

How to refresh your website

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Introduction

Is your website feeling a little tired? Technology moves fast and even a website from a few years ago can start to feel a bit clunky in terms of functionality and design. Having recently redeveloped our [thrive](#) website, we wanted to share some tips and tricks so you can avoid some common pitfalls.

Refreshing your website isn't just about making things look nicer — it's about making sure your online presence truly reflects who you are now, not who you were five years ago. Whether you're a gallery, venue, museum, or festival, your website is often the first (and sometimes only) touchpoint for your audiences. In this toolkit, we'll show you how to approach a refresh with purpose, whether you're tackling it in-house or approaching an agency for help.

1. Take Inspiration

Before you dive into the nitty-gritty of a refresh, look around:

- What do you like about other websites?
- Which ones feel welcoming, easy to navigate, or exciting?
- Are there visual styles, structures or features that resonate?

Ask your team to share their favourite websites and try to identify what they like about them. This can go beyond arts and culture websites - what is it about that clothing website that makes it enjoyable to scroll through?

2. Declutter

When refreshing your website, think of it like moving house: if you carry over everything without thinking, you'll just end up with the same clutter in a new setting!

- Review every page. Is it still relevant? Does it serve a purpose?
- Archive or remove outdated event listings, long-forgotten blog posts, or broken links.
- Condense where you can: having fewer, more focused pages makes for better navigation.

3. Talk to Your Users

You might think you know what people need from your website, but have you ever asked them? It's never a good idea to make assumptions about your audience.

- Carry out quick user testing: ask a few honest people to try finding info (e.g. "When is the next family event?") and see where they get stuck.
- Set up a survey or feedback form on your site or social media.
- Review your site analytics: what pages get the most visits? Which ones have high bounce rates?

Goal: Understand what's working, what's not, and what your users actually *want* from you online.

4. Identify All The Problems

A website refresh might uncover other areas that need attention:

- **Are your visuals tired?** It might be time for new photography or video content.
- **Is your brand feeling all over the place?** Consider bringing in a graphic designer for new logos, brand colours and fonts.
- **Is your copy inconsistent or jargon-heavy?** It might be time to bring in a copywriter who can capture your voice.

Remember: Your website is the *shopfront*, but it reflects your whole organisation. A refresh is an opportunity to step back and reassess what story you're telling. [71% of transactions and 78% of donations](#) take place online so don't miss out on potential bookers by having your website let them down.

5. Write A Detailed Tender

If you need to outsource the project to a designer, having a tender which outlines exactly what you want will attract website designers who can deliver it and save everyone time in the long run. Consider:

- Your budget.
- Your proposed timeline.
- What problems on your existing site you would like a new site to solve.

- Do you want to stick with your current CMS? Do you have the time and resources to learn how to use a new one?

A CMS, or Content Management System, is a type of software that lets you build and manage a website without needing to write code from scratch. Some popular ones include WordPress, Craft, Squarespace and Wix. This is the software you'll use to add new content or make edits to your site.

6. Prioritise Accessibility

Accessibility isn't a nice-to-have, it's essential. It ensures your website can be accessed by everyone, on a wide range of devices. When planning your refresh:

- Use clear, readable fonts and good contrast.
- Add Alt Text to all images.
- Make sure your site works with screen readers.
- Use descriptive hyperlink text ("Find out more about our events" not just "Click here").
- Check your site's accessibility using free tools like [Contrast Checkers](#) and [Accessibility Checker](#).
- If you're working with a designer, make sure they are experienced in the latest best practice around accessible websites.

Tip: involve disabled people in your testing process where possible.

7. Go Live (Then Keep Going)

A website isn't a one-and-done project. Once your refreshed site is live:

- Keep testing and reviewing.
- Carve out time to check content is up to date.
- Keep listening to users and asking for feedback.
- Track engagement using Google Analytics to better understand how users are engaging with your website.
- Know who your point of contact is should something go wrong with your website.

Case Studies

The DIY Approach

The Oh Yeah Music Centre approached us as a grassroots music venue who manage their website entirely in-house, on a simple Squarespace platform. They wanted us to carry out a website audit and identify areas of improvement to drive traffic to their ticketed events, and to let people know they're the people behind Sound of Belfast and the NI Music Prize.

We provided them with a report which looked at analytics, user experience, accessibility, navigation and SEO.

By following our recommendations, Oh Yeah made a plan to refresh their website. They didn't need a big agency, they just needed a fresh pair of eyes and a plan.

Championing accessibility

The Millennium Forum is a large theatre venue in Derry which attracts international talent to its stage throughout the year. Their venue is really accessible and they work hard on inclusion in their local community groups. However, their website was letting them down when it came to accessibility.

We completed a website audit for them, with a particular focus on accessibility. We held focus groups with users, gathering useful feedback from real people.

After looking at our recommendations, they realised that to get to where they wanted to be with accessibility, they needed to go back to the drawing board. They approached a web designer and redid their entire website. While it's all great, we're particularly fond of the [Accessibility section](#).