

THE NORTHWAKE GUIDE TO B2B WEBSITE DESIGN

BUILT TO BE CHOSEN.

A practical, plain-English guide to planning, designing and launching a B2B website that **buyers understand, trust and act on.**

FOR MARKETING LEADS & FOUNDERS

18 sections · 2 checklists · no jargon

NORTHWAKE STUDIO

northwakestudio.com

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is for marketing leads and founders at B2B companies who are planning a new website, a redesign, or simply want their current site to work harder.

It brings together what we consider the essentials of a good B2B website, from positioning and page structure to performance, search, AI visibility, conversion and launch. It is written in plain English, without hype, and without invented statistics. Where we mention a specific standard or figure, we link to the source so you can check it yourself.

HOW TO USE IT

- **Read it front to back** before a redesign, to build a shared understanding across your team.
- **Dip into a section** when a specific question comes up.
- **Use the “Try this” exercises** to turn ideas into decisions.
- **Print the checklists** in Sections 17 and 18 and use them with whoever builds your site.

WHAT IS INSIDE

- 01 Start with clarity
- 02 Shape the site
- 03 Make it work for people
- 04 Get found
- 05 Turn visits into conversations
- 06 Plan, build, launch

ABOUT NORTHWAKE STUDIO

Northwake Studio is a premium B2B branding and website studio based in South Africa, working with clients internationally. The studio is founded and led by **Irene Erasmus**, Founder & Creative Director, who has more than 15 years of experience in web design and development. Irene works with AI tools as collaborators to move faster, while she personally leads and signs off every project.

This guide offers general guidance, not legal, financial or tax advice. Standards, platforms and regulations change; the sources cited were checked in October 2026.

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01

— PART 01 • FOUNDATIONS

START WITH CLARITY

01 Why B2B websites are different

02 Positioning & messaging

WHY B2B WEBSITES ARE DIFFERENT

A B2B website is rarely the place where a deal is closed. It is the place where a deal is quietly won or lost long before anyone picks up the phone.

Business buyers do not usually arrive, browse and buy in one sitting. They research, compare, share links with colleagues, disappear for weeks, then come back with a different question. By the time someone fills in your contact form, they may already have a shortlist, and your website has helped decide whether you are on it.

That changes what “good” looks like. A B2B site is less like a shop window and more like a well-prepared colleague who can answer hard questions, at any hour, for anyone who asks.

FIVE WAYS B2B IS DIFFERENT

01

MORE THAN ONE BUYER

A purchase often involves a user, a budget holder, a technical reviewer and sometimes procurement or legal. Each reads your site looking for something different.

02

LONGER DECISIONS

Considered purchases take time. Your site needs to be useful on the first visit and still useful on the fifth.

03

HIGHER PERCEIVED RISK

Choosing the wrong supplier can cost someone their credibility at work. Buyers look for evidence that you are safe to recommend.

04

COMPLEX OFFERS

Services, products and industries overlap. Clear structure matters more than clever design.

05

YOUR SITE IS CHECKED, NOT JUST VISITED

Prospects come back to your site after a meeting to check what they heard. So do their colleagues, and increasingly so do AI assistants summarising you.

06

CONVERSION IS A CONVERSATION

The goal is usually a qualified conversation, not an instant sale, so every page should make the next step feel easy and low-risk.

YOUR WEBSITE IS THE COLLEAGUE WHO IS ALWAYS IN THE ROOM WHEN YOU ARE NOT.

WHAT A B2B WEBSITE IS FOR

Before talking about design, agree on the job. For most B2B companies, the website has four jobs, in roughly this order:

1. **Make the offer instantly clear.** Who you help, what you do, and why it matters, in words a stranger understands.
2. **Earn trust.** Show evidence: real work, real people, honest detail.
3. **Help people decide.** Answer the questions buyers ask internally, such as scope, process, timelines and fit.
4. **Make contact easy.** Offer a clear, low-pressure next step for people at different stages.

If a design decision does not help with one of these four jobs, question it.

TRY THIS

List the three to five roles typically involved when a client buys from you. For each, write the one question they most need your website to answer. Keep the list. You will use it throughout this guide.

SECTION 02 · FOUNDATIONS

POSITIONING & MESSAGING

Most underperforming B2B websites do not have a design problem. They have a clarity problem that design has been asked to hide.

Positioning is the decision about who you are for, what you do for them and why you are the better choice. Messaging is how you put that into words. Get these right and the site becomes far easier to design, write and maintain. Skip them and you will end up debating colours when the real question is what you are actually saying.

THE CLARITY TEST

Show your homepage to someone outside your industry for five seconds, then ask them three questions:

- What does this company do?
- Who is it for?
- What should I do next?

If they hesitate on any of them, your messaging needs work before your visuals do.

SWAP VAGUE FOR SPECIFIC

VAGUE	SPECIFIC
"Innovative solutions for modern businesses"	Name the solution and the business. For example, "Payroll software for multi-site hospitality groups".
"We transform your digital journey"	Say what changes. For example, "We redesign and rebuild B2B websites so buyers understand your offer quickly."
"Passionate, client-focused team"	Show it. Describe how you work, who leads projects, and what clients can expect week to week.
"Industry-leading quality"	Point to the evidence: certifications, standards you meet, case studies, or the process that protects quality.

A SIMPLE MESSAGING FRAMEWORK

Who

AUDIENCE

The organisations and roles you serve best. Be specific enough that the wrong people self-select out.

What

OFFER

Your services or products in plain nouns. What someone actually receives.

Why

PROBLEM & OUTCOME

The situation clients are in before, and what is better afterwards, described honestly.

Why you

DIFFERENCE

Two or three genuine reasons to choose you. Things a competitor could not say with a straight face.

TRY THIS • THE ONE-LINE POSITIONING STATEMENT

Fill in the blanks and test it on a colleague:

We help [specific audience] **to** [achieve a specific outcome] **by** [your approach or offer], **unlike** [the usual alternative].

It will not appear on your homepage word for word, but every headline on the site should be traceable back to it.

TONE OF VOICE

B2B does not have to mean dull, but it should mean clear. A good B2B voice is confident without boasting, specific without jargon, and human without being overly casual. If you serve several countries, agree on one spelling standard and stick to it. Write for an intelligent reader in a hurry, possibly reading in a second language.

NORTHWAKE NOTE

We start every website project with positioning and messaging rather than layouts. It feels slower in week one and saves weeks later, because design reviews become “does this communicate our message?” rather than “do we like it?”.



02

PART 02 • STRUCTURE

SHAPE THE SITE

03 Site architecture & key pages

04 Homepage structure

05 Service pages that sell

06 Case studies & honest proof

SITE ARCHITECTURE & KEY PAGES

Good architecture means a visitor can predict where something lives before they click. It is the quiet backbone of usability, SEO and AI visibility.

START WITH HOW BUYERS THINK

Organise your site around the questions buyers bring, not your internal org chart. Buyers usually look for you by **what you do** (services or products), **who you do it for** (industries or roles), and **whether you are credible** (work, people, process). Your main navigation should reflect those routes.

THE CORE PAGES MOST B2B SITES NEED

PAGE	ITS JOB
Home	Orientate quickly, prove credibility and route people to the right next page.
Services / Products	An overview page plus one dedicated page for each core service or product.
Industries or audiences	Optional, but valuable if you serve distinct sectors with different needs or language.
Work / Case studies	Evidence. Real projects with context, approach and honest outcomes.
About	The people, the story, how you work and what you stand for. Often the second most visited page.
Process / How we work	Reduces perceived risk by showing what happens after someone gets in touch.
Insights / Resources	Articles, guides and answers that build trust and search visibility over time.
Contact	Simple, reassuring, with more than one way to get in touch.
Legal & trust	Privacy, cookies, terms, accessibility statement. Easy to find in the footer.

NAVIGATION PRINCIPLES

- **Keep the main menu short.** Five to seven top-level items is usually plenty. Use clear labels such as “Services” rather than inventive ones.
- **Make the primary call to action visible** in the header on every page.
- **Use the footer as a secondary map** for useful links that do not need to be in the main menu.
- **Keep URLs readable and stable**, for example */services/brand-strategy/*. Changing them later needs redirects.
- **Link between related pages.** Services to relevant case studies, case studies to the services involved, articles to the services they support.
- **Add breadcrumbs** on deeper sites so people (and search engines) understand where a page sits.

TRY THIS • THE SITEMAP ON ONE SHEET

Before any design, draw your proposed sitemap on a single page. If it does not fit, or if two pages would struggle to explain how they differ, simplify. Then check every page against the buyer questions you listed in Section 01.

HOMEPAGE STRUCTURE

Your homepage is a routing page and a first impression at the same time. It does not need to say everything. It needs to say the right things in the right order.

Many visitors will not land on your homepage at all; they will arrive on a service page or article from search. But the people who do arrive there are often the most important: referrals, prospects checking you out after a meeting, and colleagues who have been forwarded your name.

A DEPENDABLE RUNNING ORDER

This is not the only structure that works, but it is a reliable starting point for most B2B companies:

01 · HEADER	Logo, short navigation, one clear primary button
02 · HERO	What you do and for whom, in one line. A supporting sentence. One primary and one secondary action.
03 · CREDIBILITY STRIP	Client logos you have permission to use, accreditations, or sectors served
04 · THE PROBLEM	Show you understand the situation buyers are in
05 · WHAT YOU OFFER	Your core services or products, each linking to its own page
06 · PROOF	Two or three featured case studies with real context
07 · HOW IT WORKS	A simple process in three to five steps, to reduce perceived risk
08 · WHY YOU	Genuine differentiators, not generic values
09 · PEOPLE	Faces and names of who clients will actually work with
10 · USEFUL CONTENT	Latest insights or a resource for not-yet-ready visitors
11 · CLOSING CALL TO ACTION	Restate the next step and make it feel easy
12 · FOOTER	Contact details, secondary links, legal and trust pages

WRITING THE HERO

The hero headline carries more weight than any other line on your site. Aim for clarity first, personality second. A useful pattern is a plain headline that states what you do, supported by a sentence that names who it is for and why it matters. Avoid carousels; they split attention and the later slides are easy to miss.

CLARITY FIRST. PERSONALITY SECOND. NEVER THE OTHER WAY ROUND.

COMMON HOMEPAGE MISTAKES

- A headline that could belong to any company in any sector.
- Large decorative video or imagery that pushes the message below the fold and slows the page.
- Several competing calls to action of equal weight.
- Listing every service in full on the homepage instead of linking to dedicated pages.
- No people anywhere, which makes the business feel anonymous.

SECTION 05 • STRUCTURE

SERVICE PAGES THAT SELL

Service and product pages are where serious buyers spend their time. They are also the pages most likely to be found through search, so treat each one as a landing page in its own right.

A common mistake is a single “Services” page with a short paragraph for each offer. It is hard for buyers to evaluate and hard for search engines and AI tools to understand. Give each core service its own page with enough depth to answer real questions.

ANATOMY OF A STRONG SERVICE PAGE

01

PLAIN-ENGLISH HEADLINE

Name the service and the outcome. Readers should know within a line whether they are in the right place.

02

WHO IT IS FOR

Describe the situations and organisations it suits, and, where helpful, who it is not for.

03

WHAT IS INCLUDED

Deliverables, scope and typical stages. Specifics build more trust than adjectives.

04

HOW IT WORKS

Your process, who is involved on both sides and roughly how long things take.

05

PROOF

Relevant case studies or examples, linked directly, not just a generic portfolio link.

06

QUESTIONS ANSWERED

A short FAQ covering what buyers ask in sales calls: timelines, involvement, ownership, support.

07

HOW TO ENGAGE

Explain how pricing or budgeting works in principle, even if you do not publish figures.

08

NEXT STEP

One clear call to action that fits the page, plus a gentler alternative.

WRITE FOR THE WHOLE BUYING GROUP

Remember the roles you listed in Section 01. The person who will use your service wants to know it will make their work better. The budget holder wants confidence about value and risk. The technical reviewer wants detail. You can serve all three on one page with clear sub-headings, so each reader can jump to their part.

NORTHWAKE NOTE

The questions your sales team answers every week are the best brief for your service pages. Ask them for the ten most common ones before writing a word. If the page answers them honestly, it will do some of the selling before the first call.

INDUSTRY AND AUDIENCE PAGES

If you serve distinct sectors, dedicated industry pages let you speak their language, reference their regulations or pressures, and show sector-relevant work. Only create them where you have something specific to say. A page that swaps the industry name into otherwise identical copy helps no one.

SECTION 06 · STRUCTURE

CASE STUDIES & HONEST PROOF

B2B buyers are taking a risk on you. Evidence reduces that risk. But evidence only works if it is believable, and believable means specific and honest.

WHAT COUNTS AS PROOF

CASE STUDIES

The most persuasive format for considered purchases.

CLIENT LOGOS

Only with permission, and only for real clients.

TESTIMONIALS

Real words from named people, with consent.

CREDENTIALS

Accreditations, memberships and standards you genuinely hold.

PEOPLE

Real team photos, experience and bios.

PROCESS

Showing how you work is itself a form of proof.

A CASE STUDY STRUCTURE THAT WORKS

1. **Context.** Who the client is (or, if confidential, the type of organisation) and the situation they were in.
2. **Challenge.** What needed to change and why it mattered to them.
3. **Approach.** What you did and, importantly, why you made those choices.
4. **Outcome.** What changed. Use measured results only when they are real, verifiable and approved by the client.
5. **Visuals.** Screens, photos or diagrams of the actual work.
6. **Next step.** A link to the related service and a call to action.

BELIEVABLE BEATS IMPRESSIVE. EVERY TIME.

THE HONESTY RULES

- ☐ Never invent statistics, results, quotes or reviews. Beyond being wrong, it may break consumer protection and advertising rules in many markets.
- ☐ Get written permission before naming a client, showing their logo or quoting them.
- ☐ When you cannot share numbers, describe outcomes qualitatively and accurately, such as what the client can now do that they could not before.
- ☐ Date your case studies or keep them current, so old work is not presented as recent.
- ☐ Credit collaborators fairly when work was a joint effort.

TRY THIS

Choose your three strongest projects. For each, write one sentence for context, one for the challenge, one for the approach and one for the outcome. If you cannot write the outcome sentence honestly, that is a sign to contact the client for an update before publishing.



03

— PART 03 • EXPERIENCE

MAKE IT WORK FOR PEOPLE

07 UX, UI & accessibility

08 Designing for mobile

09 Performance & Core Web Vitals

UX, UI & ACCESSIBILITY

Good B2B design feels calm and obvious. Visitors should spend their attention on your ideas, not on working out how the site works.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES THAT HOLD UP

01

HIERARCHY

One clear focal point per section. Headings that can be scanned to get the gist of a page.

02

CONSISTENCY

Buttons, links and components that look and behave the same everywhere. A design system, even a small one.

03

READABLE TYPE

Comfortable body sizes, generous line height and line lengths that do not stretch across a wide screen.

04

PURPOSEFUL MOTION

Animation that guides attention or confirms an action. Respect visitors' "reduce motion" settings.

05

REAL IMAGERY

Your people, work and places where possible. Licensed stock used sparingly. Check the licence terms of any AI-generated imagery.

06

BRAND, APPLIED WITH RESTRAINT

A distinctive identity, used consistently, makes you memorable. Decoration for its own sake does not.

ACCESSIBILITY IS NOT OPTIONAL

Accessible websites work better for everyone: people with permanent disabilities, people with a temporary injury, people on a small screen in bright sunlight, and people using assistive technology or keyboard navigation. Accessibility also overlaps heavily with good SEO and with how machines read your content.

The recognised benchmark is the W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). The current version, WCAG 2.2, is a sensible target at level AA for most B2B websites. Legal requirements vary by country and sector, and some, such as the European Accessibility Act, apply to certain businesses and services. If you are unsure whether a law applies to you, take proper legal advice rather than assuming either way.

Sources: W3C, WCAG 2.2 · [w3.org/TR/WCAG22/](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/); W3C WAI overview · [w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag)

ACCESSIBILITY ESSENTIALS

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Text and background colours meet WCAG contrast requirements | ☐ Form fields with real labels, not just placeholder text |
| ☐ Meaningful alt text on informative images; empty alt on decorative ones | ☐ Error messages that explain how to fix the problem |
| ☐ One logical H1 per page and headings in order | ☐ Descriptive link text instead of "click here" |
| ☐ Everything usable with a keyboard alone | ☐ Captions or transcripts for video and audio |
| ☐ Visible focus states on links, buttons and fields | ☐ No information conveyed by colour alone |
| | ☐ Page language set correctly in the code |

- ☐ An accessibility statement in the footer

NORTHWAKE NOTE

Automated checkers are useful, but they only catch part of the picture. Before launch, try your key journeys using only a keyboard, then with a screen reader such as VoiceOver or NVDA. It is humbling and enormously valuable.

SECTION 08 • EXPERIENCE

DESIGNING FOR MOBILE

It is tempting to assume B2B buyers are always at a desk. Many are not. Research often starts on a phone between meetings and finishes on a laptop, and your site needs to work well in both places.

Google also primarily uses the mobile version of a site's content for indexing and ranking, a practice it calls mobile-first indexing. If something is missing or broken on mobile, it can affect how you are found, not just how you are experienced.

Source: Google Search Central, mobile-first indexing best practices · developers.google.com/search

MOBILE IS NOT A SHRUNKEN DESKTOP

Designing mobile first forces useful decisions. What is the single most important thing on this page? What can be shorter? Which content should be the same on every device, and which interactions need a different pattern on a small screen?

DO

Keep the same content on mobile and desktop. Use large, well-spaced tap targets. Make phone numbers and email addresses tappable. Keep forms short and use the right keyboard type for each field. Test on real devices.

AVOID

Intrusive pop-ups that cover content. Tiny text in diagrams and tables. Hover-only interactions. Heavy background video. Hiding important information behind too many accordions.

THE MOBILE SPOT CHECK

- ☐ Can you tell what the company does from the first screen on a phone?
- ☐ Is the main call to action easy to reach without hunting?
- ☐ Does the menu open, close and work with one thumb?
- ☐ Are tables, pricing grids or comparison content readable without zooming?
- ☐ Does the contact form work well, including validation and confirmation?
- ☐ Do images load at sensible sizes rather than full desktop resolution?
- ☐ Is it usable on a slower connection, for example on a train or at an event?

PERFORMANCE & CORE WEB VITALS

Speed is part of the design. A fast, stable site feels more trustworthy, is easier to use and gives search engines one less reason to hesitate.

Google's Core Web Vitals are a set of metrics that describe real visitors' experience of loading, responsiveness and visual stability. They are measured from real-world usage data and are assessed at the 75th percentile of page loads. They are a useful, shared language between marketing and developers.

METRIC	WHAT IT MEASURES	"GOOD" THRESHOLD
Largest Contentful Paint (LCP)	How quickly the main content appears	2.5 seconds or less
Interaction to Next Paint (INP)	How quickly the page responds when someone clicks, taps or types	200 milliseconds or less
Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS)	How much the layout jumps around while loading	0.1 or less

Source: web.dev, Web Vitals · web.dev/articles/vitals. INP replaced First Input Delay as a Core Web Vital in March 2024.

WHERE SPEED USUALLY GOES

- **Oversized images.** Serve modern formats such as WebP or AVIF, at the size they are displayed, and lazy-load images below the fold.
- **Too many third-party scripts.** Chat widgets, trackers, heatmaps and embeds add up. Audit them and remove what nobody uses.
- **Heavy themes and page builders.** Convenience can come with a lot of unused code.
- **Web fonts.** Limit families and weights, self-host where sensible and use a font-display strategy.
- **Hosting.** Good hosting, caching and a content delivery network make a real difference, especially for international audiences.
- **Layout shifts.** Reserve space for images, embeds and banners so content does not jump.

EVERY SCRIPT ON YOUR SITE SHOULD EARN ITS PLACE.

HOW TO MEASURE

Use **PageSpeed Insights** to see both lab results and, where there is enough traffic, real-user data. **Google Search Console** reports Core Web Vitals across your whole site. Lab scores are helpful for diagnosing problems, but real-user data is what reflects your visitors' experience. Treat a perfect lab score as a nice-to-have, not the goal.

TRY THIS

Run your homepage, your most important service page and your contact page through PageSpeed Insights on mobile. Note the three biggest suggested improvements for each and share them with whoever maintains your site.



04

— PART 04 • BEING FOUND

GET FOUND BY PEOPLE AND MACHINES

10 SEO basics for B2B

12 Content & blogging

11 GEO: visibility in AI search

SEO BASICS FOR B2B

Search engine optimisation is not a trick applied after launch. It is the result of a well-structured site with useful content that answers what your buyers are searching for.

B2B search is usually lower in volume and higher in value than consumer search. A handful of well-targeted pages that attract the right ten visitors a month can matter more than a popular article that attracts thousands of the wrong ones.

THE FOUNDATIONS

Research

KNOW THE LANGUAGE

Find the words buyers actually use, including problem-based searches, not just your internal service names.

Map

ONE TOPIC, ONE PAGE

Give each important topic a clear home so pages are not competing with each other.

On-page

TITLES & HEADINGS

A unique, descriptive title tag and meta description for every page, and headings that reflect the content.

Technical

CRAWLABLE & INDEXABLE

An XML sitemap, sensible robots rules, canonical tags, clean URLs and no broken links.

Links

INTERNAL LINKING

Connect related pages with descriptive link text so authority and context flow through the site.

Local & global

WHERE YOU WORK

A complete Google Business Profile where relevant, and a clear approach to country or language versions.

QUALITY SIGNALS

Google's guidance encourages "helpful, reliable, people-first content" and describes how its systems look for signals of experience, expertise, authoritativeness and trust, often shortened to E-E-A-T. For a B2B company this translates into practical steps: name your authors, show real credentials, cite sources, keep content up to date and be transparent about who you are.

Source: Google Search Central, Creating helpful, reliable, people-first content · developers.google.com/search

INTERNATIONAL SITES

If you sell into several countries, decide early whether you need separate country or language versions. If you do, use a consistent URL structure and hreflang annotations so search engines show the right version to the right audience. If you do not, one well-written English site with clear information about where you work is often enough.

NORTHWAKE NOTE

During a redesign, the single biggest SEO risk is changing URLs without redirecting the old ones. Keep a full list of existing URLs before you start, and map every one to its new home. See the redesign checklist in Section 17.

GEO: VISIBILITY IN AI SEARCH

Buyers increasingly ask AI assistants and AI-powered search features to explain options, compare suppliers and summarise companies. Generative engine optimisation (GEO) is the practice of making your site easy for those systems to understand, trust and cite.

This field is young and changing quickly, so be wary of anyone promising guaranteed results or secret techniques. The encouraging news is that the fundamentals overlap heavily with good SEO, accessibility and clear writing. Google states plainly that there are no additional requirements or special optimisations needed to appear in its AI Overviews or AI Mode beyond SEO best practice, and that you do not need new machine-readable files or special schema to appear there.

Source: Google Search Central, AI features and your website · developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/ai-features

WHAT HELPS AI SYSTEMS UNDERSTAND YOU

01

UNAMBIGUOUS POSITIONING

Say exactly what you do, for whom and where, in plain language and consistently across your site and profiles.

02

SELF-CONTAINED ANSWERS

Write sections that make sense on their own: a clear question as the heading, a direct answer, then the detail.

03

REAL TEXT, NOT IMAGES

Important information should be in HTML text, not baked into images, PDFs only, or hidden behind scripts.

04

ACCURATE STRUCTURED DATA

Schema.org markup such as Organization, Service, Article and FAQ, matching what is visible on the page.

05

VISIBLE EXPERTISE

Named authors, bios, credentials, dates and sources. The same signals that build human trust.

06

CONSISTENT FOOTPRINT

Your name, description and details should match across your site, LinkedIn, directories and profiles.

CRAWLERS AND ACCESS

AI tools can only use content they are allowed to reach. Check that your robots.txt, firewall or CDN settings are not blocking crawlers you want to allow. Some AI providers document separate crawlers for search features and for model training, which lets you make different choices for each. For example, OpenAI documents OAI-SearchBot and GPTBot separately. Decide your policy deliberately rather than by accident.

Source: OpenAI, Overview of OpenAI crawlers · platform.openai.com/docs/bots

A BALANCED WORD ON LLMS.TXT

llms.txt is a proposed convention for a plain-text file that summarises a site for large language models. It is cheap to add and may help some tools, but it is not a standard that all major providers have committed to using, and Google says it is not needed for its AI features. Treat it as optional, not as a strategy.

GEO IS MOSTLY **GOOD SEO AND CLEAR WRITING**, DONE CONSISTENTLY.

TRY THIS

Ask two or three AI assistants to describe your company, what you offer and who you serve. Note anything wrong, vague or missing, then check whether your own site states that information clearly. Repeat every few months.

SECTION 12 · BEING FOUND

CONTENT & BLOGGING

Content is how you show expertise before anyone has met you. Done well, it attracts the right visitors, supports sales conversations and gives AI systems something worth citing.

The goal is not volume. A small library of genuinely useful pieces, kept up to date, will outperform a stream of thin posts written to hit a quota.

BUILD AROUND TOPICS, NOT POSTS

Choose a few core topics that connect directly to what you sell. For each, create a substantial **pillar page** that covers the subject well, supported by focused articles that answer specific questions and link back to it. This structure helps readers go deeper and helps search engines understand where your expertise lies.

CONTENT THAT EARNS ITS KEEP IN B2B

ANSWERS

Honest responses to the questions prospects ask in sales calls.

GUIDES

Practical how-tos that show your thinking and method.

COMPARISONS

Fair explanations of options, including when you are not the right fit.

CASE STUDIES

Evidence in story form, linked to services.

POINTS OF VIEW

Considered opinions on where your industry is heading.

TOOLS

Checklists, templates and planners people keep and share.

WRITING HABITS THAT HELP

- Lead with the answer, then explain. Busy readers and AI summaries both reward it.
- Use descriptive headings that read like the questions people ask.
- Name the author and show their relevant experience.
- Show the date published and the date last reviewed.
- Cite reputable sources for any facts or figures, and link to them.
- End every piece with a relevant next step, such as a related service, guide or conversation.

USING AI TOOLS RESPONSIBLY

AI writing tools can speed up research, outlining and editing. They cannot supply your experience, your opinions or your clients' stories, and they can state errors with great confidence. Use them as collaborators, with a knowledgeable person checking every fact and owning the final word.

NORTHWAKE NOTE

We use AI tools in our own work in exactly this way: as capable collaborators that speed up the groundwork, while an experienced human leads the thinking and signs off everything that goes out. It is a good standard for any content your company publishes.

GATED OR OPEN?

Keep most content open so it can be found, read and shared. Reserve a short form for genuinely substantial resources, and ask for the minimum: usually a name and work email. Gating everything tends to hide your best thinking from the people you want to reach.



05

—— PART 05 • CONVERTING & MEASURING

TURN VISITS INTO CONVERSATIONS

13 Conversion paths & forms

14 Measurement & analytics

CONVERSION PATHS & FORMS

Conversion is not about tricks. It is about making the next step obvious, appropriate and easy for each visitor, whatever stage they are at.

OFFER MORE THAN ONE NEXT STEP

Not every visitor is ready to talk to sales. Give people options that match their readiness, and make each feel worthwhile.

READINESS	WHAT THEY NEED	SUITABLE NEXT STEPS
Exploring	Understanding of the problem and options	Read a guide, subscribe to updates, follow on LinkedIn
Comparing	Evidence and detail to build a shortlist	Case studies, process page, download a capability overview
Ready	A low-risk way to start a conversation	Book a call, request a proposal, contact a named person

CALLS TO ACTION THAT WORK

- **One primary action per page**, visually distinct and repeated at natural decision points.
- **Specific labels**. “Book a 30-minute call” sets clearer expectations than “Submit” or “Learn more”.
- **Reassurance nearby**. Who will reply, how quickly, and what happens next.
- **Contextual offers**. A service page might offer a related case study; an article might offer a related guide.

FORM DESIGN

Do

- ☐ Ask only what you need to respond well
- ☐ Use clear labels above fields
- ☐ Mark optional fields, not required ones, if most are required
- ☐ Explain errors in plain language
- ☐ Show a helpful confirmation with what happens next
- ☐ Link to your privacy notice

Avoid

- ☐ Long forms for a first conversation
- ☐ Placeholder text in place of labels
- ☐ Pre-ticked marketing consent boxes
- ☐ CAPTCHAs that block real people
- ☐ Generic “Thanks” pages that dead-end
- ☐ Sending enquiries to an unmonitored inbox

AFTER THE FORM: LEAD HANDLING

The best conversion path in the world fails if nobody follows up promptly. Agree these questions before launch:

- ☐ Who receives each type of enquiry, and who is their backup?
- ☐ What response time will you commit to, and is it stated on the site?
- ☐ Are submissions also stored in your CRM, not just sent by email?

- ☐ How will you check that notifications are not landing in spam?
- ☐ How will sales tell marketing which enquiries turned into real opportunities?

A FORM IS THE START OF A **RELATIONSHIP, NOT THE END OF A FUNNEL.**

SECTION 14 • MEASURING

MEASUREMENT & ANALYTICS

You cannot improve what you do not measure, but you also cannot act on everything you measure. Choose a few meaningful measures and review them regularly.

DECIDE WHAT SUCCESS MEANS FIRST

Before setting up tools, agree in writing what the website is meant to achieve over the next year. For most B2B companies, that comes down to a short list such as qualified enquiries, the quality of those enquiries, and visibility for the topics that matter. Everything else is diagnostic.

Outcome

BUSINESS MEASURES

Qualified enquiries, proposals requested, opportunities and revenue that can be traced back to the website.

Behaviour

ENGAGEMENT MEASURES

Which pages people read before enquiring, where they drop off, and which content leads to further visits.

Visibility

SEARCH & REFERRAL

Search impressions and clicks for priority topics, referral traffic, and traffic from AI assistants where it is identifiable.

Health

TECHNICAL MEASURES

Core Web Vitals, errors, broken links, uptime and form delivery.

A PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

TOOL TYPE	WHAT IT IS FOR
Web analytics	Traffic, sources, journeys and conversions. Google Analytics 4 is common; privacy-focused alternatives such as Plausible, Fathom or Matomo suit some companies better.
Google Search Console	How Google sees and indexes your site, search queries, and technical issues. Free and essential.
Bing Webmaster Tools	The equivalent for Bing, whose index also feeds some other search and AI experiences.
CRM	Connects website enquiries to real sales outcomes. This is where the most important numbers live.
Session insight tools	Heatmaps and recordings can reveal usability problems. Use sparingly, respect privacy and watch the performance cost.

PRIVACY AND CONSENT

Rules on cookies and tracking differ between the UK, EU, US, Australia and New Zealand, and they continue to change. In the UK and EU in particular, many non-essential cookies need consent. Choose analytics settings and a consent approach with your legal adviser, keep your privacy and cookie notices accurate, and remember that a consent banner affects how complete your data will be.

TRY THIS • THE MONTHLY 30-MINUTE REVIEW

1. How many qualified enquiries did the site produce, and from which sources?
2. Which pages did those people visit first?
3. What changed in search visibility for your priority topics?
4. Is anything broken or slower than it should be?
5. What is one improvement to make before next month?



06

— PART 06 • BUILDING & LAUNCHING

PLAN, BUILD, LAUNCH

15 Choosing a CMS

16 Planning your project

17 The redesign checklist

18 The launch checklist

CHOOSING A CMS

There is no single best platform. There is the platform that best fits your team, your content, your integrations and how much you want to maintain.

A content management system (CMS) decision lasts years, so make it on the basis of how you will actually work, not on what is fashionable. Start with questions, not product names.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER FIRST

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Who will update the site, and how often? | ☐ Who will handle updates, security and backups? |
| ☐ How much content is there, and how structured is it? | ☐ How important is raw performance and security exposure? |
| ☐ Which systems must it connect to (CRM, marketing automation, booking)? | ☐ Do you need approval workflows or user roles? |
| ☐ Do you need multiple languages or regions? | ☐ How easily could you move away from it later? |

THE MAIN OPTIONS, FAIRLY COMPARED

APPROACH	STRENGTHS	TRADE-OFFS
Static or hand-built site	Very fast, very secure, low hosting overhead, nothing to patch on the server. Ideal for focused marketing sites that change occasionally.	Content changes usually need a developer or a lightweight editing layer. Less suited to frequent publishing by non-technical teams.
WordPress	Mature, widely supported, huge ecosystem, familiar editing experience and easy to find help. Excellent for content-heavy sites.	Needs ongoing updates and security care. Plugins and page builders can add bloat if not managed carefully.
Hosted website builders (e.g. Webflow, Squarespace)	Visual editing, hosting and security handled for you. Quick to launch and update.	Platform fees and limits; less control over code and data portability; complex integrations can be harder.
Headless CMS (e.g. Sanity, Contentful, Storyblok) with a modern front end	Structured content, flexible front end, strong performance, content reusable across channels.	More development effort, more moving parts and a higher bar for maintenance. Usually overkill for small sites.

CHOOSE THE PLATFORM FOR THE TEAM THAT WILL LIVE WITH IT, NOT THE TEAM THAT BUILDS IT.

NORTHWAKE NOTE

We do not have a favourite platform for every project. For a focused B2B marketing site that changes a few times a month, a lean static build is often fast and low-maintenance. For a team publishing weekly with several editors, a well-built WordPress site may serve them better. The right answer depends on your answers to the questions above.

OWNERSHIP MATTERS

Whatever you choose, make sure your company owns the domain, hosting account, CMS login, analytics properties and code or design files. Keep a record of who has access. It is surprisingly common for businesses to discover they do not control their own website.

SECTION 16 · BUILDING

PLANNING YOUR PROJECT

Most website projects that struggle do so because of unclear scope, unclear decision-making or unclear content ownership, not because of design or code.

A TYPICAL PROJECT SHAPE

Phase 01 DISCOVER Goals, audiences, competitors, analytics review, stakeholder interviews.	Phase 02 DEFINE Positioning, messaging, sitemap, content plan, technical approach.	Phase 03 DESIGN Key page layouts, design system, prototypes, reviews.
Phase 04 BUILD Development, CMS set-up, content entry, integrations.	Phase 05 TEST & LAUNCH Quality checks, accessibility, redirects, go-live.	Phase 06 IMPROVE Measure, learn and refine after launch.

SCOPE

Write down what is included and, just as importantly, what is not. A good scope lists the pages or templates, who writes the copy, who supplies imagery, which integrations are needed, how many rounds of feedback are planned and what support looks like after launch.

BUDGET

Website budgets vary widely depending on scope, content, complexity and who is doing the work. Rather than starting from a number you have seen elsewhere, decide what the site needs to achieve and what it is worth to the business, then share a realistic range with potential partners. A good partner will tell you honestly what is achievable within it, and what to prioritise if it is tight. Remember to budget for ongoing hosting, maintenance and content, not just the build.

AN AGREED LAUNCH DATE

Agree a launch date at the start and work backwards from it. Then protect it by agreeing:

- ☐ One named decision-maker on your side, with authority to approve
- ☐ Feedback turnaround times for both sides
- ☐ Deadlines for content, images and access to existing systems
- ☐ What happens to the date if inputs arrive late

☐ Any fixed external dates, such as an event, product launch or rebrand

CONTENT IS USUALLY THE CRITICAL PATH. START IT FIRST.

QUESTIONS TO ASK A POTENTIAL PARTNER

- Who will actually lead and work on our project, and who signs off the work?
- How do you approach positioning and content, not just design?
- How do you handle accessibility, performance and SEO during the build?
- How do you protect search visibility during a redesign?
- Will we own everything at the end, including code, designs and accounts?
- What support do you offer after launch?
- How do you use AI tools, and how is quality checked?

TRY THIS · THE ONE-PAGE BRIEF

Write a single page covering: why now, what success looks like in twelve months, who the audiences are, what must be kept, what must change, constraints, decision-maker, budget range and target launch date. It will sharpen your thinking and lead to better proposals.

THE REDESIGN CHECKLIST

Use this before and during a redesign. It protects what is already working while you improve everything else.

BEFORE YOU START

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Goals for the new site agreed and written down | ☐ Search Console and analytics access confirmed for the project team |
| ☐ Current analytics reviewed: top pages, entry pages, converting pages | ☐ Ownership of domain, DNS, hosting and CMS confirmed |
| ☐ Full list of existing URLs exported, including blog posts and PDFs | ☐ Integrations listed: forms, CRM, chat, booking, tracking |
| ☐ Pages that rank well or attract links identified and flagged to keep | ☐ Stakeholders and the single decision-maker named |

STRATEGY & CONTENT

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Positioning and messaging agreed before design starts | ☐ Copywriting owner and deadlines agreed |
| ☐ New sitemap mapped against buyer questions | ☐ Case studies updated and client permissions confirmed |
| ☐ Content audit complete: keep, improve, merge or remove | ☐ Imagery sourced with correct licences |

DESIGN & BUILD

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Key templates designed mobile-first | ☐ Structured data planned for organisation, services and articles |
| ☐ Design system covers type, colour, buttons, forms and components | ☐ Redirect map from every old URL to its best new equivalent |
| ☐ Colour contrast and focus states checked against WCAG 2.2 AA | ☐ Privacy, cookie and accessibility statements reviewed |
| ☐ Performance budget agreed for images, fonts and scripts | ☐ Staging site protected from search engines until launch |

THE LAUNCH CHECKLIST

Launch day should be calm. Work through this list on the staging site, then again on the live site straight after going live.

CONTENT & QUALITY

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ All copy proofread, with consistent spelling and tone | ☐ Contact details, addresses and company information correct |
| ☐ No placeholder text, test pages or dummy images | ☐ Legal pages live and linked in the footer |
| ☐ Every link works, including footer, social and PDF links | |

TECHNICAL

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Redirects live and tested from old URLs | ☐ Canonical tags, robots.txt and structured data validated |
| ☐ Search engine blocking from staging removed on the live site | ☐ SSL certificate active and all pages served over HTTPS |
| ☐ XML sitemap live and submitted in Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools | ☐ Social sharing images and favicons in place |
| ☐ Unique title tags and meta descriptions on every page | ☐ Custom 404 page that helps people find their way |
| | ☐ Backups and uptime monitoring switched on |

EXPERIENCE & CONVERSION

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Tested on real phones, tablets and desktop browsers | ☐ Every form tested end to end, including notifications and CRM |
| ☐ Keyboard and screen reader spot checks on key journeys | ☐ Thank-you pages and confirmation emails working |
| ☐ Core Web Vitals checked on key templates | ☐ Analytics, conversion tracking and consent banner working together |

THE FIRST 30 DAYS

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Watch Search Console for crawl errors and 404s, and fix them quickly | ☐ Gather feedback from sales and from a few trusted clients |
| ☐ Compare enquiries and key page traffic with the period before launch | ☐ Agree a short list of improvements for the next quarter |



— LET'S TALK

READY FOR A WEBSITE THAT GETS YOU CHOSEN?

If this guide has raised questions about your own website, or you are planning a new one, we would be glad to talk it through. Book a 30-minute intro call with Irene. We will talk about where you are now, what you want your website to achieve, and whether Northwake Studio is the right fit. No hard sell, just a useful conversation.

BOOK A 30-MINUTE INTRO CALL →

northwakestudio.com/contact.html#call

CLARITY

Positioning and messaging that make your offer obvious.

CRAFT

Distinctive B2B brand and website design, built properly.

CARE

Senior leadership on every project, from first call to launch.



NORTHWAKE
S T U D I O

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