

The 7 Most Important Aspects of Building a Best-in-Class Website

What does it take to launch a successful website redesign? In this guide, we'll share the 7 most important aspects to consider for a best-in-class website. Learn from Rise experts as well as the marketing leaders behind award-winning success stories at Nicklaus Children's Hospital and American Lung Association. If you'd rather watch the team talk through the steps, you can access an on-demand recording at riseinteractive.com/best-in-class-website.

1 A Data-Driven Vision

Do you have a data-driven understanding of your audience's behavior on your website?

It's essential that the pre-work of a website redesign project includes collecting user experience data. Without a quantitative understanding of your current website's performance, you can't have a vision of what the future site should look like to meet business goals.

We recommend a comprehensive approach to data collection, including:

- **Sending out customer surveys:** For one Rise client, our survey on the original site found that 78% of polled users still had not found what they were looking for after 5 pageviews. When users were asked in the survey what they were looking for on the page, the most common response was actually the organization's central KPIs. This survey made it clear that the new website needed to make their conversion points more accessible.
- **Analyzing heat and click maps/session replay:** To understand user behavior on the site, use heat and click maps to see which website features users engage with most, and where there is friction in the path to conversion.
- **Conducting persona analysis:** Understanding your audience, including their needs and pain points, is an essential step to designing your website, which should serve as a solution to their problem.

2 Company-Wide Collaboration

Effective collaboration and strong working relationships across the entire organization will help in securing the necessary buy-in from two important groups:

- **Senior Leadership:** If your leaders don't understand your pain points and the barriers to conversion on the existing site, they could be resistant to investing the company's time and resources.
- **Department Stakeholders:** Specific teams, such as your IT team, need an upfront contract of their collaboration responsibilities to be kept accountable (and excited!) on a redesign.

After gaining buy-in from these two groups, it is important to maintain a transparent relationship with them during the whole project. We recommend having weekly status calls to keep coworkers involved and informed throughout the redesign process.



3 Gameplan to Meet Your Audience's Needs

In a virtual event Rise hosted, we asked attendees what their biggest challenge is in launching a website redesign—the most common response was about understanding the target audience. We consider this an essential step in any redesign process; knowing who your website needs to reach and assist is important for envisioning what it should look like and how it should operate.

Success Story | Breathing New Life into American Lung Association's Website with Audience Insights

American Lung Association came to Rise looking for a data-driven rebrand of their website that would need a tailored experience for each of their constituent audiences. Rise utilized several methods for gathering information about these audiences and their needs.



Identify the Audience Segments and their Motivations

American Lung Association serves multiple groups ranging from the general public to healthcare audiences and beyond. Each of these groups have different motivations and needs when visiting American Lung Association's website including volunteering, donating, sharing their own story, finding events, or becoming an educator. Documenting these nuances provided the necessary foundation for creating a memorable and fulfilling experience for all visitors.

Gather Data and Survey Employees for Intuitive Navigation

To understand the journey that visitors took when browsing online digital content, they referred to the company's legacy website and Google Analytics data to uncover the page pathing per each audience segment's needs. Rise's development team also surveyed American Lung Association employees who offered their insight on the organization's audience.

Design with the Client's Mission in Mind

Ultimately, Rise was able to design a new website that brought warmth and emphasized the humanity of the brand, while also making popular areas of the website such as Lung Health & Diseases, Research & Reports, and Policy & Advocacy easier for viewers to access. One notable change was the redesign of American Lung Association's donation page. Rise developed a more colorful interface with lifestyle imagery to provide a feeling of compassion, and ultimately create a stronger bond between the donor and the association.

Donations Page Before

A screenshot of the old donation page. It has a white background with red and black text. The heading is "Make a Donation to the American Lung Association". Below it is a paragraph of text about the impact of donations. There are two paragraphs of text, one with a link to an "Honor Donation Form". A form box contains radio buttons for donation amounts: \$500.00, \$250.00, \$100.00, and \$50.00. Below that is a text input field for "Enter Amount (\$5 minimum)". There is a checkbox for "Make this a monthly gift?". Below the form box is a section for "Enter Contact Information:" with fields for Title, First Name, Last Name, Suffix, and Email Address. Another section for "Enter Mailing Information:" includes fields for Street 1, Street 2, City, State, and Zip Code.

Donations Page After

A screenshot of the new donation page. It features a dark blue header with a photo of a smiling couple. The heading is "Make a Donation to the American Lung Association". Below the header is a section for "Your One-Time Gift" with a "MAKE THIS A MONTHLY GIFT" button and a "Your Best Gift" button. There are radio buttons for donation amounts: \$500.00, \$250.00, \$100.00, and \$50.00. To the right is a "More Ways to Donate" section with a link to "Donate in Honor or in Memory of a Loved One". Below is a "Personal Information" section with fields for Title, First Name, Last Name, and Email Address. There is a checkbox for "I would like to receive emails on the latest news on lung health and healthy air.". At the bottom is a "Mailing Address" section with a field for "Address Line 1".

4 Mission-Driven Branding

Did you know that a user's perception of your website has a direct correlation to their trust in your brand?

In fact, 48% of people cited a website's design as the top factor in deciding the credibility of a business. A website is frequently a user's first impression of your brand, especially in 2020 as in-person brand interactions have been severely limited. Moreover, as part of Google's May 2020 updates, UX is now a more heavily-favored component of the core algorithm; factors such as mobile friendliness, page load speed, and security will play a bigger role in your site's SEO performance.

Success Story | Transforming the Nicklaus Children's Hospital Brand to Stand Out in a Sea of Sameness

Nicklaus Children's Hospital needed an agency partner that would understand the world guiding their redesign requirements: a target audience that needs a responsive and optimized mobile design, a visual identity that supported their mission and made them distinct among the competition, and a commitment to work as an extension of their own team, experienced and ready to understand every nuance of their business.



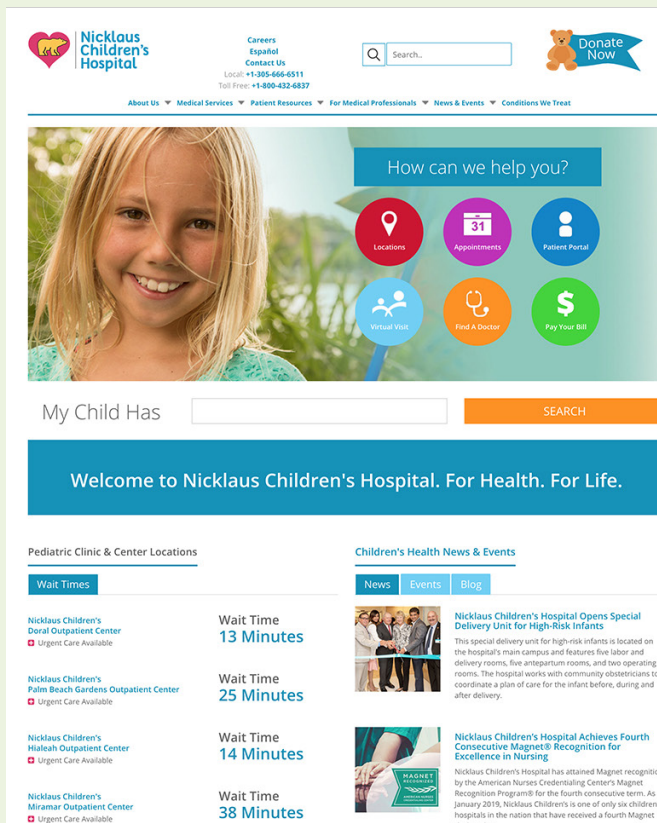
Nicklaus Children's Hospital

Nicklaus Children's Hospital gave Rise the freedom and flexibility to draft multiple branding options and brought these concepts to a variety of user tests, including virtual focus groups, consultations with their Family Advisory Council, as well as in surveys to parents of young children on staff (a central demographic of their target audience). By doing this research, they could make sure the rebranding was reflective of their customer's voice.

The new design illuminated the Miami culture and community of the hospital with pastel colors and lifestyle imagery of the hospital's patients. Furthermore, infographics were added to promote scrolling beyond the fold and highlighted important data about Nicklaus Children's Hospital reputation.

Not only were Rise and Nicklaus Children's Hospital able to create an attractive website that differentiated the brand, they were able to make thoughtful processes and decisions that established Nicklaus Children's Hospital as a central contributor to the Miami community.

Homepage Before



Homepage After



5 Powerful Measurement Infrastructure

Is your tech stack ready to support post-launch inquiries about your investment's performance? Some key questions to ask yourself when looking to see if your measurement infrastructure is properly configured are:

- Who are my users and how are they interacting with my site?
- Are user interactions happening as intended per business goals? And are these interactions being properly tracked?
- Where are the friction points for my users? How can you solve them?

Common pitfalls (and solutions) to look out for include:

- **High bounce rates on content-heavy pages:** Oftentimes, users land on your page, read the content, and then leave. If proper measurement infrastructure is not implemented, that can sometimes count as a bounce, which is not the same as a user landing on your page and then immediately leaving. In this scenario, we recommend implementing scroll tracking. A standard interaction threshold is 75%, meaning that if a user views 75% or more the page it is counted as an interaction rather than a bounce rate. This threshold will provide a clear and accurate view into how users are engaging with your content.
- **iFrame tracking:** When third party technology is integrated within a website, there is frequently a lack of communication with the measurement system resulting in a loss of valuable data. We recommend implementing a GTM container to help tracking and closing that loop.
- **Cross domain tracking:** If you have multiple domains, tracking will become an issue as a user starts to navigate between multiple pages. For example, your career site may be on a separate domain, but should be linked within your ecosystem of websites. In this case, a user going between the main domain and the career domain will be counted as two separate users and sessions. Therefore, it is crucial to set up your cross domain tracking correctly, so you can accurately record that referral traffic.

6 SEO: Your Key to Long-Term Success

Launching a new website can have serious implications on your website's SEO performance. You may have heard horror stories about how brands spend a lot of time on the branding, customer experience, and content of their redesigned website but plummet in traffic after the launch. Even worse, a loss in organic traffic is usually directly intertwined with a loss in page authority, and can be nearly impossible to recover if the right steps aren't taken after that initial launch phase.

As a performance marketing agency, Rise is uniquely positioned to set clients up for long-term growth by approaching web redesign projects with developers and SEO experts working in lock-step. Mastering this collaboration has allowed us to optimally restructure our client's website and boost their traffic immediately after launch. Three key considerations, among many, are included in our SEO integration:

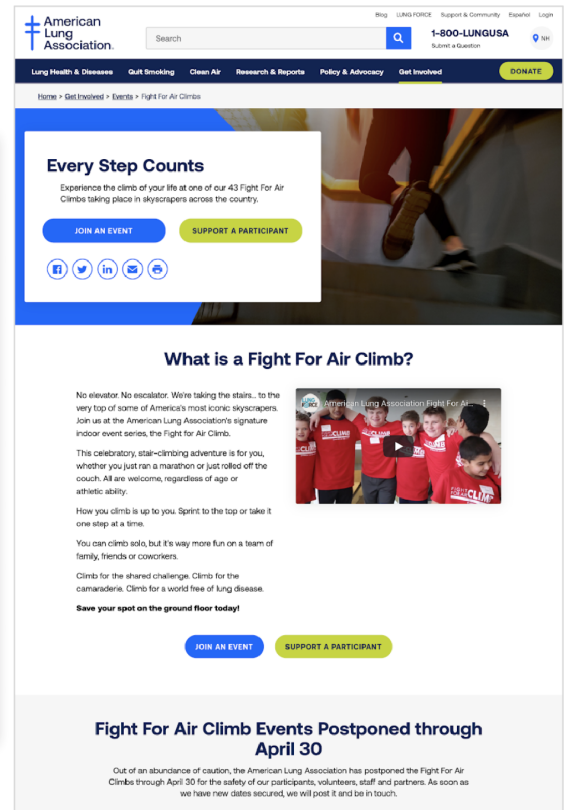
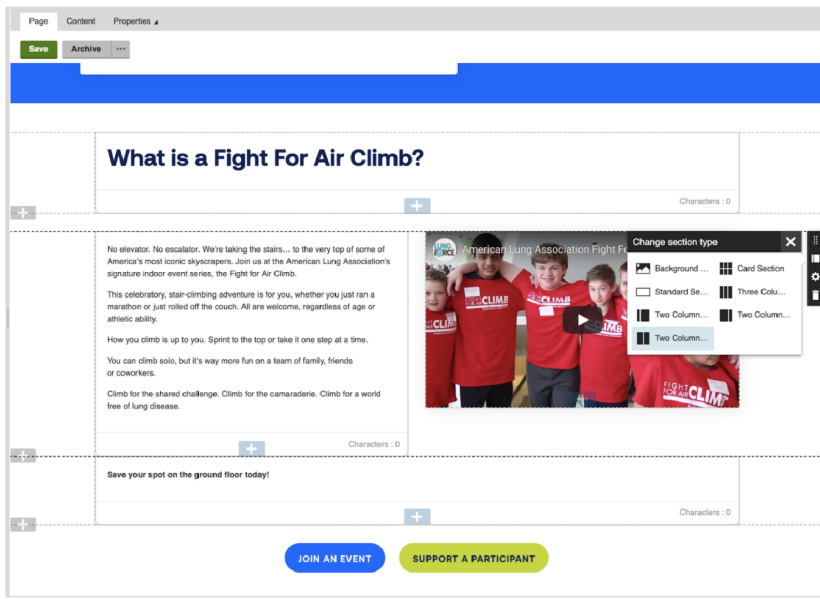
- **Redirect strategy:** The first thing you want to look at is that you have set up a strong redirect strategy. Usually, the Rise team will have a 1-to-1 URL mapping process which ensures that we are retaining organic traffic from past pages. Furthermore, for the purpose of user experience, we want to make sure that when consolidating topics we are still directing certain key pages to the appropriate corresponding page. In more complex website redesigns, Rise will use a scalable mapping strategy that will take categories of pages and map them to different pages.
- **Collaborative navigation and sitemap structure:** The next key consideration is to heavily involve your SEO team within the navigation and sitemap work. With our website development projects, the Rise user experience and SEO team will work together to understand how users are searching for content, not just on a client's website, but across search engine trends as well. Taking this step will help your websites rank higher for key content that users are searching for.
- **Implement XML sitemaps and robots.txt files:** Lastly, you want to incorporate a strong technical strategy, specifically your XML sitemaps and robots.txt files. XML sitemaps help us tie the bow around the whole process. Making changes to a website allows us to map old and new, while also helping search engine crawlers understand where all the new pages live. Utilizing robot.txt files minimize any issues with duplicated and lean content, and will direct the crawlers to your website appropriately.

7 Empowering CMS Frameworks

At Rise, building technology that empowers users is the cornerstone of our development work. During our partnership with American Lung Association to conduct a total redesign of their website, lung.org, we needed to solve a major pain point their employees were facing—inefficient updating processes of the site.

The non-profit's previous legacy system required them to seek outside help or contact their website development team whenever they needed to make a change. During the website redesign process, Rise held discovery meetings with the organization's stakeholders to understand what technology was needed to make telling their brand's story online more accessible. Rise built a new CMS through Kentico that gave American Lung Association's team the ability to own the creation and update process of web pages.

CMS "Page Builder"



All of these steps are essential and worth every bit of your effort. Without the right branding, you'll lose your audience's attention and miss a valuable opportunity to tell your story. Without the right technical chops, your website investment will never be able to catch up to competitors on the SERPs. And without the right data to back up all of your design and SEO decisions, you risk losing buy-in or even worse, wasting your brand's time and energy on a website project that didn't fulfill its promises. Take action today with a comprehensive plan to level-up your brand's digital home.

If your website isn't as showstopping as your brand, we need to talk.

In 2020 alone, we've won 8 awards for our web development program and we're eager to make your online identity the next award-winning story. Reach out to us to learn how our unique approach to website redesigns goes beyond sophisticated design—it's data meets storytelling.

riseinteractive.com/contact-us