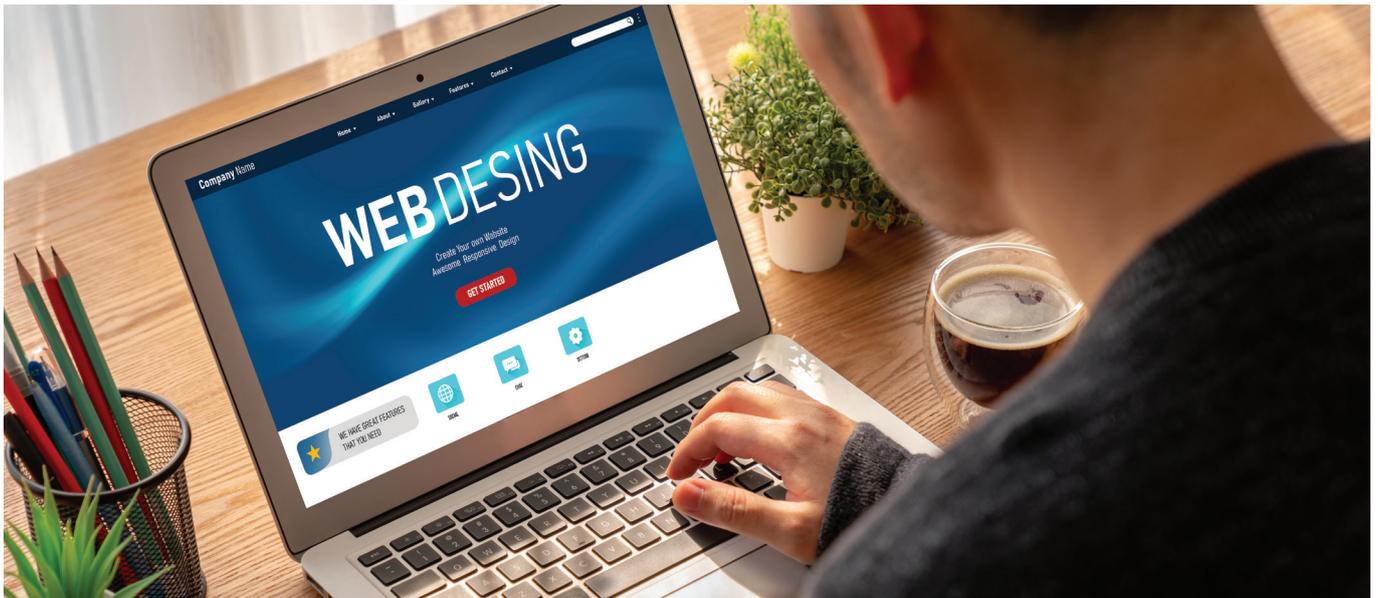


# SITE LAUNCH CHECKLIST

By now you understand that your website is critical to your company's success. It's your mothership for engagement and the control center for identifying behavior and making informed business decisions as related to your marketing. Whether you are building a new site or updating an existing environment, these steps will ensure your site is ready to rock & roll.

## STEP 1 COMPATIBILITY

A. There are hundreds of devices accessing the internet by browsers and applications across mobile, tablets, and computers. These devices also have a range of screen sizes and orientations. This means that the way you intended your website visitor to consume your content can and WILL vary depending on the device, browser, or screen resolution. While we want all users to have a great experience, we can't and don't want to, support old browser versions or devices / screen sizes with low adoption. It's for this reason that at Covert Communication we test compatibility on the most popular 10 resolutions using Chrome and Safari.



B. To test a site for compatibility you can use a third-party program or go the old fashion route and send links to a group of friends/family/coworkers using different devices and see how it goes. While common, the problem with the latter is that not everyone has the same set of expectations when viewing accessibility. Also, large sites can contain 50+ pages and all it takes is one image covering copy on a popular device to diminish results. The Covert Code has created an application which will scan your website and take pictures of every page in the most common resolutions for a nominal fee. To learn more visit [thecovertcode.com](http://thecovertcode.com) website products page.

## STEP 2 GOING LIVE CHECKLIST

### A. Contact Forms

1. Check all the settings to make sure that everyone on the team will receive the submissions.
2. Check the design of the submission and verify both customer facing and administrator view, i.e., when someone submits the “free quote form” the customer receives this email, and the admins receive this email.
3. For those firing records into a CRM, make sure that the automatic submission in WordPress or your CMS provider are off, if you are sending emails from your CRM. You don’t want the customer to receive multiple emails with the same messaging or varying designs.
4. WordPress Tip: Install the free version of CRM form to create a backup of all your form entries.

### B. On-Site SEO

1. All images should contain an ALT tag.
2. All pages and posts should contain a Meta Title, Meta Description and Meta Keyword. For more details visit the SEO cheat sheet documentation.
3. Optional but recommended – All buttons should contain ALT tag with a description on their purpose, i.e., this is a button that takes you to the free quote page.



### C. Remove The Junk

1. Remember that every page and element on your website can show in search results after you publish (even if they are in draft or unused in a media library).

Go through your site and delete all template pages/posts/FAQs/portfolio items. Repeat for the media library. Delete anything not used or not containing an Alt Tag. For example, if you have multiple logo size files and unsure which is being used where, leave them all in the media library but make sure each has a clear alt tag “your company name logo” so it will be given the right credit in search results.

2. Review plugins and remove those not being used. As best practice it is not recommended to allow plugins to update automatically. This should be done systematically to make sure you are in control so that if any updates break your site, you will know exactly what happened. Before updating plugins always make sure to back up your current site environment. WPengine.com makes this easy — ask your hosting provider to make sure you are protected. If you have a staging site, update plugins there first before updating them on the live environment for an additional layer of scrutiny.

## D. Check Every Link

1. Assign a third-party to read the site (every page) and click on EVERY link to make sure the destination is correct.

Note: The Covert Code shop also has a solution to provide a quick easy Excel download of all your links.

## 2. Active Links

All phone numbers, emails and locations should be active links. This means that the customer can 'click to call', 'click to open' an email or 'click to view' your GoogleMap location.

## E. Privacy & Policies

1. On your site footer you should clearly display a "Privacy Policy" and for those with businesses or customers who are residents of specific states or countries with heightened privacy rules in place, cookie preference, or extended policies for "Terms Of Service" / "CCPA policy" / "GDPR" or said information may be required by industry.

Examples In Education: CARES Act Data, Non-Discrimination Policy, SARA Agreement, FERPA Policy, Consumer Information, etc.

Example In Real Estate: DMCA Notice.

2. Always add your latest "updated privacy policy date" and make sure you have clear messaging on how to contact the company by email, phone, or physical mailing address. While it's not federally mandated yet, consumer privacy protocols are changing quickly and as a result companies will be required to exercise a formal response to any Subject Rights Request (SRR) indicating that they wish to be purged, updated, or that they are seeking information on what your company knows about them. To learn more about this topic read Anna Covert's Forbes Article in the annacovert.com news section: Article title – Consumer Privacy: How Universal Is Universal Consent?

## F. Accessibility

1. Make sure to Install a plugin that allows more users to consume your content as intended. Remember that approximately 20% of users are classified as disabled in some way, meaning they are color blind, visually impaired, or limbless. A variety of free plugins exist across all platforms and allow for 75% of all issues to be easily addressed. For many industries, professional guidance is a must as the rules and fines can vary.
2. Note: Regarding accessibility, currently the rules state that a company will have 30 days from a reported accessibility issue to resolve before it is subject to penalty.
3. Recommended Free WordPress Plugin: One Click Accessibility

## G. Marks

1. Make sure that you are displaying the appropriate licensing and verbiage on your site footer.

All sites should contain © (date) (your company name) | All Rights Reserved | Privacy Policy | Site Map

Contractors are required to display license numbers, the same is true for realtors and various other industries. Make sure you're compliant!

## H. Tags

1. Confirm that your Google Analytics G4 is set up and tracking correctly with events and conversions.
2. Create a list of all your third-party pixels and confirm that each is placed on the site or within GTM (and include conversion events).



## I. Page Sitemap

1. Have your sitemap show all pages in the site. You want to make sure that the links on your sitemap only reflect the pages you want to be navigable. Pages such as Thank You pages after form submissions should be excluded from the sitemap.
2. You can find several free plugins in Wordpress for auto generating a sitemap. Recommended Plugin - WP Sitemap Page

## J. Error 404 Redirects

1. You want to make sure that you either have a visually appealing 404 page for when customers may enter the wrong link to your site or if your site is being upgraded, previously indexed links that are no longer valid are redirected to a nice page with branded messaging.
2. Alternatively, you can redirect 404 errors to the homepage which is recommended but some industry discussion around this suggests that customers can be confused if they previously went to a link and now it is no longer available.

## K. Going Live

1. Make sure you have delegate access to the location of the domain and hosting (they might be the same or might not). You will point the A Record from the domain register to the hosting environment. Follow the guidelines provided by said companies.
2. NOTE!! Always be careful to make sure your company emails will not be affected. Depending on where they are hosted this can disrupt the system.
3. Depending on your register and hosting it can take up to 48 hours for the new site to “propagate” or be fully viewable world-wide. Or, it can be instantaneous or within a few hours. Be prepared for the worst! At Covert Communication we always launch sites on Friday after business closes for clients.
4. Once the site is live, resubmit every form from both desktop and mobile devices. Wait 24 hours and then confirm that these events / conversions fired in G4 as expected. Also make sure you receive email notifications as the customer and administrator.
5. Turn on the site to index (or crawlable a.k.a. on to search engines) and log into G4 and click on the Search Console integration to complete the site map submission.
6. Validate that all your URLs reference the new “live” domain and not your development environment domain, i.e., ‘<https://thecovertcode.wpenginepowered.com/>’ should be changed to <https://thecovertcode.com/>. In some cases, the dev domain will redirect to your live domain but that causes additional speed degradation. It’s recommended to run a find and replace’ for the dev domain and change to the live domain to maximize site performance. One tip: When embedding links on your site if you set the destination page to not have a domain, i.e. /site-page vs. the [fulldomain.devsite.com/site-page](https://fulldomain.devsite.com/site-page) this will save you a step as the domain will change to the live site when it goes live.

Congratulations! You have given birth to a beautiful new website. Remember that it can take time for your new site to be visible in search results. In general, you can expect a new website to start appearing in search results within a few days to a few weeks. Using tools like Google Search Console can help you monitor your website's indexing status and identify any issues that may be delaying the process. Once your site is live, the next step is to drive traffic (paid and organic) and begin your learning phase, i.e., of all the traffic we generated what percentage converted and over what period.