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The Web Designer Starter Kit

5-Step Framework

To Start Designing & Building Websites

STUDIO WILDLING

Hello, Friend

I’m so glad you’re reading this because it tells me that you’re ready to grow and diversify your skillset which is so exciting!

Most people get caught up in the ‘dreaming’ part and don’t follow through with the ‘doing’. They let their busy workload or a mountain of excuses keep them from pursuing their passions, which, to their detriment, is keeping them from living to their highest potential.

But you pushed past those excuses. By downloading this guide, your creativity and curiosity have chosen growth over remaining small (whether you realise it or not). You are ready to learn the fundamentals of web design and diversify your skillset.

Here's to creating abundance!

kate carman

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6 Signs You're Ready To Start Creating Websites

1. You want to scale your income but don't know where to start

Creatives have infinite possibilities in the ways they can pivot their businesses but all too often get caught up in a state of analysis paralysis and with too-many-ideas-to-execute syndrome. You bet I've been there! Adding a complimentary service to your offerings that enables you to charge more is the best (and easiest) place to start scaling your income.

2. You're burnt out and exhausted from constantly having to find new clients

Constantly having to market your brand to find new clients is exhausting work. Getting caught up in working 'in' your business takes away your time to work 'on' your business, which is where the real growth happens. Trying to battle the feast and famine cycles only leads to burnout.

3. It pains you every time you have to hand over a warmed up client to a web designer to finish the project

I know, I get it, you're leaving money on the table with warm clients that you've already nurtured through the design process. Ouch! Rather than handing over your clients at the most profitable phase of the project, imagine being able to take your clients through your entire high-end process and pocket all of the money yourself!

4. You already know a bit about graphic design and you’re ready for biz growth

Having a basic understanding of the fundamentals of design will definitely help leverage your web design experience. As you'll see in the following pages, web design involves a lot of the same elements as graphic design such as fonts, colours, layout and strategy. So if you already know how to use a few design tools, you'll have no problem picking up web tools.

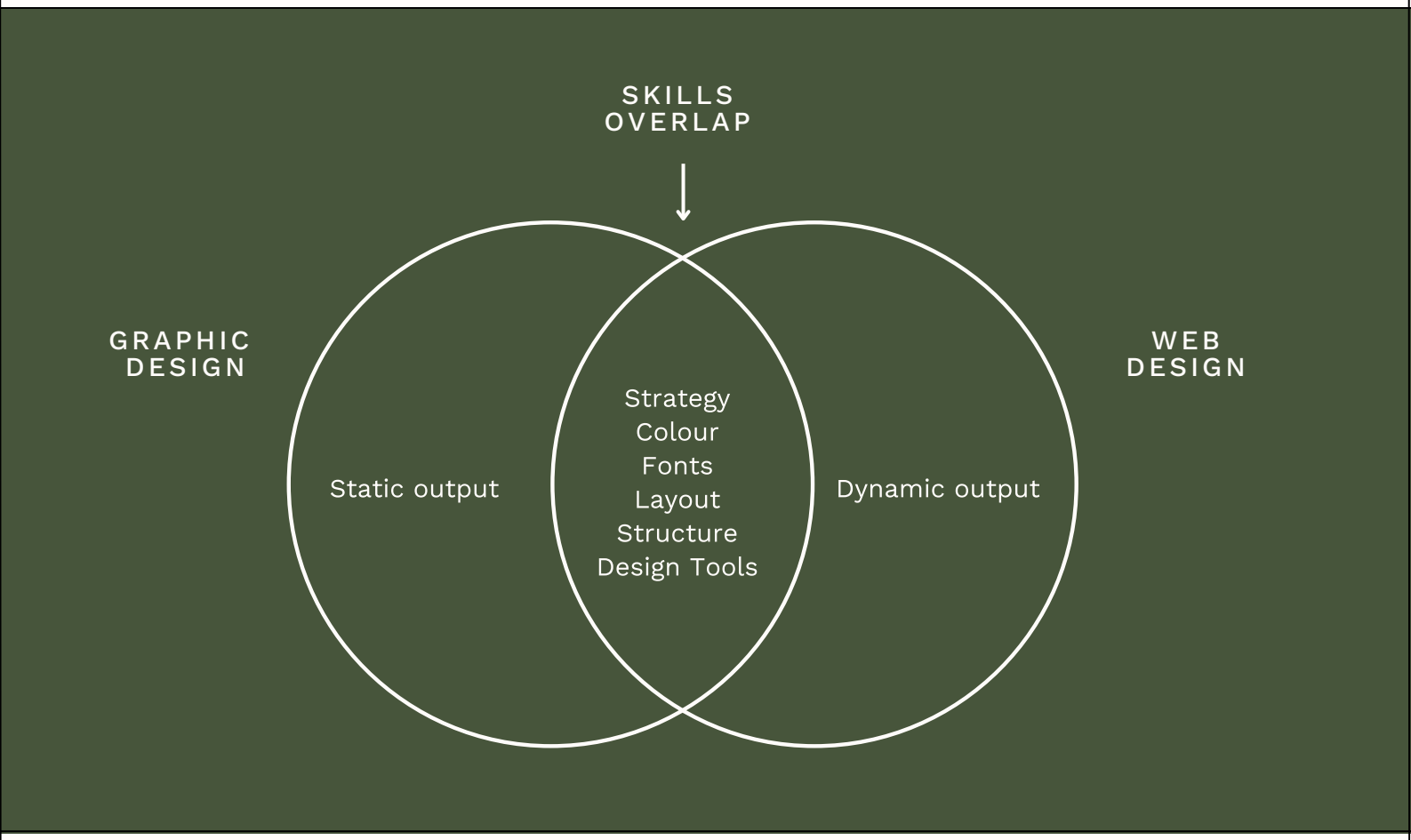
5. You’re curious about web design

This might sound like a no-brainer but some creatives are happy to stick to the lane they’re used to cruising. If you’re even a slight bit curious about web design, or you can see the benefits for your business and clients will far outweigh you keep playing it safe, then you are 100% ready to dive in and learn what it’s all about.

6. You’re ready to make more money — working smarter not harder

You’ve been working hard to establish and grow your design business—call it freelancing, a creative studio, or even a side hustle—and you can either keep going around in the same cycles that you've outgrown or start working smarter by making (lots) more money for the same (or less) effort.

I bet you already have the skills but simply don't realise! (Yet.)



Where I see a lot of creatives getting stuck is with the mindset that web design is a bold and scary domain for design 'unicorns'.

This is just one of many myths that surround web design. There is actually such profound skills overlap with graphic design that the main point of difference is the output. Graphic design is (mostly) static and web design is dynamic, or interactive.

All of the other design elements are essentially the same from strategy, colour and font application, layout and structure, and even down to a lot of the design tools utilised.

“But I’m not a qualified web designer.”

Mindset Tip

I’ve got a little secret to share with you. My degree is essentially irrelevant these days.

The industry and the technology have evolved so much over the years—particularly the past 5 years—that a qualification is no longer the foundation for a design career. Do you know what is? Skill, passion, and doing the work.

If you wait until you feel like an expert you are shortchanging yourself and doing a disservice to your clients by not delivering them a high-end start to finish design experience.

Instead of being consumed by imposter syndrome because you don’t feel qualified enough to start, ask yourself these questions:

- Do you already have an understanding of the general graphic design process and tools (aka Adobe Creative Suite)?
- Have you helped clients achieve an outcome that better connects them with their ideal audience?
- Are you passionate about growing your business and helping your clients achieve their dreams?

Keep reading if you answered "yes" to any of these!

5-Step Framework To Start Creating Websites

Introduction

A quick note before you get started...

Whether you're creating your own website or a client's, following a creative process is what will guide you to the optimum outcome—an authentic and aligned online presence that will connect with your ideal customers.

On the following pages, I'm giving you my signature 5-step framework that I use on all of my client projects. A framework that has enabled me to build abundance into my brand and allows me to pick and choose the projects that truly light me up.

You will probably recognise a lot of similarities in your own creative process—take that as an affirmation that you're already on the right track.

As you work through this guide, my intention is to reveal the overlap in skills that you already possess and nudge you one step closer into giving yourself permission to grow and step into abundance.

1. Clarity & Strategy

STEP 01

Define your vision and goals

The Clarity & Strategy phase of a project is integral to creating websites that convert and is not a step that can be skipped. Getting clear on the website vision and goals from the get-go will save you a lot of time in the design phase, and trial-and-error in the later stages of a website build.

Know your 'why'

Whether it's a branding or web design project, it always starts with the ‘why’. Building brands with purpose is the best way to ensure longevity in business and a brand’s ‘why’ is the foundation of the project strategy.

Having a strong "why" also helps keep the project aligned and acts as the north star if things start to go off track.

Articulate your brand's purpose

Get clear about where your (or your client's) business is positioned, from the industry you occupy to your competition, your brand mission and purpose, and the single most important thing that sets you apart from your competitors. Even if you already know this, getting it down on paper helps you form a clear starting point for your website project.

I help [WHO] achieve [WHAT] by [HOW] so that they can [WHY].

E.g. I help purpose-led brands achieve their dream online presence by creating custom and authentic websites so that they can connect with their ideal audience, grow their businesses, and create abundance in their lives.

Identify your audience and target market

Get very specific about who you serve. Much like graphic design outcomes, you're designing for your ideal customer, not for yourself. Sure, it's important that you (and your future clients) are proud of the website and want to shout it from the rooftops, but ultimately, it's more important that your ideal customers love it and want to engage.

Getting specific about who you're designing for in the strategy phase will ensure your website not only attracts your ideal customers but that it converts.

Define your website goals

The 'what' of your website helps determine all of the pieces of the puzzle. Although there are standard features to every website, service-based and product-based websites require different design elements and development features.

As well as determining the general features you'd like to include, clearly defining what you would like the website to accomplish with primary and secondary goals will give you a solid foundation to measure success.

Some examples of website goals are:

- Get more inbound leads/quote requests/phone enquiries
- Increase brand awareness
- Educate your audience
- Encourage sales
- Collect email addresses to build your subscriber list
- Encourage onsite or social media interaction
- Get more customers into your shop

Your turn!

What is the brand's purpose?

I/we help [WHO] achieve [WHAT] by [HOW] so that they can [WHY].

Who is the target audience?

What are the primary and secondary goals?

2. Discovery & Ideation

STEP 02

Define your website's structure

Now that you're clear on the website strategy, let's dive into the website structure.

This is where you start to sketch out the wireframes (aka, the blueprint of the website) of the core pages to establish a layout style and help you determine the website's flow.

Common pages and features

- Home
- About
- Services
- Portfolio/Gallery
- Blog/Journal
- Contact
- Shop
- FAQs
- Email opt-in/Newsletter
- Ecommerce/Shopping cart
- Contact form/Booking form
- Testimonials/Product reviews
- Downloadable PDFs/Resources
- Survey form/Quiz
- Membership portal
- Location map

Layout and flow

Websites are built on a grid structure, but that doesn't mean you can't have fun with layouts. Once you've defined the required pages, sketching out the general web page layouts helps provide insight into exactly what content you will require for your site and where to strategically place calls-to-action so that your site is primed for engagement.

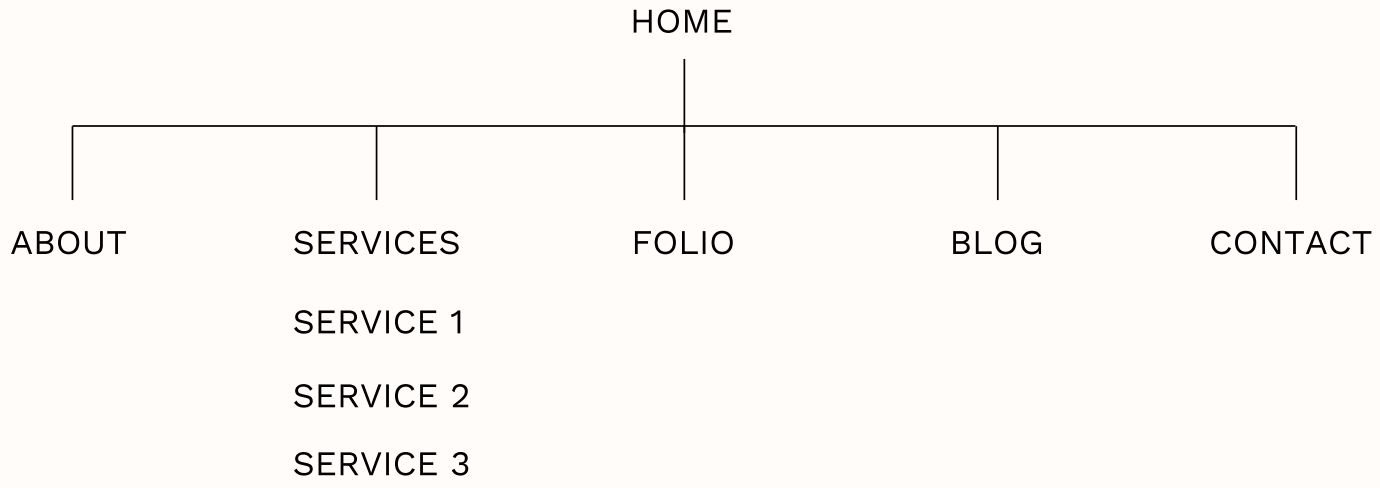
You don't have to get fancy with this. Rough sketches with pen and paperwork a treat!

*Pro-tip: When designing a website, always think back to the user experience. UX sounds techy, but it's a fairly simple concept. An easy way to get in this mindset is to think about how you like to navigate around websites. Include the things you love about other websites, and avoid the things that bug you about other websites. UX? Easy peasy!

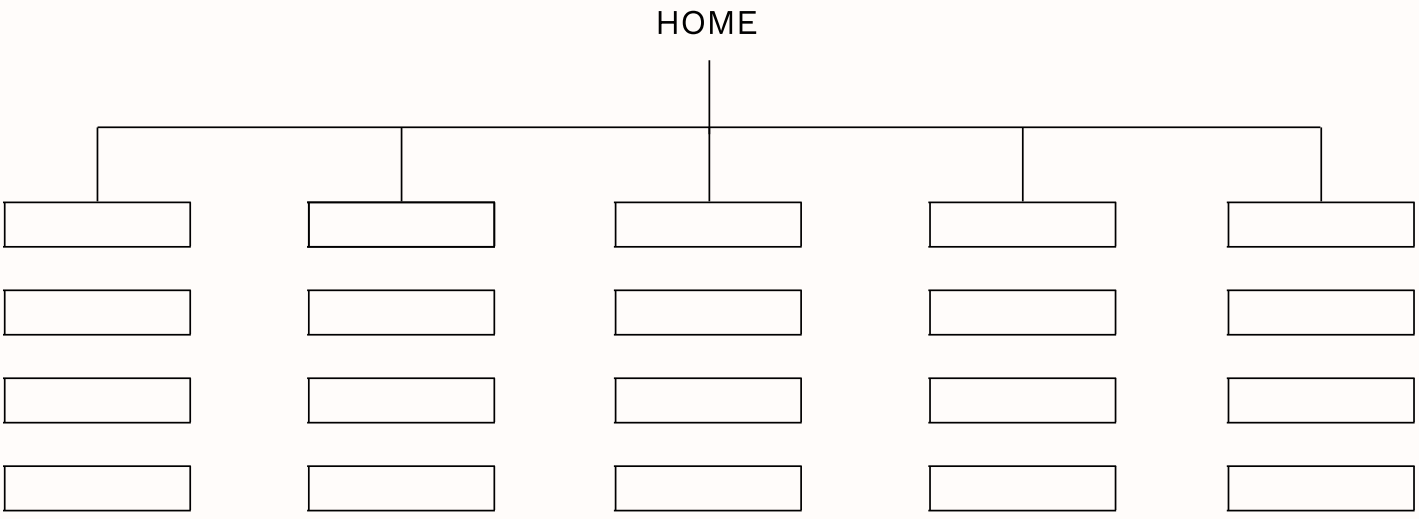
STEP 02

Sitemap and navigation tree

Here we determine the website hierarchy, starting with the Home page and filtering down to the other internal pages. This also forms the site navigation. It's recommended to only have around five primary pages in the navigation and then to nest other pages in the sub-navigation to ensure a cohesive user experience and for a more responsive design.



Your turn!



3. Design & Review

STEP 03

Collect all of your brand assets

This is where the real fun begins! The first step to the design phase is to bring across all of the brand elements. Collect and collate the brand colours, fonts, logos, patterns, and imagery, as well as the website copy.

*Pro-tips:

- Ensure your images are relevant and complement your design and story.
- Keep your copy and tone consistent for ultimate engagement.
- Insist on having all web design assets prior to commencing the project!
- Make sure inspiration doesn't result in copy-catting. It's unethical and really uncool.

Start designing!

You've done all of the groundwork and collected all of the essential brand assets, now it's time to start designing! The first thing you'll have to do is choose your favourite software to design on. Popular web design tools are Adobe XD, Illustrator, and even Photoshop. There is no right or wrong way, choose your poison and get creative! (For those who are curious, I bounce between Adobe XD and Adobe Illustrator.)

Review and revise your design

The design revision is a great checkpoint to ensure you're on track with the creative direction. Taking the time to review and revise prior to jumping into the website build will save you from having to repeat tasks in the development phase.

Gathering design feedback is particularly important when you're creating for clients and for sites with more of a custom design. Giving your clients a sneak peek of what's to come also helps keep them excited and motivated throughout your collaboration.

Your turn!

List the brand assets that you need to gather.

Which design program(s) will you use?

Brainstorm key feedback prompts you'd like to address in your revision process.

4. Develop & Refine

STEP 04

Pick a platform and stick with it

Web development tools have evolved so much over the past few years and are built with designers in mind. Visual builders and modular drag-and-drop systems have made it easier than ever for brands—from startups to businesses who've seen a few laps around the sun—to get an online presence. And one that looks and converts mighty fine as well!

Rather than being a Jack (or Jill) of all trades and a master of none, it's best to niche and specialise in just one web platform.

Find your creative sweet spot

The key is to find the sweet spot between a platform that you enjoy working with and one that will meet your client's needs. I.e. If the majority of your clients are looking for a more customised design or the ability to easily scale the site when their business takes off, then choosing a platform that supports this functionality from the get-go is important.

All-in-one and out-of-the-box solutions are easy and pretty to work with, however, a word of caution: they are also closed-source, meaning that they're a lot harder to customise and the website's growth potential could be capped by its limited flexibility.

Visual builders: a designer's (and client's) best friend

My personal preference is WordPress paired with a powerful visual builder. This development suite enables you to build on the front-end, applying your design visually and in real-time. It's fun for you to build with and the potential to customise, grow, and scale the website is unlimited.

Visual builders are designed to support business autonomy and the modular style drag-and-drop design makes it easy for your clients to update the content themselves.

Your turn!

What outcomes do the majority of your clients (or your desired future clients) need to achieve with their website? (E.g. Simply a brochure website, or a site that can grow with their future goals?)

Which web platform resonates best with you and your clients' creative needs?

My website development suite is: (E.g. WordPress paired with Elementor.)

5.
Test & Launch

Triple-check everything!

So your new website is looking all shiny and pretty and you're so excited to get it out into the world. Slow down just a minute! The golden rule to launching a website is to check absolutely every page, call-to-action, link, and feature before shouting it from the rooftops.

Anything to do with technology can be finicky at times, but websites can be particularly so and you don't want that embarrassing DM from an admirer or an urgent email from a client when something is not looking or functioning quite right.

Mobile-friendly and responsive

A quick fact: Over 50% of global website traffic is viewed from mobile devices and this number can grow exponentially depending on the audience. So it's important to design and build your website so that it's mobile-friendly and responsive, meaning that the different elements will adjust and stack depending on the size of the screen.

The majority of web platforms and visual builders make this easy for you by giving you the option to switch the page view between desktop, laptop, and mobile so you can adjust the design accordingly. However, it's a good practice to get into the habit of considering how the design will shuffle and change from the initial design phase.

Launch party!

It's time to celebrate! You now have a stellar and authentic online presence that speaks so much to your ideal audience that they can't get enough of your offerings.

What's even more humbling and exciting than creating a website for your own brand? Helping bring a client's dream to life and providing them with a platform that will enable them to build brand success, abundance, and wealth for themselves and their families.

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5 benefits of being a multi-passionate designer

01 It allows you to thrive through the highs and lows

02 You can charge more (lots more)

03 You can choose your projects and clients

04 You can do the creative work your soul desires

05 You can free up time to work on your biz and passion projects

KATE CARMAN FOUNDER & CREATIVE DIRECTOR

My Story

I'm a self-taught WordPress web designer & developer, despite having a digital design degree. Why? Because the modern-day platforms and technology simply did not exist when I was still in university. In fact, I used to hate web design because it was all tech and no fun and I was adamant I would never pursue a career in it.

Fast-forward to today and I run a 6-figure design business with over 90% of my revenue coming from website projects. I've gone from charging under $5K to being able to charge over $21K for projects simply because of the outcomes and high-end design experience I can create for my clients.

Imagine not having to hand over your clients to someone else when you hit the web design phase? Instead, you get to take them through an end-to-end design experience that will not only wow them but ensures the profit stays in your pocket.

With web design, I saw an opportunity to not only satisfy the creative and strategic sides of my brain but to create a unique point of difference against the vast sea of other graphic designers. And the best part? It's a fun process that nurtures creativity because the tools and technology are now built for designers through a visual experience.

There's no 'secret recipe' to becoming a web designer other than to believe in yourself and your skills and simply get started! Web design is not an exclusive club for 'unicorn' creatives, rather it's a smart career pivot that's 100% attainable for you and your creative business as well. And one that will undoubtedly bring abundance, brand growth, and creative freedom!

Want to keep learning?

To learn more about crafting a website
that connects and converts...

VISIT MY WEBSITE

GET IN TOUCH

Or send me a voice message via DM with any specific questions.

Bonus Reading

The Benefits Of Diversifying Your Skillset As A Graphic Designer

6 Homepage Must-Haves For Your Creative Website

15 Terms & Features To Consider When Planning Your Website

So, What's The Big Deal About Mobile First?

7 Telltale Signs It's Time For A Website Redesign

Notes.