Selecting the Best Web Design Firm

Learn what to ask and what to do to attract the firms best suited to your needs.

Embarking on the road to a brand-new, optimized website is only the first decision in the long line of critical choices you face before reaping the benefits of the final product. Next up, you have the task of choosing an experienced web design firm. By knowing what key questions to ask and how to construct an effective RFP, you'll choose the best web design firm to fit with your business goals.

To help ease the pressure, we've put together the following checklists that will guide you in writing a website design RFP and interviewing your top design candidates.
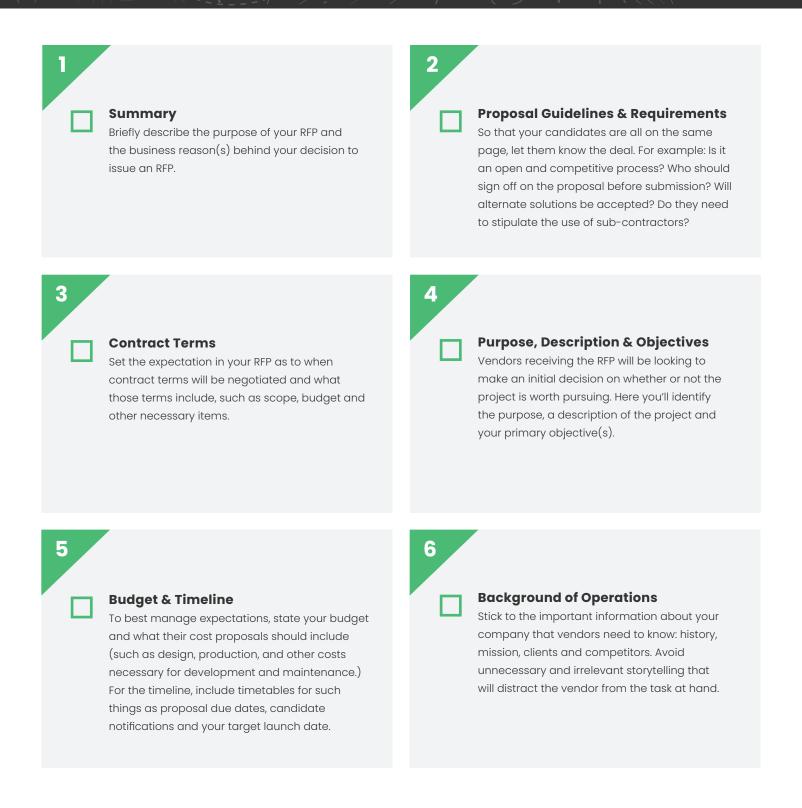
Simple Questions to Find the Best Web Design Firm for Your Business:

☐ **Can you tell me more about your company?**
Key points of discussion include: team credentials, available resources, years in business, types of clients, strengths & weaknesses, general budget expectations and understanding who you'll be working with directly.

☐ **What services do you offer?**
You'll need both traffic and credibility for your site to be effective. Make sure there is a plan for BOTH that includes: consulting & guidance, marketing plan, professional design, programming, writing, photography, video, branding, search engine optimization (SEO), inbound marketing, and pay-per-click (PPC.)

☐ **Can we take a look at your portfolio?**
When you judge their work, you need to take into account the target market, then decide if the work is professional and credible for the intended audience. Look to see if each project is original or if it all looks the same. Ask if they use templates or do custom work, as well as what content management system (CMS) they use and if the designs you're seeing are created by the actual company or a third-party developer or designer.

☐ **Can we see before and after data?**
Data speaks for itself and clients say it best. Inquire if you can speak to clients, see client testimonials and reports that demonstrate such measurements as changes in website traffic, lead acquisition and conversion, and return on investment (ROI).

☐ **What does your process look like?**
Ask the team to walk you through how they'll learn about your business and how you'll go about communicating your needs effectively to them. Don't be bashful: you'll want to know what happens if you don't like the design. They'll need to tell you upfront how many concepts they'll give you. And if there isn't mention of a content strategy, it's a big red flag.

> **Speak to former clients before signing. This is clearly THE best way to judge a company's overall skill level, responsiveness, and expertise in working effectively and efficiently to an end product that produces the results you expect.**

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12 Components of an Effective Website Design and Development

1

Summary
Briefly describe the purpose of your RFP and the business reason(s) behind your decision to issue an RFP.

2

Proposal Guidelines & Requirements
So that your candidates are all on the same page, let them know the deal. For example: Is it an open and competitive process? Who should sign off on the proposal before submission? Will alternate solutions be accepted? Do they need to stipulate the use of sub-contractors?

3

Contract Terms
Set the expectation in your RFP as to when contract terms will be negotiated and what those terms include, such as scope, budget and other necessary items.

4

Purpose, Description & Objectives
Vendors receiving the RFP will be looking to make an initial decision on whether or not the project is worth pursuing. Here you'll identify the purpose, a description of the project and your primary objective(s).

5

Budget & Timeline
To best manage expectations, state your budget and what their cost proposals should include (such as design, production, and other costs necessary for development and maintenance.) For the timeline, include timetables for such things as proposal due dates, candidate notifications and your target launch date.

6

Background of Operations
Stick to the important information about your company that vendors need to know: history, mission, clients and competitors. Avoid unnecessary and irrelevant storytelling that will distract the vendor from the task at hand.

7

Audience

The description of your target audience is crucial information for prospective vendors. It will determine all key elements of your site such as functionality, user experience, usability, aesthetics, etc.

8

Scope & Guidelines

Vendors will rely on this section to paint a clear picture of your requirements. Be specific and detailed regarding exactly what functions and requirements you need to accomplish, but also include elements of the site that would be "nice-to-haves" – optional capabilities if they fit in the budget.

9

Available Resources

If you own or have access to design elements such as photography, logos, etc. that's a valuable piece of information to disclose, as it could impact vendors' design cost proposals.

10

Qualifications

Yes, you'll cover much of this information during the interview process, but asking for it in writing helps everyone in the evaluation process have access to the same information. Ask the vendors to provide work samples and to share more about their team and resources, their project management process, how they communicate with clients, their service level agreement structure, and terms & conditions.

11

Evaluation Criteria

Clearly state the criteria upon which you'll evaluate proposals. This section may include who should receive the proposals and what specific criteria will be used to evaluate the submissions, such as demonstration of expertise, value/pricing structure compatibility, and proposal presentation.

12

Format for Proposals

This section is a guide for vendors on how they should respond to your RFP. Try and standardize responses to make your review process more efficient and effective. Remember, you want to be comparing apples to apples.

Now you're ready to write a website design RFP that will attract the right prospects and give you the best shot at choosing the vendor that will bring you success!

Lasso Up is a web design, development and inbound marketing firm focused on digital marketing solutions that are effective, compelling and that drive financial results. If you need help with your internet marketing strategy, we're here to help.

Contact Us for a Complimentary Consultation