Checklist for Writing a Website Design RFP

It's an exciting and challenging time! You're about to design a new website or redesign an existing one. The world is your oyster, but which firm you choose to lead this expedition will be the deciding factor in whether or not your new site succeeds.

Your first step is to construct an RFP that effectively communicates your vision and the exact features, characteristics and capabilities you want to incorporate into your new site, while balancing design with user experience, functionality, and SEO considerations. Not to put more pressure on you, but there's a lot riding on the strength of your RFP... your site is central to the brand identity and bottom line growth of your business.

To help ease the pressure, we've compiled a checklist to guide you through writing a website design RFP that will attract the most qualified vendors, ensure you are comparing apples to apples, and ultimately lead to your making the best choice of web design firms to fit with your business goals.

Here are 14 must-have elements every Website Design RFP should include:

☐ **Background/Project Overview**
This first section is crucial as it's the first impresions of your business and project. Consider it the firm vs. weak handshake that we've all encountered in meeting someone for the first time. You want to come out of the game strong with your elevator pitch, which should include key information that vendors want to know when deciding whether or not the project is worth pursuing. Be sure to include your budget and deadline in this section.

☐ **Company Overview**
While you're well-versed in talking about the ins and outs of your company, at this point in your outreach, vendors only need a descriptive, but concise overview. Stick to the important information that vendors need to know about your purpose and value in the marketplace. Avoid unnecessary and irrelevant historical storytelling that will distract the vendor from the task at hand.

☐ **Audience**
The description of your target audience is crucial information for prospective vendors. It will determine all key elements of your site: functionality, UX, aesthetics, messaging, tone, etc. And with many firms having specific industry expertise, this information can be a deciding factor as to the whether or not moving forward would be a good fit.

☐ **Site Objectives**
Here you will identify the primary goals of your site. Do you want it built to directly convert visitors to leads, or educate while reinforcing brand authority? Your site's main purpose will determine the ultimate strategy for execution.

☐ **Competitors & Website Links**
List a few competitors' URLs and any websites that you find effective. Keep the sites you reference to similar industries or verticals so the feedback is relevant to your business. Provide input on the what you like and, just as important – what you DON'T like. Whether it's design components the specific functionalityor copy/messaging.That is drawing you in, make sure the reader understands your intent.

☐ **Branding Needs**
Like your RFP's first impressions, your website's first impression hinges on your branding. IN the RFP it's important to communicate any needs for new or revised branding, as that would be a required first step to complete before any website design work could commence.

☐ **Existing Website**
Talk about your current website, why you are redesigning, what elements you want to keep and which parts of the site you wouldn't mind letting go. Explain the current and desired framework, theme or platform, including any hosting requirements. While the latter may sound technical for the initial RFP, it's important for vendors to understand the requirements upfront.

☐ **Functionality Requirements**
Be as specific and detailed as possible regarding exactly what functions and requirements you need, including any customizations, integrations and technical requirements. Galleries, search filters, interactive functions, animations, video, CRM integration, Google map integration, and API's would all fall under this category.

☐ **The Wish List**
In this section, include all elements of the site that are "nice-to-haves" but not absolutely necessary; optional capabilities you would like your site to have should the budget warrant it.

☐ **Ecommerce Details**
If your site will have ecommerce capabilities, use this section to thoroughly outline your product types, product specs, number of SKU's, product imagery requirements, format of inventory, pricing structures, shipping info, etc. If you are also looking for a marketing partner, projected sales growth is helpful.

☐ **Marketing & SEO**
List any SEO and marketing requirements. If you are looking for a partner to help with blogging, social media, email or general inbound marketing services, ask for specific program details and costs of interest. If you're not sure what you need, ask for recommendations based on your goals and budget.

☐ **Budget Details**
In order to best manage expectations, reiterate your budget parameters (which were already included in your company overview). Include payment schedules, fiscal years or any other financial details that are relevant.

☐ **Proposal Requirements**
Vendors need a guide on how they should respond to your RFP – format of response, email address for submission, timeline, etc. Not only is this helpful to the vendors, but by standardizing responses, you'll set the foundation for a more efficient and effective review process. It's much easier to compare apples to apples, so do your best to prevent any oranges from rolling into the mix of responses.

☐ **RFP & Project Timeline Details**
This last section should reiterate the deadline you already mentioned in the company overview, but should also include timetables on for the proposal and when vendors should expect a response. You can also include your target launch dates here, but make sure your timing is realistic.

> **Now you're ready to write a website design RFP that will attract the right partners and give you the best shot at choosing a winning vendor that will bring you success. Good luck!**

If you need help with your website design project, we're here to help!

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