

Drupal 7 End-of-Life

Why You Should Start Your Migration to the Current Version Today

Drupal 7 was first released in 2011. When Drupal 8 came out in 2015, many Drupal teams felt a growing pressure to move from old to new. Drupal 8 overhauled deep layers of architecture that set the foundation for a better way forward. When it came time to update dependencies and switch to Drupal 9, teams did so with a tiny fraction of the disruption of past major updates. Switching from 9 beyond to the latest version is even smoother.




The one detail that's been the sticking point for many teams has been answering when exactly to make that last big leap from the old Drupal architecture of Drupal 7 to the modern architecture of the current version.

That question has been complicated by the global pandemic and multiple extensions to the Drupal 7 end-of-life date. Now, with the last extension date of January 5th, 2025 well in the past, the pressure increases. Still, the risks and costs of migrating can feel more pressing than the opportunity on the other side.

That's why we've joined forces with Strategic Partner, [ImageX](#) to detail why you shouldn't hesitate to start the process today.

Opportunity is Knocking

Your website is your most important marketing asset, so don't miss the [opportunity to make it more effective](#) at addressing your customers' needs and achieving your organization's objectives. Migrating to the modern Drupal architecture (you can skip to the latest version) with its API-first architecture and new modern features should be



exciting like moving into a new home. It's your chance to reassess, declutter and update your decor.

Modern Drupal also adds many new and useful features compared to Drupal 7:



Responsive Images

Faster and better performance on mobile devices.



Cleaner Code Base

You can deprecate legacy code when migrating from Drupal 7



Symfony and Twig

Drupal now relies on modern PHP frameworks for improved security and developer experience.



Layout Builder in Core

Drupal now includes Layout Builder in core, a successor to the Panels-ecosystem of contributed modules. Canvas is coming soon!



Content Moderation in Core

Drupal now includes more mature modules in core for managing content publication workflows.



Headless CMS

Drupal is now far better suited than Drupal 7 to act as a Headless CMS through its APIs to enable better customer experiences.



Future Proofing

Switching from Drupal 8 onwards has been significantly smoother than the previous era of major version upgrades.



Heavy Traffic Ahead

According to [Drupal's usage statistics](#), hundreds of thousands of sites are still running on Drupal 7. One of the consequences of so many sites needing to be migrated is that digital agencies are beginning to see increased demand for migration and redesign services, and in turn, start dates for new clients are becoming later and later. So if you're planning on working with a skilled Drupal agency, you should begin your vendor selection as early as possible.

A website migration is a lot of work and involves many moving parts, which makes it helpful to get outside help, especially if you don't have the internal resources available. Many teams can struggle to get a project off the ground without that assistance.

While vendor selection adds some extra steps to the process, the benefits are often substantial. For instance:

- Project management expertise keeps a project on track and on time.
- Your team can continue to focus on their existing workload.
- An agency offers extensive design and digital experience expertise.
- You can benefit from best practices for gathering requirements, planning, implementation and project management.
- Agencies can also offer experience with content strategies, accessibility, SEO, quality assurance and ongoing site support.

If you're committed to a smooth, thoughtful migration – one that moves your business forward – and want to avoid a mad scramble to beat the deadline, now is the time to get started.



Pre-Planning Your Migration

Usability expert [Don Norman](#) famously said, “A project is behind schedule and over budget the day it’s started.”


The reason this is so often true is that organizations can underestimate [the time required to get a project started](#). Every company is different, but most site owners will need to build a business case to secure funding for their project and to write and distribute a request for proposal (RFP) to find an agency and a WebOps platform. They will need to go through the process of reviewing multiple RFP responses to evaluate and select a vendor and then get any vendor agreements through an often lengthy legal review process - all before any actual work has begun on the migration.

While you are lining up a vendor to supply developer power and more, you can proceed on a parallel effort to get your ducks in a row. That way, when the full project team kicks off, it is doing so from as clean of a starting point as possible and as clear of a vision of success as possible. Depending on the complexity of your site, development of the new Drupal site may take one, three or six months. It is wise to spend a similar amount of time refining what you want to achieve.

What Do You Want to Achieve?

For many organizations, a site migration is a perfect opportunity to revisit their overall digital strategy, making changes big and small. Those who wait too long are often forced to simply replicate their existing site, with all of its shortcomings and without any meaningful improvement.

Whereas, combining other initiatives - as part of the migration - can be much more time and cost-efficient. For instance, adding a design refresh during a migration typically adds 15% to the overall cost. It's much more expensive and time-consuming to replicate an old design in a new system only to then redesign it.



If you'd like to move your site forward and deliver better results, you should consider some of the following items within your site migration project:



Taxonomy Updates

Is your site organized in a manner that helps visitors find what they need and reflects how your users are actually using your site?



Design & Copy Refresh

Does your site look dated or has your branding been updated but not your website? Does the voice and tone of your website need to be fine-tuned? Now is the time to create that consistency.



Accessibility Standards

Does your site meet or exceed accessibility standards? A site migration is a perfect time to ensure that you are providing access to all of your visitors and aren't being penalized in organic search.



Content Audit & SEO Optimization

You'll need to review all content on the site to determine what should be kept, what should be updated and what should be retired, so optimizing your content and media as part of the process should be a no-brainer.



Development Workflows

Consider a WebOps platform that will help your migration run more smoothly and it will set you up for longer-term success. Putting the right workflows in place makes it much easier for marketing and development teams to collaborate and deploy changes more frequently.



Authoring Workflows

Many clients use a migration to take a closer look at the content and editing experience with the objective of making content creation and publication easier for all involved.

Most organizations recognize the value of these User Experience (UX) improvements, but as we get closer to the end-of-life deadline, they worry they won't have enough time to make updates so they narrow the scope to only what absolutely needs to be done.

Planning a Successful Migration

No matter where your migration project stands, there are plenty of practical steps that you can start working on today.

Pre-Project Planning

- Detail the project goals.
- Outline project scope.
- Define success criteria.
- Develop a business case to request funding.
- Secure project funding.
- Develop an RFP or Project Brief.
- Review and select a vendor.
- Complete vendor contracts.

Once the pre-project planning is underway, you can shift your focus to site strategy and begin to evaluate where your site is today and where you would like to take it. Not everything needs to be accomplished during the migration, but if you don't know where you're going, it's really hard to get there.



Digital Strategy Review

Take a moment to step away from the task at hand – migrating your sites from Drupal 7 – to circle back and make sure your current website strategy still makes sense. How well does it align with your organization’s overall strategy? How effectively are the websites doing their most important job to help your organization succeed? Similarly, you should consider whether your sites are effective at helping your customers do what they want to do online. The answers to these basic questions will help inform many of the decisions you’ll be making during the migration.

Content Audit

Even if you’re building a new site from scratch, you’ll likely want to migrate some of your existing content to your new site. That means now is the time to look at each page to determine what should stay and what should go. Visit each page and ask:

- Who is the primary audience for this page?
- What is the purpose of this content?
- Is this content current and relevant?
- When was the last time anyone reviewed or updated the information?
- How many times has this page been viewed in the last week, month, or year?
- Is this information duplicated elsewhere?

Pare down your content to only what meets your organization’s and audiences’ needs. That’s the key to making your website the powerful tool it’s meant to be.

Code Review

Almost every Drupal 7 site has some form of custom code, whether it handles a few small overrides, or multiple custom modules handling integrations and other features. The nature of this code can heavily influence the effort needed to upgrade a site. In some cases, custom features can be rebuilt using new core functionality, but in those situations where it needs to be recreated using code, a code review is necessary to understand what needs to be done to upgrade it to work on the new site.



WebOps Platform

WebOps platforms make it easy for you to continually improve your site, which further reduces the likelihood that you will need to do another rebuild and relaunch. At [Pantheon](#), we empower developers, marketers and IT to collaborate and iterate with speed and agility to deliver extraordinary results. Agencies will often use Pantheon's WebOps platform to develop, test and release website changes faster and more reliably, which frees them up to deliver truly amazing digital experiences that create value for your organization.

Wrap-Up

If you've read this far, it's safe to assume you're currently planning or need to plan a migration project. So here is our parting advice for a smooth transition from Drupal 7.

1

Think of your migration as an opportunity to improve your site with your users in mind, and deliver better results for them and your organization.

2

Project pre-planning – getting the project approved and funded, hiring vendors and getting contracts signed can take much longer than you'd expect, so get that process started as soon as possible.

3

The longer you wait to get started, the more difficult it will become to make meaningful improvements to your site prior to the Drupal 7 end-of-life, which can be a costly missed opportunity.

4

Skilled vendors can keep your project on track and help your team achieve its project goals, consider [finding an agency](#) to support your migration effort.

5

Build your site on the right WebOps platform to make your migration smoother and set your team and organization up for ongoing success.