

8 essential questions before starting a web design project

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Web Development of a New or Existing website Planning Process

So you want to create or upgrade your website?

It's an exciting time for any business, as your creative juices are probably buzzing with new ideas and fresh inspiration. However, this can also be a tricky moment.

It's easy, as businesses, to let your creativity flow as you get carried along by the design process. But without taking the time to gain a solid understanding of your business, audience, and goals, you could end up producing a website that's a work of art to look at but utterly useless in terms of business aims and objectives.

Here are nine crucial questions to think about at the start of any web design project:

1. Describe your business in a few sentences.
2. Do you currently have a website? If so, what is/isn't working for you?
3. What are your goals for this project?
4. Who is your target audience?
5. What specific features do you want on the site?
6. How can we avoid failure?
7. Who are your main competitors?
8. What makes you different from your competitors?



1. Describe your business in a few sentences

In other words, give us your best elevator pitch.



In some cases, your business may appear blindingly obvious, but you should never assume anything. Sum up your business in a few short sentences; this is the essence that needs to be immediately obvious when visitors land on your new website.

Dig deeper, too. Try to find out what your key values are, your level of experience in the industry, and your vision of the future, as well as your size, location, and background.

2. Do you currently have a website? If so, what is/isn't working for you?

Unless you're starting from scratch, your current website is a mine of information. What CMS you use, how long you've had it, and how easy it is to update. What do you like and what can't you wait to see the back of? Can you provide a Google Analytics report?



3. What are your goals for this project?

I figured we were overdue a refresh – this site looks old and dated alongside our competitors.

This is a line often trotted out, while it's undoubtedly true, you need to know a bit more so you can produce a site that's truly effective. At this point, you should take a step back and review your motivations.

Ask your definition of success. Do you want to increase the amount of visitors, up the average order size, or boost the users on the web forum? Perhaps you want to encourage greater engagement via the blog, increase brand visibility, or encourage people to sign up for email newsletter/free trial/white paper, etc.

4. Who is your target audience?



Design is subjective and beauty is very much in the eye of the beholder. You're not designing this website purely for yourself. It has to resonate strongly with the users and target audience, otherwise, they simply won't use it – online audiences are incredibly fickle today, owing to the hugely competitive market.

Delve into the user demographics and psychographics, such as their media consumption habits, slang words, and lifestyle choices. What are their purchasing habits? Do you need to bridge a gap between the current audience and target market? The more you know about the end users, the better you can determine the appearance, layout, and navigation of the website.

5. What specific features do you want on the site?

Establish at the outset whether you client have any particular functionalities you want included on the new website. Some things may be obvious. If you run a restaurant for example, you'll need their opening hours and menu included, whereas if you run a hotel, you may want an online booking form.

Other possibilities include a blog, website chat, social media integration, photo galleries, video integration, or a contact form. Always clarify at the outset to avoid late additions that could cost time and money to marry into the site.

This is also the point for any branding materials or style guides that need to be incorporated into the site's design.

6. How can we avoid failure?

Knowing your dislikes is equally important. Removing something integrated in a website once you're halfway through a project is just as annoying, expensive and time-consuming as adding something in.

Think about your least favorite websites and point out the design elements, features, and styles that make you shudder. This way, you can strike out potential failures before you get into the nitty-gritty of the project.

7. Who are your main competitors?

Discovering your main competitors provides you with another useful source of information. Once you've indicated the main rivals, you can gather information that will help guide your web design. Look at the elements that work well on their sites, and see if there are things that fall flat. Your intention here isn't to copy what's been done before, but to learn from their successes and failures. Pointing out the things you do and don't like on the competitors' websites is another useful indicator of your likes and dislikes.

8. What makes you different from your competitors?

Knowing your unique selling point will help you design a site that stands apart from your competitors'. In the busy, noisy, competitive online world, businesses need to be truly remarkable to be successful. So how can you grab people's attention when they land on the site? How can you make that tricky first impression count?

This doesn't have to be anything major; it can be as simple as a free consultation or awesome customer service. Other things that make businesses stand out include speedy or free delivery on products, stocking the cheapest or best quality products in their area, having an amazing guarantee or returns procedure, or offering unique packages.

8 essential questions you need to ask before starting a web design project



These are eight of the most important questions to ask at the start of a new web design project. Have we missed anything? Can you add more questions to our list?



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