THE B2B WEBSITE
BUYER'S GUIDE

What you should know, ask and do when seeking a B2B website design firm

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GOOD DESIGN IS GOOD BUSINESS

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WHAT WE OFFER
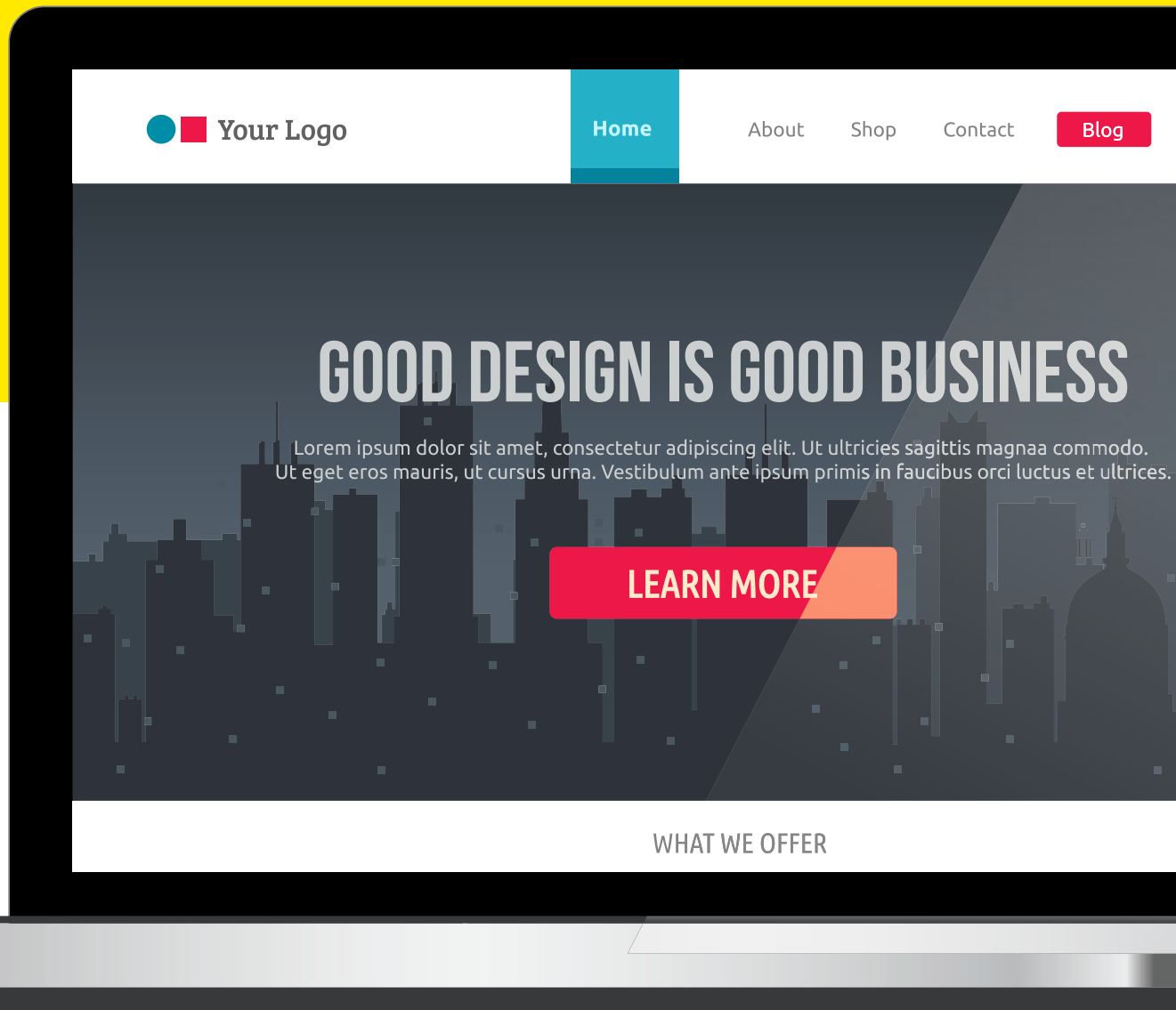
Before assuming it's time for a website redesign, ask yourself the following: Does my website possess the following qualities?

- ☐ Serve as an effective credibility piece
- ☐ Have an engaging and intuitive design
- ☐ Have content that reflects my brand's tone and perceived quality
- ☐ Is easy for prospects to find through a search engine
- ☐ Is an effective lead generation tool

If you're having trouble saying "yes" to any of the above, it's time for a website redesign. But where should you start? 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.

What Are My Website Project Requirements?

Before approaching web design firms, it's critical to have an internal discussion about requirements for the new website. To make sure you don't waste valuable time, a consensus needs to be reached about budget, timeline and objectives before meeting with prospective web design agencies. Here are some helpful tips on project requirements:

Budget

As you explore various agencies and freelance options, you will receive a wide array of ballpark quotes. Freelancers will typically cost less but they tend to be "jack of all trades, master of none"—trying to do all tasks themselves. As you price shop, make sure you know what's included and are truly comparing "apples to apples." Is it a custom design? Is it fully responsive? Is SEO and copywriting included?

We receive numerous calls with the immediate question, "How much does it cost to build a website?" This is like asking the question, "How much does a house cost?" You can't answer a question like that without more information and discussion. In order to determine a price for house, you would need to know what the client is looking for—the desired number of bedrooms and baths, location and square footage.

At Bop Design, an 18-page fully responsive website will be a ballpark price of $15,000. This includes custom design, development, copywriting, on-page SEO and WordPress integration.

Objective

Do you want your firm's website to be a lead generation tool and be prominent on Google for targeted keyword phrases? Or do you only need the website to be a credibility piece and online brochure? Determining the role of the website in the sales and marketing process will determine website content, number of pages, blog integration, conversion tools, etc. For instance, while 18 pages may seem like too many pages, remember that it's important to separate individual services and products onto their own pages for SEO and navigation purposes. If your company wants to appear larger, more pages convey a sense that your business is more established—helping build a stronger case of credibility.

Timeline

Redesigning a website can be a difficult, time-consuming task with many decisions that need to be made. Keep in mind; a client helps dictate the speed and smoothness of the web design process. Timely feedback and decisiveness help move the process along. At Bop Design we create 40 websites a year and on average, the design, copywriting and development process requires 12 to 16 weeks. As you shop for the right agency, beware of the firm that overpromises but under-delivers.

Internal Staff

Another important step in a website redesign process is determining the colleagues necessary for the project. Note that we said necessary. That means creating a small group—usually no more than three individuals—that are needed for feedback, guidance and approval. When it comes to the ultimate decision on design and copy, it's important there is one final decision maker.

Industry Experience

As your firm researches the right web design agency, make sure to look at their portfolio. Have they worked with firms in similar industries? Do they do more B2C or B2B websites? A web design agency should demonstrate their knowledge of a business model, industry, target market and competitive landscape through their sample work.

Should My Website Be Responsive?

As more clients use tablets and smartphones to browse the web, how is your firm's website changing for smaller screen sizes? It is important to find a web design agency that can create a website that will address visitors on desktops, laptops, tablets and smartphones.

In catering to a mobile audience, your firm has a choice: a condensed mobile website or a fully responsive website.

Option 1: Responsive Website

A responsive website ensures that visitors view your firm's full website no matter what device they are using. Responsive web design is the answer to creating a stress-free, streamlined online experience for all visitors regardless of device used. Ask all prospective web design agencies about their experience with responsive design. At the very least, each agency's own website should be responsive.

If your firm's website is experiencing 25% or more of visitor traffic via a mobile device, it's time to invest in responsive design. That means at least a quarter of your prospective customers experience slower load times, difficult to read text and not-to-scale images. Responsive website design will ensure your website is relevant from a usability standpoint for years to come.

Option 2: Mobile Optimized Website

If your firm's budget is limited and responsive design is not an option, a separate mobile optimized website addressing smartphone users is a must. Mobile sites are rarely an exact copy of the standard company website and what pages to include in the condensed version will ultimately be answered by your firm's website analytics. Make sure that a prospective web design agency has sample mobile websites in their portfolio and that they implement best practices. Best practices include: Simpler navigation, Larger buttons that are "tapable", less text and larger fonts, click to contact phone and email functions. Keep in mind that mobile websites are separate and will involve the management of two websites going forward.

RESPONSIVE WEBSITE
=
1 website adjusts to all screen sizes

MOBILE WEBSITE
=
2 websites managed separately: 1 desktop size, 1 mobile size

What About the Process?

As your firm shops for the right B2B web design agency, ask each prospective agency about their process and the steps involved from start to finish. Knowing as much up front about the process will ensure that there are no surprises. A typical project schedule can be broken up into the following six steps. Make sure that the selected web design agency implements a similar process.

Discovery

In the discovery stage, an agency will discuss your firm's unique value proposition, target market and role of the website in the sales and marketing process. Steps include client interviews, industry research and analysis of a preliminary keyword wish list for SEO.

Plan

Based on the initial creative discovery session, an agency should present the client with options before any web development is performed. At Bop Design, we provide clients with two unique homepage concepts and a preliminary sitemap. Typically clients like aspects of one concept and aspects of the other. We go through revision rounds until there is consensus on both the homepage design and sitemap. Once a client is happy with the homepage and sitemap, we move on to the rest of the pages. It will be clear what the website will look like once it is developed. Also with an industry-specific copywriter, we work with a client to develop web copy that incorporates your SEO goals and brand message.

Web Development

After the design and copy is approved, the focus moves to the backend of the site. Make sure a web design agency is developing a website according to the most current web standards as determined by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). Also the website development should easily crawlable by search engines—helping your website to be more prominent for targeted keyword phrases on search engines. If an agency says they're good at SEO, ask them about SEO success stories. Make sure they can deliver.

Launch

If your website were a movie, this would be the big premiere. The website launch is the most exciting time but make sure that the launch is properly managed. Ask an agency about post-launch monitoring and maintenance. At Bop Design, we set up 301 redirects, plus monitor and correct 404 errors for 30 days post-launch—ensuring your firm's website is not losing any valuable traffic.

DISCOVERY	PLAN	DESIGN	COPY	DEVELOP	LAUNCH
• Creative Meeting • Research • Analysis • Keyword Wishlist	• Site Map • Content Strategy • Keyword Research & Suggestions	• Homepage • Subpages • Photo Research • Revisions	• Interview • Writing & Editing • Integrate Keywords • Revisions	• Coding • Testing Browsers • Content Entry • QA & Final Edits	• Redirects • Launch • Website Manual

How Can My Website Be a Business Development Tool?

Too often B2B firms view a website as just a branding tool and not a platform that can generate and nurtures ideal client leads. While a B2B website can interest a prospective client to do business with you, it should also be guiding them down the sales funnel. Here are some best practices and issues to discuss with a prospective web design agency:

Calls to Action

Calls to action (CTA) are an important component to any B2B website. Acting as a special banner, button or graphic text on a webpage, a CTA is meant to prompt the website visitor to perform a specific desired action and continue down the sales funnel.

So what makes an effective CTA? One word: Variety. Keeping your CTAs diverse and fresh keeps your prospective client interested in your business.

Varied Content

In B2B, a service or product is being sold that impacts an entire organization and often involves the input from multiple decision makers. Therefore the sale is more complex—often resulting in a longer decision making process.

If your website only features a "Contact Us" page or a newsletter signup, you're missing out on the potential for visitors to move faster through the buying process. While effective, that content can only support certain stages of a sales cycle. For example, a visitor discovering your website for the first time may not be ready to subscribe to a weekly newsletter, but they would be open to downloading a tip sheet or watching a video.

Oftentimes this content is already lying around your office (literally or figuratively) and just needs refreshing for the web. Here are some new content ideas that can make great CTAs:

- Infographic illustrating your service or onboarding process
- Portfolio or project gallery
- Customer testimonials
- Case studies
- Sales sheets
- Recent presentations
- White papers
- eBooks
- Archived webinars
- Videos
- Articles
- Press or awards
- Blog
- Social media

All of these CTAs address a different type of client at a different buying stage. If your firm wants their website to be a lead generation tool, discuss conversion tools and an effective content strategy with prospective web design agencies.

We hope this guide helps you research, qualify and select the optimal web design agency for your B2B firm's needs. For more insight into a website redesign, visit the Bop Blog.

Pass along the knowledge! Click each icon to share with friends and colleagues.

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