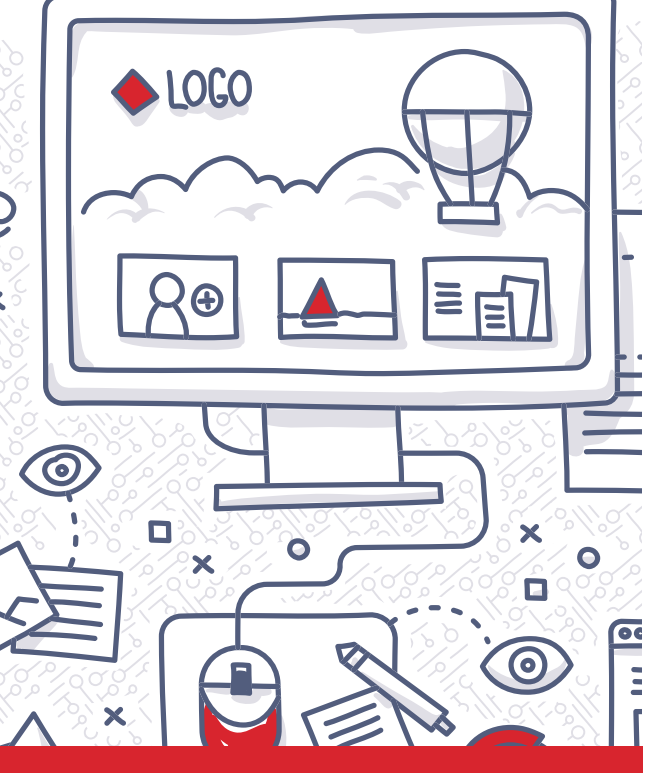# 25 Questions
to Ask a
Web Design
Company

DRIVE

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AGENCY

25 Questions

TO ASK A WEB DESIGN COMPANY

You need a new website, but there's a million and one web design companies that all look amazing. How are you going to pick the right one?

Whether you're building a website for the first time or redesigning an existing site, it can be difficult to choose the right web design company. Of course, there's no one-size-fits-all option, so choosing the one that meets your unique needs is also a challenge.

You owe it to your business to do your research and to better understand what you are looking for in your web partner.

To help you on that path, we have put together 25 questions that you should be asking any web design company before you sign a contract.

We know you do web design - but what other services do you offer?

Do you offer services beyond design that can complement our website? For example, you may want to consider services such as SEO, branding, blogging, digital marketing, etc. Oftentimes, it can save you time and money by working with the same company for several of these needs.

Spreading your marketing and web design needs across many companies tends to reduce communication and thus efficiency. Furthermore, your on-site SEO will simply be more effective if your site is built from the ground-up with SEO in mind. Figure out what services you need and the extent of what a web design company offers.

1

Wow, your portfolio looks great! Is each site custom-built, or do you develop with a pre-built template?

Web design companies generally build a site with a customized approach or a pre-built template. Many companies offer both approaches and utilize whichever is best-suited for a client's needs.

Consider the pros and cons of each. Pre-built templates give design companies a head-start, saving time and your budget throughout the development process. However, this efficiency comes at a cost, as your site will not be completely customizable and may have limitations from a design perspective.

With customized builds, you have much greater flexibility and freedom as far as design and functionality. Additionally, since the site was built from the ground up with a specific vision in mind, you are likely to see improved performance. Traditionally, this necessitates an increased budget.

Regardless of what your site will need, look before you jump and ask how the design company builds their sites.

2

How will you manage my site build, from beginning to end?

Will there be a dedicated professional for my account?

Will there be an account manager dedicated to your web design build, or will the team alternate between working on your project and others?

Will there be a detailed timeline?

Can you tell me more about how the timeline is broken down? What happens when, and how faithful can I expect everyone to be to the given timeline? In other words, is there "wiggle room" here or are these hard dates?

How do you organize the process?

Building a website is a complex process. How do you organize all the different tasks, phases, and responsibilities, such as discovery, research, strategizing, design, development, and (drum roll) launch?

3

Can I see some samples of your web work?

Anyone can build a website, but seeing a company's portfolio of work gives you a better sense of who they are as well as the quality of their work.

Does the design and usability match your industry? If they've done a million restaurant websites, but have never handled anything in the automotive industry, they might not be a great fit for an automotive parts supplier.

Beyond looking at the "bones" of the build, try to get a sense of how the company handles the "feel" of the websites.

Are they responsive, easy to use, and easy to navigate (what we call UI/UX)? Do they naturally and confidently lead you to an actionable step, like calling, subscribing, or making a sale?

Don't forget branding, either. Are you impressed with the appearance of the site? Does the messaging feel consistent throughout? Is their logo memorable, relatable and reflect the client's example?

A web company's portfolio is the best chance you have to get an idea of what your site will look like if you choose them. Study their portfolio carefully!

4

How about some case studies that demonstrate your ability to achieve clients' business goals?

Case studies are a great way to feature the project and demonstrate how business goals are met. A design company's portfolio shows you how their websites look and feel – but their *case studies* will show you *how* they achieve business objectives.

When looking through case studies, try to see how their accomplishments match up with your own business goals. For example, if you need to rebrand, look to see how well the company has handled similar tasks and objectives.

Remember that you're not choosing the best web design company – you're choosing the best web design company for your business and unique needs. Review case studies accordingly.

5

Do you have client testimonials or references that I can review?

Any established web development company will have a record of work that they have done, as well as clients that sing their praises. It's a great idea to review and reach out to their references to make sure you are picking a partner that is both techincally apt and has a positive track record of customer service.

6

How are you going to help me meet my business goals with my site? What strategies do you have in mind?

Ask the web design company to outline their strategies for achieving your objectives with your website.

How is your new site going to generate leads?

How will it help you attract and retain top talent in your industry?

How will your site build brand awareness?

What will your website do to position you as a thought leader in the industry?

7

How involved will I be in the design of my website? How much input will I have on the look and feel of my website?

This is a big one. Before diving into web design, you need a crystal-clear idea of how involved you will be in the design of your new website.

The average web design company has built dozens if not hundreds of websites – each with a different degree of client involvement. Some clients like to be involved at every step. Other clients like to sit back and let the design company "do their thing".

Ask yourself which type of client you are, then ask the design company what will be expected of you.

We recommend that there are multiple check-points throughout the process so you can ensure that the site stays true to your vision.

We wholeheartedly believe that client involvement in the discovery and approval process is a critical part of success, and quite simply results in better finished product.

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How long will it take you to build my website?

Most websites will take around 12 to 16 weeks to complete. This is not absolute, but depending on the size and complexity of the website, current workload and participation from the client, this is a reasonable timeline.

Many websites are completed in shorter timelines, while especially large and complex websites may take up to six months.

Regardless of the size of your site, it's important to establish how long you can expect the project to take. Ask the web design company for a ballpark estimate before you get started.

9

What do you need from me to get started?

Odds are the company will need you to answer a laundry list of questions upfront.

What are the services you offer, in full?

What do you specialize in?

What makes you different than your competitors?

What business goals do you want to achieve with your new site?

Etc...

Beyond all the questions, there's probably a number of assets you should get in order:

• Copy assets (if applicable)
• Photo assets (if applicable)
• Video assets (if applicable)
• Login credentials (It could be 2, it could be 10...It's never a single person)

There's also a lot of people you'll need on board, too. If the web design company doesn't have the following professionals, you'll want to start looking for some additional resources.

• Strategist/researcher
• Copy writer
• Photographer
• Videographer
• Project manager
• Designer
• Developer

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Shoot - I actually don't have any images or video for my site. Can you help me with that?

Not all businesses have all the images and videos ready to go for the website. Ask if they offer photography/videography. Furthermore, it's worth asking if they do it all in-house or if they partner with other external teams.

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How many pages should I have on my website?

This will be determined by the sitemap. Ask the web design company how the site map is built. Will they benchmark your website against competitors? Will they perform a full analysis of your site vs competitors to identify ways in which you can gain an edge?

Your sitemap should dictate how many pages of what you truly need on your website to help meet your business goals.

12

How much business and industry research do you perform prior to designing my site?

Most web design companies will perform a series of benchmarking, analytics, and discovery tasks before beginning the design of your website. These steps help to gauge what's trending as well as best practices for your specific industry.

Ask the web design company how this stage will influence design, call-to-actions, and functionality (UI/UX). Make sure the firm you are using shows a pattern of due diligence in this phase.

More often than not, the research phase lays the foundation for a great build and launch.

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How does your pricing structure work?

Agencies come in all shapes and sizes when it comes to pricing. Ask if the web design company uses flat project pricing or an hourly rate. Regardless, make sure the pay rate corresponds to an appropriate level of quality.

14

What's included in the price for the project? I need to know what I'll have to pay out the door.

Is the scope of work detailed? Does it show precisely what services are being performed? Is that photoshoot included within the project price? What about hosting or copy writing?

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Let's talk hypotheticals. If the scope of my project changes or if we need to make adjustments, how is that handled?

Sometimes during the course of a web project, additional wants are identified and the project can evolve. You should have no doubts about how such an event is handled. Do these changes throughout development affect pricing or payment schedule and how is that presented?

16

Will my website be responsive (compatible with smartphones, tablets and other mobile device)?

The responsive experience of the website should directly translate to the performance across any platform, whether it's a smartphone, tablet, notebook or desktop PC. The end user should have a cohesive brand experience throughout the website, no matter what devise they utilize.

17

Do you build websites with search engine optimization (SEO) practices in mind?

It's industry standard to build websites with SEO in the forefront. Without a long-term SEO strategy, be wary of anyone touting that ability to rank your site very high.

It should be standard practice to build and code the website with SEO on the backend to give the website the best opportunity to rank well.

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How will social media factor into my web design?

Social media is an extension of your brand and should be recognized on your website.

Web design and social media should be like drums and bass in a rock band – working in concert to push the whole endeavor forward. If they're not integrated together, the results will not be as effective. During the design phase, social media should be incorporated into the site design. What was uncovered in the discovery and benchmarking phases helps dictate how social should be integrated and utilized within the design.

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What type of Content Management System (CMS) do you use?

Having access to the right CMS is a very important aspect of your website. To clarify, the CMS will be your system for updating and maintaining minor website content edits.

You need to know how easy or difficult it will be to utilize the CMS, as it will determine how easy it will be to make changes to your site on your own.

20

What happens after my website is launched? Do you offer or provide any post-launch training? Is that included in the original pricing?

Most firms offer to provide some level of training after the launch of your website. Training can include simple login and basic changes like; adding a blog, a new location or additional content.

You should know prior to the project start if training is available, if it's included and what type of training it will be (video tutorials, onsite training, how-to guide).

21

How do you test my website before it goes live to ensure that it functions and performs properly?

Testing and Quality Assurance (QA) is a vital step prior to launch. Testing ensures that the site is properly responsive on mobile, tablet, laptop and desktop. Testing should also include cross browser compatibility on both current and legacy browsers.

Whenever a customer is viewing your website, it should always keep with the consistency of the brand and build. This includes browser compatibility, screen shape and size.

22

Who owns the site/domain name/hosting?

Before you start your website project with your provider, you should have a complete understanding of who will retain ownership of the website, domain name, and hosting.

Your domain name and hosting should always be registered in your company's name, not the builder's business name. Always ask if you retain all source files, admin and hosting credentials once site is completed and/or if you decide to no longer retain your web builder's services anymore.

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Once my site is built, will you be providing on-going maintenance after my site goes live?

Your website is an investment and should be viewed as one. You will want to add content to your website, run security updates, and make small changes to reflect changes within organization.

You need to know ahead of time if you will rely on the company building your site or if you will be seeking an additional support to assist with these types of updates. Any maintenance program should detail out exactly what is included and how often.

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Will I be able to access my website analytics on my own, or do I have to contact you every time?

Post-launch performance of your website is crucial for ensuring that your site continues to support your business goals.

You will want direct access to your website analytics so you can see traffic volumes, bounce rates, click paths, and lots more. These are all indicators of site performance from a technical and marketing perspective.

If you have marketing campaigns in motion, it's important to understand the effectiveness of each campaign and how it factors into the overall traffic and data of the website. You should have direct access to these analytics without having to without having to jump through any hoops.

Deciding to redo or build your website is a great decision and can no doubt help your business reach business goals. Selecting the right team to partner with is all part of the process.

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This list of questions is not absolute, but it's a good jumping off point to assist you in your vetting process. Whichever partner you choose, they should understand your business and the goals that you are trying to achieve - both long and short-term.

Who is Drive Creative?

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Drive Creative is a marketing firm located in Michigan. We specialize in brand identity, web design, social media campaigning, and digital marketing. Our team takes a "brand first" approach when working with clients; we believe that digital is the most effective channel to reach your audience, but your story is the part that makes the difference. We add value to our clients by telling their story in the most effective manner possible.

Give us a call if you want to learn more about how we can help Bring Your Story to the Masses!

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