

Web development

Web development is the term used to describe the work involved in creating websites and web applications. It contains several areas including web design, web programming, network security, and e-commerce development.

The end goal of web development is to create digital products that provide value to users and accomplish the objectives of the company or organisation.

Developing websites and web apps requires web developers. Web developers design, build, and maintain websites. They use a range of coding languages and tools to create both the front end that users see and interact with, and the back end infrastructure that powers the site.

Web developers collaborate with designers, clients, and management teams throughout the project process. They must be skilled at both the technical coding aspects of development as well as communicating with stakeholders. The web development process involves planning, designing, testing, deploying, and updating sites.

Why it's important to understand user research terminology

- **Effective communication:** Web development involves collaboration between designers, developers, project managers, and clients. Understanding the terminology allows for clearer communication between team members and clients.
- **Conceptual understanding:** The terminology reflects core concepts, processes, and components in web development. Understanding the terms leads to better understanding of the field.
- **Professional credibility:** Knowledge of key web development terms demonstrates competence and allows professionals to discuss projects using the right vocabulary expected in the industry.

Having a well-designed, user-friendly website is crucial for any charity or non-profit organisation to accomplish its mission in today's digital world. An effective website allows a charity to increase awareness about the issues it tackles, connect with more potential donors and volunteers, accept online donations in a seamless way, share stories of impact, and mobilise more support for the cause. By making information accessible, engaging stakeholders and facilitating actions like fundraising and petition signing, a well-developed web presence can take a charity's support to the next level. For a charity looking to expand its reach and further its mission, investing in web development is not an option but a necessity.

Web Development glossary of terms

301 Redirect

A permanent redirect that reroutes users and Google from an old page to a new one. Essential if you want to retain SEO ranking when making URL structure changes or redesigning your website.

Accessibility

The ability for a website to be used by people with disabilities. For example, a visually impaired visitor using a screen reader, or a hearing-impaired visitor using your website with no sound. This is an essential element of your website and the Equality Act (2010) states that site owners are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' to make their sites accessible to people with disabilities

Alt text

The description of an image that is primarily for screen readers. Alt-text should be a description of what is in the image. It is shown when an image can't load, and an empty alt tag must be used if the image doesn't need describing.

API (Application Protocol Interface)

An API allows two software components to communicate. For example, you could have an API connecting your CMS and CRM, allowing enquiries to be added automatically to your CRM. API's can also be used to provide data to your website – this could be to show the results of an insurance quote, for example.

Back end

The back end is the parts of your site a user doesn't see or interact with. The back end manages the logic, data, and processes that make the front end work.

Backlink

A backlink is a link from other websites to yours.

Bounce rate

The percentage of people who leave the site from the page they entered, without engaging with your content.

Breadcrumbs

A section of small links traditional under the header. Breadcrumbs show you where you are on the website and normally allow you to navigate between different sections. Often displayed as Home > Section > Sub-section > current page.

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Browser

This refers to the program a visitor uses when accessing your site, for example Google Chrome, Safari, Firefox or Internet Explorer.

Cache

When you access a website, some files are saved or downloaded by your browser. These files enable the page to be loaded faster the next time you visit.

Canonical URL

Canonical URLs are often used to prevent issues with duplicate content. The canonical URL is the one preferred URL that search engines should prioritise and link to. It helps avoid duplicate content penalties.

CMS (Content Management System)

This is where you make content changes to your website.

Cookie

A small file or set of files that are stored on your computer when you access a website. Cookies can track visits, remember login details and so on.

CSS (Cascading Style Sheets)

CSS is a language used to control how web pages look. CSS handles the appearance and visual styling of websites. It controls colours, fonts, layouts, animations, and more. CSS allows styling and formatting to be separated from the HTML structure and content of web pages.

CSS Framework

A pre-written collection of CSS rules, files and design components. They provide a structured foundation for designing websites or applications. These ready-made styling elements and layouts can save developers a significant amount of time but at the same time can add bloat to the website.

DNS (Domain Name System)

When you want to access a website, the DNS helps your computer look up the site's IP address. It works like the internet phone book, helping your computer find websites by translating their domain name into numbers.

Domain

Your domain is your website name, for example freshegg.com. It is the text a user types into the browser to access your site. Your domain name needs to be purchased and is followed by an extension, such as .co.uk, .com or .org.

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Follow/No-follow

This tells Google whether you want a page crawled. For a page to be read and crawled by Google, it needs to be set to follow. You will usually have the option of Follow or No-follow in your CMS.

Fold

The term 'fold' comes from the newspaper publishing days. If content is 'below the fold', it is not visible when a page first loads. If content is 'above the fold' it can be seen when a page loads.

Front end

This can also be referred to as 'client-side'. It is the part of a website that is visible and accessible to users.

Hardcoded

An element of a website that is embedded directly into the source code. It cannot be changed without altering the code itself and is not accessible via the content management system (CMS). Examples include static text or numbers, or styling elements.

Host/hosting

Websites consist of various files that need to be stored. Hosts provide the storage, infrastructure and internet connectivity for your site to be available online. Hosting is the process of renting the space for your website.

HTML (Hypertext Markup Language)

HTML is code used to create and structure web pages. It is a set of instructions that tell the browser how to display your website.

HTML sitemap

An HTML sitemap provides an organised and structured way of accessing the pages of your site and can act as an alternative navigation but is mostly used for search engines.

Hyperlink

A hyperlink is text, an icon or a graphic that links to another web page.

IP Address

IP stands for Internet Protocol, and an IP address is a unique number for each device on the internet. It helps data find its way between devices to communicate and share information.

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Internal linking

Links from one page to another on your website.

Javascript

A programming language used to add interactivity and dynamic effects to websites. JavaScript code is directly inserted into the HTML of web pages. When a user visits a page, the JavaScript runs and interacts with the HTML/CSS to create effects. Common uses are popups, buttons, click interactions, animations, image sliders, forms, validating input and dynamic content.

Media queries

CSS code that allows webpages to change their layout depending on factors like screen width and orientation. For example, a button could be styled to be full width on mobile devices but have a max width on desktop screens.

Metadata

Information contained within the HTML of a page that helps search engines understand what the page is about.

Mobile-first

A web design strategy that focuses on mobile screen size first and desktop size second. This is often used as mobiles are recognised as the primary access point for most users today.

Mock-up

This is a static, visual representation of a website to show you how it could look. It is usually designed in graphic design software and cannot be interacted with.

Navigation

The set of features and elements that allow users to move through your website. Key aspects include menus, breadcrumbs, links, and buttons. These are key to your user journey.

Open source

In simple terms, open source refers to the underlying code of a website platform. If a website platform is open source, its code is available to the public for free and can be manipulated and used by developers. It can also refer to components on a website, including plugins. Examples of open-source website platforms include Drupal and WordPress. Open-source platforms often have good support networks.

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Page titles

Page titles tell users and search engines what to expect from a page and are visible to users. Every page of your website should have a page title for SEO purposes.

Payment gateway

These securely transmit payment data between the customer and the merchant. When choosing a payment gateway, you will need to look at one that best suits your needs. Find out costs, features, and types of payments they accept (e.g., debit cards, Apple Pay). Examples of payment gateways include PayPal, Worldpay and Sage Pay.

Permalink

Short for 'permanent link', a permalink is a URL that is designed to be stable and consistent. They are designed to link to a specific page or blog and remain the same, regardless of changes elsewhere. This is good for SEO and user experience.

Plug-in

An add-on or extension that you can use on your website, like adding an app to your phone. It allows you to add new functions or features without building them from scratch.

Responsive design

Building websites to adapt and display correctly on mobile devices as well as desktop screens. This is often done using the mobile first methodology using media queries.

Sticky element

An element on the page that stays in one spot regardless of where you scroll. Often used for newsletter sign-ups or cookie pop-ups.

SSL (Secure Sockets Layer)

SSL ensures your data, such as passwords and credit card numbers, are kept safe whilst you are online. You can tell a website has this security layer, it will begin with 'https://' and have a little padlock icon in the search bar.

URL (Uniform Resource Locator)

This is the website address of a page and is compiled of the protocol (e.g., http:// or https://) domain name (e.g. www.freshegg.com) and the path to the page (e.g. /blog/fresh-egg-wins-2018-bima-awards/).

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Usability

The ease with which a user can use a website. It is a wide-ranging scale that includes contrast, text sizes, content and functional processing.

UI (User Interface)

UI is what the user interacts with, it is all the elements of your website that a user can see.

UX (User Experience)

The experience a user has when accessing and using your website. UX is key to having a successful, easy-to-use website.

VPN (Virtual Private Network)

A secure and private network made on a public network using encryption.

Wireframe

Wireframes are used to plan web pages and user journeys. They contain a visual representation of a website's layout and structure, usually using simple outlines and boxes.

XML Sitemap

A file that lists all the web pages of a site, designed to help search engines find and index your pages.