



# The Website Buyer's Guide



What you need to know, ask, and do when seeking a website design firm.

**simpler site**

## Before assuming it's time for a website redesign, ask yourself:



### **Is our website meeting our business goals?**

Analyze website traffic, leads generated, and conversion rates. Are you achieving your desired outcomes (e.g., sales, brand awareness)?

### **Does our website accurately reflect our brand's value proposition and offerings?**

Evaluate if the website's design, tone, and messaging align with your current brand image.

### **Is the user experience (UX) smooth and intuitive across all devices?**

Consider navigation ease, content clarity, and mobile responsiveness. Does your website offer a positive user experience for all visitors?

### **Is our website content accurate and engaging?**

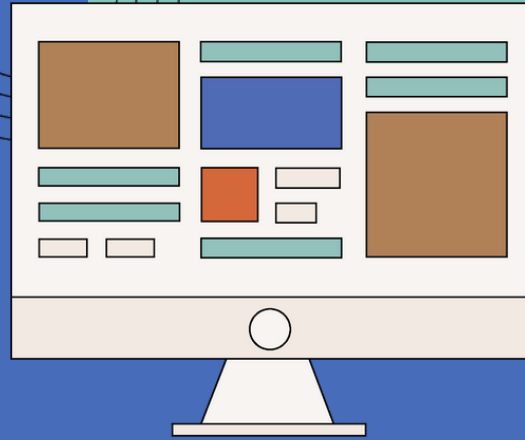
Outdated content can deter visitors. Is your website content informative, up-to-date, and optimized for search engines?

### **Is our website performing well from a technical standpoint?**

Check for broken links, slow loading times, or security vulnerabilities. A buggy website can damage your credibility and lose potential leads

If you're answering no to any of these questions, it's likely time for a website update. But where do you go from here? In this guide, we'll outline the most important questions to ask so you find the right agency partner to put your new website on the path to success.

# Website Project Requirements

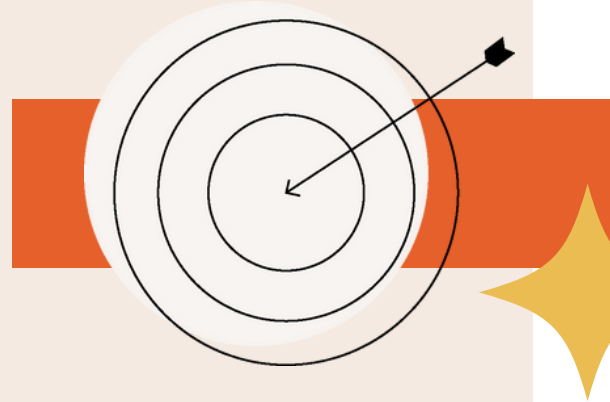


Before diving into conversations with web design agencies, taking time for an internal discussion about your website's requirements is crucial. This proactive step ensures a smooth and efficient project by establishing clear goals from the outset. By reaching a consensus on budget, timeline, and objectives before meeting with potential partners, you'll empower your team to make informed decisions.

Here are some helpful tips on project requirements:

## Define your website's goals

Your website can serve various purposes, acting as a lead generator, a credibility booster, a resource center, or a customer service tool. Before diving into development, determine your website's primary function and how it aligns with your sales and marketing goals. Remember, the more functionalities you expect, the larger (and potentially more expensive) the website becomes to create, manage, and maintain.



## Determine must-haves vs. would-likes

Once you've established your website's goals, identify the essential features (must-haves), desired features (would-likes), and any unwanted elements. This doesn't require an extensive list, but it should consider all company stakeholders.

Here's a pro tip for creating this list: Organize a quick internal meeting with key stakeholders from relevant departments. These representatives can gather input from their teams before the meeting, ensuring a focused and efficient discussion.



## Set a budget range

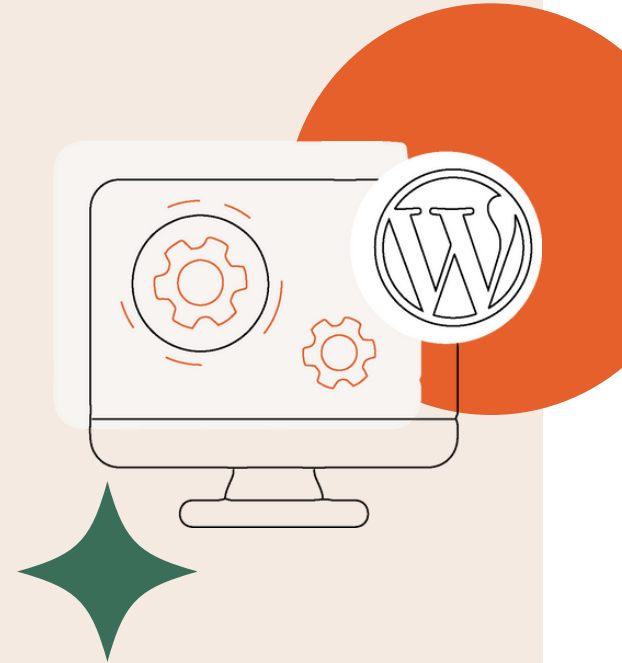
Your web design budget might or might not be entirely within your control. If you have flexibility, you can determine the website type that aligns with your budget. However, it's more common to have a predetermined maximum budget from finance. Knowing your budget range before contacting web design partners is crucial. This will help you decide if a freelance designer, in-house development, or a professional web design agency is the best fit.



## Know your CMS needs

Choosing a Content Management System (CMS) is an important decision, though often overlooked. Many companies leave this choice to their developer. However, unless the developer manages the website, updates content, and implements design changes, this decision should involve you and your team. We've created a guide "[Choosing the Right CMS Platform](#)" to support your decision making.

At Simpler Site, we exclusively use WordPress as our CMS. Why? Because as the world's most popular CMS, it offers the largest support community, a vast array of plugins, and user-friendly content updates. Often, a quick tutorial is all that's needed to get started. Additionally, WordPress empowers marketing teams to manage and update the website independently, minimizing development support – a critical factor for a successful digital marketing strategy.



## Find, meet, and listen

Now that you understand your needs, it's time to explore your website development options. Reach out to a few designers and agencies to learn about their offerings. Interview a shortlist of potential web design agencies and actively listen to their proposals. Ensure each proposal is tailored to your company's specific needs and addresses all your requirements.



# Questions to Ask

Here are ten key questions to ask potential web design agencies, ensuring you find the ideal partner for your new website:

## 01 How do you approach understanding our unique business goals, target audience, and brand identity before diving into design?

A strong agency will prioritize understanding your business objectives, target audience, and brand voice. This ensures the website design aligns with your overall strategy and resonates with your ideal customers.

## 02 What content management system (CMS) will you be using?

A user-friendly CMS empowers you to manage website content after launch. Explore their preferred CMS and ensure it aligns with your technical team's capabilities or your comfort level for self-management.

## 03 How will we handle content creation and integration?

Content plays a significant role in launching a new website. Existing content might be suitable for a redesign, while some situations require content revamps or creation. Clarify whether you'll provide the final content or if the agency has an experienced content team. If you lack the resources for writing website copy, partnering with a full-service agency offering content strategy and copywriting can be beneficial.



## 04 What is your approach to Search Engine Optimization (SEO)?

Organic website traffic is essential for long-term success. Explore their SEO strategy and whether they optimize websites for search engines within your budget. Ask about specific tactics they employ to improve search engine ranking.

## 05 What security measures do you implement, and do you offer ongoing website maintenance services?

Website security is paramount. Look for an agency that prioritizes data security and offers ongoing maintenance plans to keep your website protected and functioning smoothly.

## 06 How will you help us track website traffic, user behavior, and conversions to measure success?

Measurable results are key. The right agency will use analytics tools to track website performance and provide valuable insights to optimize your website for ongoing success.

## 07 How easy will it be for our internal team to update content in the future?

While a web design agency might create a stunning initial site, if your internal team struggles to update content later, it can quickly become outdated. Look for an agency that prioritizes a user-friendly setup, empowering your team to maintain a dynamic and engaging website.



## 08 How will we handle ongoing website maintenance?

Websites require regular maintenance for security and functionality. Understand their approach to updates, security patches, and any additional ongoing fees associated with maintenance.

## 09 What is your communication style and reporting process?

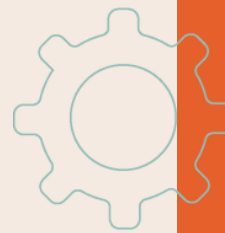
Clear communication fosters trust and a smooth project. Ask about their preferred communication channels and how they'll keep you informed on progress throughout the design and development process.

## 10 Can you provide a detailed proposal outlining the project cost and timeline?

Knowing the upfront costs and project timeline allows you to budget effectively and manage expectations. A transparent pricing structure fosters trust and a smooth working relationship. Ask for a breakdown of key milestones to visualize the development process.

Pay close attention to the agency's sales approach. It can offer valuable insights into what it might be like to work with them on an ongoing basis. Remember, the agency is also evaluating you as a potential client to ensure a good fit.

By asking these questions, you'll gain valuable insights into the agency's capabilities and approach. This empowers you to choose a partner who aligns with your specific needs and goals.





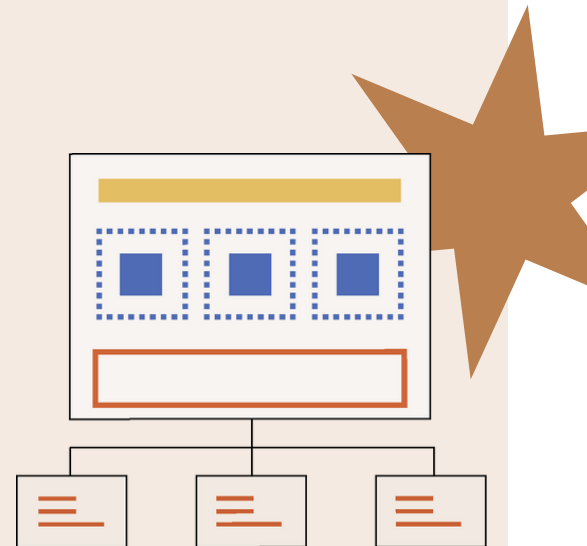
# Website Design and Development Process

Understanding a web design agency's process ensures a smooth collaboration. A typical project schedule can be broken up into the following five steps.

## Strategy & Architecture

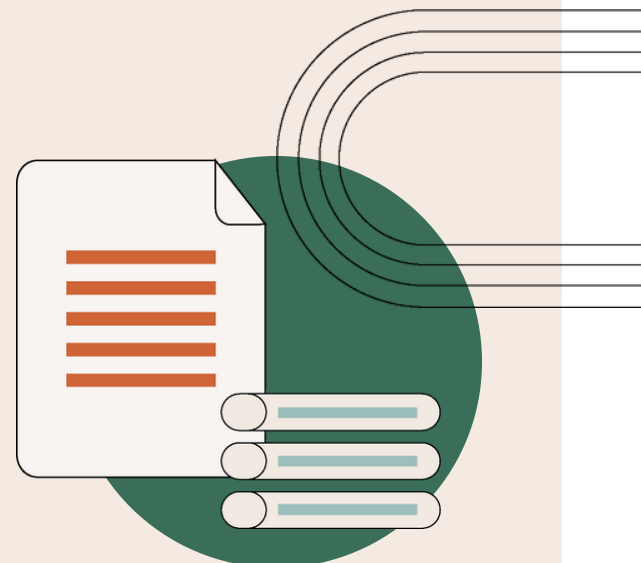
The first step is all about understanding your business. An agency will discuss your unique value proposition, target audience, and how your website fits into your sales and marketing funnel. This stage involves interviews, industry research, and analyzing your initial SEO keyword wishlist.

Before any development begins, an agency should present you with initial design and messaging options. At Simpler Site, we take this a step further by providing two unique homepage concepts and a preliminary sitemap (a visual plan for your website's pages). We work with you through revision rounds until you're happy with both the homepage design and sitemap. This ensures you know exactly what your website will look like and what message it will convey. Once a client has approved the home page and site map, we move on to content and design for the rest of the pages.



## Content

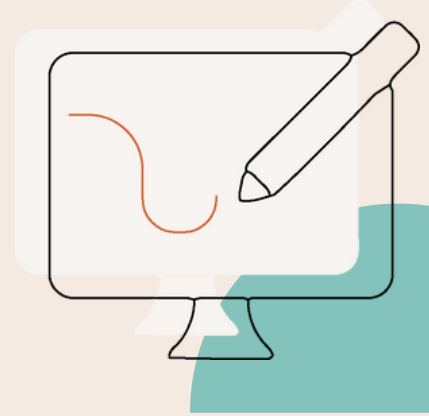
The content development phase of a website project typically involves an initial interview (call or meeting) and up to two rounds of client revisions. Throughout this stage, we collaborate with clients to develop website copy that seamlessly integrates their SEO goals, brand voice, and clear calls to action. While copywriting and design are distinct phases, they often progress concurrently within the project timeline.



## Design

After finalizing the homepage and sitemap, an agency's design team starts crafting templates for your website's subpages. These subpages will echo the color scheme and overall look and feel you approved for the homepage, but their structure will adapt to fit the specific content of each page category. Infographics, icons, and original or stock photos and videos are all potential design elements that can enhance your subpages.

At Simpler Site, we provide the subpage designs in PDF format for your review and feedback. We offer up to two rounds of revisions to ensure the subpages perfectly complement your vision. This collaborative approach guarantees your website maintains a cohesive and impactful presence.



## Development

Once the design and content are finalized, it's time to build the website's core structure, the backend. Make sure a web design agency is developing a website that leverages the latest development best practices for a secure and up-to-date foundation. The website should be set up to be easily "crawlable" by search engines - helping your website to be more prominent for targeted keyword phrases. If an agency says they're good at SEO, ask them about SEO success stories. Make sure they can deliver.



## Launch

Your website launch is like your website's grand opening! It's an exciting time, but ensure a smooth experience with an experienced marketing and development team. Launching a website is a technical process requiring meticulous attention to detail and the expertise to fix any hosting or coding issues that might arise. Ask an agency about their post-launch care plan. A successful website launch is just the beginning. Ongoing monitoring and maintenance are crucial for optimal performance. At Simpler Site, we go beyond launch day. We set up 301 redirects to ensure smooth user experience and monitor for 404 errors (broken links) for 30 days post-launch. This proactive approach keeps your website functioning flawlessly and delivering peak performance.

# Content Marketing & SEO

Your website is more than just a digital brochure; it's a powerful magnet that attracts, engages, and converts website visitors into loyal customers. While a stunning design grabs attention, your website should also nurture prospects through their buying journey.

## ✦ Living Resource Center

Think of your website as the central hub for all your digital marketing efforts. Sales materials and email newsletters should prominently feature your website URL, guiding potential and existing clients to valuable resources. Social media bios and posts should also drive traffic to your website to learn more and connect with your brand.

## ✦ SEO and Content Marketing Foundation

Your website is the cornerstone of a successful SEO and content marketing strategy. Regularly adding fresh, informative content is essential for both search engine ranking and user engagement. Developing a content marketing plan before launch maximizes your website's impact. This way, you have a steady stream of content ready to go and can leverage SEO best practices from the start. Communicate your SEO and content goals to your web design agency during the design process to ensure everything aligns perfectly.

## ✦ Compelling Calls to Action (CTAs)

Strategic calls to action (CTAs) are like signposts on your website. These buttons or banners guide visitors towards specific actions that move them closer to becoming a customer. The best CTAs offer variety – cater to different customer needs, buying stages, and desired actions. This keeps visitors engaged and moving through your sales funnel.

## ✦ Content Variety is Key

Sales cycles often involve multiple decision-makers and a lengthy process. Websites that only offer "Contact Us" forms or newsletter signups miss valuable chances to accelerate this journey. While these calls to action (CTAs) have their place, they cater to specific lead stages. A new visitor might not be ready to subscribe to a weekly newsletter, but downloading a helpful tip sheet or watching an informative video could be the perfect first step.

By providing valuable, educational content, you establish your brand as a trusted resource. This keeps you top-of-mind when potential customers are ready to buy.

The good news? Often, this valuable content already exists within your organization; it just needs to be optimized for the web.

#### Examples of Content that Nurtures Leads:

- ✦ **Engaging Videos:** Showcase your expertise and explain complex topics in an easy-to-digest format.
- ✦ **Customer Success Stories:** Build trust by demonstrating the value you deliver to real clients.
- ✦ **Educational Articles:** Offer insights that address your target audience's pain points.
- ✦ **Case Studies:** Show how you've solved similar challenges for other businesses.
- ✦ **Press Mentions & Awards:** Highlight your industry recognition and credibility.
- ✦ **Sales Sheets:** Provide a clear overview of your services and benefits.
- ✦ **Blog Content:** Regularly publish informative articles that keep your audience engaged.
- ✦ **Infographics:** Visually represent complex data to enhance understanding.
- ✦ **Informative eBooks or Guides:** Offer in-depth knowledge in exchange for contact information.
- ✦ **Portfolio Showcasing Past Projects:** Demonstrate your capabilities and experience.
- ✦ **Archived Webinars:** Share valuable presentations on-demand.
- ✦ **Product Demos:** Allow potential customers to experience your product firsthand.
- ✦ **Links to Your Social Media Channels:** Foster connections and interaction beyond your website.
- ✦ **In-depth White Papers:** Offer comprehensive reports on relevant industry topics.

By incorporating this variety of content and strategic CTAs tailored to different lead stages, your website transforms from a static brochure into a powerful lead generation machine.

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