Burn It Down or Build It Up?

Planning for Iterative Website Evolution

The Pitch

In the past: To evolve, hospital and healthcare websites needed to be burned down with each iteration — largely because the design, content and technology were so closely intertwined, and to adapt to mobile.

Today: The separation of content, design, and technology makes it possible to establish a firm foundation and move the site forward to achieve the institutional objectives. In addition, external changes in content delivery have stabilized.

The opportunity: If a solid website foundation is established, your organization can shift from burning down your website with each iteration to building on top of it.

Let's Look Back

Mobile Design

2008 iPhone 3G launches, pushing the need for websites designed for the mobile web and forcing full-scale rethinking of web design and content presentation. Burn down those websites.
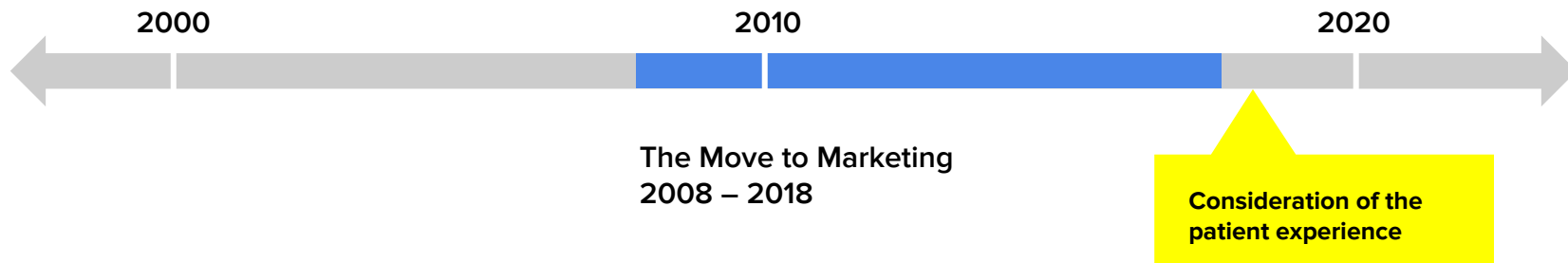

2000   2010   2020

2008

The Responsive Design Decade
2010 – 2019
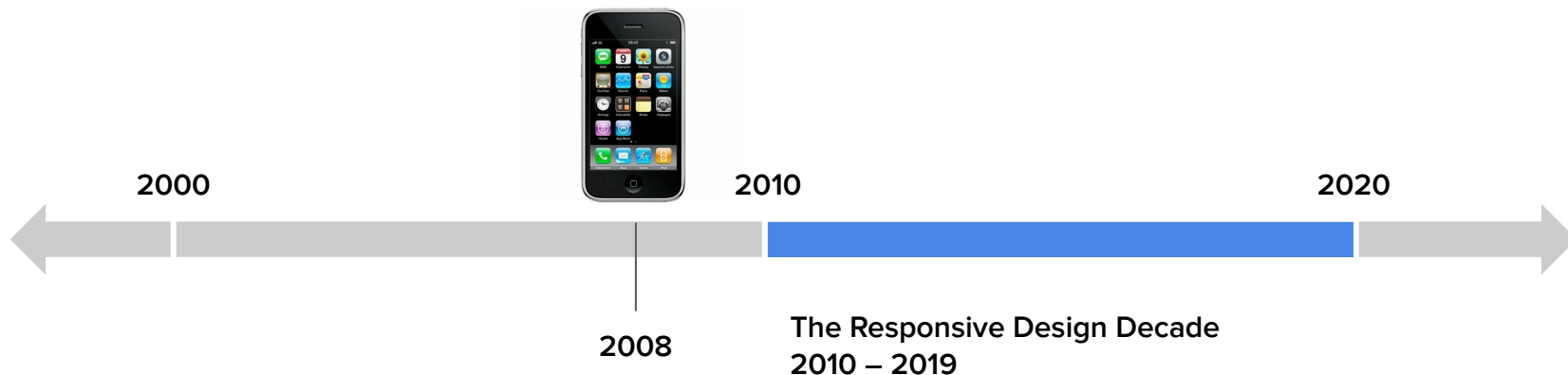
Evolving CMS Platforms

2015 Before 2015, all Drupal sites needed to be rebuilt with every redesign.

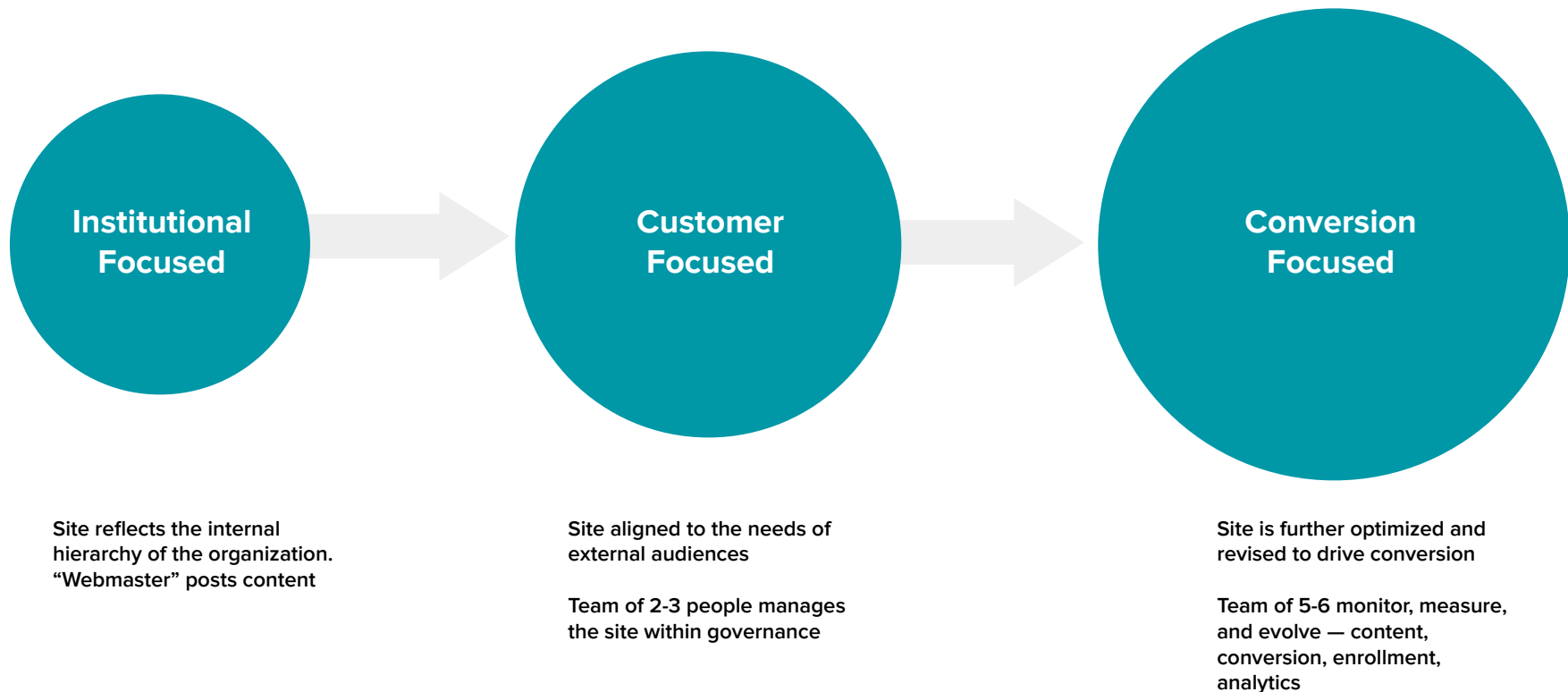After 2015, the core can be updated to maintain the content structures.

2000

2010

2020

| 2007 D5 | 2008 D6 | 2011 D7 | 2015 D8 | 2020 D9 |

Burn It Down

Build It Up
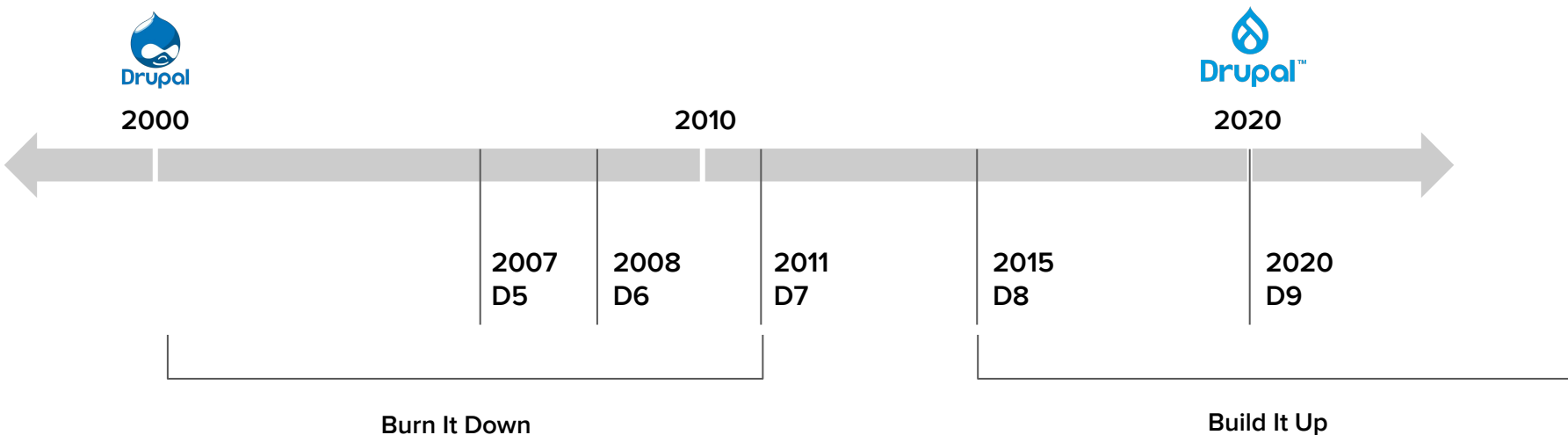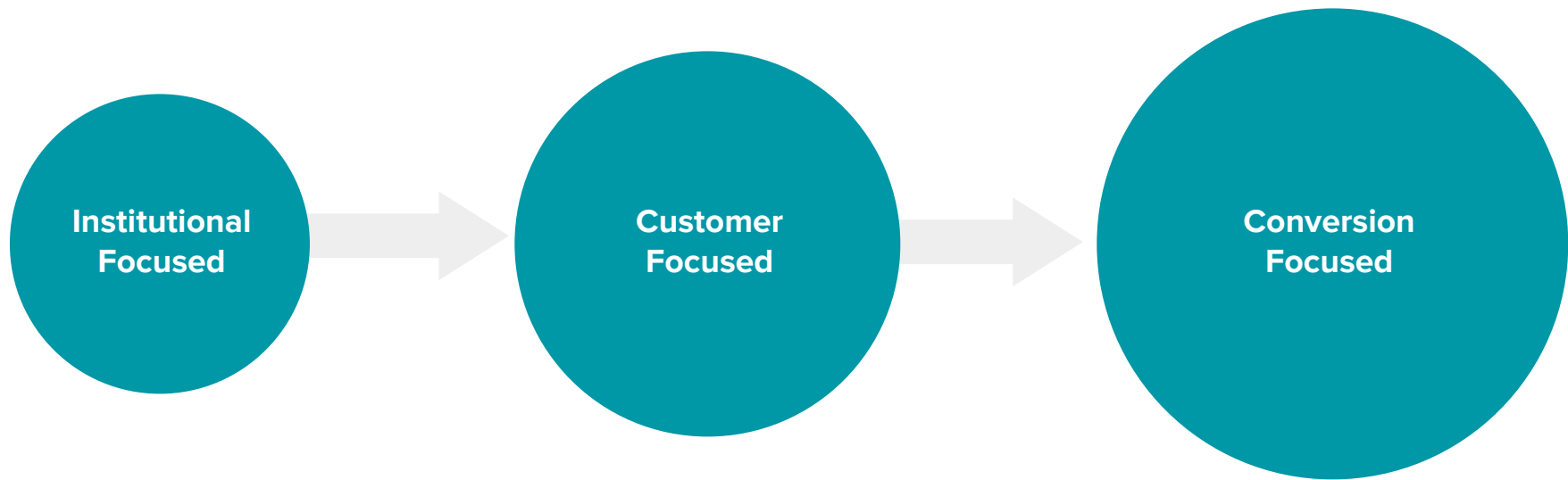
Website Moves from IT to Marketing

2008 The move from the website being a "technical" project to a "marketing" project occurs with the expansion of more specialized marketing tools.
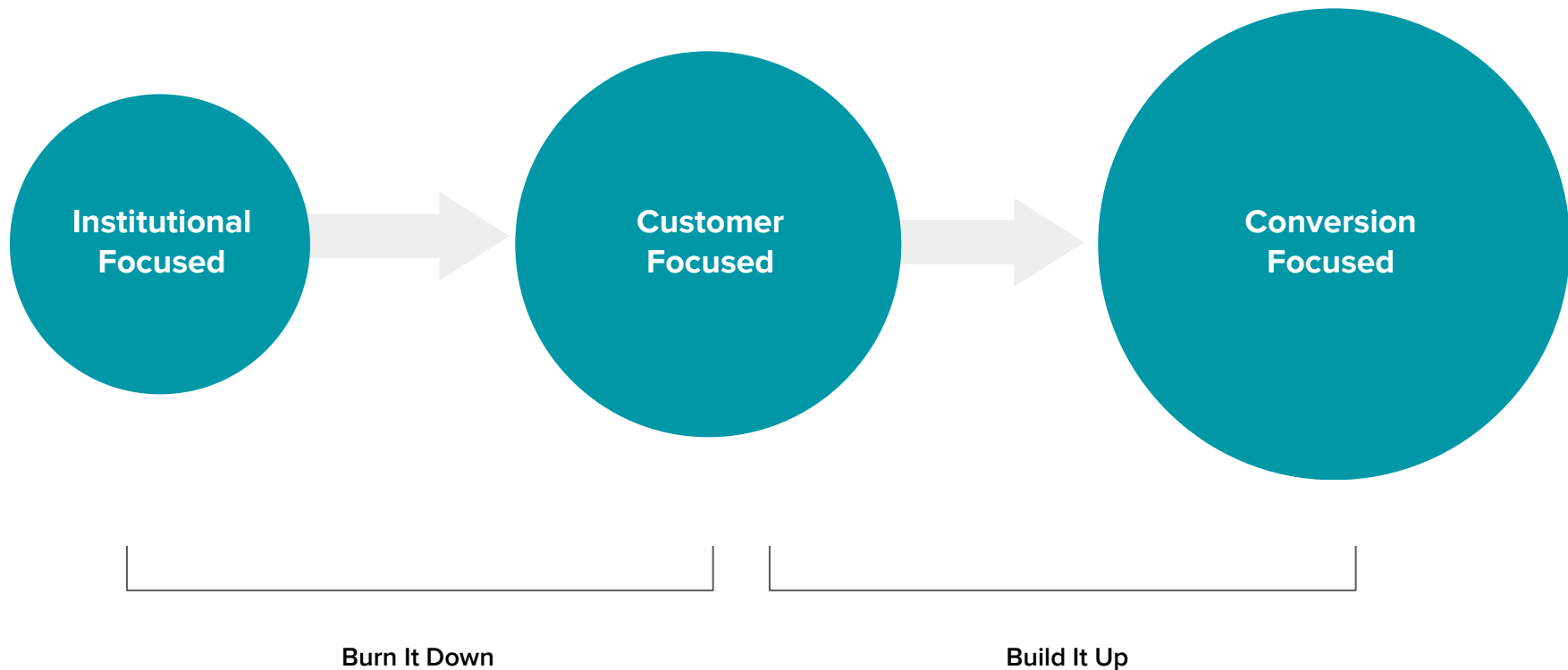
2000   2010   2020

The Move to Marketing
2008 – 2018

Consideration of the patient experience

Website Evolution

Institutional Focused

Customer Focused

Conversion Focused

Site reflects the internal hierarchy of the organization. "Webmaster" posts content

Site aligned to the needs of external audiences

Team of 2-3 people manages the site within governance

Site is further optimized and revised to drive conversion

Team of 5-6 monitor, measure, and evolve — content, conversion, enrollment, analytics

Website Evolution

Institutional Focused

Customer Focused

Conversion Focused

Resumé of the school.

Achieves the business goals of the school.

Website Evolution

Institutional Focused → **Customer Focused** → **Conversion Focused**
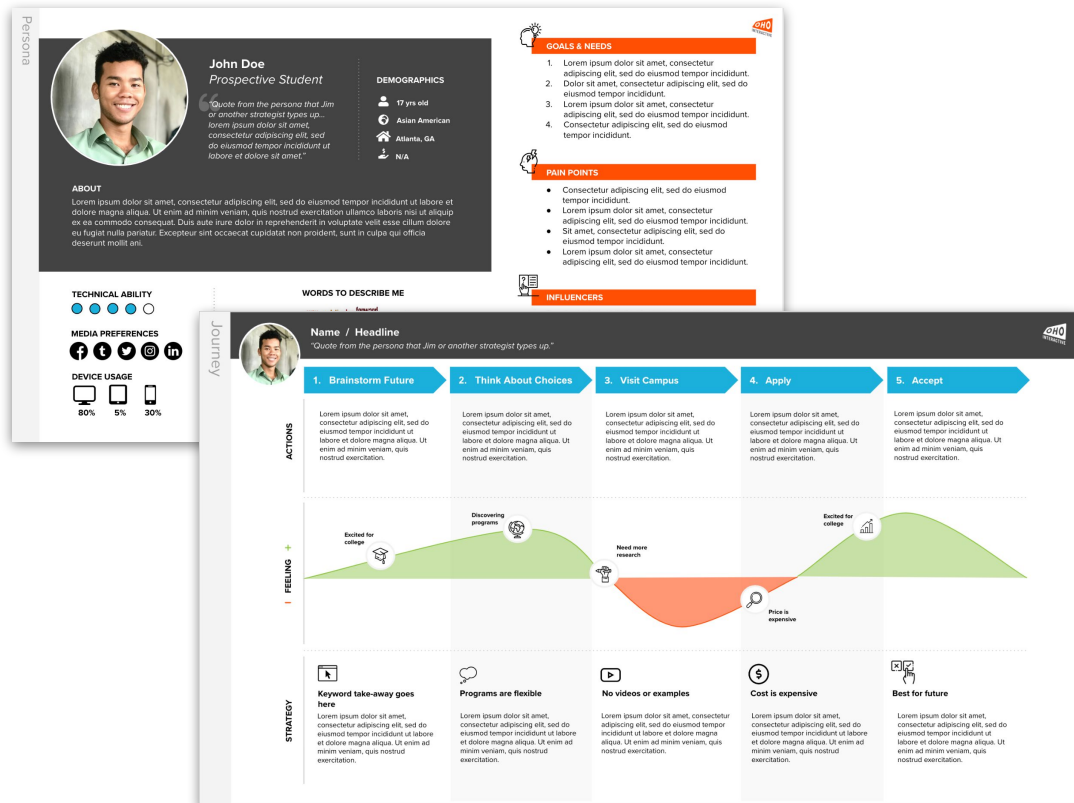
Burn It Down

Build It Up

Setting the Foundation

Building a Solid Foundation

- A user-centered website focused on audience needs (not institutional needs)

User-Centric Website

The more you can learn and understand about what your audience's preferences and behaviors, the better you'll be able to engage and convert them. User needs heavily influence navigation, nomenclature, and content.
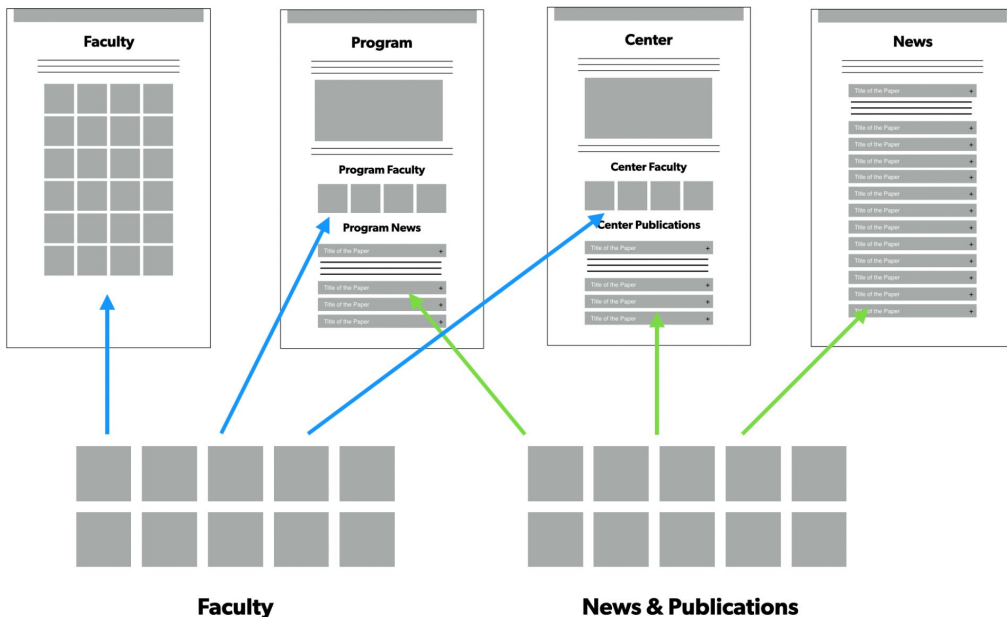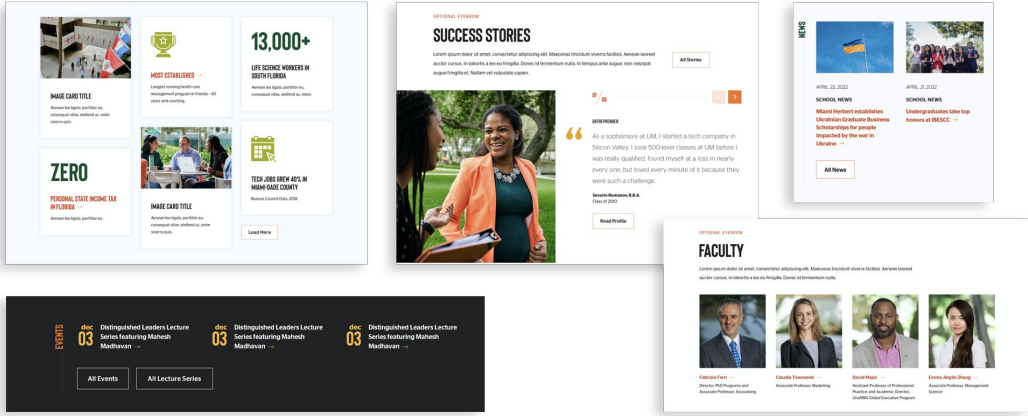
Building a Solid Foundation

- A user-centered website focused on audience needs (not institutional needs)
- A digital content strategy that maximize content sources and reuse

Content Strategy

Key requirements include:

- Ease of upgrade and iterative evolution without major overhaul
- Ability to manage content day-to-day without developer support
- Ongoing documentation of functional spec as site evolves
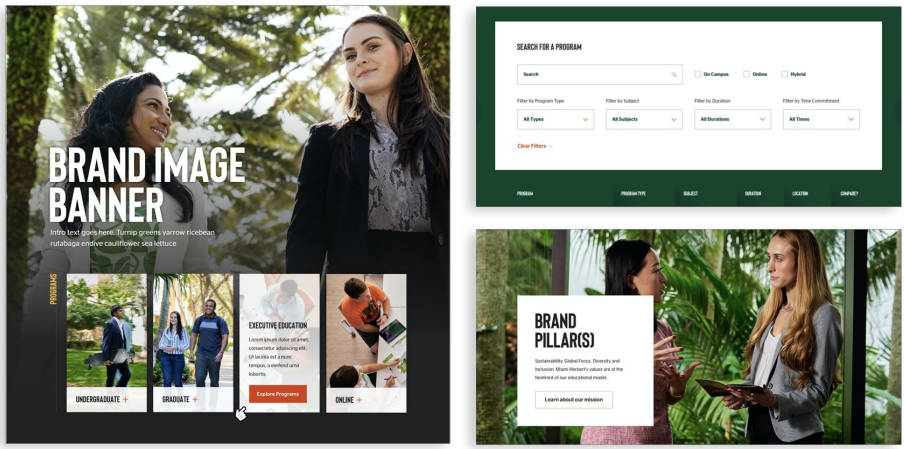
Building a Solid Foundation

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- A digital content strategy that maximize content sources and reuse
- Component-driven design

Component-Driven Design System

Creating a modular design system, existing separately from the site structure, can refresh and evolve as new needs and requirements emerge.

UNIQUE

RECURRING

Build A Solid Foundation

Building a Solid Foundation

- A user-centered website focused on audience needs (not institutional needs)
- A digital content strategy that maximize content sources and reuse
- Component-driven design
- A governance strategy to maintain site quality
- CMS that is able to evolve and be upgraded without having to rebuild
- A site that you can edit and publish without the help of a developer
- The staff to support and execute on the strategy

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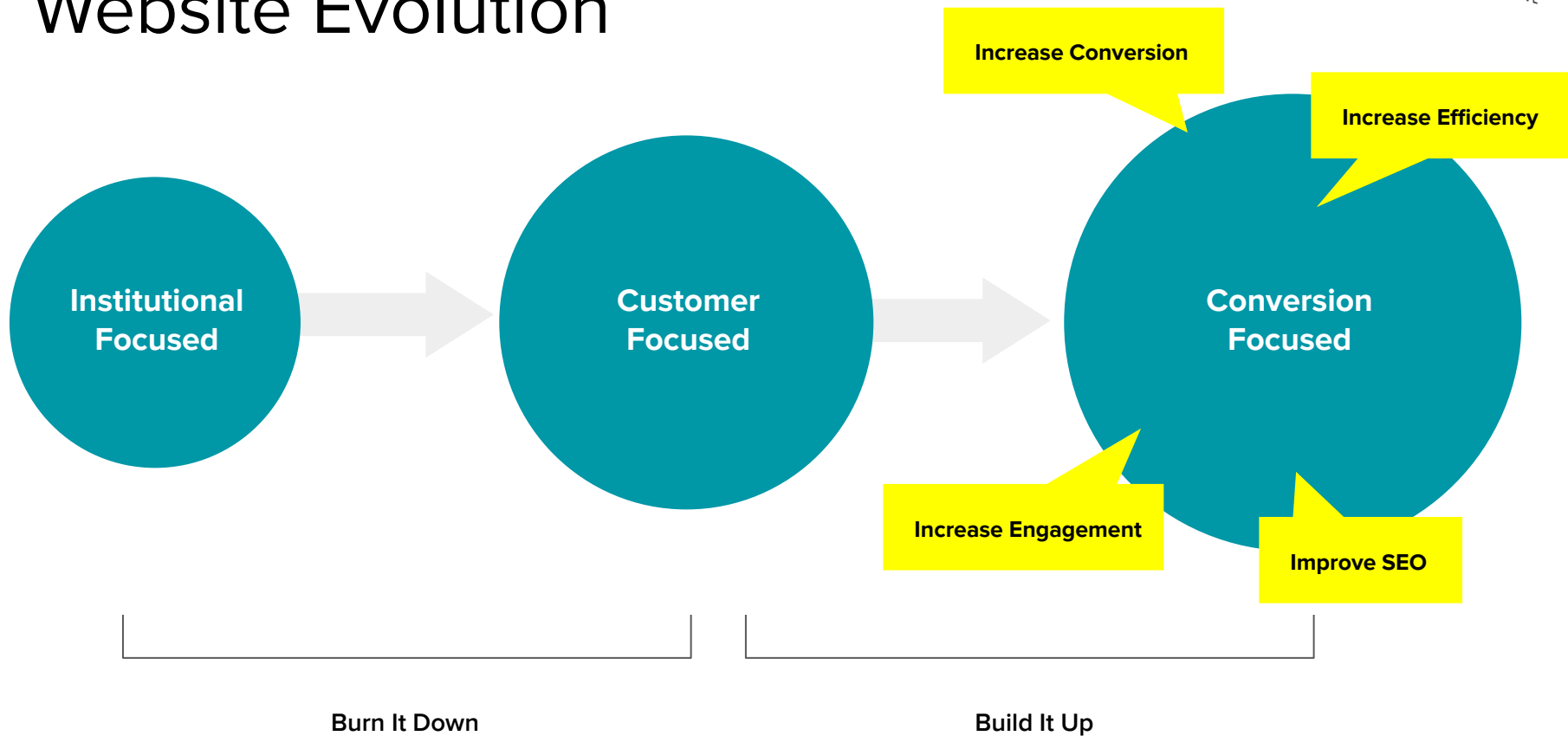- The staff to support and execute on the strategy

Build It Up

Your Foundation Is Set. What Does Building Look Like?

Your New Identity

Shift your thinking from "webmaster" mindset to "digital expert" and "lead investigator" — you're looking to always be measuring, learning, and improving.
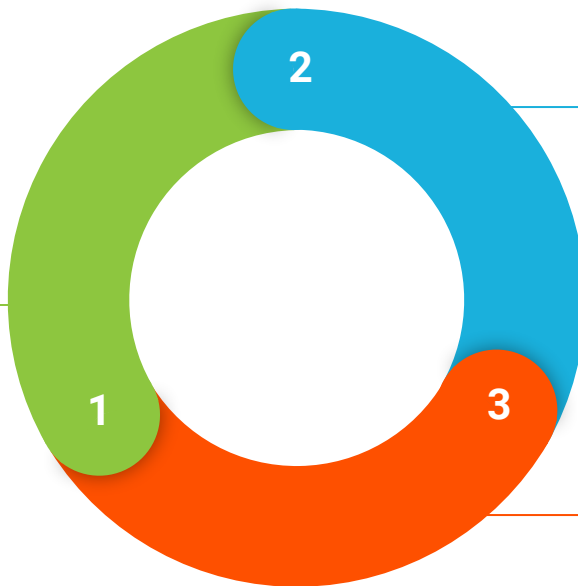
Conversion Rate Optimization

A shift from thinking about the website in basic health and publishing terms to thinking about the site in terms of reaching the business goals of the organization:
make money, save money, increase brand awareness.

Improvement Cycle

Step 2: Develop and Test a Hypothesis

What's working? What's not working? Where and why are conversions happening? How can I best get more information?

Step 1: Focus on Goals & Conversions

Tie your site activity to the business goals of your organization.

Step 3: Make Updates Based on Findings

Make UX, design or content updates to solve the problem and increase conversions. Measure your results.
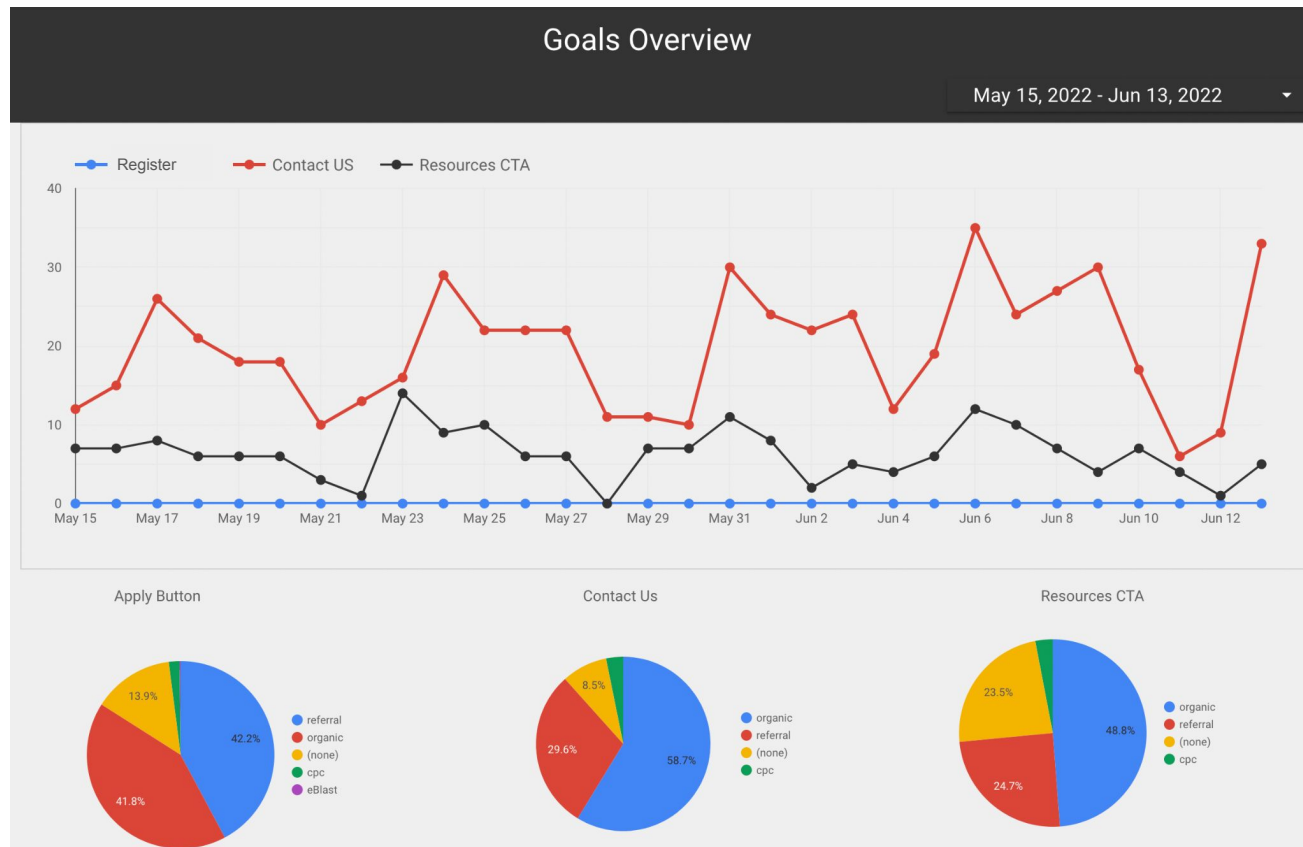
Report on Conversion & Goals

Change the Conversation

Establish and report on conversions and demonstrate how the website is increasing conversions.

Where are people converting?

Understand which parts of the site are working well. Set up events to track content engagement.Review analytics with a conversion mindset.

The Measurement & Testing Cycle

Testing Cycles. Pick the proper test to collect input, to answer the questions that you have, or to test a hypothesis that you think will help increase conversions or increase your brand.

- A/B testing
- Focus groups and 1:1 sessions
- Think aloud user testing
- Heatmaps
- Analytics
- Navigation treejacking
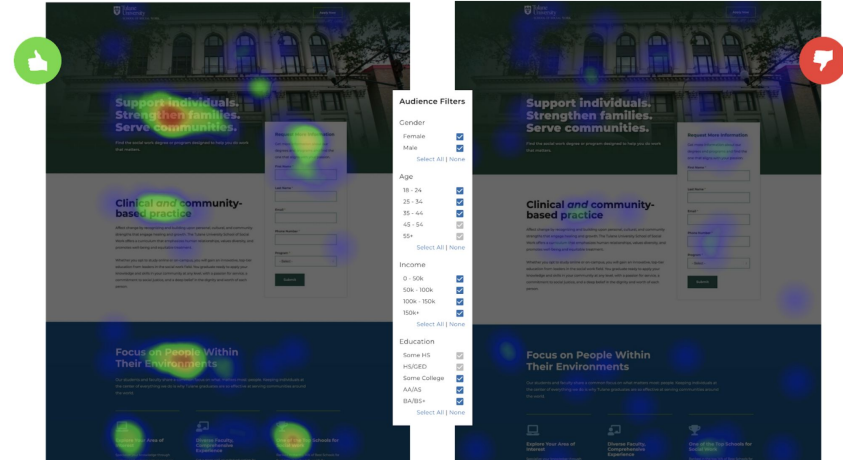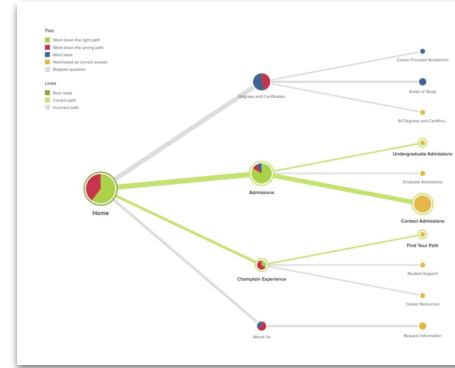
Even with a foundation, when might I need to burn it down?

Controlled Burn

- Significant overhaul in the products, services, locations or delivery
- Drastic new brand or visual designs
  - Should be able to reuse existing assets (news, events, staff)
  - May require just homepage or adding new components
- Major strategic shift — combining two hospitals/organizations together

Next steps

Questions to Consider

- Is your site Institutional, Customer-Focused, Conversion Focused?
- Have you moved out of the "webmaster" mindset?
- Do you have clear business goals and a defined way to track?
- Do you have ongoing practices in place for assessing site effectiveness?
- Do you understand your audiences, and does your site meet their needs?
- Is your team staffed and skilled for tomorrow, or yesterday?
- Do you have the processes, documentation, and support in place to empower effective and efficient website stewardship?
- Can your design system and CMS flexibly accommodate change?
- Are digital resources a fixed budget priority or an infrequent special request?

Questions?