

# Website Launch Checklist

Your go live cheat sheet for successful website launches.

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The planning and crafting of new websites doesn't happen overnight. It takes a considerable amount of design and development effort just to be ready to add content, create visual assets and refine the user experience of the site.

As you near the launch date for your project, there can be a mixture of relief and anxiety, with everything resting on a smooth and successful launch.

Here at SilverStripe we're well versed in building and successfully launching websites. We have put together a handy cheat sheet to ensure your launch goes smoothly—for you and your users.



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## Before You Launch Checklist:

1. Last minute content review
2. You're receiving analytics data
3. Plan B is in place
4. It's safe and secure
5. You have a phase two list
6. You've made peace with bugs
7. Final testing
8. Internal comms are in place
9. Old site links work
10. Channels for feedback
11. Error page exists and is styled
12. The perfect date

## ✓ Last minute content review

By this stage you've probably seen the content so many times you could recite it from memory. This is why it's a good idea to get a fresh set of eyes on your content before going live.

### Here are the basics to cover:

- Proofed by someone else—peer or external review
- Meets accessibility standards—this is a full project in itself and is ideally completed at the start of the project. For now you can check a few basics such as descriptive ALT tags on all your images.
- SEO and Google friendly—make sure your meta descriptions are informative and encourage your audience to take an action
- No hidden content—an easy mistake to make is to have a page in draft, or placeholder content appearing on a live site. Watch out for this!

## ✓ You're receiving analytics data

You may have had analytics running on your old site, but is it ready to roll on the new one? You don't want to miss a single nugget of that information, particularly with any launch traffic spikes.

You'll also want Google Webmaster tools working for the site, which you can use to submit your new sitemap to Google as well as identifying broken links and crawl errors. You can also consider Bing Webmaster tools to cover more than just Google.

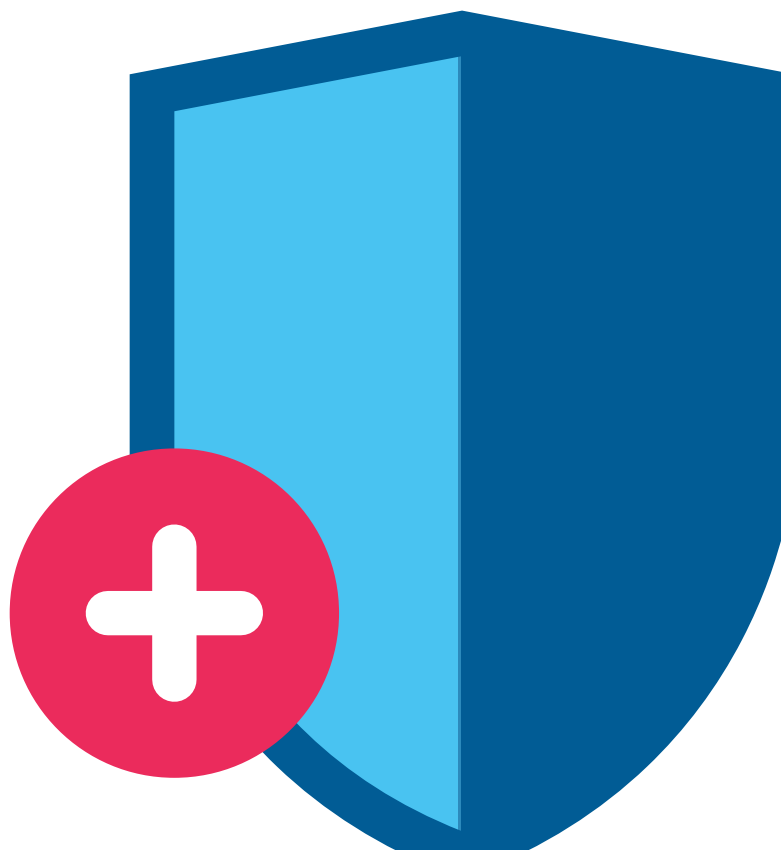
## ✓ Plan B is in place

Of course your new site is going to be a raging success, but just in case, it's a good idea to have a plan B in place if things go wrong (such as a crash).

We recommend taking some time (~2 hours) to consider the top 10 things that could go wrong at launch. You can then prioritise potential issues into Showstoppers, Likely and Unlikely and come up with proactive solutions accordingly.

## ✓ It's safe and secure

Your agency or development team will be the main ones responsible for your security and should have this covered. You'll want to make sure that the site content doesn't expose any sensitive information to the public and that your password isn't 1234! Now is also the time to switch out any debug modes, trial integrations, or test email addresses, so you're ready for real traffic and are handing off to actual business processes.



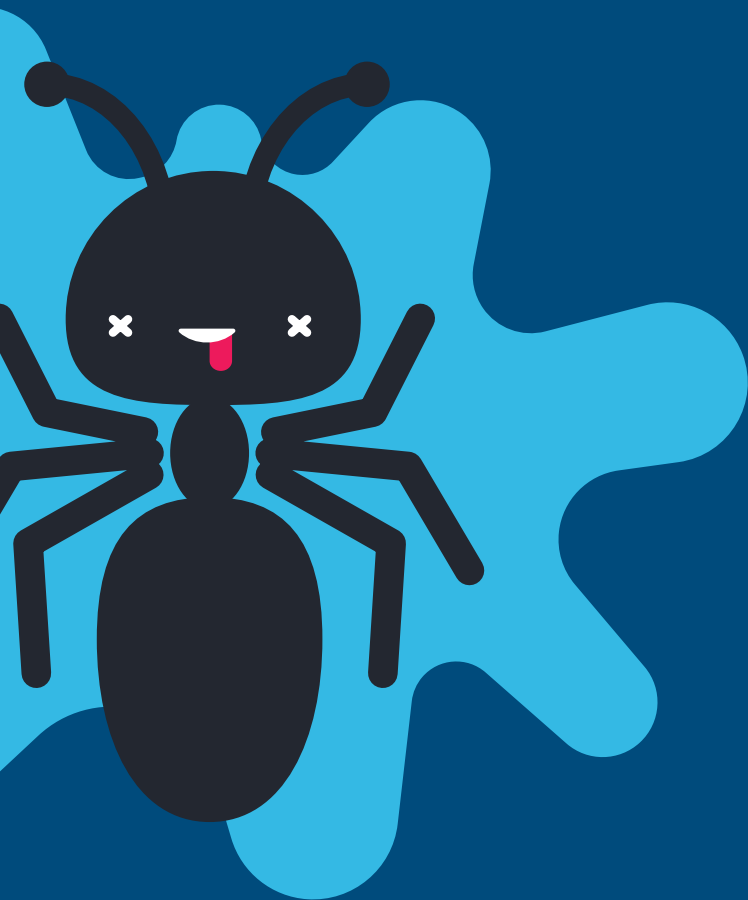
## ✓ You have a phase two list

As you open up your site up your 'real' audience, you will start to receive feedback and ideas. Make sure you have a phase two list ready to add to as launch kicks off. Treat your website as a living thing that will need improvements and further work.

## ✓ You've made peace with bugs

No matter how much you've tested your site, there will still be some bugs. Now is the time to make peace with this reality.

Non-critical bugs shouldn't stop you from going live. Make sure you have a way to track and report new bugs after launch.



## ✓ Final testing

Testing will vary depending on the size and resource for your site. Large government sites require test analysts and a significant chunk of project time. Smaller sites can be tested within your own team. This is still better than no testing at all.

### Some basics you'll want to cover:

Create a list of the key functions of your site (e.g. actions users can take such as purchasing or filling out a form), and have someone test those key functions, noting the results.

- Check results from the website, for example what emails or notifications are meant to be generated. Are all of these working and is all the text correct?
- Is your site responsive and mobile friendly? Think about different handheld devices, different browsers and different screen sizes.
- As you run your testing you'll want to consider and track the performance of the site.

Depending on the size of your site your digital agency will run a variety of tests. For a significant site with large amounts of traffic you will want to consider load testing, which simulates a significant number of visitors hitting your site at once to gather realistic data about expected load and response times.

## ✓ Internal comms are in place

A crucial step when launching any new project is an internal communications plan to ensure the whole organisation is the loop. Assume others outside of your team know nothing about the new site and so will need to know how to access information they need as well as the changeover process.

Often internal staff are your website's most frequent visitors. Neglect them and you can expect a flood of internal complaints.

## ✓ Old site links still work

If you're moving across from an old site then you'll want to ensure that any old URLs are still working for visitors. Your agency can guide you on how to set up 301 permanent redirects to your new content pages.

You can also set up the legacy website on a legacy domain (e.g. old.mysite.com) if possible. This makes it easier to refer back to existing functionality after launching the new site.

## ✓ Channels for feedback

The launch of a new site is the perfect time to make sure you're set up to receive feedback - both directly via the site and through other tools. Around launch time you'll want to keep an eye on your social media channels as they can be the first place users vent any frustrations.



## ✓ Error page exists and is styled

**People will encounter errors on your site so there are two things to check:**

1. They receive an 404 error page
2. It looks and sounds friendly. For this you can consider a custom 404 page.

*Tip: they don't have to be boring, SilverStripe's 404 page is both fun and informative*

It's also a good time to consider adding or updating an automatic site monitoring tool.

## ✓ The perfect date

Work with your development team to consider peak traffic times and flows. Don't forget about any advertising or large marketing campaigns that you may have for redirecting people to your website. Once you're live, consider when might be a good time to schedule the decommission of any old infrastructure you no longer need.

Good luck for the launch of your new project. We trust it will be a raging success and your Plan B only gathers dust in the drawer. Remember continuous improvement will be the main aim once your site is launched.

If you'd like to enlist the expertise of SilverStripe for your next digital project and website launch, let's talk!

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