

Finishing a build **that stalled at ninety.**

For a build that has been nearly done for a while. Write the list first, then work through it in launch order. For whoever is finishing it, and for whoever is paying for it.

None of this is the hard part of a build. It is the part nobody demos, which is why it was never in the estimate.

BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE: THE LIST

- ☐ **Every screen the site has, from the router, the CMS or the sitemap**
The list is the job. An estimate made before it exists is a guess with a decimal point on it.
- ☐ **Each screen's states written out: loading, empty, populated, error, edge case**
A simple listing page has five. Counting features instead of states is how the last ten percent goes missing.
- ☐ **Every line marked done, missing or unknown**
The unknowns are the honest part, and finding out about them is what the next few days are for.
- ☐ **No line bigger than one person can finish and tick off in a day**
"Tidy up the account area" could be an afternoon or a fortnight. Break it down until it can be counted.

ERROR STATES

- ☐ **Every place the site talks to something it does not control is listed**
Payments, the CRM, search, the maps key. Each one needs a message and a next step written for it.
- ☐ **A decline, a timeout and a failed submit all tried on staging**
Use the payment provider's test card, and block the request in the browser's network tab.
- ☐ **No screen ends on a spinner or a raw error code**
Both look the same to a customer. They try again, pay twice, or ring somebody.

EMPTY AND FIRST-RUN SCREENS

- ☐ **A brand new account walked through on clean data**
Everything you see before adding anything is an empty state, and it is somebody's first impression of the site.
- ☐ **Every empty screen says what it is and what to do next**
A blank white box is the version that gets built by accident.
- ☐ **The first item, the first order and the first post each tried once**
Going from nothing to one item is where layouts built on test data usually break.

THE EVERYDAY JOBS

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- ☐ **The person who will run the site adds a page while you watch, unaided**
Every place they pause is a field that needs a better label or a sensible default.
 - ☐ **Add a page, swap a photo, publish a post and change the opening hours, all once**
If it is awkward now, the site stops being updated later, and that costs more than a bug would.
 - ☐ **Who does what after launch is written down, with who to ask**
Otherwise it lands on whoever answers the phone first.
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EMAIL, DATA AND THE EDGES

- ☐ **Every email the site sends is listed, with its from-address and where a reply goes**
Order confirmations, form notifications, password resets, and what happens on a bounce.
 - ☐ **One of each sent to Gmail, Outlook and a phone, spam folder included**
Email that quietly goes to spam looks exactly like email that works.
 - ☐ **SPF, DKIM and DMARC set for the sending domain**
The difference between arriving and disappearing, and it is a DNS job rather than a code job.
 - ☐ **Real content loaded, not tidy test content**
Real names are longer, real categories have one item in them, and real people fill forms in an unexpected order.
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ACCESSIBILITY, BEFORE IT BECOMES A REDESIGN

- ☐ **The main journey done with the keyboard alone**
Watch where the focus outline goes. Anything you cannot reach that way is not finished.
 - ☐ **Contrast, heading order and form labels checked on a real page**
Left until the end, the fixes land in the design rather than the code, which is the expensive version.
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LAUNCH, AND WHAT YOU LEAVE BEHIND

- ☐ **The list put in launch order, not in the order things are enjoyable**
Progress becomes something everyone can count again, and the list gets visibly shorter each week.
 - ☐ **Anything shipping unfinished is written down, with who agreed it and when**
It goes into the handover as deliberately unfinished, so nobody treats it as a bug in March.
 - ☐ **A QA pass in the plan with a date on it, not a buffer at the end**
A buffer gets spent on whatever ran late. A phase with dates has to be removed on purpose, where everyone can see it.
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Take it, change it, use it on your own projects. No need to credit me. adamroe.co.uk/blog/the-last-ten-percent