Inbound 281

MARKET YOUR WAY UP

GROWTH-DRIVEN DESIGN PLAYBOOK

The New Gold Standard for Revenue-Generating Websites

Growth-Driven Design* I GDD I

noun

1. **A responsive website development framework:**
   Our company implemented growth-driven design instead of traditional website design.

2. **Creation of a launch pad website that addresses the most pressing needs required to serve visitors:**
   Growth-driven design allowed us to launch our fully functional website in just eight weeks.

3. **Analysis of data and user behavior to determine the best path for the further development of a website:**
   Our website is constantly evolving and improving because we used growth-driven design to analyze visitor behavior and adapt appropriately.

*HubSpot's An Introduction to Growth-Driven Design, authored by Luke Summerfield, served as a resource for information and statistics that appear within this download.

Contents

Welcome to the new gold standard of website design

Your website is your biggest marketing and sales asset.

It is often the first place a potential customer will go to research your organization and provides you valuable opportunities to collect data and information about your leads and target audiences.

As important as your website is to your communications, overall brand identity, and marketing and sales efforts, don't you want to ensure that it is built to be agile, designed with substantial insight from data, and tailored to reflect visitor behaviors?

Unfortunately, if you followed a traditional web design process, your website likely isn't going to be as intuitive and user-centric as your organization needs.

The standard process of web design is often expensive and time consuming, so many organizations will not pursue re-design projects more than every couple of years. This leaves you with a website that remains stagnant and unable to adapt to changing visitor behaviors.

You can put all kinds of time and effort into researching the qualities you want your website to have, but what if you were wrong? What if new techniques in technology or design quickly render your site obsolete?

Growth-driven design allows you to aptly handle any upgrades or changes your website might need—without having to wait until your next full-scale redesign. The process builds your website's content and structure through a gradual process, leveraging input from performance data and user input in order to determine which features are best suited to meet the needs of your visitors.

The growth-driven design process starts with well-formed hypotheses to build a launch pad site that will serve your visitor's basic needs. As you track their surfing habits on your site, you can add more pages and customized content that will ensure your site remains constantly relevant.

Staying agile in your approach to web design and content creation allows you to accumulate consistent feedback and useful data on your marketing efforts. If your offers and content resonate with users, you can stick with them and add more. If they don't lead to conversions, you can create new offers and pursue different angles until you develop campaigns that captivate your target personas.

This eBook will give you a more in-depth look into growth-driven design and will show you how it can give you a greater understanding of your users' goals, motivations, and pain points in real time.

As a result, you can design your website's functions and customize your content to improve things like conversions and retention.

Take a look at this smarter approach to website design so you can start producing better results, growing your business, and delighting your customers.

Why marketers everywhere are shifting to growth-driven design

A traditional web design project generally takes three or more months to complete and can represent a significant up-front investment in both time and money.

And while you might end up with a beautifully-designed and functional website, how can you know for sure if it is doing what you need it to? Is it optimized to cultivate leads? Is the content on your site engaging prospective customers in the way you would like? Is your site design responsive so that it will adapt to whatever device your visitors are accessing it on?

You might be able find some answers to these questions by using analytics and other resources on your traditional website, but how difficult (and expensive) would it be to actually implement enhancements after you've already built your site?

Most companies only embark on a website redesign every two years or so because of the time and money commitment involved. GDD, on the other hand, allows you to not only spread out the resources committed to your redesign, it is structured to account for changes and redesigns along the way.

That feedback you got from your website's user data last month? You can make those changes on your site today, altering the design, moving a call-to-action, or swapping your navigation.

Growth-driven design is quick, agile, and produces better results and ROI than traditional design. It allows your website to be more flexible and better adapt to visitor needs than traditional web design, thus delivering greater impact.

In a way, the GDD process is similar to a marketing campaign that uses a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods like focus groups, sales lead quality, web traffic and other metrics.

Before launching a campaign, marketers will develop tactics based on hypotheses they've formed about their audience. Throughout the course of the campaign, marketers will monitor metrics to understand which tactics are working and which need to be improved.

GDD offers you the same opportunity to analyze your website's performance and make upgrades in real time. Using traditional web design is like running the same exact marketing campaign for two years without changing any copy, tactics, or strategy to better engage the audience.

TRADITIONAL WEB DESIGN	**$15K - $100K** (All up front) *	**3-4 Months** *	**Only a Hypothesis**	**Redesign in 2 Years** (No major changes in between)
GROWTH-DRIVEN DESIGN	**$2K - $6K/month** (Spread out over time) **	**Launch Pad Website** (8 weeks) **	**Validated Results** (based on data)	**Continuous Improvement**

*Out of scope, over budget, late   **Agile, on time & on budget

How GDD increases leads, customers, and revenue

A typical buyer will have moved through 70% of the sales process before reaching out to your sales team. Where do you think he or she is finding information about your company and products before talking to you? More often than not, your website is going to be the first place a buyer will look to learn more about you.

Therefore, your website is the most important component of the communications efforts you use to engage visitors and customers. Other efforts, like social media and email, can help to engage your potential customers, but you ultimately want to drive them back to your website to capture their information and cultivate them as leads.

With the growth-driven design process, you will better be able to understand the problems and pain points that your visitors have and how you can solve them. By following measurable metrics, you can see how visitors use your site and design it accordingly. Research will allow you to determine the way your buyer personas make decisions, and with this in mind, GDD can help you identify which questions and themes your site should be structured around.

Using the GDD framework—which calls for monthly website improvements instead of a full-scale redesign project every two years—will help guide the continual performance-based changes you'll implement on your website. These monthly enhancements will be shaped by a thorough hypothesis or by hard data that utilizes web analytics, user testing results, split testing, heat maps, and/or buyer personas.

The improvements you make will apply to your website's design, conversion funnels, content, structure, and other functions. GDD will help keep your website fresh and current, optimized for lead generation, and relevant to your buyers, customers, and visitors.

-------- Growth-Driven Design vs. Traditional Web Design --------
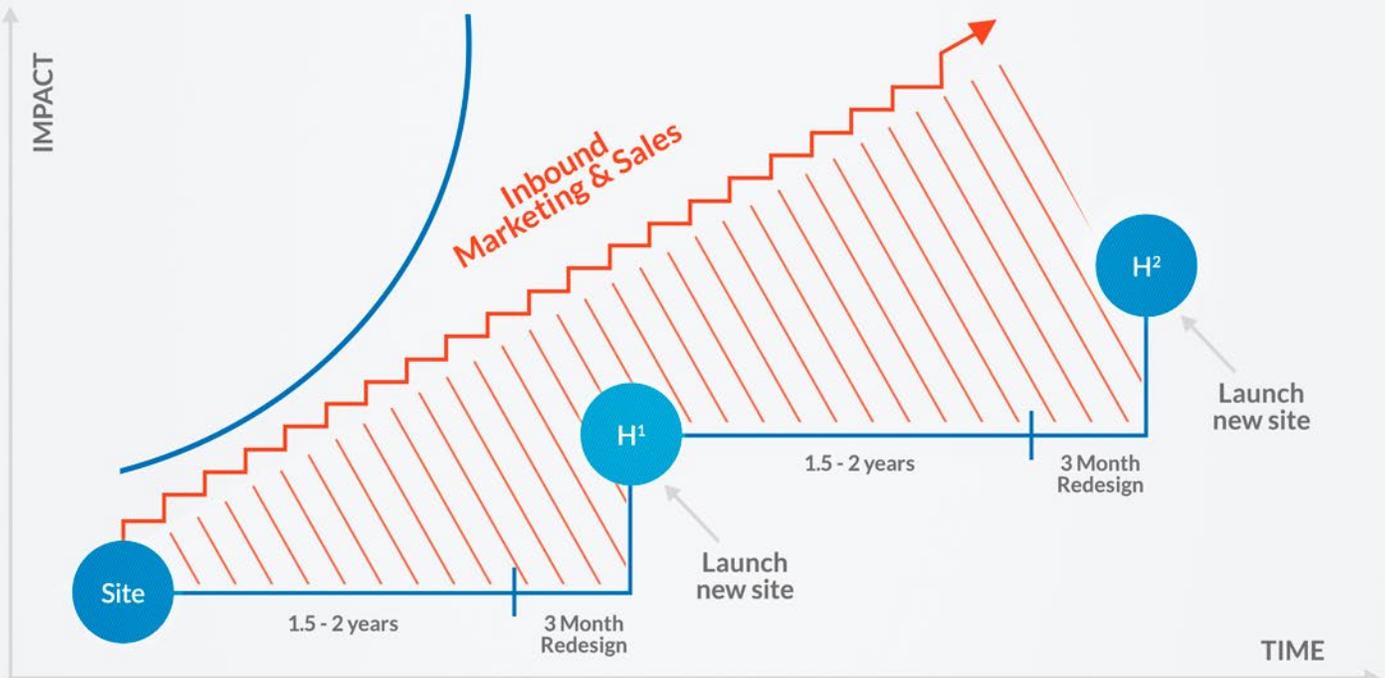
Once your website is designed around your visitors' problems, you will better be able to meet their needs and deliver the experience they seek from your organization and your site. GDD gives your users a pretty significant voice in how your website will be designed, which helps ensure that it will function as closely as possible to what their interests and habits dictate.

As you learn more about how people are using your website, GDD can help you to make the necessary upgrades that will ensure your visitors are finding the information they need, utilizing your resources as they are designed, and ultimately becoming viable leads and customers.

GDD also allows you to gather enough information about your users to personalize content with the help of a content optimization system (COS) like HubSpot. Personalized websites can deliver messages specifically tailored to where a prospect is in the buying process, or content targeted to people the very first time they visit. These efforts allow you to target content based on anything you know about your contacts and can help you build true relationship-driven marketing.

---------- The three objectives of growth-driven design ----------

1. Minimize the risks associated with traditional web design

GDD avoids the risks of traditional design by taking a systemic approach to shortening the launch time, while focusing on leveraging continuous learning and improvement to deliver the greatest impact.

2. Continuously learn and improve

GDD calls for constant research, testing, and learning about visitors to inform ongoing website improvements that will help your website achieve peak performance levels.

3. Integrate learning with marketing and sales

GDD is closely integrated with marketing and sales strategies. Information learned about visitors can be used to improve marketing and sales strategies and tactics (and vice versa).

Before you get started

What to expect in the GDD process

Basically, your full website will be phased in over a span of weeks or months after you've implemented your launch pad website. Along the way, you will gather information from your site that will influence the decisions you make for the fourth, fifth, sixth and however many other versions of your website you want to create.

To better inform your decisions as you evolve and adapt your website, you can watch heat maps to determine how visitors are engaging with your content and site structure. You can also track how your calls-to-action are performing, and which content is driving views, clicks, and interactions. You are able to use this data and analytics to make adjustments and give your visitors the site that will best meet their needs.

What you can do with growth-driven design

We've covered the objectives and overarching themes of growth-driven design, but what are some of the practical applications that you can implement on your website?

Here are a few examples of specific GDD applications you can use in building your site:

- Design a new homepage banner and test its effectiveness compared to the old one.

- Run a usability test to get feedback from your users or an anonymous panel.

- Analyze which devices your visitors use most in order to maximize your website's responsiveness on mobile, tablet, and desktop screens.

- Move the location of key call-to-action (CTA) buttons, navigation menus, or other content based on the results of heat map analysis.

- Steadily add or edit content using personalization tactics, such as targeting a visitor's buyer persona, industry, or product interest.

- Simplify or reorganize the structure of your navigation menus.

- Run tests to optimize conversion rates on your landing pages, blog, or CTAs.

6 steps to begin your growth-driven design journey

Think of the steps in the growth-driven design process as similar to planning a cross-country road trip. Your itinerary includes the key attractions you want to see, but you also want to remain flexible enough to incorporate new experiences you might encounter along the way. With GDD, your destination will be your launch pad site—the starting point for your constantly improving and evolving website.

1. Define your strategy
Just like determining which activities you want to do on your trip and then researching the places that will allow you to hike through the mountains or lie on a beach near the ocean, you're going to lay out your organizational goals for your website, research your audience's needs, and develop your page strategies.

2. Build your wish list
Once you figure out which activities you want your trip to encompass, you're going to create a list of the specific places you want to visit. With your website, your wish list will identify the key impactful sections and pages, design elements, and other features that you want to incorporate in your design process based on your strategy and research.

3. Analyze and prioritize
Unfortunately, most of us don't have unlimited time, money, and resources to hit all the amazing sites we want to see on our road trip, so we need to prioritize which attractions will best fit into our budgets and routes. With GDD, we will analyze and prioritize which action items on our wish list are absolutely necessary to include in our launch pad website.

4. Start website implementation process
This is the point where you would rent a car, book hotel rooms, and take care of any other details you planned for your trip. With your website, this is where you develop messaging and content, site architecture, wireframes, and other website implementation actions.

5. Collect meaningful data
Even on a road trip, being able to collect and assess information will allow you to make adjustments to avoid traffic, save gas money, or make unplanned stops. The same goes for your website, where your data collection practices will ensure your website is on track. Once your site is live, you can collect user data to inform the further development of your GDD website.

6. Make your launch pad site live
After developing the most vital aspects that get your website needs, you will make this launch pad site live. This adaptive site will allow you to understand what your visitors are looking for and determine which design, content and structural changes are necessary to help your site improve and grow. Just like the road trip we are taking, the growth-driven design journey is built to be agile and adapt to the changing needs of your organization and your visitors.

1. Define your strategy

The strategy phase in growth-driven design is much sleeker and more data-driven than the planning phase in traditional web design. With GDD, your strategy will be built around these key actions:

Set goals
What are the performance goals that you are trying to achieve with your website? How has your website performed historically, and where would you like to improve?

Identify personas
A persona is a fictional representation of your ideal customer. You can create different groups of personas based on common characteristics your audience shares. This could be a point of pain, industry, job title, etc. Growth-driven design centers on the user, so it is critically important to fully research and develop your persona profiles in the beginning. These personas will set the stage for all future activities.

Perform a website and analytics audit
By running a quantitative audit and digging into your website's performance data, you will be able to see what functions are and aren't working as well as intended. You will be able to determine which applications visitors utilize most, where users are dropping off, and other areas where you can identify opportunities for improvement in your future web work.

Conduct user research
After you have identified some of the areas of opportunity through your audit, the next step is to reach out to your existing users to learn more about them and gain a better understanding of who they are. As you're collecting new user research, it will help you validate the assumptions you put in your original persona profiles and will likely give you additional information to use as you build your site.

Articulate user behavior and motivation

Using what you have learned in the previous steps, you can start explaining the behavior and motivations of your website users. This information can help you to influence both the global and page strategy in the final step of the strategy phase.

Some of these fundamental user assumptions can incldude:

- Value propositions for each product, service and offer

- Locations and devices users will be accessing your website from

- What information your users are looking for

Develop global and page strategy

The last step in the strategy phase is to develop both a global strategy for the website as a whole and a specific page-by-page strategy for each major page on the site.

The global and individual page strategies should incorporate all of the previous steps and lay out a detailed plan of exactly how to best engage and influence the user in order attain your goals.

2. Build your wish list

Once the strategy planning phase is complete, you can use all that you've learned to brainstorm every impactful, creative, and innovative idea you'd like to include on your new website. This will be your "wish list."

Using our road trip analogy, this is where you would dream about any activities that you want to do along the way, no matter how major or minor they are. Maybe you want to finally try authentic Chicago deep dish pizza, then head north to see Mount Rushmore before you hit hiking trails in Colorado.

For your website, you want to think about how the items on your list will help you achieve your goals if money, time, and development skill were not an issue. The key here is to come into your brainstorming session with a clean slate and not get hung up on your existing site.

Essential brainstorming ideas can 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, locale, etc.**

After a few hours of brainstorming with your team, you might have a list of 50, 150, or even more ideas for your new website. Not all of these items will be implemented right away, but it's important to flesh out as many ideas as possible right off the bat.

Your wish list will be used to determine the initial action items to implement on the new site, but it also functions as an agile and flexible list that you will be continuously adding to (and subtracting from) as you re-prioritize your actions items over time.

3. Analyze and prioritize

Unfortunately, you probably can't travel to all the attractions you've written down on your wish list if you've only got a couple weeks or a month to squeeze your road trip into. But that's OK. You can still determine which places you want to see the most and keep the other activities on the back burner for future trips.

With GDD, your goal is to include only the most necessary elements in your launch pad website, and save the other items for further review and possible implementation after your site is live.

This step requires you to review your wish list with your entire team and identify the 20% of items that will produce 80% of the impact and value for your website's users. Once you have identified the core 20%, pull these items to the side and do some additional filtering by asking yourself, is this action item…

- **A "must have" or a "nice to have"? Any "nice to have" returns to the main list for safe-keeping.**

Then with the remaining items ask:

- **Is this absolutely necessary for the initial launch pad site, or could we build it into the site in month two or month three?**

The goal of asking these additional questions is to narrow your focus to just the action items that will provide the most impact. By narrowing down these core action items, you can ensure a quick launch of your website.

4. Start website implementation process

Once you have identified the most critical action items for your launch pad site, you can run those items through the standard website implementation process, including:

- **Messaging and content**
- **User experience (UX) and site architecture**
- **Inbound marketing strategy alignment**
- **Wireframes**
- **Designs**
- **Development**
- **Quality assurance and testing**

5. Collect meaningful data

Even before you hit the road, you might realize that you need to map out different routes due to construction, or may not be able to see as many destinations based on gas mileage calculations.

And once you set out on your road trip, you might discover you are making better time than you originally planned for, are saving extra money on gas, or that you enjoy camping more than staying in hotels. Being able to collect and respond to this information will help ensure that you can make adjustments so that your trip will satisfy all your goals.

With GDD, you will develop your data collection ideas during the wireframing process in order to ensure that your website is on track. Once your site is live, you can begin collecting the user data that will inform the further development of your GDD website.

Your qualitative and quantitative data collection should revolve around:

- **The goals you defined in the strategy phase**

- **Each of your fundamental assumptions**

- **Each hypothesis statement of your action items implemented in the launch pad website**

Setting up data collection is an important step, as it allows you to start learning about your visitors once your launch pad site is live. The information you gather from data collection will come in handy when you enter the next phase of the growth-driven design process, the design cycle.

6. Make your launch pad site live

This is where growth-driven design really differentiates itself from the traditional web design process. In traditional web design, the launch of the website is the end of the design process. In GDD, your "launch pad website" will serve as the basis for all your future improvements.

Your launch pad is meant to be developed and put into operation quickly—ideally, you will be able to move from the strategy to launch step in only one month—so it's not going to be perfect, and it's not going to have everything on your wish list just yet. But it will be clean, dynamic, and most likely a huge improvement over your previous website. Your launch pad is the starting point for you to build and grow your enterprising and adaptive website.

Take a minute to think about the advantage growth-driven design gives you: Your website is no longer going to sit idle for one or two years (or longer) before you make meaningful improvements upon it. With GDD, your website will be dynamic and ready to adapt to the needs of your visitors.

Customer acquisition design cycle

Once your launch pad website is up and running, it will be time to implement the ongoing design cycle that will help you continuously experiment, learn, and improve your website.

Even after your site has launched, you will have a long list of impactful items that you want to incorporate into your site. You will also encounter new items that you will want to add based on your ongoing research and analytics.

The entire design cycle starts with and revolves around the personas who are visiting your website. Each stage of the cycle requires you to ask how each active or proposed function of your website provides value to the personas visiting your website.

If it is not clear how an action item is meeting the needs of or relating to your persona, you should step back and re-evaluate what you are working on.

Plan
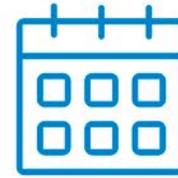
The first step of the design cycle is planning. At this step, you will be identifying the most impactful items on your wish list and formulating a strategy to implement the most important features into your cycle.

There are five main ideas to focus on during the planning phase:

Performance vs. goals
Review the current performance of your website and contrast that to the goals you're trying to achieve. This will show you where our website is succeeding and the areas where it can improve.

Additional data or research
While reviewing your performance and goals, you will often find additional data and research you may need to do in order to help clarify which action items you should add to your wish list.

Learning from marketing and sales
There is a good chance your marketing and sales teams have been able to gather more background about your users since your previous design cycle. The insight gleaned from this information can provide valuable insight into how your visitors are using your site, and how you can implement new action items to adapt your website to meet their needs.

Brainstorm and prioritize wish list
Now that you've gathered all kinds of new data, research and insight on your visitors, it's time for another brainstorming session to determine if you have any new action items to add to your wish list. You will then prioritize all the action items based on the impact they will have on your goals for the website and the value they will provide the user.

Plan sprint cycle
With an updated and prioritized wish list, you can then pick the most impactful action items that you want to implement in this cycle. The number of items you pick will depend on how long the cycle is. You're better off picking fewer items and really focusing on doing your best work with them. If you happen to complete them early, you can always go back to your wish list and pick more.

What kind of action items should you be looking for in the planning phase?

Your action items can be any improvement, large or small, that is designed to meet your visitors' needs. These could address any number of issues, but generally will fall into one of these five groups:

Boosting conversions
Activities directly related to your website's conversion rate optimization.

Improving user experience
These action items should focus on making your site easier for users to navigate, find what they are looking for, and discover solutions to their problems.

Personalizing your site
Adapt your calls-to-action, download offers, content, and other assets to the specific visitor. Tailor these efforts to the visitor's interests, persona, device, referral source, or previous actions on your site.

Building marketing assets
Create in-depth resource stations, online training sessions, white papers, webinars, or other informative resources. These items provide value to your end user and your company.

Making general website updates
These update will be anything that you encounter in your research that you think can enhance your user's experience—whether it's design, navigation, or new copy and images.

Develop

In the development phase of the design cycle, you will take the most impactful action items that you have identified and start implementing them on your site.

Each action item that you implement should be considered an experiment. You will set up validation tracking around the metrics outlined in each item and analyze the feedback and impact each item has had on the performance of your website.

After your action items go live on your site, you may want develop a marketing campaign (social, pay per click, blogging, etc.) to drive traffic to a specific page or section of your site so you can start collecting data.
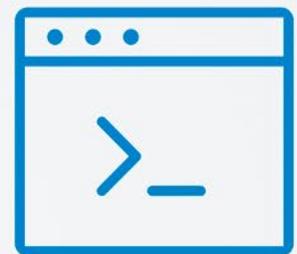
Learn

After your experiments have had enough time to run and collect data, you can then review the information you have accumulated on your website visitors. This information can help you validate or disprove the hypotheses you developed around your action items.

With your data and background knowledge about your visitors, you should try to answer the following questions:

- **Did your change have the impact you expected and why did or didn't it?**
- **Based on the results, what did this teach you about your visitor?**
- **What did you learn about them that you didn't know before?**

Another important aspect of the learning phase is to make the results of your analysis available to everybody in your organization. Once you determine whether your hypotheses were correct and you have gathered knowledge about your visitors, you will want to publish this information in a central location for everyone to take advantage of. This can be a useful reference for future brainstorming sessions on developing new action items for your website.

Transfer

The last step in the cycle is to transfer any impactful information you've learned to other parts of your organization. Review your results from each completed action item and brainstorm how your conclusions might be applicable to other practices and procedures. Data and results from completed action items can also show you valuable usage patterns about your visitors.

Once you've put together recommendations for your organization, host a meeting to educate everyone and brainstorm ways they can integrate and transfer the new ideas into tactical action items within in their department.
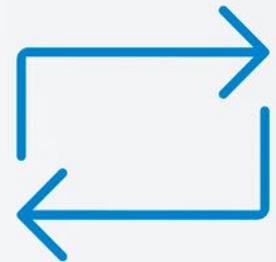
Repeat

Once you've completed the cycle with a set of action items, go back to the beginning and start planning your next cycle. The cycle repeats itself over and over again, each time with a better end result and more knowledge gained about your visitors. The more cycles you can complete, the greater the impact and return on investment your website is going to have.

Integrating GDD into your inbound marketing efforts

Your inbound marketing efforts focus on delivering engaging content, enhancing visitor experiences, cultivating leads and then guiding those leads through the buyer's journey. You support this process with email workflows, calls-to-action, and other supplemental pieces.

More often than not, your inbound marketing techniques are designed to be agile and adapt to the analysis and feedback you gather from your monitoring and testing efforts. By making continual improvements, your marketing tactics will drive increased conversions rates, generate more leads, and produce greater revenue.

The feedback and data you receive from your growth-driven design website will allow you to learn more about your visitors, and will in turn help inform and improve your marketing and sales strategies and tactics.

Now that you've rolled out your launch pad website, and maybe even made a few updates already, you can use your website to support your inbound marketing efforts, and vice versa.

Content creation

With GDD, you will be able to modify content on your website, update downloads and offers, and add new pages with fresh content. While you may make changes based on a hypothesis you've developed, GDD allows you to easily track the impact of the changes so you can determine what assets perform the best, and how you can develop many aspects of your site (blog posts, downloads, navigation, page copy, etc.) around them.

Conversion optimization

As we mentioned earlier, you can use targeted campaigns to highlight special offers and drive visitors to specific areas of your new website. A pay-per-click campaign that promotes one of your eBooks or white papers can be used to drive downloads and also give you an opportunity to analyze the design, placement, and text of your calls-to-action (CTAs), landing pages, and forms. GDD allows you to modify, shift, and revamp your assets to ensure that their design elements speak clearly to your visitors.

Social media integration

If your organization operates social media accounts, you want those to be integrated with your company website. This allows your customers to easily share your content and interact with your brand. GDD can help you determine the best placement of social icons and sharing buttons, as well as the content that your visitors find most engaging and are most interested in sharing— which can help you develop topics for your next blog post or download. You will also be able to see the social media outlets that your visitors prefer to use, which will allow you to better tailor and deliver future communications.

Metrics / accountability

One of the greatest benefits of the growth-driven design process is that it allows you to track every action item that you implement and make future decisions based on customized, comprehensible data. By watching heat maps, tracking clicks and downloads, measuring time on site and specific page views, among other metrics, GDD can help drive the direction of your website's content strategy, design structure, and visitor engagement opportunities.

About Inbound 281

WHO WE ARE

We are a digital marketing agency dedicated to helping our clients navigate the digital landscape, connect more meaningfully to their customers, and inspire their audience with purposeful content. We do this by leveraging inbound marketing and web design strategies for business, corporate, and enterprise marketers.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to use our inbound approach to develop leading-edge digital marketing plans, perceptive strategies, and valuable solutions to help you engage your customers with more two-way conversations and personal interactions to support revenue generation.

READY FOR A CONVERSATION?

If you are interested in a comprehensive plan that combines website design, email marketing, social media marketing, content development, and automation – or if you'd just like to learn more about how an inbound marketing plan can complement your established branding and communications strategies to meet your organization's unique needs – reach out and have a conversation with us.

Inbound281.com

TALK TO US