



6 PRINCIPLES

— FOR A —

Less-Stress  
Web Strategy

— FOR YOUR —

BUSINESS

**Robojuice**

**When you're sitting in yet another meeting about the web project that never goes anywhere, no amount of positive thinking can relieve the stress that grips your head and chest.**

When things aren't working, the natural tendency is to just do more: schedule more meetings, gather more opinions, implement more stop-gap tactics, throw more spaghetti against the wall. But the problem is that the "do more" strategy almost never works.

Whether you're designing a new marketing site, building a digital lead-generation system, creating a business intelligence dashboard that will help you run your business more efficiently, or anything else, you need to get the project completed. Ditch the endless, unproductive meetings and implement the six principles we describe here. We've developed these principles over years of working with clients on all sorts of web projects, and we continue to practice and improve them. They take the stress away and convert goals to reality.

## The 6 Principles

- Relationship: Align Your Values and Commit to Communication**
- Excellence: Stay Relevant in Your Area of Expertise, and Trust Your Team Members**
- Process: Create a Plan and Communicate the Plan**
- Analysis: Define the Problem and Outline Objectives**
- Schedule: Build a Timeline Based on Priorities and Get Buy-In**
- Tools: Have a Fully-Stocked Toolbox and Know That Toolbox Thoroughly**





01

# Relationship:

## Align Your Values and Commit to Communication

In the words of [Simon Sinek](#), “If you don’t understand people, you don’t understand business.” Every relationship is important. Interactions with clients, the leadership team, and fellow employees all affect not only the work environment but also the performance of the business — for good or bad. Shared values and a commitment to understand each person’s perspective together create a healthy culture, which allows the team to produce better results.

### The Foundation: Align Your Values

Few projects will be successful if the team members don’t value the same things. Shared values create unity. When each person knows that, at the end of the day, everyone is working toward the same thing, the team will achieve better results. Despite differences, the shared values form a foundation that everyone has confidence in.



*Shared values and a commitment to understand each person’s perspective together create a healthy culture, which allows the team to produce better results.*

On the flip side, if team members value different things that are in conflict with one another, there will be constant tension. Each person will work toward his or her own objectives, and it will be difficult for the project to move forward.

Practically, how can you get everyone on the same page? One idea is to collaboratively create a list of values that the team will be committed to, and then have each team member sign off, agreeing that the values will guide every interaction, every step of the process. The key is collaboration — each person has to feel ownership and be a true stakeholder.

## The Magic: Act With Empathy

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Empathy isn't just a warm and fuzzy psychological buzzword. Strong relationships that result in effective work are built on empathy. [Stephen Covey's](#) wisdom, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood," will never become out of date.

***Empathy is magic: when you truly try to see from another person's viewpoint rather than pushing your own point of view, you expand your knowledge and understanding of the issue at hand — even if you don't fully agree in the end. In the process, you enable the other person to open up to your viewpoint, and build a positive relationship with the individual.***

Empathy is powerful in work teams because it allows the team members to get a clearer picture of the issues and collaborate to solve problems effectively. It's like the old story of the [blind men and the elephant](#): without each person's perspective, the issue won't be fully explored or known. Each individual has something to contribute.

“**Strong relationships that result in effective work are built on empathy.**”

A classic example of this is the interactive team and the marketing team, each of which believes that the other isn't focused on the right thing. The interactive team thinks that user experience and design is primary, while the marketing team is focused on

lead generation and ROI. In reality, if the two would get together and seek to understand the other department's goals and activities, then outline a plan to optimize those activities with the insight shared from the other team, they'd accomplish much more — and might even start to like one another.

Before we at Robojuice start working with a new client, we make sure our values align with theirs. We know that we can't produce good work if we're not on the same page. Our next step in building a relationship that will result in an effective project is to understand not only the business, but also each team member's perspective. We find that when we do these two things, we're able to become an integral part of the team, ultimately creating excellent work and helping them to reach their goals. This requires a commitment to communication, and it's a fundamental part of our process.



02

## Excellence:

### Stay Relevant in Your Area of Expertise, and Trust Your Team Members

Excellence is essential for an effective project that accomplishes what it intends. No truly successful company gets the results they achieve with mediocre people having mediocre skills doing mediocre work. You have to be committed to continual improvement, because the world is constantly changing, the web is constantly changing, and the skills you need to create solutions that reach your goals are constantly changing. You can't rely on what you learned even two or three years ago.

#### Be at the Top, Stay at the Top

Each of your team members must continually stay at the top of their game. Encourage them to take courses, attend conferences, and be reading to learn the latest in their fields. The best companies out there provide [training and growth opportunities](#) for their employees. And good employees want this education — they want to improve and grow. It's a win-win for both the company and the team members.

#### Trust Your Team Members

At the same time, the team must trust its specialists. People specialize in different disciplines because it's impossible to be proficient at everything. If you have confidence that each team member is at the top of his or her game, you need to trust that person's expertise when it comes time to make decisions in that area.

#### Do What You Say You'll Do

But no amount of education will make up for failing to do what you say you'll do. Successful teams are built on integrity and commitment: each team member can depend on what the others commit to. Without this ability to stick to agreed-upon deadlines, deliverables, and work quality, the project will be filled with stress, which will affect not only everyone involved but also the outcome of the project.



***No truly successful company gets the results they achieve with mediocre people having mediocre skills doing mediocre work.***



03

## Process:

### Create a Plan and Communicate the Plan

Without process, stress is certain and the outcome of the project is not. There's no one right process, but you do have to have a process that each team member is committed to following. If you don't have a process, you'll need to create one before the project begins.



*The clearer your process is, the more effective it will be.*

### Stick to a Process that Works

Creating a process is similar to goal-planning. Start with the end in mind, then work backward through the steps you'll need to get from Point A to Point B. Brainstorm everything that could go wrong along the way, and work contingency plans into your process. The clearer your process is, the more effective it will be. If each person knows exactly what to expect and what's expected of him or her, your project will be much smoother (with less stress!).

### Realize that People Like Process

One of the reasons our clients like working with us is that we have a crystal clear process. They know they can have confidence that we'll get them to their destination in a straightforward way, on time and on budget. While clients make key decisions along the path, they know they won't have to worry about where that path is going or how things are going to get done. We explain at the beginning what the process is and each step they can expect.

People like process. They relax when they know where they're headed and how things will get accomplished. Seeing the path and knowing the steps ahead of time reduce anxiety and free people to be creative and get work done.



04

## Analysis:

### Define the Problem and Outline Objectives

Without process, stress is certain and the outcome of the project is not. There's no one right process, but you do have to have a process that each team member is committed to following. If you don't have a process, you'll need to create one before the project begins.

It's tempting to start on a project before you're really ready. Everyone wants to accomplish the mission, and it's emotionally rewarding to check off to-do lists. But if you're on the wrong road, driving faster won't help you reach your destination more quickly. Tactics are fun to implement, but you have to start with strategy if you want to get results.

#### Learn the Real Need

Before you start, you need to conduct a thorough analysis. What problem are you really trying to solve? What do you really need to achieve? Work together to determine what the real needs are, because you'll frequently discover that what you actually need to accomplish your goal is different than what you originally imagined.

*For example, when planning a new marketing website, many people don't know if they need a new website design or just need to clarify the words they use on their site. An analysis will reveal the real issue, ensuring that the real problem is addressed. When you take the time to do analysis and ask better questions, you have a better shot at finding the root problem and solving the real issue. If you skip analysis and take action based on assumptions, you might find yourself with the same problem after the project has been completed.*



Dig deep to find out what your needs actually are. Start with a blank canvas and ask what would truly take you to the next level of growth. You may be surprised at what you discover.



***What problem are you really trying to solve? What do you really need to achieve?***

## **Get Practical With Objectives**

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Once you know what your real needs are, it's time to get practical. What will it take to meet those needs? Define your objectives in concrete terms, so each team member knows exactly what they're aiming for. With a list of objectives that will enable you to solve your real needs, you can have confidence you're on the right road, heading the right direction.

## **Understand that Projects Often Fail Without Analysis**

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If you don't know what's causing a particular problem, you won't know how to fix it. Analysis uncovers the root causes behind problems, allowing you to target the right issues.

We decided early on that Robojuice wouldn't take on a project without first conducting an analysis. We

think it's actually arrogant to say to a client, "Here's what you need to do," without being sure that what we're proposing is going to make a meaningful difference in the growth of the company. Analysis is that important.



05

# Schedule:

## Build a Timeline Based on Priorities and Get Buy-In

Scheduling is what translates objectives into performance. It's how goals become reality. You've got to create a specific plan with timelines attached if you're going to achieve your objectives. The [SMART goal system](#) is an old one but a good one. Scheduling address the Achievable and Time-bound requirements of a SMART goal. A project deadline might be arbitrarily assigned if it isn't time-sensitive, but most goals come with deadlines already determined — and they're not always realistic. Maybe a project needs to be completed for a trade show. Maybe a system needs to be built in order to get the next round of funding. Whatever the reason for the deadline, if the typical route a project would take means missing the deadline, then it's time to get creative.

### Schedule in Phases, Based on Priorities

Scheduling usually means creating a phased approach, and it starts with determining priorities. What absolutely must be done by a certain deadline? What do you have to have by that date? This is often called the minimum viable product (MVP). The result might not have all the bells and whistles you desire, it might not meet all of the objectives, but it will ensure that the most important needs are met.

Your mission in the scheduling stage is to consider how you can creatively make that MVP happen by the deadline. This will be Phase 1 of the project. The following phases will build out the additional pieces or elements that meet the less important objectives. By the end, you'll have accomplished your goals while sacrificing as little as possible in the process.

### Don't Schedule Without Prioritizing

There's a temptation to say, "Everything is a priority!" But when you try to complete every element by an unrealistic deadline, the result may not accomplish any of your objectives because the product will be inferior (and may not even work properly). It's better to have confidence that you'll have a high-quality MVP than a low-quality product with all the bells and whistles.



*Scheduling is what translates objectives into performance. It's how goals become reality.*



06

## Tools:

### Have a Fully-Stocked Toolbox and Know That Toolbox Thoroughly

Your tools are what enable you to get the job done. These tools include the ones you need for project management as well as the ones for project execution.

#### Use Strategic Tools for Project Management

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The tools you use for project planning, management, and communication are just as important as the ones you use to build the product. All team members need to be able to quickly and easily see and access schedules, conversations, and files. Everyone should know what's going on and what's being said at any point in time. Clear, open, and efficient communication is key to a successful project.

We at Robojuice use Basecamp for project management. There are other good tools, such as Asana. Specific communication tools, like Slack, are also sometimes helpful. What matters is not the brand of tool you use, but that the tools are the best ones to serve the purposes you need them to.



***Your tools are what enable you to get the job done.***

#### Make Sure Your Tools Work Together

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When you're putting together your toolbox, keep in mind that some tools work better together than others. Phillips head screws require a Phillips head screwdriver. Digital tools are no different in that if they're designed to work together, your life will be much easier than if they're not.

## Use Strategic Tools for Project Implementation

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The tools you use for implementation will depend on what the individual project requires. You need to have a fully-stocked toolbox so you're ready with the right tool for the job, and you need to know your toolbox thoroughly, so you understand what tools work best for different purposes. Your objectives will drive the decision of what tools to use for any given project.

At Robojuice, we've developed a full technology and development stack that allows us to choose exactly

the tools to build each project in the most effective and efficient way possible. This is one of the main ways we're able to help clients reach their goals on time and in budget — we have exactly what need in order to make that happen. Whether it's e-commerce platforms, customer relationship management systems, content management systems, app development tools, or anything else, our decisions about what to use when are always based on what would be the best for that individual project.

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## WE'RE GOING Full Circle

These six principles will ensure that your project not only gets accomplished, but also that it grows your business to a level you may not otherwise have realized. They also naturally take away the stress that often comes with web projects.



*In order to put these principles into practice, you have to have the right people on the right bus in the right seats.*

But in order to put these principles into practice, you have to have [the right people on the right bus in the right seats](#). You need the right team. A team who shares the same values, who's committed to these principles. This is the tough part, because it requires making some difficult decisions. If you don't have the right people on your team, you need to decide what you can do to create that team. Maybe that means moving some people around internally. Maybe it means helping someone who doesn't share your values find a better fit, and then making a new hire. Maybe it means bringing in an outsourced team like ours to be a part of your internal team. Whatever it means for you, the key is that you start with a team that can function together in a way that will produce the project that will take your company to the next level.

**Want to learn how we can help your team grow your business?  
Schedule a time to talk about your plan.**

**Visit us at [robojuice.com](http://robojuice.com)**

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## **ABOUT** **Robojuice**

We take the worry out of web. For companies that understand the importance of web for business, we provide a plan and a process to accomplish their goals, and we build platforms that solve business challenges. [See how we've helped other companies like yours.](#)

