

WHAT

CASE

GRNT.MEDIA

“**Back to Basics: Redesigning a Website for Future Growth**”

STUDY

IN SHORT

GRNT.MEDIA developed its website infrastructure after realizing its content's reach and appearance was being limited by only publishing on social media. The intent is for the site to serve as a base for people to engage with GRNT.MEDIA and in the future the team would like to incorporate an online store.

ABOUT THE NEWS OUTLET

GRNT.MEDIA is an independent media outlet that emerged during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It appears on several social media platforms and writes about day-to-day events in Ukraine and the reconstruction process. It is exclusively funded through donations, grants, and readers.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

GRNT.MEDIA aimed to transform its website from a secondary publishing tool into a core platform that supports long-form journalism, partnerships, audience trust, and future revenue streams. The goal was to create a clear, user-friendly digital base



IMPLEMENTED SOLUTIONS

The team redesigned the site around user needs, simplified navigation, clarified key sections, and restructured content to support new formats and projects. Responsibilities were assigned internally, collaboration with developers improved, and the website was positioned as a central hub for content, partners, donations, and a future online store.

WHY THIS PROJECT?

The team had long discussed internally that it needed a website but didn't fully understand what for. In its current form, it was more of an additional tool rather than a core platform. It was used for maybe 15% of GRNT.MEDIA's overall activity, mostly to publish long analytical pieces or editorial opinions. All of its main activity happened on social media: Instagram, Telegram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

The site was not flexible. The team couldn't easily add new formats, launch special projects with partners, create a store, or present itself as an organization that does more than just publish texts. Even the "Support Us" section was hard to find. At the same time, they already had a strategic vision: in 2026 they want to publish more of their own content: investigations, blogs, editorial pieces, special projects. For that, they need a platform that allows for it.

The team also wants to launch a store, and the website should serve as its base. Another important point is that the site needs to look presentable for partners and donors, a place where they can quickly find all the essential information about the team, projects, and contacts.

HOW DID APPLYING DESIGN THINKING PRINCIPLES HELP?

First, the team shifted their perspective from what is convenient for them to what their audience actually needs. They tried to think like their users: what they're looking for, how they navigate the menu, when they stop reading an article, why they would return to the site (or wouldn't), how they move between sections, which sections are key for them, and what needs to be on the homepage to grab their attention and guide them in the right direction.

This focus on three main principles and three main goals helped them the most. Thinking like their audience was the core value of the design-thinking process for them.

DID GRNT.MEDIA'S APPROACH CHANGE ENGAGEMENT WITH ITS AUDIENCE IN ANY WAY?

It's hard to say, as the new website had yet to be fully launched because the team wanted to improve the copy. Technically everything was ready, but they wanted to rewrite many sections, including the editorial policy and the "About Us" page. They were waiting for a strategy session this winter to finalize these texts.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID GRNT.MEDIA ENCOUNTER AND HOW DID IT ADDRESS THEM?

The team lacked someone with both the production and technical skills to structure everything, so it required a lot of communication with developers and their designers to keep the website simple and user-friendly for everyone involved.

The second challenge was that it was a redesign, not a full rebuild. The team still needs to review the code again, look closely at SEO and optimization, and think about how to promote the website more actively. Right now, the site ranks first or second depending on the search terms, but there's more work to do.

The third challenge was that the team didn't start working on the copywriting early enough, which delayed the launch. While the website was introduced to the audience using the existing copy, the team doesn't plan to actively promote it until they've rewritten key texts, which they expect to finalize after the strategy session this winter.

Another challenge was internal capacity. It was difficult to properly review everything the external team produced. GRNT.MEDIA addressed this by assigning responsibility for each section of the site to different team members. But in hindsight, it would've been better if one person owned the entire process. That's now fixed, as GRNT.MEDIA has a single person overseeing the site, and the product is almost ready.

HOW WAS GRNT.MEDIA'S PROJECT RECEIVED BY ITS AUDIENCE?

It's still too early to assess how the audience has received the final product, because GRNT.MEDIA hadn't fully released the new version yet. But through this process, the team gained important insights that will help it shape the final result better.

WHAT INSIGHTS OR LESSONS DID GRNT.MEDIA GAIN FROM THIS PROJECT?

First, the team realized they could have done more with the time and resources, especially in reviewing the code, checking the logic, and spotting any hidden bugs or inefficiencies. That taught them the importance of thinking very clearly about what they want to build and what they want to achieve with each technical specification. That's their biggest internal takeaway.

Second, they were reminded that their audience does not think like them. You have to approach the product not as an insider, but from the perspective of a regular user, someone who casually follows your media. What's their path through the site? What catches their attention? Where do they drop off? This shift in thinking helped the team focus on clarity, simplicity, and functionality. It reminded them to build not just what's meaningful for them, but what actually works for their users.

WHAT DOES GRNT.MEDIA PLAN ON DOING NEXT?

The team planned to fully test and launch the updated website by December 1. By February 1, they aim to rewrite all key content, including the “About Us” section and editorial policy, to better reflect current strategy. They’re also planning to launch a merchandise store. First through Instagram, and then, as the range expands, they’ll integrate it into the website as well. They’ll also collect user feedback and, if technically possible, do a second round of code review to improve site performance and SEO.

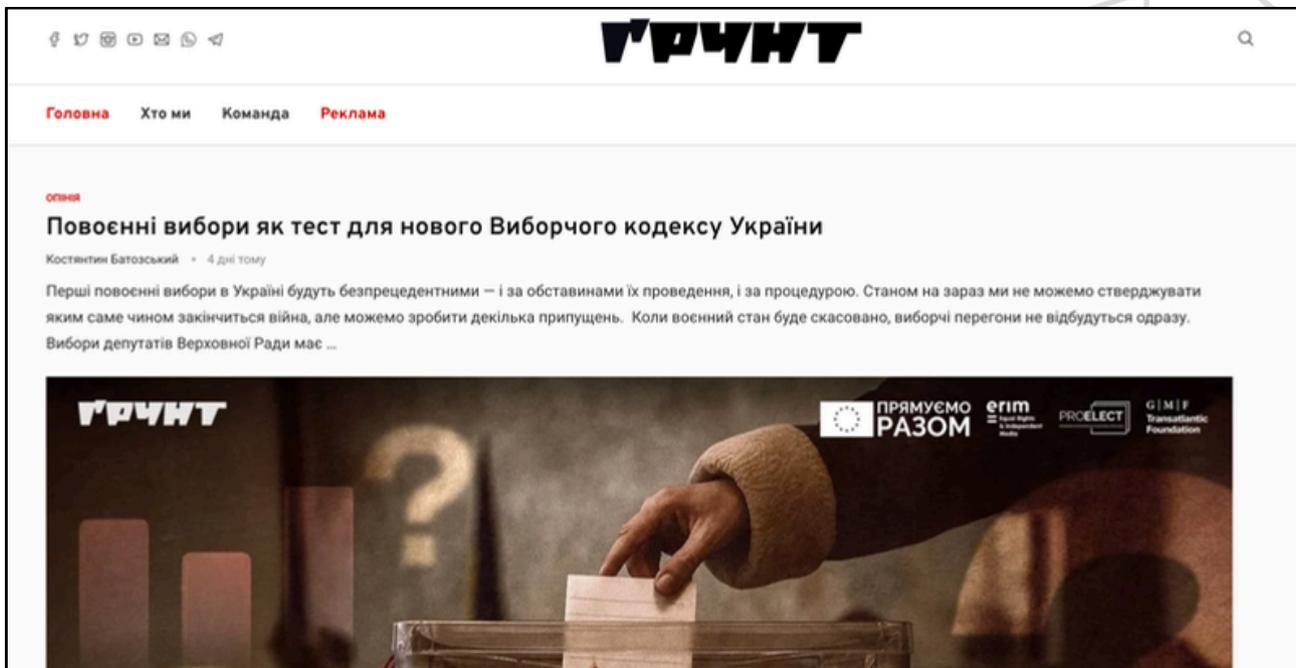
In the second quarter of 2026, the team plans to release new long-form investigations, op-eds, and original content. This time, the new website will be fully integrated into the publishing and engagement strategy.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD GRNT.MEDIA GIVE TO OTHER JOURNALISTS OR ORGANISATIONS CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PATH?

First of all: don’t start with design. Start with why. Be clear about what your website is actually for. For your team, your readers, and your partners. Assign clear responsibilities early on. Otherwise, you’ll waste time trying to get everyone on the same page. Don’t leave content and structure for “later.” Your copy, navigation, and tone of voice are not decoration, they are part of the product. Without them, even the best design won’t deliver. A website redesign is not a magic fix. But if you treat it as a strategic tool, to build trust, grow your audience, improve your workflows, then it can truly transform your organization.



ГРЧНТ VISUALS FROM THE PROJECT



GRNT.MEDIA's redesigned website positions long-form analysis and opinion pieces within a clear, credible editorial framework, strengthening the outlet's visibility beyond social media and reinforcing its role as a trusted platform for in-depth public discourse.