



Project Risk Management Guide

by Lean Labs

The purpose of this guide is to identify the 13 largest risks to our project together and understand how Lean Labs mitigates them. It's also a foundation for how we can do our best work together. Please share this document with all project stakeholders.

Risk #1: Lack of Taking Risk

We'll want to try a lot of things in order to determine what works. The risk is if we are not allowed to experiment or you are not open minded to trying new things. If we have to guarantee everything we try will work, not a lot of innovation will happen.

How to mitigate: Please help all stakeholders understand that you hired "*Lean*" Labs, which is all about testing new ideas, measuring results, and learning from metrics & feedback about what works and how to continuously improve ideas and results.

Risk #2: Unrealistic Expectations

It's very hard to deliver when a stakeholder has unrealistic expectations. This is mitigated by documenting goals and setting clear strategy and expectations.... which we will do together. Example: When building your traffic and leads with Inbound Marketing, it's important that Inbound is viewed differently than paid advertising. Rather than an instant flow of traffic & leads, Inbound is like planting an orchard... and the first 6 months is mostly planting and watering in order to see a clear sprout of growth, not a waterfall of results (that comes later as results compound). Following 6 months of planting and watering, we'll observe growth and flowering buds with some fruit and a crop at 1 year. Then, exponentially larger crops every year after.

Risk #3: Rushing

It's important that we build the right thing, build the thing right, and stick to the project timeframe we've agreed upon. If we both, client and agency, do our part, we'll finish on time without rushing.

Risk #4: Poor Communication

Mitigated by weekly huddles to confirm we're always on the same page and by using our Help Desk email system that we will setup.

Risk #5: Complex Email Threads

Mitigated by not having lengthy discussions over email. As we mentioned above, we use a help desk system for all email communication questions and requests... as that goes into a ticket system for us, and we can assign each question or request to the

right person, then get back to you. Also if we can both agree to keep one thread per topic and not mix apples and sandwiches, all email communication will go smoothly.

Risk #6: Complex Emails Continued

We like to keep CC'ing of emails to an absolute minimum (if not zero), because CC'ing our whole team or your whole team causes duplicate work, things to get missed, and general confusion about who is in charge of different tasks. It's just painful when we ask a question and we get 3 different responses, or we have to wait for everyone to respond in order to line up all the answers and then try to decipher what we should do based on all the different thoughts. Instead, let's route communication to the designated "project owner" and ask that you obtain team input and reach an agreement on the decision before sending your reply. Of course, asking more questions so as to make the right decision is absolutely no problem at all.

Risk #7: Too Many Chefs in the Kitchen

Mitigated by you establishing a project owner for your team. For our team, we're built so that you work with our best talent for each need. Kevin Barber is the project owner of strategy, Giles Talbot for design, Ryan Scott for inbound, and Miles Ukaoma for delivery. For your team, if you have multiple stakeholders, we need one project owner to manage the other stakeholders so that we move forward efficiently.

Risk #8: Poor Design & Marketing Choices

Often our clients request changes to our plans that are, basically, bad ideas... at least in our opinion (we're speaking of ideas that any competent designer would say is not helping improve the product). In an ideal world, everyone would value and trust our opinion, as we're the design team and marketing team you hired. However, in the real world, clients often want to remove whitespace, make their logo way too big, use too much color/emphasis on unimportant elements, use slideshows improperly, or try to take marketing content in a direction that won't help results. Some clients have a lack of understanding of what makes for good design or how inbound works.

It's hard to mitigate this from happening, but we try to mitigate it without hurting the work. We do try at least 3 times to say no before we cave in... and if it's a really bad idea, we'll fight you hard on it... but as nicely as possible.

Risk #9: Friction

Mitigated by asking each other what our pet peeves are and trying to not do them.

Example: Kevin's biggest pet peeve is him asking a Yes or No question and getting a 3 minute long answer back rather than "most of the time, yes" or "it depends". We will always dig deeper when needed. We are going to ask a LOT of questions, especially Kevin, so if every answer has a story, it makes completing meeting agendas difficult.

Risk #10: Late Stage Changes

Mitigated by walking you through our process so you understand it, by asking you to be present and focused throughout the process (not just at the end), giving us feedback throughout key stages. We also require that stakeholders review the brand strategy guide, whitespace guide, this risk management guide, content prototypes, and all design mockups throughout the process. It is not fair to our team to have a stakeholder come in at the eleventh hour and change the design direction, site strategy, or add requirements. This stakeholder needs to be involved to help shape the project along the way, giving us input early in the process.

Risk #11: Timeline Risk (Delays)

Timelines go out of whack when the scope changes or you're not able to respond to progress readily. Also, content creation must be taken very seriously or it can derail the project. For content challenges, realize that web pages are never complete, so you can always login to your site and make tweaks. If we try to achieve perfection on the first draft, you may achieve it, but the site will be a few months late.

Even larger than content challenges, managing the scope of the project is key to keeping a project on time. Not every idea should be included in a design. The best mitigation is to not add scope for "nice to have" features to the project until after it is ready to launch. Basically, if you request something new, mid swing, that's not easily

included, we'll tackle it post launch as part of our wish list. This way we don't have to constantly revisit timeline and budget.

Finally, projects that don't have daily time availability see delays. All we ask is 1-2 hours per day during the strategy and content phase. If you can block out at least 1 hour per day, everyday, the project will move forward smoothly. Oh, and timely payments help keep projects on schedule too. Thank you!

A few final risks specific to Inbound Marketing:

Risk #12: Inconsistent Marketing

A key to marketing consistency is to have timely content fact checks plus plenty of lead time before any content publish date. We like to work 1 month ahead of when we actually publish so as to establish a very consistent content creation rhythm and smooth publishing schedule.

Risk #13: Unreasonable Style Requirements

We aren't you and we won't ever sound just like you. You need to understand that someone else is doing your writing, so what we create won't sound just like it came out of your mouth.

In closing...

We hope that we haven't scared your team by being upfront and transparent about the risks to the project. These risks exist even if we never bring them up. It's our hope that by addressing them openly and honestly we can overcome any obstacle we encounter as we work together. If you have any concerns whatsoever, please reach out to Kevin Barber directly at 1-913-871-6500 x100.

Thank you for taking the time to read this document.



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