core topic. This can't be done overnight – who has enough time to write, upload and hyperlink 25+ blog posts at the same time as creating a 3000+ word pillar page?

Instead, organise your internally created links in the following ways:

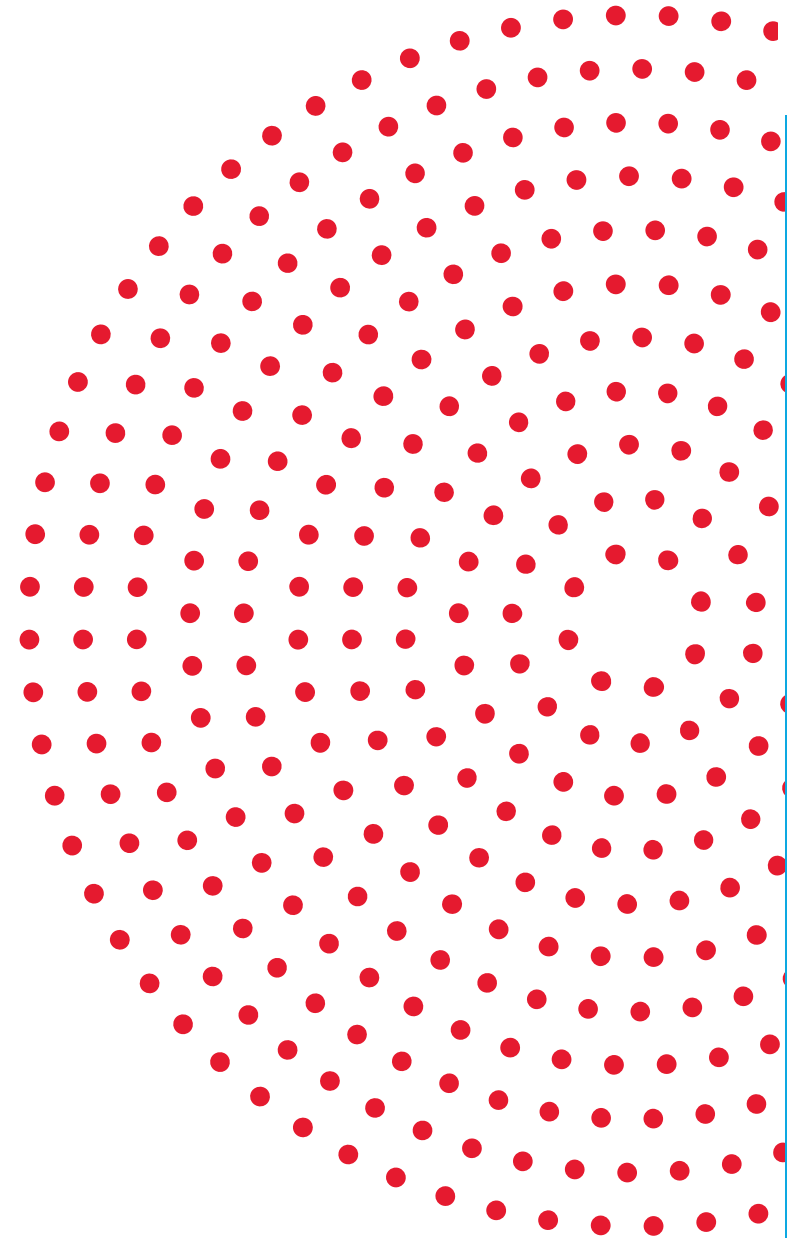
- Identify any blog posts you already have published which related to various sections of your pillar page.
- Go back into your CMS and add a new hyperlink to the old post, taking readers to your pillar page through a key word or phrase.
- Link this same key word to the blog post, when it appears in your pillar page – and there you have a two-way link, creating neat and tidy clusters for Google to organise your content by.
- There are bound to be lots of gaps in your existing content: note these down.
- Create a plan so that, over the coming months, you can build new content into your blog schedule which links to the pillar page, gradually filling in the sub-topic gaps you've identified.
- Now link to external valuable content too – it isn't all about you!
- It's important to hyperlink to useful, helpful, accurate content from other sites, too (but remember to carefully vet the sites you promote: they are a reflection of you and your business,



Step7 – We made it!

So where does your pillar page appear on your website and how do people find it? You'll need to create a conversion path to access the pillar page from your website. This can be done by:

- Updating the navigation menu to have a 'Resources' tab
- On the sub menu, as well as 'blog' and any other resources you have – checklists, ebooks, quizzes – create a 'pillar pages' tab
- Plus, updating the CTAs of existing blog posts and Lead Flows will help create a pathway to your pillar page.



Chapter 6

Top tips for pillar page layout

And finally (drum roll please)...

There are a few best practices you'll need to check you're using on your pillar page. Without these, your page might not function as effectively as it could, meaning all that hard work is being wasted. You might have already implemented some of these tips – some have been mentioned in previous chapters – while others may have passed you by.

Activity 3:

Use the following points as a checklist, ticking off each one when you've achieved it on your pillar page.

Ensure your core topic is actually referenced in your page title

It sounds so obvious, but this is the best way for Google to find you and associate you with other similar content you've created. Remember, if your pillar page performs well, it boosts everything else linked to it, so make it really easy to find you.

Likewise, make sure your core topic is referenced in the URL for the page


Lots of CMSs do this automatically for you when you create a new page, but it's still worth checking that your key core topic words appear in your URL – again this helps improve your site's search visibility.

Check there's a top navigation to the rest

If this is the first page a new visitor lands on – because they've clicked through from one of your related posts, social media or advertising – you need to give them the opportunity to explore the rest of your site, so don't hide away.

Don't stop at the page title, include the core topic in your H1 tag

It bears repeating: you need to ram it home that this pillar page is about your core topic! Yes, it feels overly repetitive and contrived, but by repeating those key terms you'll be easier to find and easier not to confuse with something else.




Early on, define your core topic – assume nothing

Your reader has come to your pillar page for one of two reasons: they know a bit about the topic but need more, or they know absolutely nothing. The former will want confirmation of what they know for a confidence boost, the latter will benefit from layman's




Include conversion-focused landing page elements at the top (a form)

As explored in Chapter 5, the pillar page format isn't for everyone and the ways people plan to use your information may vary greatly: use this as an opportunity to gain some contacts and offer a PDF of the page in exchange for some basic details.




Create an anchor-linked table of contents which skips to chapters when clicked on

This is the essential feature of a pillar page – there is so much content in one place here that you need to make it as easy as possible to navigate the different sections/ include an anchor to make skipping around really easy.




Reference the core topic in the alt text of images throughout

Not only can your pillar page be found through Google text searches and linked external content, but if you include your core topic words in the alt text of the images you use, Google Images will also redirect to your pillar page, creating another way for you to be found.



Include clear H2 tags for section headers

This is a mighty, mighty body of content. Your reader will likely not be interested in the whole thing – you need to give them clear headers to signpost them to the parts they're interested in and ensure the correct H2 headers map to the correct anchor links in the table of contents. Remember: Google likes organisation!



Reference related core-topic terms throughout the page's content and define them

Not only do you need to be using your core topic wording at every turn, but related sub topics in the cluster – those you will link to outside of the pillar – need plenty of mentions. This isn't only so that you've got opportunities to hyperlink, but so you are constantly teaching the reader new terminology. terms explanation.

■ Link to relevant internal resources (blog posts, ebooks, case studies and others)

We've laboured this point enough in this pillar page, but just in case you missed it – link, link, link! The most valuable content to link to your pillar page (and vice versa) is your own. Whether it's older content or newly created for this purpose, the best way to promote your expert view is to hyperlink.

■ Link to relevant external resources (viable, trustworthy websites that aren't yours)

Your own content is the best, but showing you're confident and credible enough to shout about other great marketers is a wise move – alternative, if you're creating a Resource Pillar Page, you'll be predominantly relying on superb external links.

■ At the end, include a 'Back to top' button to save your reader from scrolling

This is another tactic to encourage further exploration of your website – don't just leave them hanging at the bottom of your page; guide the reader back to the top so they can a) explore another chapter they previously skipped or b) use your site navigation to discover more about you and your products/services.

And there you have it...

Well, not really because – as your new expert knowledge has taught you – a pillar page is never really done! But for now, we wish you luck with your own go forth and organise!

[Request content consultation](#)

Simply fill in the short form, then someone from our team of experts will contact you shortly.

Thank you for downloading this ESM Inbound guide, and good luck on your journey to business growth with pillar pages!

