Quether

WORKSHOP TEMPLATE

Defining a website in twelve pieces

Everything you need to decide before anyone opens the editor

FORMAT

PDF workbook, with the twelve pieces and their questions

WHO IT'S FOR

Whoever commissions or leads a website: managing directors, marketing, or the studio that wants to deliver a defined brief instead of a three-line one.

WHAT IT TAKES

Two three-hour sessions, plus the desk work in between.

LAST REVIEWED

26 August 2026

https://quether.com/en/resources/defining-a-website

What you take away

The kit that turns “we need a new website” into a brief that can be built: objective, personas, messages, journey, architecture, screen inventory, stack, measurement, design, risks and a phased plan.

+ The twelve pieces in order, with exactly what gets decided in each one
+ The rule that stops the sitemap filling up with pages nobody needs
+ The screen card: the three fields without which a page doesn't make it onto the map
+ The discipline of the rejected list, which is worth as much as the list of choices
+ The three measurement rules that prevent the “but my dashboard says something else” arguments

The problem it solves

Almost every website project starts with the visible part: references, colours, “I like the way this other company does it”. And almost all of them discover too late that the expensive part wasn't the design but the decisions nobody made: what the site exists for, which conversion takes priority over the rest, what happens to the old URLs, who maintains it a year from now.

This kit puts those decisions first. Twelve pieces: eleven for work and one for rules. They're used in order, because what's closed in one feeds the next. At the end there's no website; there's a brief that can be built without asking anything again.

The golden rule

> **No screen goes on the map without three things**
>
> A job to do, a person it serves and an event that measures it. If it doesn't pass all three, it isn't a page: it's a paragraph inside another one. This one rule prevents the bloated sitemap, which is the most common defect and the most expensive to fix later.

Its little sister follows from it: one page, one job. If “services” are three lines of business, that's one page with three sections, not three subpages. Every subpage opened for convenience is a URL that has to be maintained, linked, ranked and, sooner or later, redirected.

The twelve pieces

Each frame decides one thing and one thing only. What's closed there isn't reopened in the next: if the temptation shows up, it's a sign the previous piece wasn't really closed.

Decide

What the site exists for, who it speaks to, what it says and which way that person comes through. It's half the work and the half that almost always gets dispatched in a half-hour meeting.

01

The objective

CLOSES WITH

One primary objective—just one—the conversion that takes priority over all the others, the list of anti-objectives and the north-star metric it's measured by.

02

Personas and ICP

CLOSES WITH

One persona per column, the three-layer company filter and the anti-persona: who the website has to repel, and by what mechanism.

03

Value proposition and messages

CLOSES WITH

Positioning, claim, differentiators, what proves each one and the voice guardrails—including the list of banned words.

04

The journey

CLOSES WITH

Each stage with five rows: what's happening to them, what they're asking themselves, where it happens, what they need to see or feel, and what event measures it. With no event, the stage doesn't exist.

Draw

How many pages there are, how they hang off each other and what each one does. It's the first decision that gets expensive if it's done badly.

05

Information architecture

CLOSES WITH

The map with the final URLs and, if there's a previous site, the redirect map from the inventory of old URLs.

06

Screen inventory

CLOSES WITH

One card per screen with its job, its persona and its status. Whatever has no card doesn't get built.

Build and sustain

What it's built with, how it's measured, how it looks and in what order it goes up. This is where a project becomes maintainable or becomes a debt.

07

Tech stack

CLOSES WITH

The choice for each layer—framework, content, data, payments, hosting, analytics—and, next to it, the rejected list with the reason for each.

08

Measurement

CLOSES WITH

One event per funnel step, the source of truth for each number and a single KPI per channel.

09

Design system

CLOSES WITH

A palette with the role of each colour, two type families at most, rules of form and where each value comes from. If it isn't in the system, it isn't used on a page.

10

Risks, gaps and decisions

CLOSES WITH

Three lists: what's decided, what's open and—marked separately—what's open and blocks everything else.

11

The phased plan

CLOSES WITH

The build order and, in each phase, what's deliberately left out. What doesn't fit in phase 1 doesn't die: it waits.

The screen card

The inventory isn't a list of page names. Each screen is written on a card with the same fields, and that card is the brief for that page.

FIELD	WHAT GOES IN IT	WHY
Route	The final URL, decided here and not during development.	Changing it later costs redirects and rankings.
Job	What this screen has to achieve, in one sentence with a verb.	If the verb is “show”, it's almost always a section of another page.
Who for	Which of the personas from frame 02, by name.	A page that serves everyone is written well by nobody.
Event	What fires when it does its job.	It's the condition for getting onto the map: without an event you can't tell whether it works.
Status	Written, awaiting copy, awaiting a decision or blocked.	It separates what's waiting on development from what's waiting on a person.

What's waiting on a person isn't a technical delay

Getting a client's permission to publish their case, writing the homepage copy or settling a price aren't development tasks, and yet they're the ones that hold up the most projects. Put them on a list of their own from day one, with a name and a date.

The rejected list is worth as much as the list of choices

The stack piece has two columns. In the first, what's chosen for each layer. In the second—the one almost nobody writes—what's been ruled out and why. Without that second column, six months from now someone will propose exactly what was already ruled out, and the whole discussion will be repeated because the reason isn't written down anywhere.

The principle behind it: master one thing thoroughly rather than renting five platforms by halves. Every service you adopt is another admin panel, another mental model and another data silo. Adopting has a cost that doesn't show up on the invoice.

+ Write the rejection with its reason, not with an adjective: “it solves a problem we don't have yet” is a reason; “we're not convinced” isn't.
+ Say, too, under what conditions it would be reviewed: “adopted if the editorial team grows beyond two people” leaves the door open without reopening the debate today.
+ Be wary of any tool that cuts the data's journey short. If the client comes in through one place and their information ends up in a silo that doesn't talk to the rest, you've gained a feature and lost the whole.

Three measurement rules that prevent arguments

They're decided before building, not after. An event that wasn't instrumented in time can't be reconstructed after the fact: that data simply doesn't exist.

RULE 1

Money is measured on the server

A confirmed purchase arrives by webhook, is idempotent and doesn't depend on the browser staying open. Any revenue figure measured in the browser is an estimate, and it ends up being used as if it weren't.

RULE 2

Each tool counts something different, on purpose

Acquisition analytics and product analytics don't have to match: they measure different moments. Write down what each one measures and which one rules on each question, or every meeting will start by comparing two dashboards.

RULE 3

The business truth lives in your database

A client's real status is in your tables, not in a third-party dashboard. Everything else is reconciled against that. If a number matters for a decision, it has to be possible to query it without depending on an external service.

And one KPI per channel, not a dashboard of thirty metrics. Five numbers on one screen, or it doesn't get looked at. The rest lives in a monthly report that can actually be read in full.

Separate what's open from what's blocking

Piece 10 has three lists, not two. What's decided, what's open, and what's open and blocking. That third list is the one looked at in every follow-up meeting, and it's usually short: two or three things.

A gap is filled with a fact or declared pending; it's never filled by making something up. Writing “[pending]” on a legal page is uncomfortable and honest. Writing a plausible identifier is comfortable and false, and nobody will ever look at it again.

- [ ] Is there a primary objective written down, and only one?
- [ ] Does every screen in the inventory have a job, a persona and an event?
- [ ] Does the redirect map from the old URLs exist?

- [ ] Have the final URLs been decided, before any code is written?
- [ ] Does each layer of the stack have its reason, and each rejection its own?
- [ ] Is there one event per funnel step and one source of truth per number?
- [ ] Have the legal texts been reviewed, or explicitly marked as pending?
- [ ] Is it written down what's deliberately left out of phase 1?
- [ ] Does the list of what is waiting on a person have a name and a date on every line?

Quether

Quether works alongside leaders of mid-sized companies to transform their organisation—and themselves—without losing their essence.

This material, always up to date, at https://quether.com/en/resources/defining-a-website