

# How to create a user experience that generates leads



**The six factors that make up the best online user experiences.**

# Introduction

**Digital types love acronyms and abbreviations, and these are two of the big ones. UI, short for user interface, and UX, short for user experience, are a big deal for designers, developers and marketers.**

They're similar, but they're different. Simply put, a user interface is what a website looks like, while a user experience is what a website actually feels like to use, and the outcomes a user will reach.

It can be very easy to focus on the looks, and neglect what's going on underneath. Often, new websites come around because companies or brands want a new look and feel, but they haven't necessarily considered anything beyond that. After all, isn't what the site looks like the biggest part of a user's experience with it?

Well, it's a big part—but it's not the only part. When designing a truly great user experience—one that gives users exactly what they're looking for, makes a site perform well on search engines, and has the maximum potential to generate and convert leads—there's a lot more to think about!



**It can be very easy to focus on how a website looks and neglect what's going on underneath.**

# UX and UI are impossible to separate

**For a successful website, UX and UI are completely intertwined. It's difficult to have a good user experience without a good user interface. And a user interface that provides a bad experience can hardly be called a good one, no matter how pretty or flashy it is.**

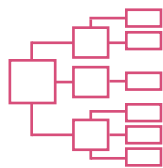
If you were to make a list of the essential components of a great experience, the interface would be right there at the top. But there's plenty of stuff underneath it, and neglecting everything under the surface will make for a fairly shallow experience.

**Here's what needs to be considered to make a great user experience:**



**1**

**The user interface**



**2**

**The requirements and sitemap**



**3**

**The content strategy**



**4**

**The user journey**



**5**

**Accessibility**



**6**

**Responsiveness**

There's a lot more there than just what the site looks like.

**Let's dig down into them one by one...**

# The user interface

# 1

There are a lot of things that make a good user interface. At its simplest, here's what a site needs to get right:

## The design

A site's design is the biggest part of the interface. What it looks like—the layout, the colours, the images. There's a lot to consider here, as design trends change all the time, and what people consider to be the most effective or attractive interface shifts pretty regularly.

The design really is one of the biggest elements of the user experience—but that's also when the trouble begins. Because the look and feel plays such a big role in the user's active engagement with the site—it's all they see, after all, and it's often the deciding factor as to whether they stick around or bounce straight off—it's easy to see it as the whole of the user experience.

## Copy

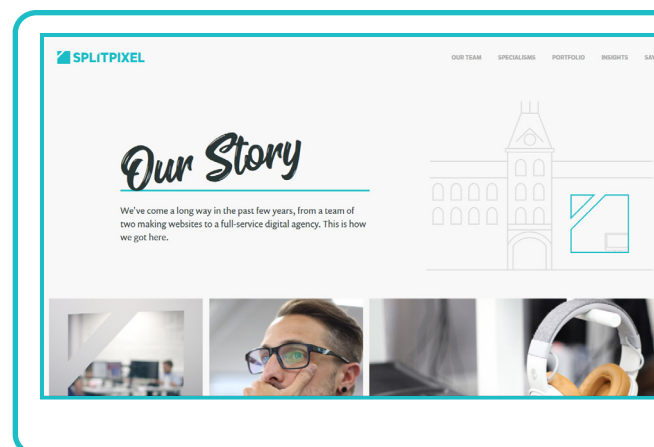
Websites need words. Even when trends move towards more visual, image-led designs, it's so essential not to forget about the copy on a website. Not everyone will read every single word on your site—so it's important to make sure there's enough there that people can get a good understanding from only reading a bit.

A website with a good user interface will have copy in readable fonts in legible colours, laid out in a way that's easy to read. The tone of voice used is a big part of the interface as well—it's the way your website speaks to the people that visit it.

## Interactivity

A slightly newer consideration in user interface design is interactivity. What tools the site presents to users to reach out and use it. How what you click, tap or swipe changes what you see on the screen. How the menus and navigation features work.

These elements of the user interface, once again, do have a lot of say in determining the user experience—more so than the design itself—but they're still not the whole story. When you stop at this point, you're still only looking at the surface.



# The requirements and sitemap

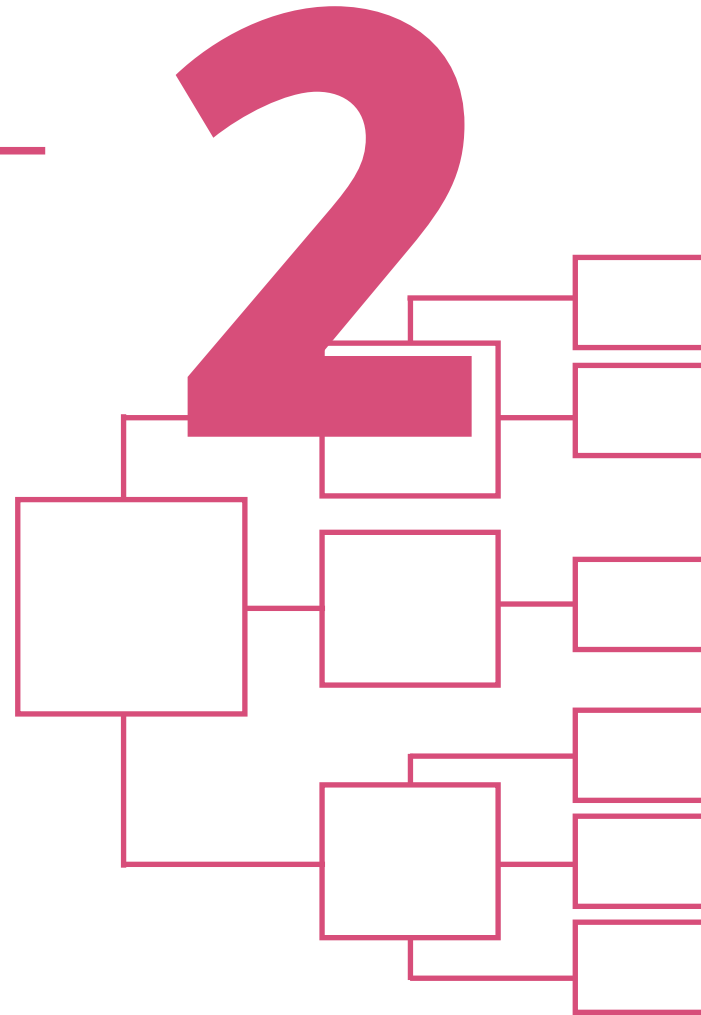
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A website brief is, more often than not, incredibly simple. Here are a few examples of what a client may ask a web agency for:

**“We need a new website so that customers can buy our products directly online.”**

**“Our services have changed a lot, so we want a new site that shows off what we do now.”**

**“We don’t get enough leads through the website, so we want a new one that helps us generate more.”**



This is the most basic description of the website. It tells us what the new site needs to do—and the next step is to come up with how it does it.

This is where the UX begins to be determined, as it needs to be an experience that encourages the desired action. So, what does the site need to achieve its goal?

The sitemap—the full list of pages and how they’ll be structured in menus—is a big part of this process. It sets out the pages required for a site to achieve its overall goals.

Each page on the sitemap will then have its own individual requirements, including the features, the information it needs to display, and the other pages it needs to link to, which will then need to be reflected in the interface design.

This is important to the user experience because it keeps a site focused on its goals, and on providing users with the necessary pages and tools to use the site for what it’s meant to be used for. A site that’s been designed just to look nice, without considering what each page is actually for, and what it needs to do it, won’t provide a very helpful user experience!

# The content strategy

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**Developing the sitemap is also the beginning of the site's content strategy. A website's content is often neglected in comparison to the design and interface, but it's arguably a much more important part of the experience of using a site.**

After all, a site that looks nice but doesn't actually tell you anything useful, or hides information away where it's difficult to find, isn't much good.

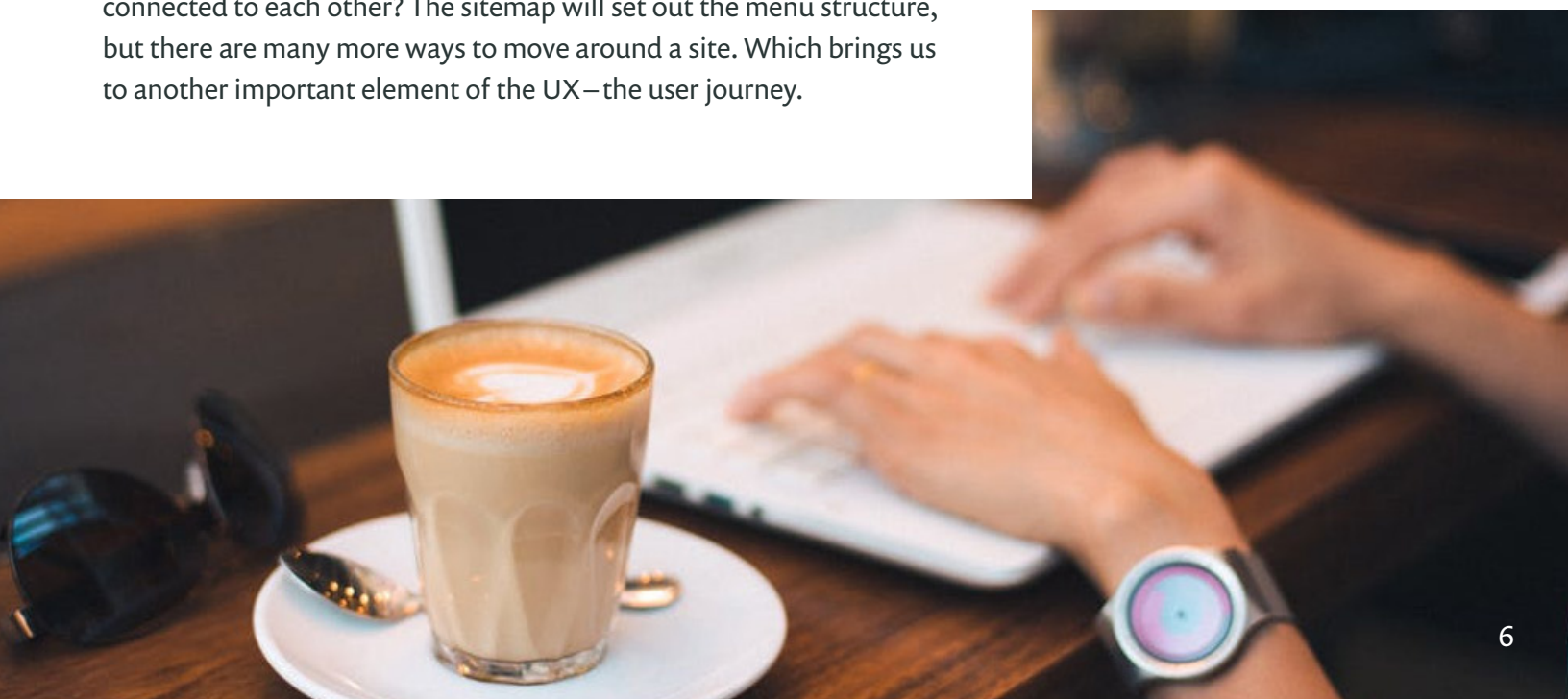
There are a lot of different elements to a website's content strategy. For example, each page will need individual keywords, to make sure people can find the relevant info when they're Googling. Long tail keywords will also need to be identified to give more context to why people are searching for a particular term—and pages will need to answer those queries.

Developing user personas is also an important part of content strategy. A user persona is essentially a profile of the people you want to be visiting your website—who they are, why they're visiting you, what they're looking for, and what will convince them to use your business. Developing content that serves these ideal customers will make it more likely that you will reach and influence them.

How the content directs people through the site is also a big part of the content strategy. What calls to action are there, and how are pages connected to each other? The sitemap will set out the menu structure, but there are many more ways to move around a site. Which brings us to another important element of the UX—the user journey.

# 3

**A website's content is often neglected in comparison to the design interface, but it's arguably a much more important part of the experience of using a site.**





# The user journey

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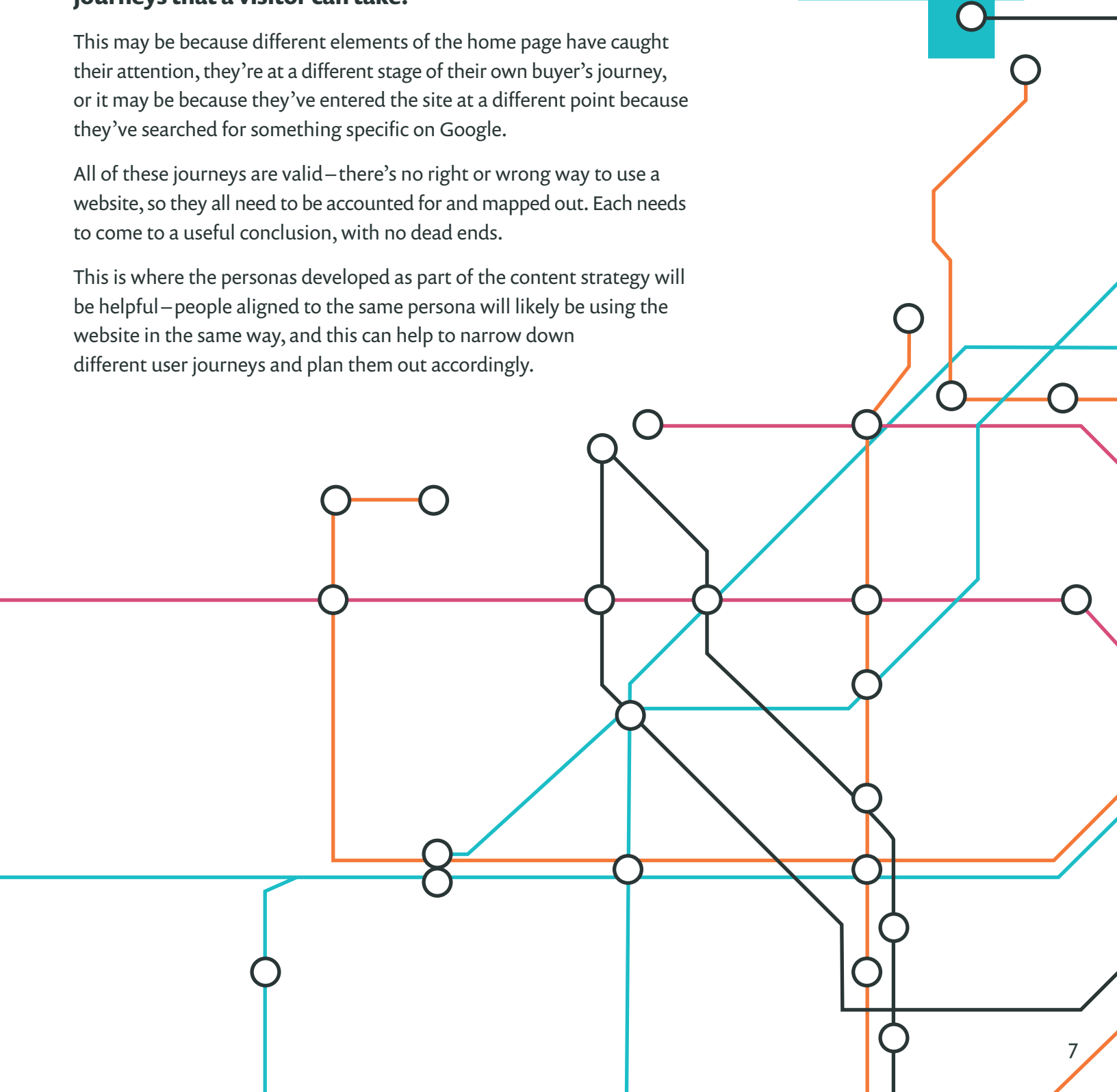
**The sitemap is more like a tube map than a treasure map – it's very rare that every user will move through the site in the exact same way, and there'll be many different journeys that a visitor can take.**

This may be because different elements of the home page have caught their attention, they're at a different stage of their own buyer's journey, or it may be because they've entered the site at a different point because they've searched for something specific on Google.

All of these journeys are valid – there's no right or wrong way to use a website, so they all need to be accounted for and mapped out. Each needs to come to a useful conclusion, with no dead ends.

This is where the personas developed as part of the content strategy will be helpful – people aligned to the same persona will likely be using the website in the same way, and this can help to narrow down different user journeys and plan them out accordingly.

# 4



# 5

## Accessibility

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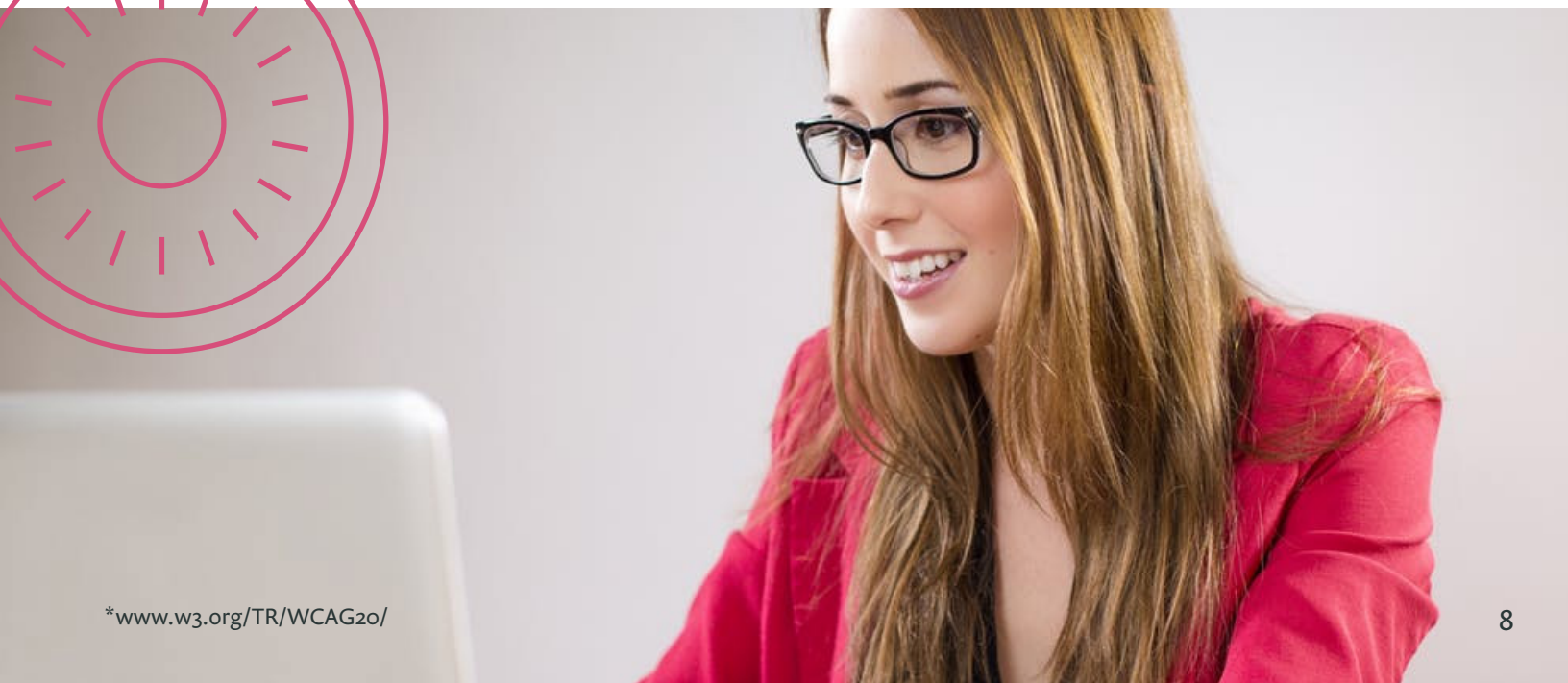
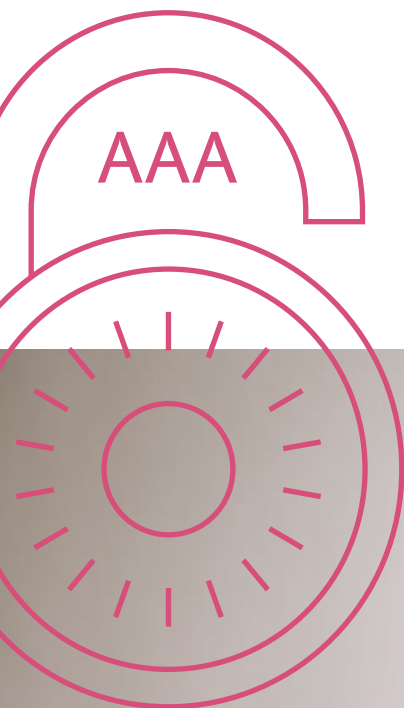
**A website needs to provide a good user experience for everyone. A lot of sites are unfortunately designed without the needs of people with disabilities in mind, which can make them quite limiting.**

There are guidelines to how web content should be presented so it's accessible to people with disabilities, and a site that meets all of them can be considered to have an AAA rating. You can read the [full guidelines here\\*](#).

Guidance includes avoiding flashing content that is known to cause seizures, providing alternate colour schemes to improve clarity, and using fonts that are easier to read for people with dyslexia.

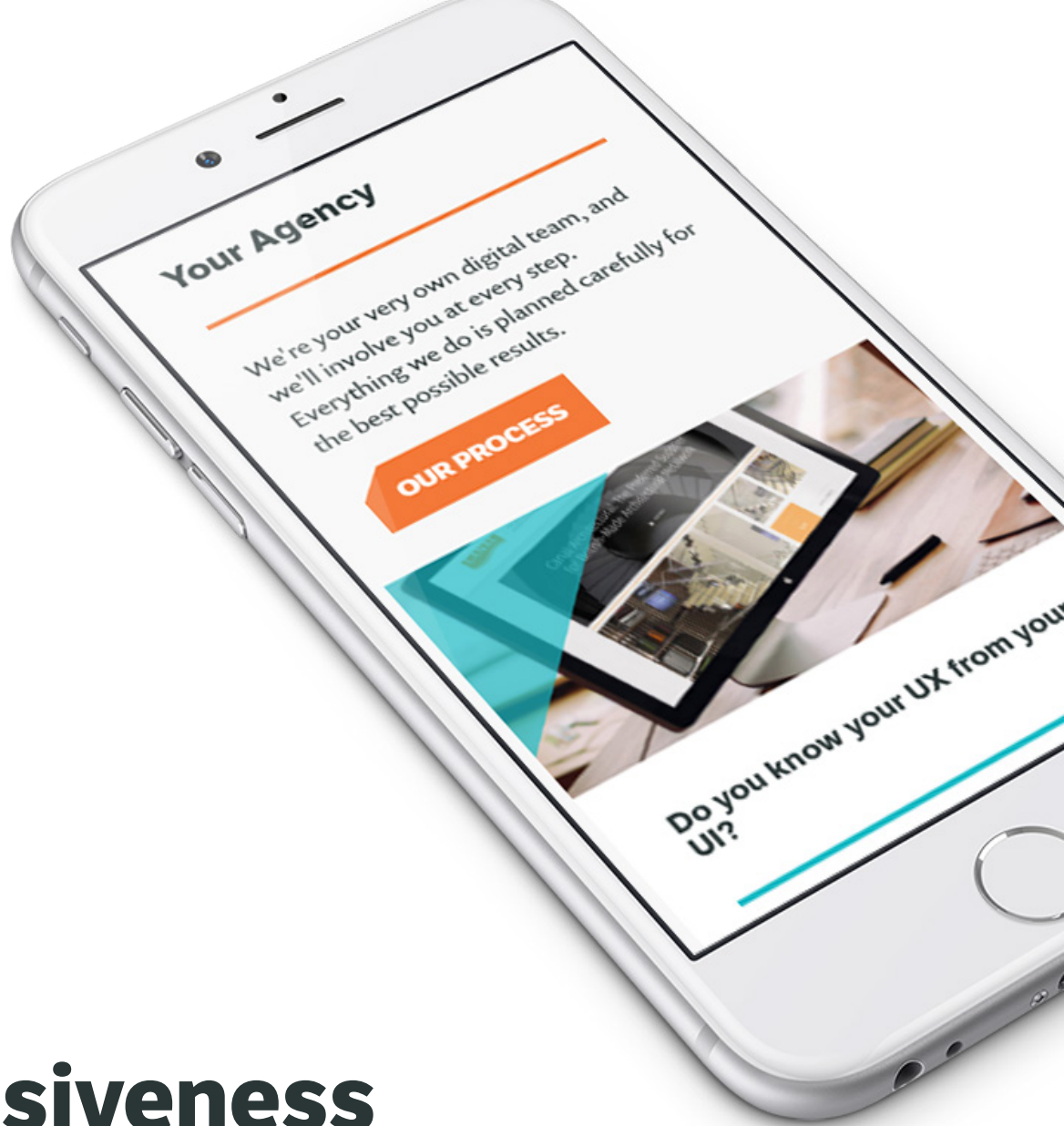
While a lot of these considerations usually come under the user interface, there's plenty behind the scenes, too, such as making sure that videos have subtitles, or that any non-text content has a text alternative.

These features aren't just useful for people with disabilities, either. Relying on sound to convey information, for example, might turn people off if they're working in a quiet office and don't have their headphones—really simple things like that. It's all about making sure a website is essentially just as helpful as possible—and why shouldn't that be a priority?



\*[www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/](http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/)





# 6

## Responsiveness

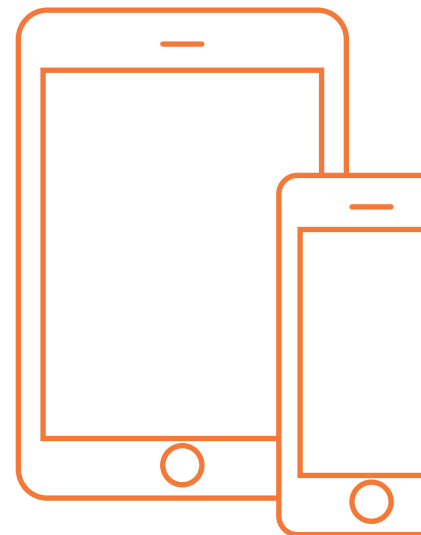
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**Just like a site needs to provide a good experience for every person, it also needs to provide a good experience on every device.**

That means making sure the interface is responsive, working equally as well on differently sized monitors, phones and tablets.

Mobile traffic in particular is constantly growing, but it's still neglected by so many sites. A lot of businesses simply don't care about how they look on mobile, because they assume that their customers don't visit them on handheld devices, and they'll neglect their mobile site.

But you know who does care? Google! Search engines are starting to penalise sites that don't provide a good mobile experience. And customers will always be visiting on mobile. It might be less of them, but giving them a good experience is no less important.



# UX goes beyond the screen



**It's not just mobile that takes a site beyond the computer screen these days. How a site integrates with social media, how easy it is to use the site to contact a company, how it relates to physical marketing, remarketing, and paid advertising – these are all key parts of a user experience now, and they need to be considered.**

# An interface informed by experience

**It should be pretty clear by now that you can't separate the user interface from the user experience. So, how do you design a user interface that keeps UX in mind?**

On the next page are a couple of things you can do to make things easier for the UI designer at different stages of the process.

# Heatmapping

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Heatmapping involves tracking visitors on a site and making a note of things they click on. Each click is displayed with a coloured dot, so more clicks means brighter colours, making it very easy to see what people are clicking on.

This is a really useful way to understand the way users are currently experiencing a website, and where the interface is failing to meet expectations.

For example, if people are clicking on a certain word or element that isn't a hyperlink, then it's clear that the element needs to direct people to a new page where they can learn more about the topic at hand.

Similarly, if a lot of people are going directly to a certain category from the homepage menu, then perhaps there's cause to represent that category more strongly on the homepage.

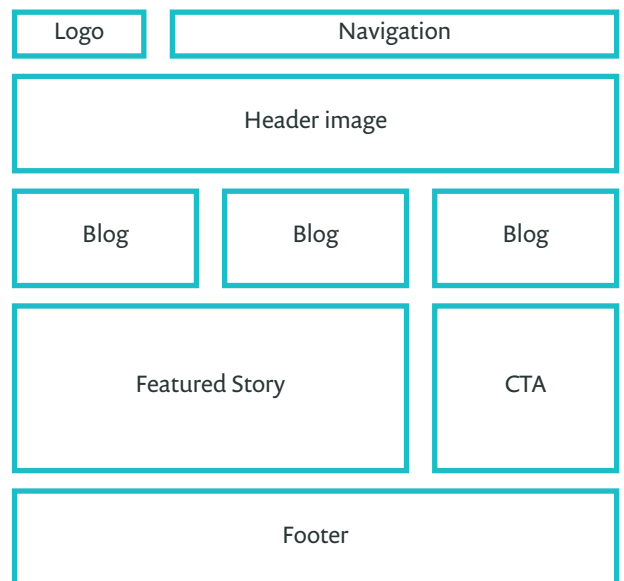
Simply put, heatmapping helps UX specialists to work out what people are interacting with on a site, and feed this to the designers to make sure it's represented in the UI. It needs to come early on in the process, usually while determining the website requirements.

# Wireframing

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Once website requirements have been worked out, it can be helpful for a content strategist to plan out how various features and content should be displayed on the page, providing guidelines for the UI designer and ensuring that no elements are left out.

A simple wireframe that shows a very basic layout and structure is a great starting point for the UI designer, and makes sure the whole process is all joined up.



# About Splitpixel

Founded in Yorkshire in 2008 as a team of three making websites, Splitpixel has grown over the past decade into a full-service digital agency that specialises in design, development and digital marketing.

We focus on creativity, customer service, and achieving good results for our clients. Honesty, good value, and helpful advice that's accessible to everyone has always been what we're about, right from the very start.

We're very proud to have worked with such a diverse range of businesses not just in Yorkshire, but across the whole of the UK. From SMEs to national blue-chip companies, we still aim to give everyone that same accessible service that we've provided all along.

So drop us a line - let's see what we can work on with you. We can't wait to get started!

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