



A Marketer's Guide to a Perfect Launch

*7 things to know
before you go live*





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Website Got You Down?

Launch day signs that your process needs a helping hand

ANXIETY AND PANIC
ARE THE NORM

COOL FEATURES
DIDN'T MAKE IT
IN - AGAIN

LAUNCH DATE
WAS YESTERDAY—
AND YOU'RE STILL
LAUNCHING

The initiatives of most marketing teams revolve around the website. Whether it's a campaign kickoff or a completely new site, how smoothly a launch goes is a great barometer of your team's overall efficiency.

However, sites constantly launch late and over budget. With so much depending on website success, it's important to make sure your marketing organization is both aware of common agile marketing challenges and how to overcome them. They are lessons learned from Pantheon marketing power users.

Key factors which bottleneck marketing team productivity

MARKETING TEAM
TECHNOLOGY
LIMITATIONS

DEVELOPMENT
RISKS AND
REPERCUSSIONS

SCALABILITY
CHALLENGES

How Dated Technology Stifles Innovation

Marketing technology (also known as MarTech) is evolving rapidly, allowing for richer customer interactions, smarter analytics, and deeper reporting. Web design patterns also seem to be changing with the season. If website brittleness prevents you from experimenting with new tools, designs, and features, it's time to consider the value of the opportunities you've lost and the creativity of your team that's been stifled.

Companies that can launch new digital experiences quickly and repeatedly look beyond a single site. They recognize the benefits of leveraging campaign-specific landing pages and distinct sites within a marketing campaign.

Agile marketing teams should be equipped to manage hundreds of landing pages and multiple sites. Don't be held back by the weight of technical limitations. Implementation, execution, and adaptation are the signs of a healthy marketing team.

Addressing Development Risks & Repercussions

Being a successful marketer requires creating bold, new campaigns out of thin air. WordPress and Drupal are the right choices for bending code in amazing and innovative ways. Obviously, you also need to plan for occasional unexpected results.



DID YOU KNOW?

Companies able to leverage Conversion Rate Optimization tools on their websites have an average ROI of over 200%. Make sure you are keeping up!

There are many ways to reduce the risk of bugs in production. Having a solid testing framework helps discover mistakes before they go live. In lieu of massive updates, making small continuously tested improvements also ensures that releases and the deployment process are solid.

Fortunately, modern technology allows for easy bug fixing and fast rollbacks.

This is also a great way for managers to show your team that you have their back. Developers aren't expected to be infallible, but they can feel more supported in their jobs when they have great tools, and are happier and more productive as a result.

So, as a marketing manager, you can take the lead as the one pushing for guardrails and best practices in development and deployment.

Addressing Scalability

If your business can't scale its web presence by adding content, features, and new sites instantly, you will soon find yourself trapped by your infrastructure. Scalability means having the ability to add resources as customer demand takes off, and removing the limits on your marketing reach. You and your team need the freedom to move and grow.

Amazing sites tend to get popular! When they do, you need to scale vertically, too. When site traffic ramps up, either virally or seasonally, don't let downtime or poor performance turn your best day into your worst. Websites running in modern cloud infrastructures should be able to handle whatever you throw at them and scale in seconds.



DID YOU KNOW?

Scalability matters. When page load increases from one to three seconds, bounce rates also rise by 32%.

7 Steps to a Fail-Proof Launch

Once your strategy and direction is in place, it's the ideal time to put tools, process, and teams into action to achieve your marketing vision.

1 Agree to shared ownership and accountability

If all parties involved in a launch simply agree to deliverables and a timeline, it isn't enough. Taking responsibility is vital. Here is the ideal scenario for which you are striving:

- You are an educated leader of a dream team.
- Your project manager has a clear idea of objectives and who delivers each one.
- Your developers and designers understand the value of functionality as well as the technical details.
- Even your stakeholders are invested in the process, helping to make sure all points of view are considered and roadblocks are addressed early.

In short, you have a hungry and healthy team. They have room to try, fail, then try again—all while knowing you have their back. Your kickoff meeting explodes with excitement!



2

Keep information flowing

Teams need a formal communication strategy. A great (and easily accessible) plan keeps your team focused on the work at hand, and status is communicated with minimal disruption.

This means keeping up with the times. While long, boring meetings are a great way to pass the day, modern teams communicate constantly without the hassle of face-to-face appointments. By leveraging modern messaging applications, automated notifications can be sent whenever code changes, keeping everyone in the loop.



3

When things get crazy, you get calmer

Stress happens. Acknowledge it, but don't succumb to it. Trust your solid tools, team, and process: the more you prepare, the less you stress. Make sure that you have eliminated all known sources of risk. Don't mess with shoddy infrastructure or make quick and dirty technical decisions that you will have to live with forever. Try not to do too much with too little time. Remember, features you push to add at the last minute can result in hastily-crafted solutions.

When launch is a few weeks away, let everyone know it's time to take a deep breath and relax. Stressing about deadlines, bugs, and other typical pressures stifles creative thought and never makes a tough situation better. Take an extra yoga class or go for a run and encourage your team to join you.



DID YOU KNOW?

Chat applications can be integrated with smart web platforms not only to show when work is done, but also to display the results of automated testing; alert when a site experiences high load or errors; or communicate when updates are available.

4

Test your processes

Be sure things work, and work well. Don't leave any stones unturned. Use automated testing during development and eliminate "missing semicolon" errors. Yes, using an automated test suite is difficult the first time you use it - and maybe the second time! But soon, it becomes habit, and your code quality just gets better over time.



You can test almost anything. Simulate real traffic with load testing, so you can use existing site usage patterns to see how new features will perform under live conditions. Developing these habits early results in a lower probability that you end up fixing problems on the moving train of a live site.

5

Kaizen every process

As the marketing manager, you are the team's radar. Be vigilant. Watch out for possible roadblocks ahead. Consider how to eliminate them. Look for ways to practice [kaizen](#): the process of small, continual improvements to a process. Find opportunities to call out lessons learned for the next project. And be sure to have clear success metrics, so you know whether the work you did achieves the value you intended.

Take responsibility for speaking intelligently about your process, your industry, your digital strategy, and innovations in technology. An informed marketing leader will have respect and authority, because he or she makes choices based on both experience and newly available information. A way to ensure your voice and your company become part of conversations is to get involved in the open source communities that make Drupal and WordPress CMS leaders.



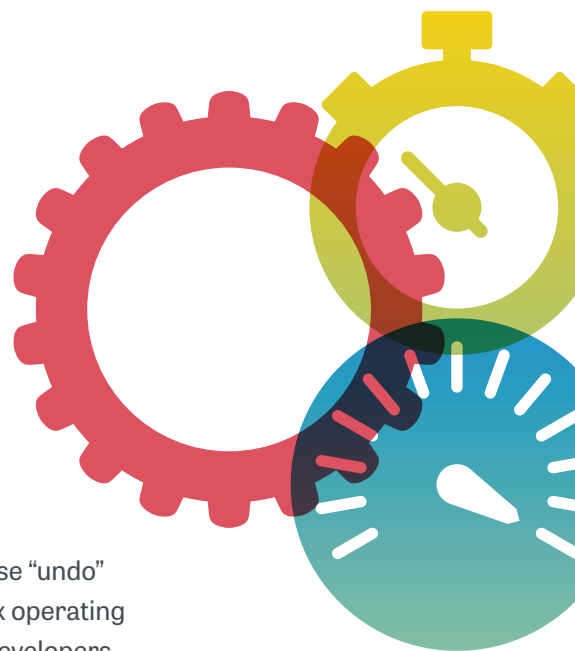
DID YOU KNOW?

While Page Load Time is important, Page Speed Index tells you how quickly content becomes visible in the top of the browser. This is a better way to gauge overall performance. Know your site's index. Check it [here](#).

6

Make performance a habit

In addition to understanding the awesome development workflow you are using, knowing the basics of performance is important, even if you aren't a developer. As a smart marketer, you should also understand the components of modern web tech, if only to impress your dev team. If that sounds overwhelming, here's a primer to get you started:



Git: Allows your devs to store code and collaborate with very precise “undo” features. Git was created by Linus Torvalds, the creator of the Linux operating system, to manage the thousands of code contributions made by developers involved with building and managing the Linux kernel.



Distributed Infrastructure: Using smaller, separate real or virtual servers to share the website workload, and reduce impact if there are hardware issues.



CDN: A Content Delivery Network, or CDN, is a network of servers which puts copies of your site in multiple locations globally, so site visitors in France are served from France, site visitors in Texas are served from Texas, etc. These copies are called “cached” copies.



SSL/TLS/HTTPS: An established way to securely transmit traffic to and from your users. Don't launch without it. SSL is short for Secure Socket Layer, and is the “S” in HTTPS, (Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure). HTTP/HTTPS are the rules the internet uses to transmit and receive data.



DID YOU KNOW?

If HTTPS security isn't enough of a compelling reason to deploy it, Google ranks sites that don't use HTTPS lower in search engine rankings.



Automated Testing: Anytime you make a change to the site's code, you spin up a test version of the site. You tell robots to do things (log in, view a page, create a user, etc.), and they let you know if the site passed. If the tests fails, the robots invade! (Another option, they don't invade, instead sending you an email notification.)



Blockchain: No one knows what this means or does. Just mention it occasionally. For example, "I dabble in the blockchain space." People will be impressed, yet too self-conscious to ask any questions.

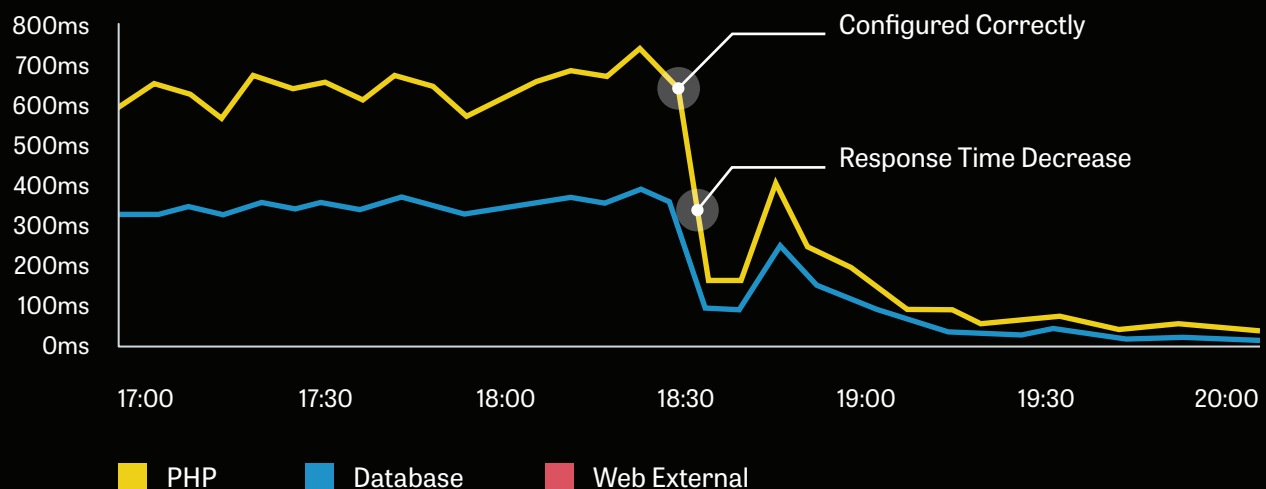
As a marketer, you don't have to become a development or operations expert, but by understanding a few key concepts you can make better decisions about how to run your websites.

7

Relentlessly test and iterate

Stick to your commitment to innovate. Launching isn't a one-time event; it's a work ethic you want to embrace, not endure. Now that you've stopped putting out fires, you can be fearless about making updates, launching new campaigns, doing A/B tests, and integrating features and tools. As you revel in your new abilities, make website performance one of your key marketing metrics.

APP SERVER RESPONSE TIME

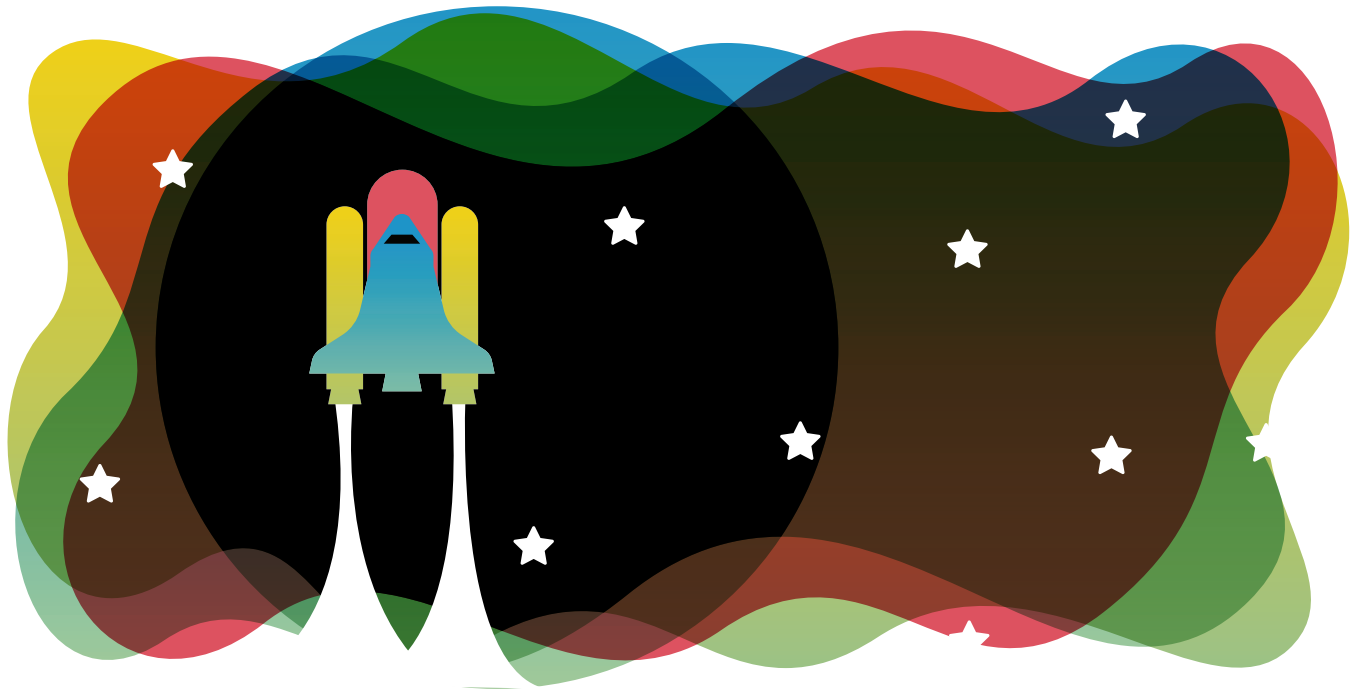


8

Ready, Set, Launch!

With these tips in mind, you are now ready to launch digital experiences all the time, and each launch will be more solid than the last. You'll realize your palms are no longer soaked with sweat. Launching will be an everyday occurrence for you. It usually happens without notice. When some bug does sneak into production, it gets reverted, fixed, and a new test gets written to catch it the next time.

Beyond launching, you will have built a team that embraces and thrives in a creative, yet disciplined culture. You are beloved as a marketer - and feared by your competition. You are an inspiration to other departments and a leader in your industry.



How Pantheon Helps

Have we met? (We probably should.)

Pantheon is the Website Operations Platform that thousands of marketers, digital agencies, and developers rely on to build, host, and manage their most important digital assets. Its a platform ideal for ensuring fail-proof website launches.

Pantheon runs more than 200,000 Drupal and WordPress sites and offers push-button website operations, site portfolio management tools, and unsurpassed dev tools.

Invite your team to start building your site on Pantheon.

[Learn more.](#)



The website is our front door. Focusing development resources on getting people in the door yields dramatic value, but only if the we can iterate rapidly and safely. Pantheon makes this possible.

ERIC PETERSON, MARKETING SYSTEMS ENGINEERING, TABLEAU