

Name _____

Project _____



Workbook

Take your online store back to school with a series of questions,
exercises and space for creative thinking





Introduction

This workbook will help you improve your online store by guiding you through short activities for thinking and planning.

These are presented through a combination of pages that can be edited directly in a pdf viewer (such as the free-to-use [Adobe Reader](#)) and pages that should be printed and annotated by hand.

If you see questions on a purple page background like this one, you're viewing an editable PDF page and you can type directly into the text boxes.



When there is a Print me! icon, this indicates that you should print out the page and annotate it by hand. You can print as many copies of these pages as you need.

You might prefer to print the entire workbook and keep it as a physical resource. It's your workbook to use how you like.

However you choose to work through this resource, our aim is to encourage creative thinking and introduce practical steps for evolving your online store.

1. Do you really need a new store?

If you're wondering about rebuilding your website or online shop, we're here to remind you that perhaps you don't need to. Perhaps you can improve your existing one.

Common thinking about how to tackle problems with an existing eCommerce store often advocates scrapping everything and starting from scratch. Counter to this, we've developed a model that makes websites work harder and perform better over time with monthly improvements, rather than with a complete rebuild.

We call it **Always Evolving®**.

This could come in the form of a fresher look and feel, a more accessible and usable site, new features or functionality, and the list goes on.

Find out more by visiting the 'How we work' page on our website:
atomicmash.co.uk/always-evolving-wordpress

That's not to say a new website project isn't for right you. Not sure which path to take? Use the methodology checklist opposite to explore your options.

i This workbook is tailored to businesses looking for long term evolution of their online store, but there will be useful nuggets for everyone.

1. Methodology checklist

Tick the statements that feel truest to you. Tick all that apply regardless of which column they sit in.

If all of the boxes you choose are in the left column, you'll most likely need a full site rebuild. This might be because you need a complete overhaul of your website or need to change technology.

If all of the boxes you choose are in the right column, you'll most likely benefit more from a WordPress and WooCommerce site that develops over time instead of a new website. Our Always Evolving approach.

If you choose statements from both columns, you will most likely benefit from a new site build that moves into the Always Evolving model after launch.

About you	<input type="checkbox"/> I have little time to allocate to my online store	<input type="checkbox"/> I prefer a collaborative way of working
	<input type="checkbox"/> I want my website development team to take the lead	<input type="checkbox"/> I believe that solving small problems can tackle big challenges
About your business	<input type="checkbox"/> My business does not change much over time	<input type="checkbox"/> My business is a high growth business
		<input type="checkbox"/> We regularly interpret user feedback to ensure we meet user needs
		<input type="checkbox"/> We quickly adapt to changing customer behaviour and expectations
		<input type="checkbox"/> We introduce new business models, such as subscriptions
		<input type="checkbox"/> We change or progress company culture, policies and priorities
	<input type="checkbox"/> We regularly introduce new service or product ranges	
About your website	<input type="checkbox"/> The website needs a complete rebuild and overhaul with changes rolled out in one go	<input type="checkbox"/> The website is built using WordPress and WooCommerce
	<input type="checkbox"/> The website is built using technology that is not WordPress	<input type="checkbox"/> The website regularly needs new features, extended functionality, refreshed design, audits and improvements
		<input type="checkbox"/> The website requires regular performance optimisation for better site speed, UX and SEO

2. Consider your journey

This is where the big-picture thinking happens. To help your site evolve, consider your goals, challenges and the team you want involved. Repeat this exercise once per quarter so you can reassess.

- 1 Pull together your A-team.**
Who should be involved with planning how your website evolves?

Name / Title

Responsibilities

Name / Title

Responsibilities

Name / Title

Responsibilities

- 2 What do you want from your online store?**
Write down your three main goals for your website.

Goal one

Goal two

Goal three

- 3 What challenges do you face?**
Write down one key challenge your organisation is facing and consider how your website project might provide the solution.

- 4 What does success look like?**
Step back and consider your website as a whole. What would make it a success?

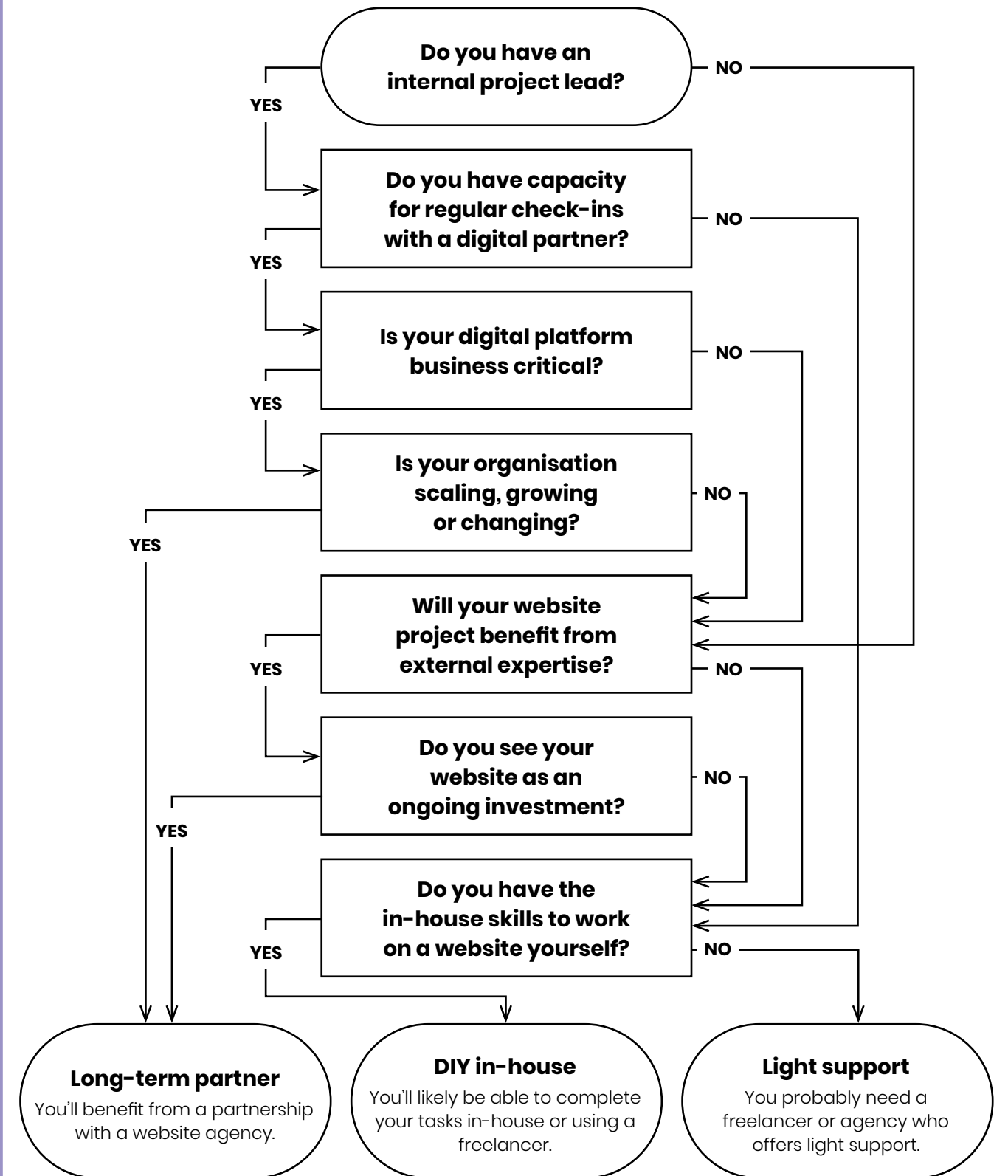
3. Finding the right digital partner

It can be challenging to find the right website agency to work with. Tick the words or phrases that best describe what you want from your ideal digital partner.

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reliable | <input type="checkbox"/> Transparent | <input type="checkbox"/> Dedicated | <input type="checkbox"/> Progressive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Value for money | <input type="checkbox"/> Good communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Fast response times | <input type="checkbox"/> Forward thinking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traditional | <input type="checkbox"/> Innovative | <input type="checkbox"/> Supportive | <input type="checkbox"/> Creative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technical expertise | <input type="checkbox"/> Proactive with ideas | <input type="checkbox"/> Good track record | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry experience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aligned values | | <input type="checkbox"/> Competitive offering | |

3. Decision map

Use this diagram to explore what type of support you need for your digital project.



i If you're looking for a long-term partner, Atomic Smash could be a great fit.

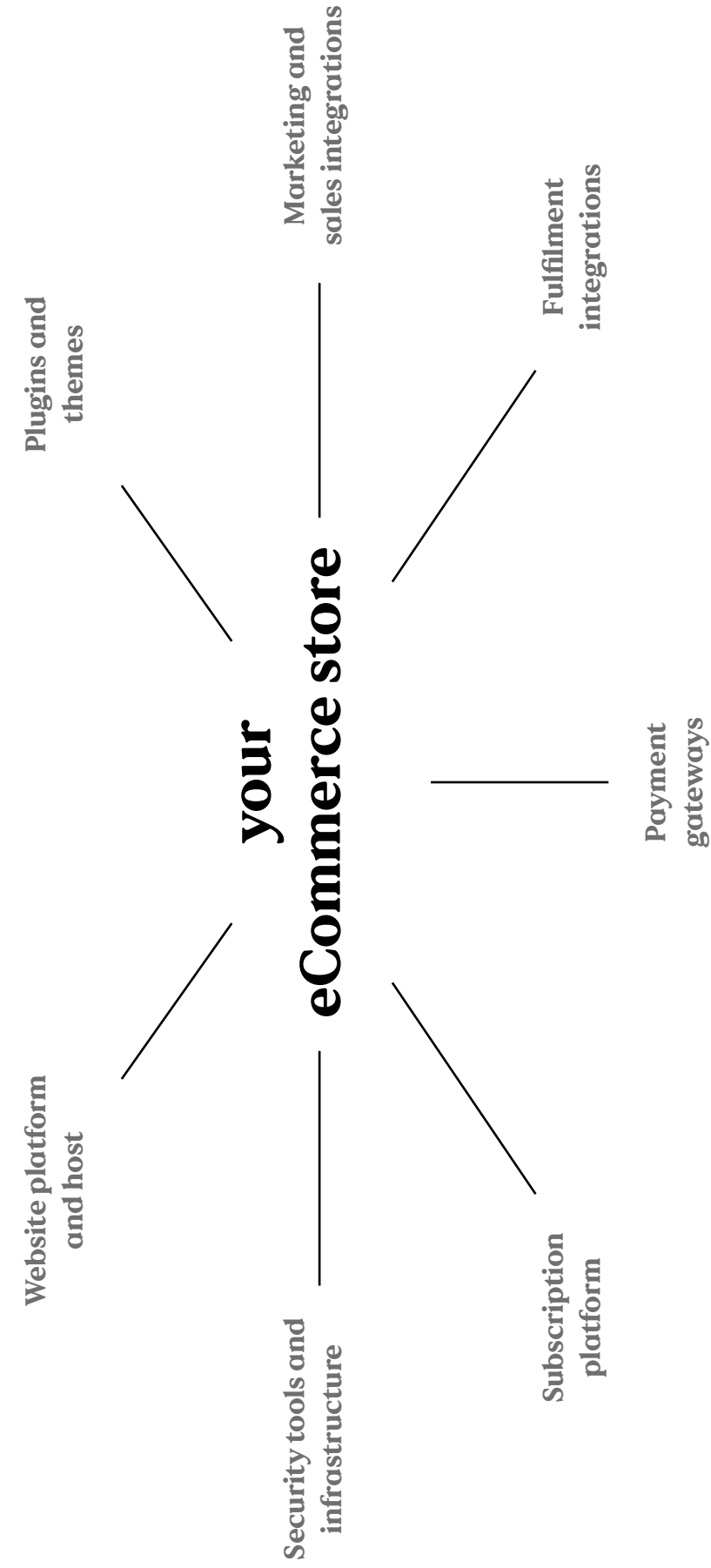
4. Uncovering the unknowns

Digital projects typically have a lot of unknowns, but a good agency will work closely with you to uncover these.

To get off to a good start, create a mind map of useful information to share with a technical expert. We've started you off with some useful prompts 🖋️



4. Mind map: Uncovering the unknowns



5. Knowing your audience

It's crucial that you understand your audience if you want to meet their needs, solve their problems and demonstrate that your products or services are useful and valuable to them.

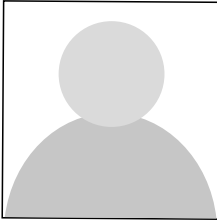
Your online store should be presented in a way that connects with your target audience, tells them your brand and products are worthy of their attention and motivates them to take action.

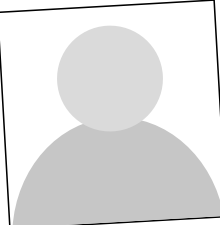
In this section:

- ☐ User personas
- ☐ Empathy maps

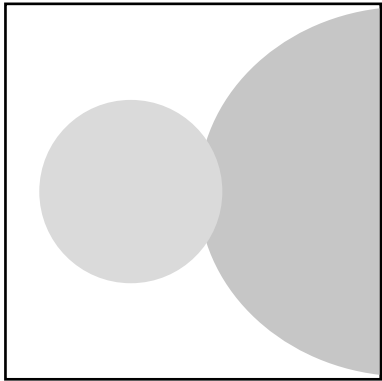
5a. User personas

Personas are detailed descriptions that represent your target audience and help you gain a deeper understanding of the customers you are trying to reach. They are fictional profiles but they work best when they are based on real data gained through knowledge of an existing customer base or through market research. Use the template overleaf to create your own.

	Name: <u>Dennis Eagle</u>	Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Buying a new smart watch- Wants to know the store that can deliver in less than 48 hours- Clear info on returns policy
Demographic Age: <u>41</u> Location: <u>London</u>	Quote: <u>"I'm too busy to browse a complex range of products. I want a simple overview with the benefits clearly laid out."</u>	
	Traits	Frustrations

	Name: <u>Janet Smith</u>	Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Wants to buy a gift for her new granddaughter- Wants to browse a number of products- Looking for easy comparison features- Clear information on age suitability																				
Demographic Age: <u>62</u> Location: <u>South West</u> Occupation: <u>Retired</u>	Quote: <u>"I find buying online a little confusing. I like sites that work well on my iPad and which look professional and reputable."</u>																					
Primary device Desktop / Mobile / <u>Tablet</u>	Traits <table><tr><td>Experimental</td><td>_____</td><td>✕</td><td>Loyal</td></tr><tr><td>Thinking</td><td>_____</td><td>✕</td><td>Feeling</td></tr><tr><td>Busy</td><td>_____</td><td>✕</td><td>Time-rich</td></tr><tr><td>Disorderly</td><td>_____</td><td>✕</td><td>Organised</td></tr><tr><td>On a budget</td><td>_____</td><td>✕</td><td>Money no object</td></tr></table>	Experimental	_____	✕	Loyal	Thinking	_____	✕	Feeling	Busy	_____	✕	Time-rich	Disorderly	_____	✕	Organised	On a budget	_____	✕	Money no object	Frustrations <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Doesn't like pop-ups- Website text which is too small- Complicated navigation- When shipping costs are not immediately obvious
Experimental	_____	✕	Loyal																			
Thinking	_____	✕	Feeling																			
Busy	_____	✕	Time-rich																			
Disorderly	_____	✕	Organised																			
On a budget	_____	✕	Money no object																			

5a. User persona



Name:

Quote:

Demographic

Age:

Location:

Occupation:

Traits

Experimental

Loyal

Thinking

Feeling

Busy

Time-rich

Disorderly

Organised

On a budget

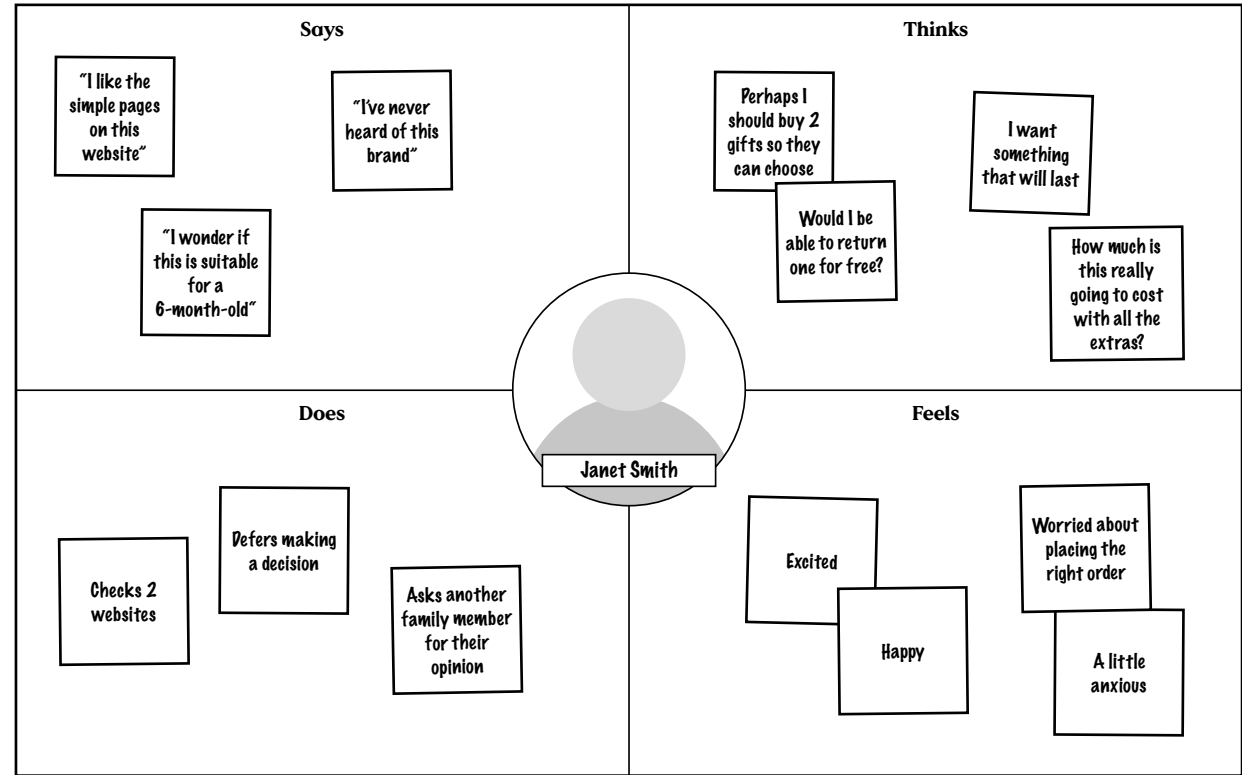
Money no object

Goals

Frustrations

5b. Empathy maps

Prepare an empathy map to put yourself in your target customer's shoes, noting down what they think, feel, say and do. Empathy maps help you to consider the world from the perspective of your user persona and identify any problems, concerns, needs or behaviours to address.



5b. Empathy map

Thinks

Feels

Says

Does

After completing your user personas and empathy maps, articulate what you've discovered about your audience by answering the questions below. Be as specific as possible.

Who are you trying to reach?

Why will they engage with your site?

What do you want them to do?

How do you want them to feel?

6. User research

User experience (UX) refers to the entire experience of a digital product; it covers the design and usability of the whole process, from the start to the end of the customer journey. Through user research, you capture what a user is thinking or experiencing when completing a particular task in the customer journey.

User research can help you audit site usability and identify areas for improvement. Meanwhile, you'll gain a deeper understanding of what connects with your target audience. You can adapt user research for many different contexts, including learning how your customer base:

- Browses products
- Engages with a digital feature
- Responds to page design layouts
- Navigates through your site

Here are some examples of what to ask your users:

- What are your first impressions of this product page?
- What one thing would you change about this product page?
- Can you show me how you'd find information about shipping costs and times?
- Can you show me how you'd complete the checkout process?
- Can you show me what you'd do if you wanted to return an item?

Use this space to write down more ideas:

User research can be done in person or remotely in a variety of ways, such as through:

- Online surveys
- Video calls with screen sharing
- Face-to-face interviews
- Field research
- Live chat

Use this space to plan how you could undertake user research:

There's no such thing as a free lunch! User research works best when you incentivise people to take part. You can make it worth their while by:

- Giving them the chance to win a competition
- Offering them a coupon
- Paying for their time with a coffee or lunch

What other ways could you incentivise your customers to take part?



When undertaking user research at Atomic Smash, we create a thorough checklist and report covering a wide variety of UX analysis, including:

Information architecture | Steps to accomplish tasks
Fields and forms | Visual design

7. Planning website evolution

Time to get creative! Imagine how your eCommerce platform could evolve over time. You can take these ideas to your digital partner and create a roadmap for improvements.

In this section:

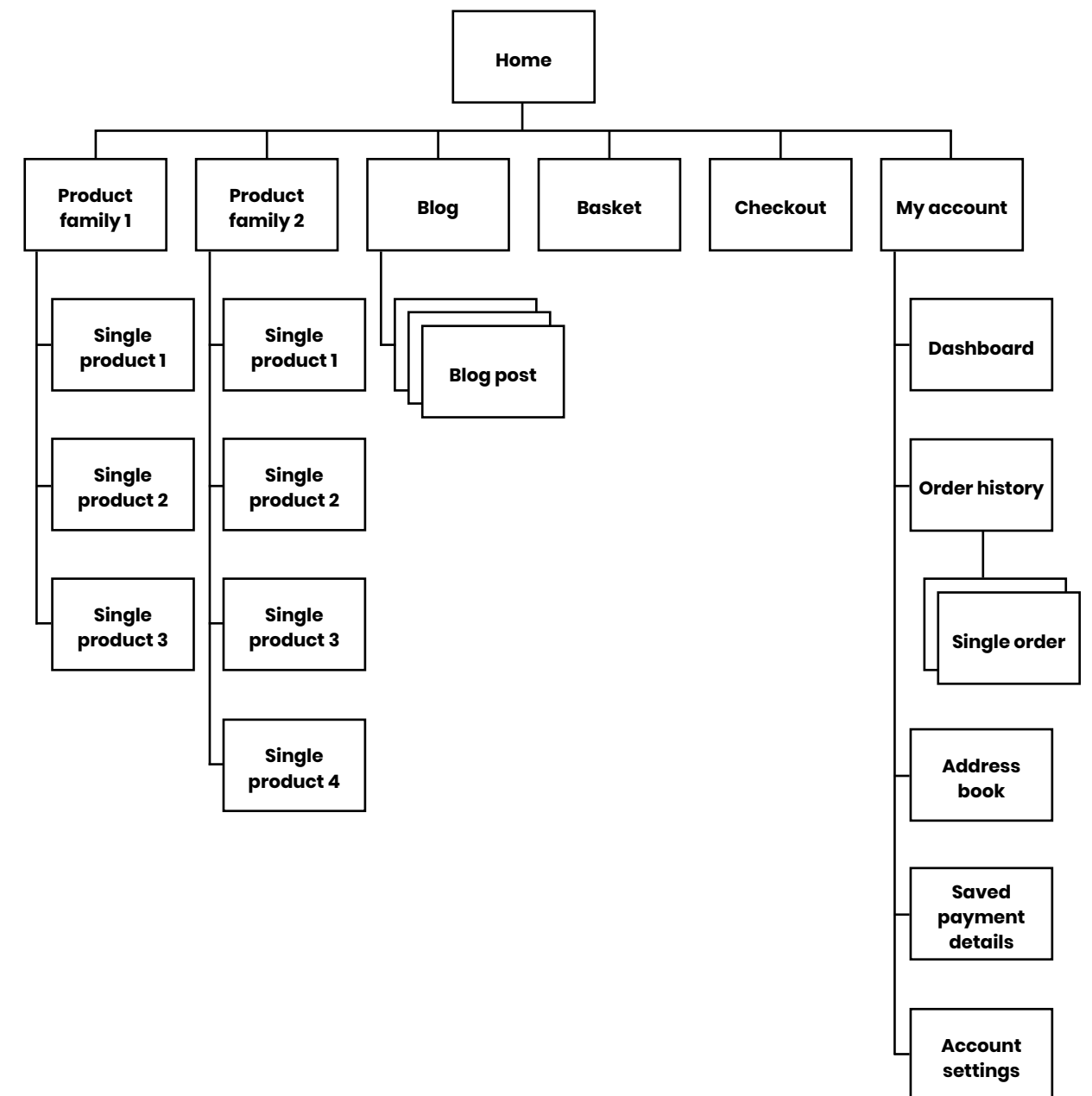
- ☐ 7a. Sitemap
- ☐ 7b. User journeys
- ☐ 7c. Wireframes
- ☐ 7d. Calls-to-action
- ☐ 7e. Business processes
- ☐ 7f. Stand out
- ☐ 7g. MoSCoW prioritisation

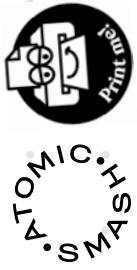
7a. Sitemap

Your sitemap outlines the structure of pages within your website hierarchically. Like a skeleton, a sitemap shows how web pages are connected.

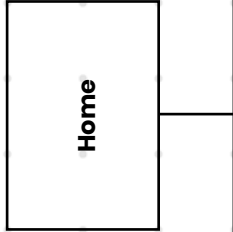
In this example we can see how the 'parent' pages of a website and their 'children' begin to suggest a sensible navigation structure.

Using the double page overleaf, sketch out a sitemap with an improved website structure, starting with your homepage.





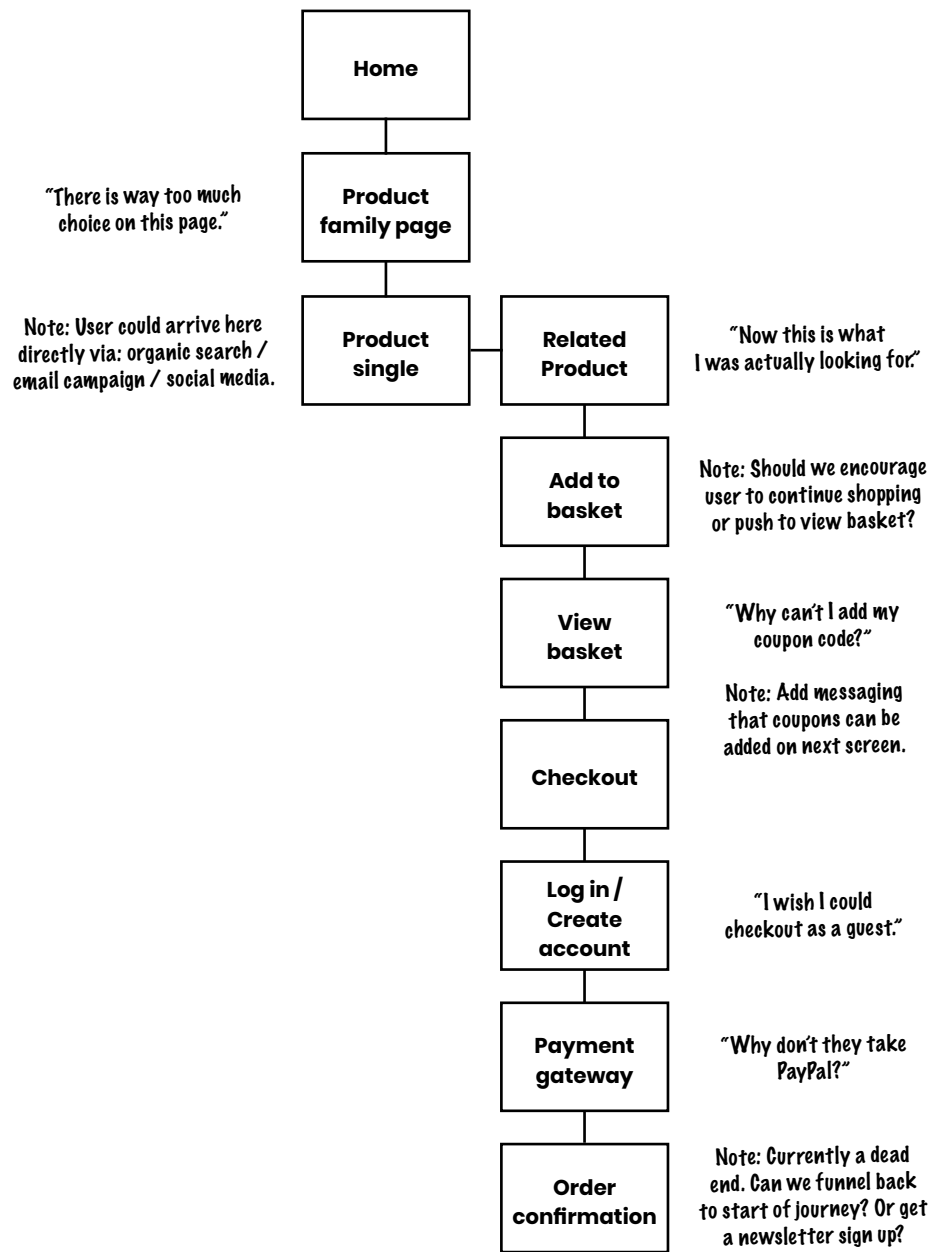
7a. Sitemap



7b. User journeys

The path that a user may take to reach their goal when visiting your website is called a user journey. Use the page opposite to sketch out existing and improved user journeys for your online store, working through from the point they come to your site to the action you want them to take.

For example, starting from the homepage, visiting a product page, then moving all the way through checkout. Notes down ideas alongside the journey for what your user might be thinking or feeling, and ideas for improvements or integrations. Think about the user personas and empathy maps you made in section 5.



7b. User journeys

7c. Wireframes

Think of a wireframe as the blueprint of your website. Wireframes are used to plan web page layouts with all the content and functionality you need. Some common elements used in a wireframe include headings, text, call-to-action buttons, hero images, photo galleries, videos, newsletter sign-up forms, drop-downs for FAQs, and customer reviews.

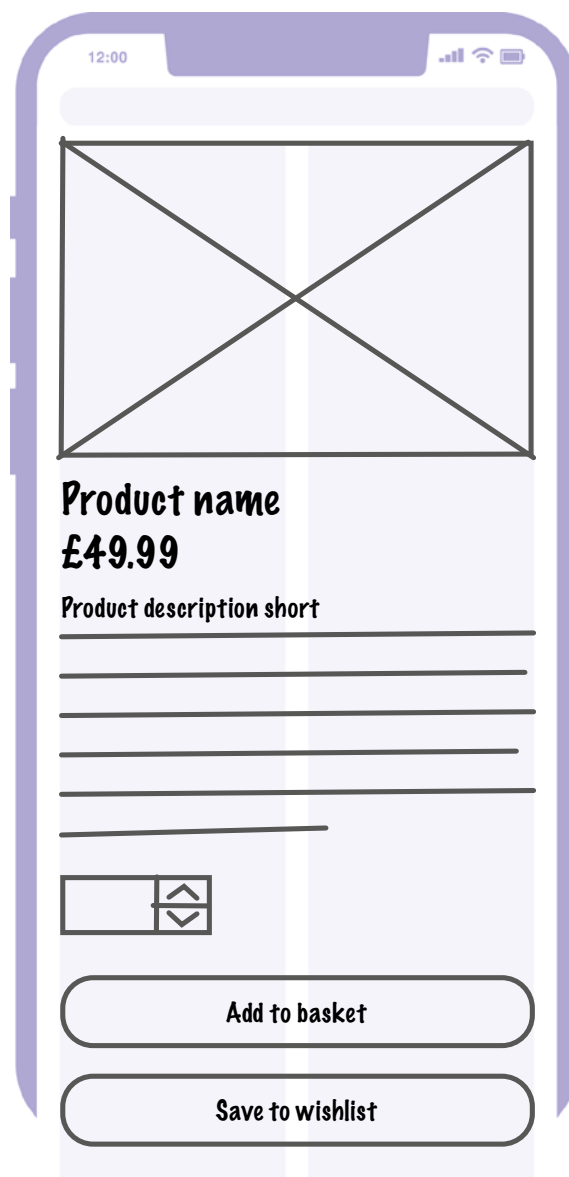
Have a go at sketching some wireframes on the page opposite (mobile grid) and on the double page overleaf (desktop grid). Print out as many copies of the templates as you need. Some typical pages to consider, include:

Homepage wireframe

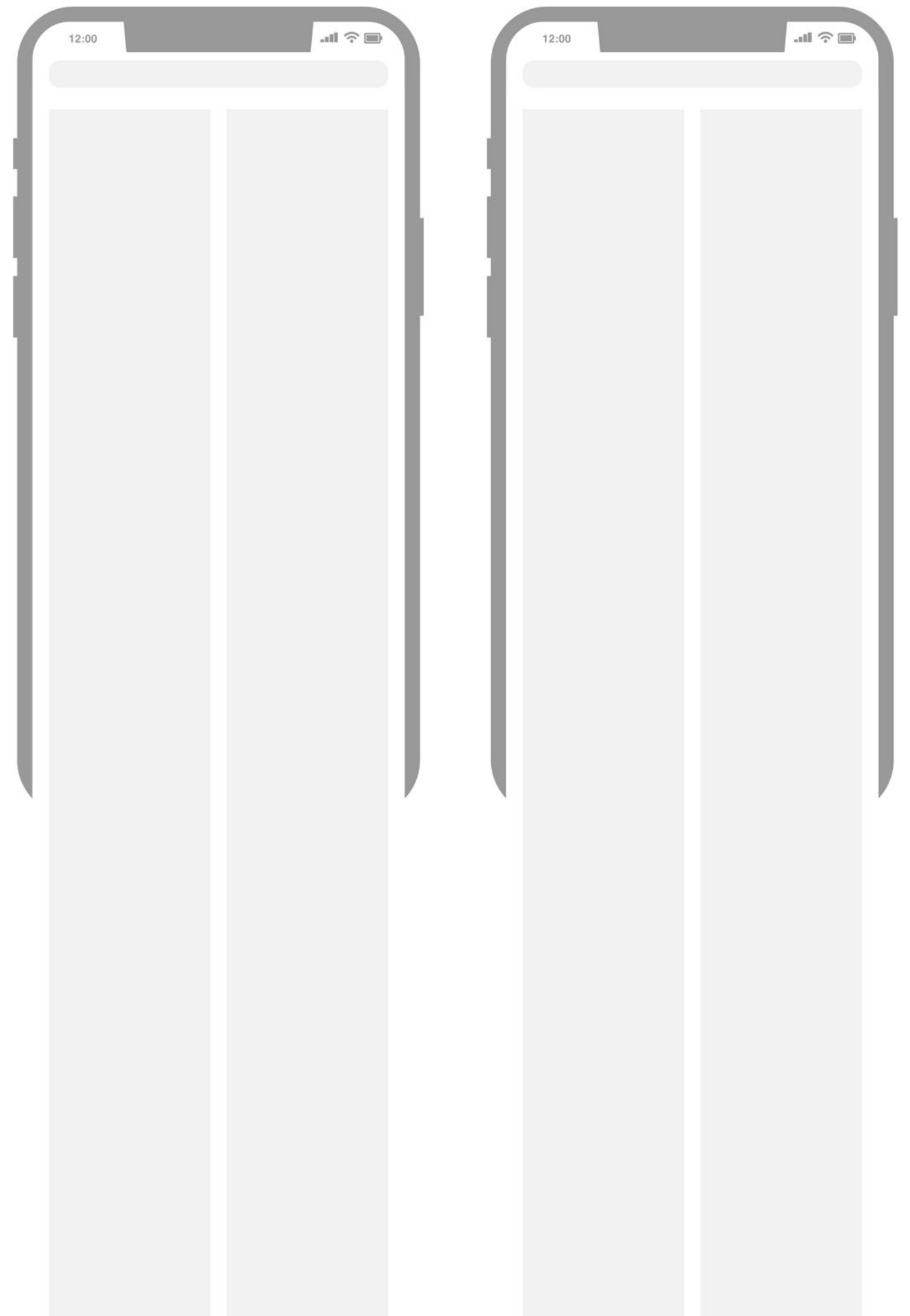
Plan the types of content to include on your homepage and include any creative ideas you want to delve into further with your digital agency.

Product page wireframe

Include any key information needed for product listings. This might include product descriptions, images, reviews and FAQs.



7c. Wireframes (mobile)





7c. Wireframes (desktop)



7d. Calls-to-action

8. Project KPIs

Key performance indicators (KPIs) help you measure success. Depending on your business goals, your KPIs might include better conversion rates, higher average order value, more newsletter sign ups, increased organic traffic, faster site speed, a lower digital carbon footprint, and the list goes on. Use this space to outline some KPIs for your site.

9. Return on investment

A great website will produce dramatically better results than a good website. This could translate into hundreds of thousands added to your bottom line. Take a moment to note down your current website budget and your commercial targets, then explore how increasing your investment in your website could improve profitability, considering the value of each stage in your sales funnel. Return to this periodically with updated figures for an accurate return on investment (ROI) and sales forecast.

Current budget


--

Commercial targets

10.

Accessibility

There are legal requirements for web accessibility and there is also a strong business case for it. Accessibility improvements can benefit overall UX, enhance your brand, extend your market reach and drive forward innovation.



Mini audit: Does your website currently have...

☐ **Alternative text for images**

☐ **All functionality available from a keyboard**

☐ **Text and background colours with sufficient contrast**

A full accessibility audit involves a thorough investigation and recommended improvements to ensure your site is accessible and easy to use for a wide range of potential website visitors, including people with disabilities and the visually impaired.




Atomic Smash develops websites that meet WCAG AA standards as a minimum and our Always Evolving clients get opportunities for regular accessibility audits and improvements.

11.

Performance

Delivering fast sites is great for SEO, which benefits your business, and most importantly, benefits your users, because bad website performance correlates powerfully to a high bounce rate.



Mini audit: Does your website currently have...

☐ **Optimised images**
Automatic resizing and reformatting of image uploads to ensure faster load times.

☐ **Preloaded fonts**
Instead of loading web fonts from another service, it's possible to load the fonts from the same server, reducing load time and having better control of optimisation.

☐ **Lazy loading below the fold**
Loading only the sections of the website that are visible to the user.

Web performance is not just about site speed, it's also about how fast your users perceive your site to be. Ensuring the content is quick to load and responsive to user interaction is crucial for delivering a good user experience.



We take speed and performance seriously at Atomic Smash. We're committed to delivering fast performing pages scoring a minimum of 90% on Google's Lighthouse performance tool.

12. Sustainability

The internet has a larger carbon output than the global aviation industry. It is important to build websites to be more energy efficient in order to reduce carbon emissions and environmental impact.

✓

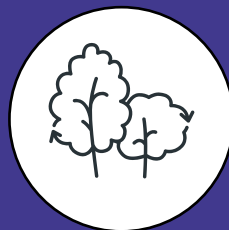
Mini audit: Does your website currently have...

☐ Dark mode option

☐ Videos that don't autoplay

☐ Green web hosting

Most web sustainability improvements will also have a positive impact on other key areas, such as better performance, improved accessibility and inclusivity, reduced hosting costs, easier maintenance, and improvements to UX, SEO and CRO.



We're helping our Always Evolving clients improve the energy efficiency of their websites by making improvements little and often.

13. Making your case

Modern website development should involve some non-negotiables, particularly when it comes to the likes of accessibility, security, speed, performance, and sustainability.

Consider any potential push back you might get from stakeholders about the importance of these, then draft your responses and make each case. If you get stuck, ask someone at Atomic Smash to help outline why each of these are mission-critical.

Potential pushback

Your arguments

Potential pushback

Your arguments

Potential pushback

Your arguments

14. Recap: Always Evolving®

Always Evolving keeps your website developing over time so that it can grow and adapt with your business.

Instead of throwing out a website every few years and starting from scratch, which involves a large investment and disruption to your business, you're making a longer-term investment with monthly design and development time.

Developing or extending functionality, optimising performance for faster site speed, auditing accessibility and UX with improvements implemented regularly means your website works harder for your business and delivers a higher return on investment.

Digital platforms that are always performing at their best:

- Reach wider audiences
- Generate more leads
- Engage and convert customers
- Showcase brand personality
- Maintain credibility with security and reliability

Not sure where to get started?

Write down your top priority for your online store. Present this to your digital partner and together make a plan of action.

The single most important thing for my online store right now:



Learn more at:

atomicsmash.co.uk/always-evolving-wordpress



 Atomic Smash

 @atomicsmash

 @atomicsmash_studio