

The Above-the-Fold Website Conversion Checklist

Credit: This framework builds on conversion optimization principles from [Nik Sharma](#) and has been adapted by David deSouza for growth-stage organizations.

What's in it for you

- Your website visitors leave without taking action, even when they should want what you offer
 - You want to know exactly what needs to be "above the fold" to convert visitors
 - You need a practical checklist to audit your current website or brief a designer
 - You want proven conversion elements that work for mission-driven organizations
 - You're tired of websites that look pretty but don't actually drive results
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Why This Matters

David's insight from his messy middle marketing framework: **"If you get this wrong, they won't scroll down. Getting this right is pretty important."**

Your above-the-fold content — what people see on their phone or screen before scrolling — determines whether visitors engage or leave. This checklist gives you the essential elements that convert browsers into supporters, participants, or customers.



FIX THESE FIRST (Biggest Impact)

Start here - these changes alone can dramatically improve your conversion rate

1. Headline That Actually Makes Sense

What it is: A headline that immediately clarifies what your organization does and its core benefit.

For mission-driven organizations:

-  "Legal aid that actually gets families housed"
-  "The youth development program that follows kids to college"
-  "Policy change that communities can see and feel"
-  "Transforming lives through innovative solutions"
-  "Building a better tomorrow together"

Test: Can a stranger understand what you do in 5 seconds?

2. Impossible-to-Miss Call-to-Action

What it is: A clearly visible, eye-catching CTA button that tells people exactly what to do next.

Examples by organization type:

- **Direct service:** "Get Help Now" or "Apply for Services"
- **Donations:** "Support This Work" or "Donate Today"
- **Programs:** "Join Our Program" or "Learn More"
- **Products:** "Shop Now" or "Get Started"
- **Partnerships:** "Partner With Us" or "Schedule a Call"

Requirements:

- Different color from everything else on the page
- Large enough to easily tap on mobile

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- Uses action words ("Get," "Join," "Start," "Support")

3. Mobile Reality Check

What it is: Your website actually works on phones (where most people will see it).

Test on your actual phone:

- Can you read the headline without zooming?
- Is the CTA button easy to tap with your thumb?
- Does everything load quickly?
- Can you understand what to do next in under 10 seconds?

If any answer is "no," fix this before anything else.

4. The Three Essential Questions

What it is: Your above-the-fold content must answer these immediately:

1. **What exactly is this?** (Clear description of your work/offering)
2. **Why should I care?** (Benefit to them or the community they care about)
3. **How do I engage right now?** (Clear next step via CTA)

Test: Ask someone unfamiliar with your organization to look at your homepage for 10 seconds, then see if they can answer all three questions.

★ ADD THESE NEXT (Strong Impact)

Once the basics are working, these elements build trust and motivation

5. Clear Explanation of Why You Matter

What it is: A brief, punchy sentence or two that explicitly explains why your work matters.

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Examples:

- "We help working families avoid eviction by providing emergency legal representation and connecting them with long-term housing resources."
- "Our mentorship program has helped 89% of participants graduate high school and 67% enroll in post-secondary education."
- "Small-scale farmers using our heirloom seeds report 40% higher yields and premium pricing for their crops."

Test: Does this address the visitor's question "Why should I care?"

6. Social Proof Near Your CTA

What it is: Testimonials, reviews, or trust indicators placed strategically near your call-to-action button.

High-impact placements:

- **Direct service:** Client success stories near the "Get Help" button
- **Nonprofits:** Donor testimonials near the "Donate" button
- **Products:** Customer reviews near the "Buy Now" button
- **Programs:** Participant testimonials near the "Apply" button

Quick wins:

- Star ratings next to your CTA button
- "Trusted by 500+ families" type statements
- One powerful testimonial quote prominently displayed

7. Clean Layout That Guides the Eye

What it is: Reduce clutter and emphasize your core message.

Avoid:

- Excessive whitespace that pushes key content below the fold
- Oversized hero images that don't add meaning

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- Too many competing elements fighting for attention

Include:

- Headline, explanation, and CTA all visible without scrolling
 - Clear visual hierarchy (biggest = most important)
 - Strategic use of whitespace to guide the eye to your CTA
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✨ POLISH WITH THESE (Nice to Have)

These elements enhance an already-working foundation

8. Meaningful Visual Elements

Icons that communicate benefits:

- Housing icon + "Stable homes for families"
- Graduation cap + "College readiness support"
- Medical cross + "Healthcare access for all"
- Dollar sign + "Financial stability coaching"

Demonstrative content:

- Before/after photos of community improvements
- Short video testimonials from participants
- Quick animation showing your process or impact

9. Credibility Indicators

What it is: Trust signals that build confidence in your organization.

For social sector organizations:

- **Certifications:** GuideStar Seal, B-Corp status, accreditation badges



- **Partnerships:** Logos of respected partner organizations
- **Media mentions:** "As seen in [Local News]" or "Featured in [Industry Publication]"
- **Numbers:** "Trusted by 500+ families" or "50+ organizational partners"

10. User-Generated Content

What it is: Authentic photos, videos, or testimonials from the people you serve.

Ideas:

- Social media posts from participants/supporters
- Photos of community members using your services/products
- Video testimonials recorded by those you've helped
- Written stories submitted by program participants

Important: Always get proper consent and consider privacy needs.

11. Comparison Elements

What it is: Graphics or charts that highlight your advantages or different approach.

Examples:

- "Traditional legal aid vs. Our integrated approach"
- "Industry standard outcomes vs. Our program results"
- "Typical timeline vs. Our accelerated process"
- "Other products vs. Our mission-driven alternative"



QUICK IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Week 1: The Foundation

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- Fix headline to clearly explain what you do
- Make CTA button prominent and action-oriented
- Test entire experience on your phone
- Ensure the three essential questions are answered

Week 2: Build Trust

- Add clear explanation of why your work matters
- Place social proof near your CTA
- Clean up layout to reduce clutter
- Get testimonials if you don't have them

Ongoing: Polish and Optimize

- Add meaningful icons and visuals
 - Integrate credibility indicators
 - Collect and feature user-generated content
 - A/B test different headlines and CTAs
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QUICK AUDIT QUESTIONS

Before you start changing anything, ask:

1. **5-Second Test:** Can someone who's never heard of us understand what we do and why it matters in 5 seconds?
2. **Action Clarity:** Is it completely obvious what we want visitors to do next?
3. **Mobile Reality Check:** Does this work on a phone? (Test it on your actual phone, not just a small browser window)
4. **Trust Building:** Would I trust this organization based just on what I see above the fold?
5. **Benefit Focus:** Are we talking about what we do FOR people, not just what we do?

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If you answered "no" to any of these, start with the "Fix These First" section.

REMEMBER

Don't worry about having the prettiest OR most comprehensive website. You want a website that actually converts visitors into supporters, participants, or customers. As David emphasizes in his messy middle framework: focus on the basics that get results, then rinse and repeat.

Every element should answer the visitor's fundamental question: "Is this for me, and what should I do about it?"

Based on David deSouza's marketing wisdom with credit for the content to [Nik Sharma](#) . Part of the Messy Middle Marketing framework from the Helia Library.

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