

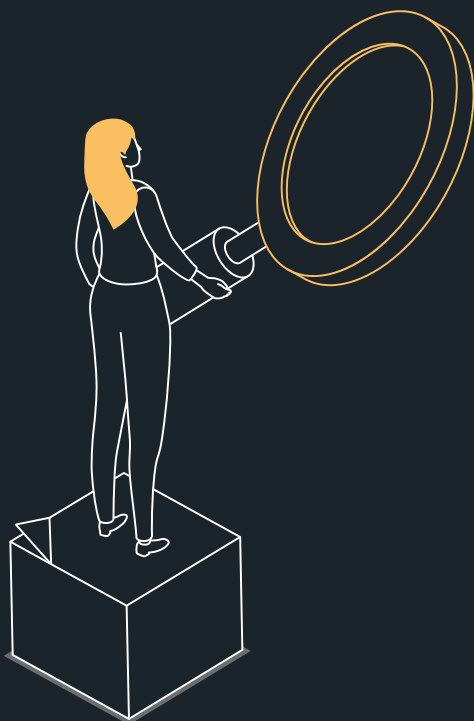
The B2B website buyer's guide

What you need to know, ask, and do
when seeking a B2B website design firm.

BEFORE ASSUMING IT'S TIME FOR A B2B WEBSITE REDESIGN, ASK YOURSELF:

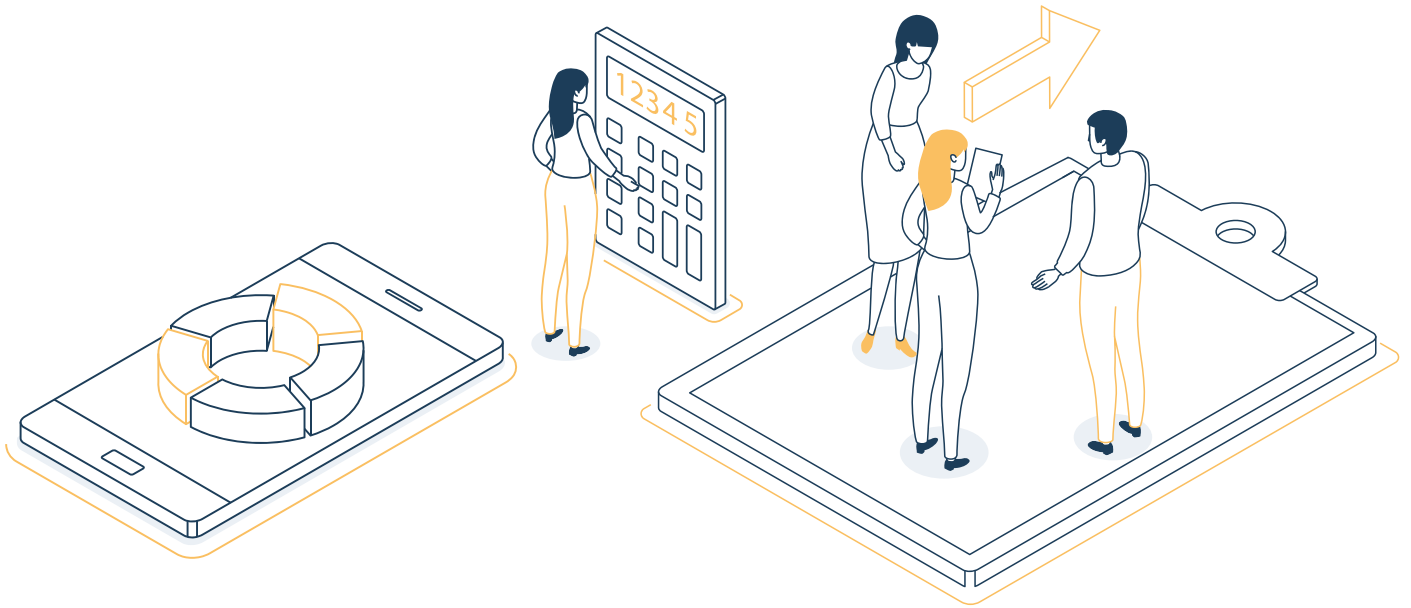
Does my website possess the following qualities?

- Serve as an effective credibility piece.
- Have an engaging and intuitive design.
- Is mobile-friendly.
- Have content that reflects my brand's value proposition and offerings.
- Is easy for prospects to find through a search engine.
- Generates sales-qualified leads.



If you're having trouble saying "yes" to any of the above, it's time for a B2B 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 B2B website on the path to success.



B2B WEBSITE PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

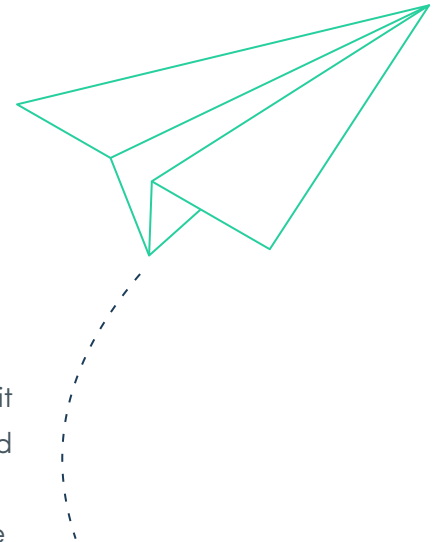
Before approaching B2B web design firms, it's critical to have an internal discussion about requirements for the new website. To make sure you don't waste valuable time, a consensus needs to be reached about budget, timeline, and objectives before meeting with prospective web design agencies.

HERE ARE SOME HELPFUL TIPS ON PROJECT REQUIREMENTS:

What is your B2B website's goal?

Your B2B website can have a variety of different functions and serve your firm in various ways, including as a lead generation machine, a credibility piece, a resource center, or a customer service tool.

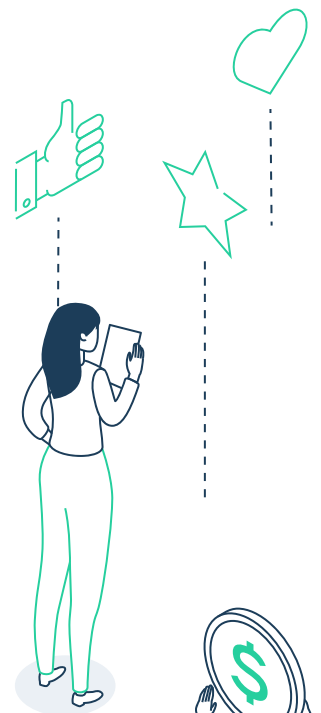
Before you start building a new website, you need to know what you expect it to do for you. Determine the main function of the website and how it can add value or support your sales and marketing goals. The only thing to keep in mind is that the more you expect from your website, the larger it will become (and often the more expensive it will be to create, manage, and maintain).



Determine must-haves vs. would-likes

Once you have established the goal(s) of your website, determine what you absolutely must have, what you would like it to have, and what you do NOT want it to have. This doesn't need to be a long, extensive list, but it should take into account all the stakeholders in your company.

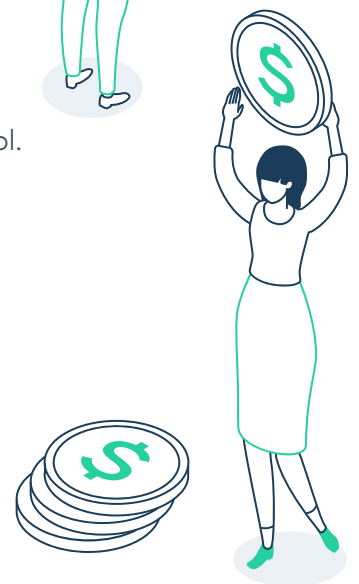
The best way to create this list is to have a quick internal meeting with all the necessary stakeholders (this does not mean everyone in your company). Invite a knowledgeable representative from each relevant department and let them know they are responsible for gathering information from their own team before the meeting. This pre-meeting work and a select group of attendees will make determining website requirements efficient and effective.



Set a budget range

A B2B web design budget may or may not be something you and your team control. If you control your budget and a new website is a priority, you can determine what type of website you can build. However, it's more common that the budget is already set and you are simply given a maximum from the finance department.

It's essential to know what your budget range is before you start reaching out to B2B web design partners since it will determine if you should work with a freelance designer, need to do the work in-house, or can hire a professional web design agency.



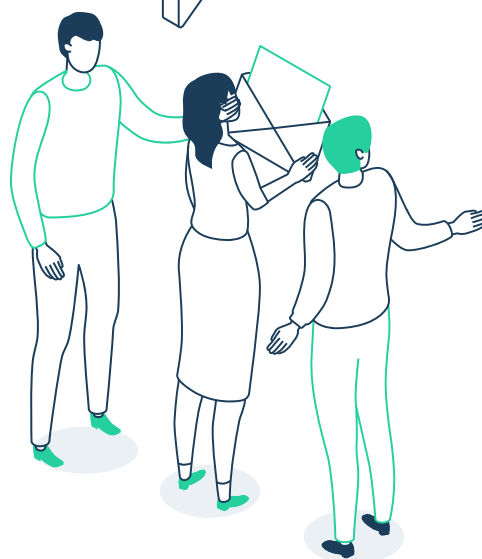
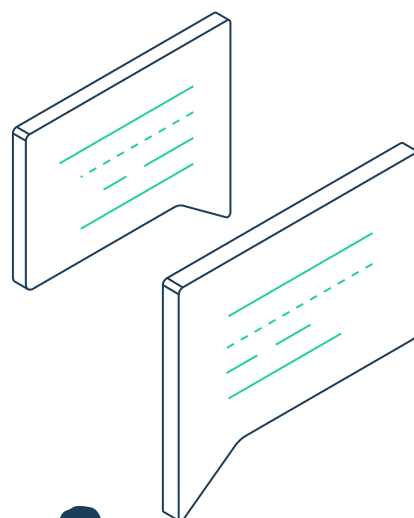
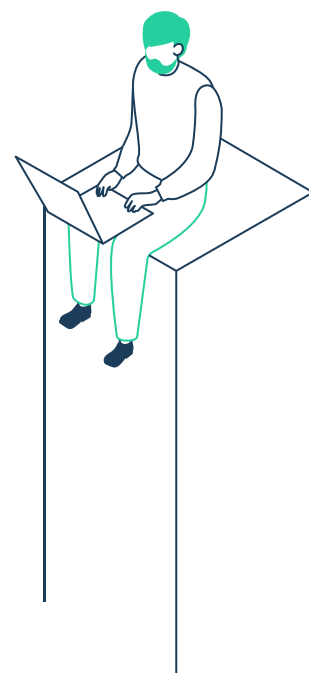
Know your CMS needs

Choosing a content management system (CMS) can be a big decision to make, although many firms never even make this decision. Many firms leave it up to their developer to choose the CMS for them and just deal with the outcome. Unless the developer is going to be managing the website, implementing all web design changes, and keeping the website updated, the decision should be made by you and your team.

At Bop Design, we only work with the WordPress CMS. Why? Because, as the world's most popular CMS, it has the largest support community, availability of plugins, and is the most user-friendly for updating. A quick tutorial is often all that anyone needs to start updating their WordPress website. It also gives marketing teams the ability to manage and update the website easily without the need for development support – a crucial factor in maintaining an effective digital marketing strategy.

Find, meet, greet, listen

Now that you know what you need, it's time to see what your options are for building your B2B website. It's always a good idea to reach out to a handful of designers and agencies to see what they have to offer. Interview a shortlist of potential web design agencies and listen to what they have to say. Make sure every offer is tailored to the needs of your firm and will fit with all your requirements.



QUESTIONS TO ASK

There are many critical questions to ask any prospective agency about their company and process. Here are the top ones to consider:

1 Do you have experience with B2B website design?

While every industry has its own challenges, it's important to partner with a marketing agency that understands the difference between B2B and B2C client relationships. B2B projects tend to have a higher price tag, take longer to nurture, span a longer period, and involve more complex products and services. Working with an agency that is familiar with designing websites for B2B target markets ensures a smoother design process and that the end product will be professional and maximize lead conversions.

2 Can I see examples of websites for firms like ours?

Web design agencies often specialize in working with firms in niche industries. While they may not have worked with a company in your exact market, they should have experience building websites for firms similar to yours. Ask for specific examples so you can ensure they understand your industry and ideal buyers.

3 Who will be working on my website design project?

Many agencies heavily outsource all design and development work to freelancers with little internal expertise in these areas. It is in your best interest to have the work done by a stable, fully engaged agency with a full-time team of experienced employees on your project. Be sure to ask who you'll be working with so you can ensure consistency and quality for your website design process.

4 Is the website utilizing WordPress as the content management system?

More than 40% of websites on the internet currently use WordPress as their CMS. It's a testament to how easy it is for a non-technical person to manage the content and make changes on the website. It also allows a company to have many more development options. An open source CMS like WordPress is always in the client's best interest. A proprietary CMS is to the advantage of the agency, since you will have limited development options and will always have to go to the agency for maintenance.

5 Can you provide me links to third-party review websites?

Don't just rely on references and testimonials provided by the agency. Do your own research on third-party review websites like Clutch, Yelp, Glassdoor, or Agency Spotter. Make sure the agency has a generally positive online reputation. If they have no online reputation or a negative one, be very concerned.

6 Can I speak to a previous or current client?

Third-party review sites provide a good idea of what it's like to work with the website design agency, but nothing beats being able to speak candidly with a previous or current client. A reputable agency fosters positive, ongoing relationships with clients even after the project is over. An ideal partner has a few previous or current clients who are willing to take the time to speak to the agency's prospects and share their experience with the agency. Speaking to a past or current client will give you the "real deal" on what it's like to work with that agency.

7 What's your process for incorporating content?

Content is a large part of a new website launch. In some cases, the existing website content is still accurate and up to date, but the design is what's outdated. In other situations, the content needs an overhaul or new content needs to be created. Ask the B2B web design agency if you are required to provide the final content or if the agency has an experienced content team who can write the copy for you. If you don't have the resources or time to draft website copy, it's important to partner with a full-service agency that oversees the content strategy and provides expert copywriting resources.

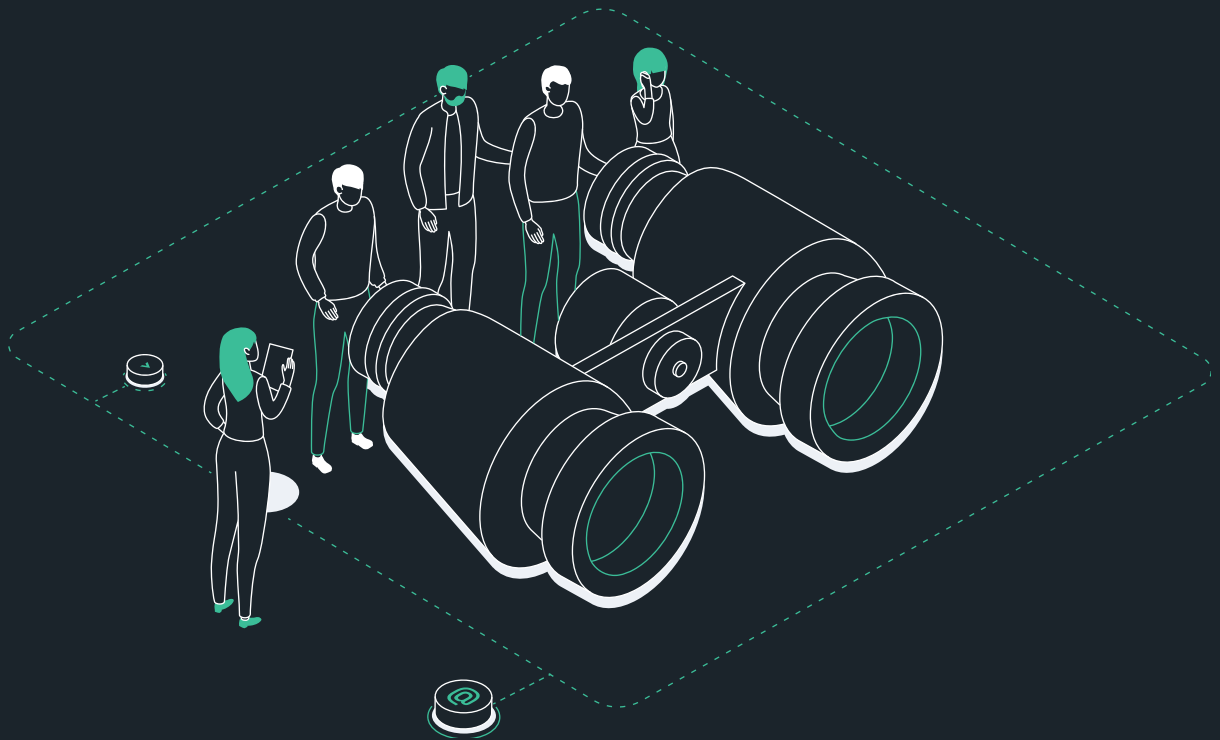
8 Do you integrate SEO best practices into the website design process?

As you speak to different agencies and review their websites, you'll soon discover that certain agencies are design-heavy and focus mainly on branding and design rather than functionality. If this is what you need, great. However, if you need a functional website that is also built to attract new website visitors, you want to partner with an agency who understands and integrates SEO best practices into the website design and development process. Trying to launch an SEO plan on a website without SEO best practices integrated often results in a complete redesign and rebuild.

9 Do your websites have accessibility built in?

Digital accessibility for websites is a large consideration for many businesses. To be candid, achieving accessibility compliance on a website is often a cost-restrictive undertaking that results in unappealing designs. At Bop Design, we do our best to follow accessibility guidelines to meet level AA criteria when designing websites. This does not ensure accessibility compliance (which often costs \$100k+) but does ensure the website is usable to a larger audience of visitors with disabilities.

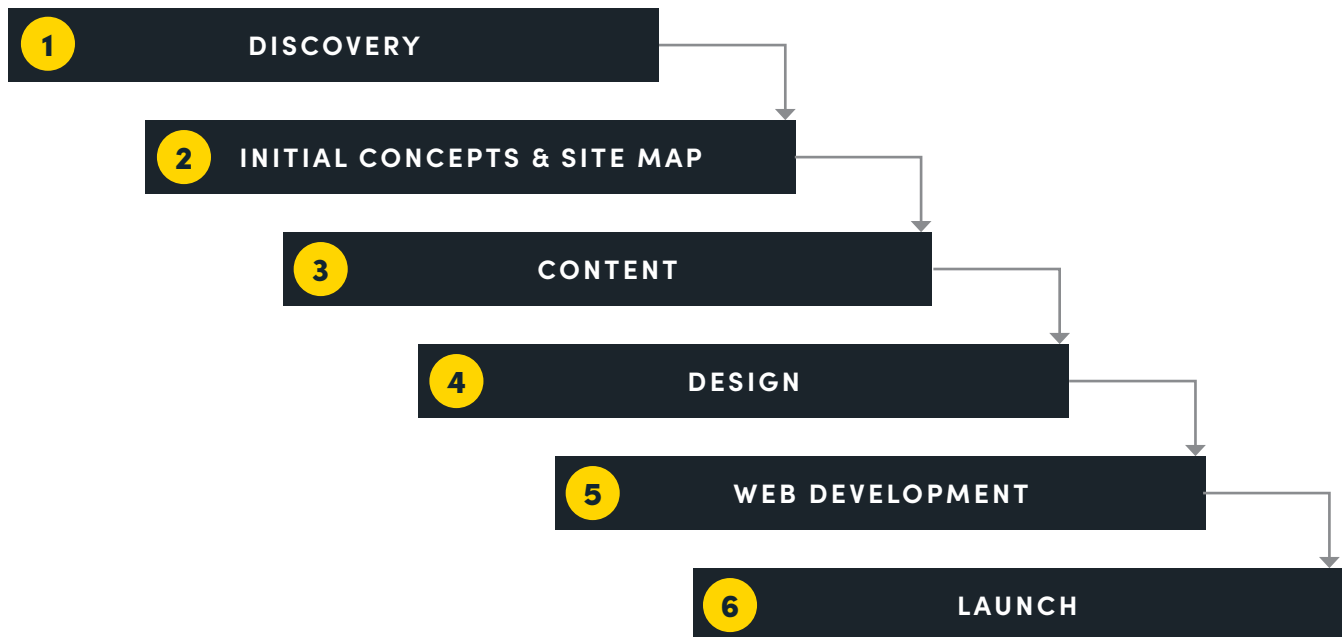
Pay attention to the sales process of the agencies that you interview or meet. Often, the sales process is a key indication of what it will be like to work with the agency. In many cases, the agency is interviewing you as well to ensure they are the right fit and can deliver on your project.

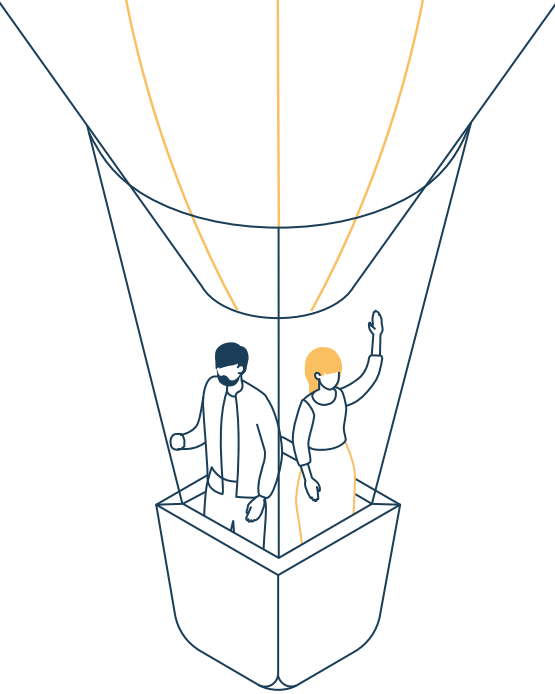


WEBSITE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Knowing as much upfront about a B2B web design agency's process ensures 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.



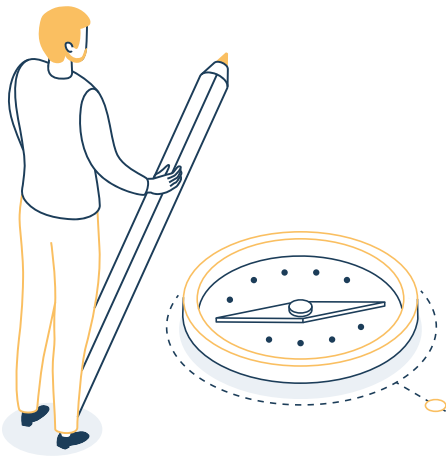


Discovery

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 interviews, industry and competitive research, and analysis of a preliminary keyword wishlist for SEO.

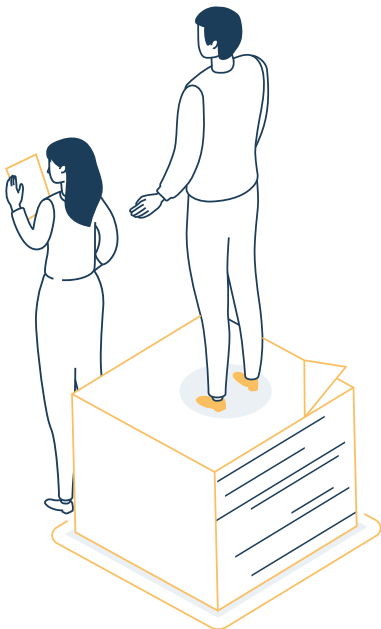
Initial concepts & site map

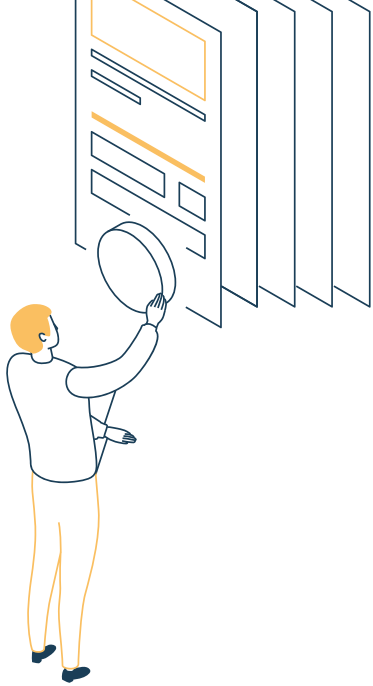
Based on the creative discovery session, an agency should present the client with initial design and messaging options before any web development is performed. At Bop Design, we present clients with two unique homepage concepts and a preliminary site map (a chart that maps out all the proposed pages for your website). We go through revision rounds until there is consensus on both the home page design and site map. It will be clear what the website will look like once it is developed, and key messaging themes will be in place. Once a client has approved the home page and site map, we move on to content and design for the rest of the pages.



Content

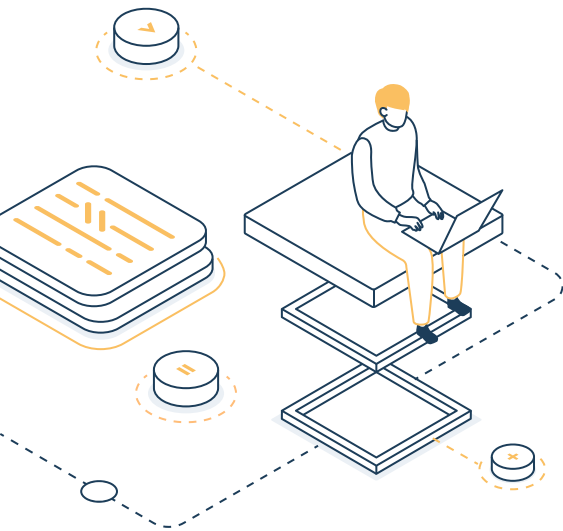
The content (aka copywriting) phase of the B2B website project typically includes an interview call or meeting and up to two rounds of client revisions. Our copywriting process includes a dedicated, industry-specific copywriter. Throughout the content portion of the web design project, we work with clients to develop web copy that incorporates their SEO goals, brand message, and specific calls-to-action. While the copywriting process for a website is separate from the design portion, they often happen concurrently.





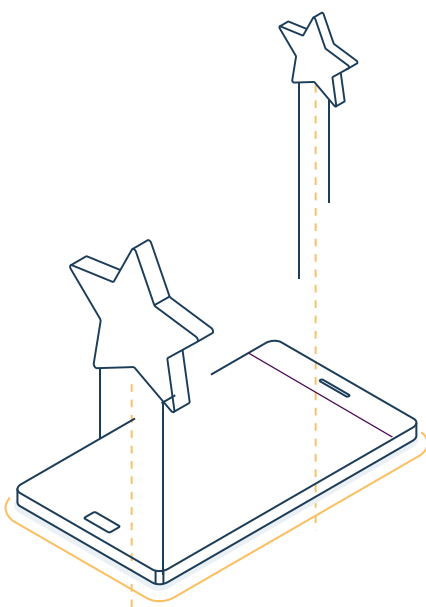
Design

Once the home page and site map are approved, the design team begins to lay out design templates for the remaining pages of your B2B website (the “subpages”). It should follow the same color scheme and general look and feel of your home page, but the structure will vary for each page category. Design elements may include infographics, iconography, and original or stock photography and video. At Bop Design, we deliver the subpage designs in Adobe XD format with design direction for you to comment on and provide up to two rounds of revisions.



Web development

After the design and content are approved, the focus moves to the backend of the site. Make sure a B2B 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 should be set up to be easily “crawlable” by search engines - helping your website to be more prominent for targeted keyword phrases. If an agency says they’re good at SEO, ask them about SEO success stories. Make sure they can deliver.



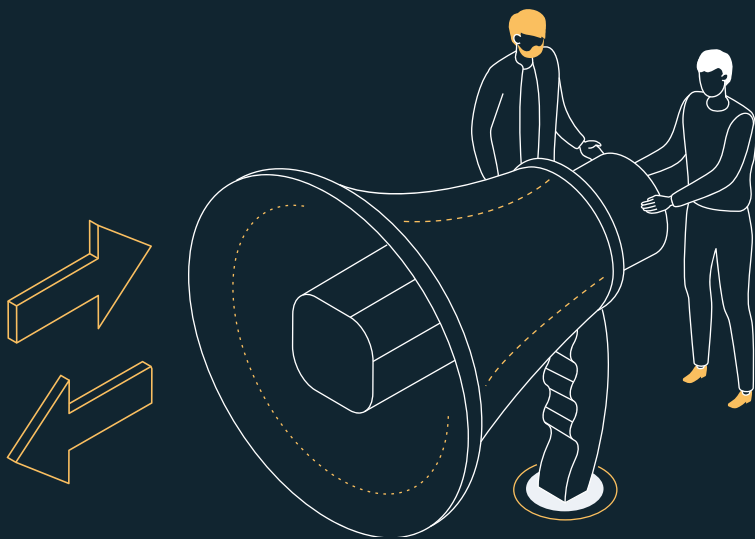
Launch

If your website were a movie, this would be the big premiere. The website launch is the most exciting time, but make sure it is properly managed by an experienced marketing and development team. The website launch is a technical process that requires careful attention to detail and the know-how to fix any issues with hosting and coding. 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 B2B website maintains peak performance and functions properly.

WEBSITE AS A LEAD GENERATION TOOL

Too often B2B firms view a website as just a branding tool and not a platform that can generate and nurture ideal client leads.

While a B2B website can interest a prospective client to do business with you, it should also be nurturing them through their buying journey.



Living, breathing resource center

For traditional and digital marketing strategies, the website is often the main hub of activity. Sales sheets and brochures should include your website URL so prospects can get more details about your company. Email newsletters link directly to various pages and resources on the website to encourage prospective and current clients to visit and complete an action. Your social media pages list the website and drive followers there to learn more information or get in touch.

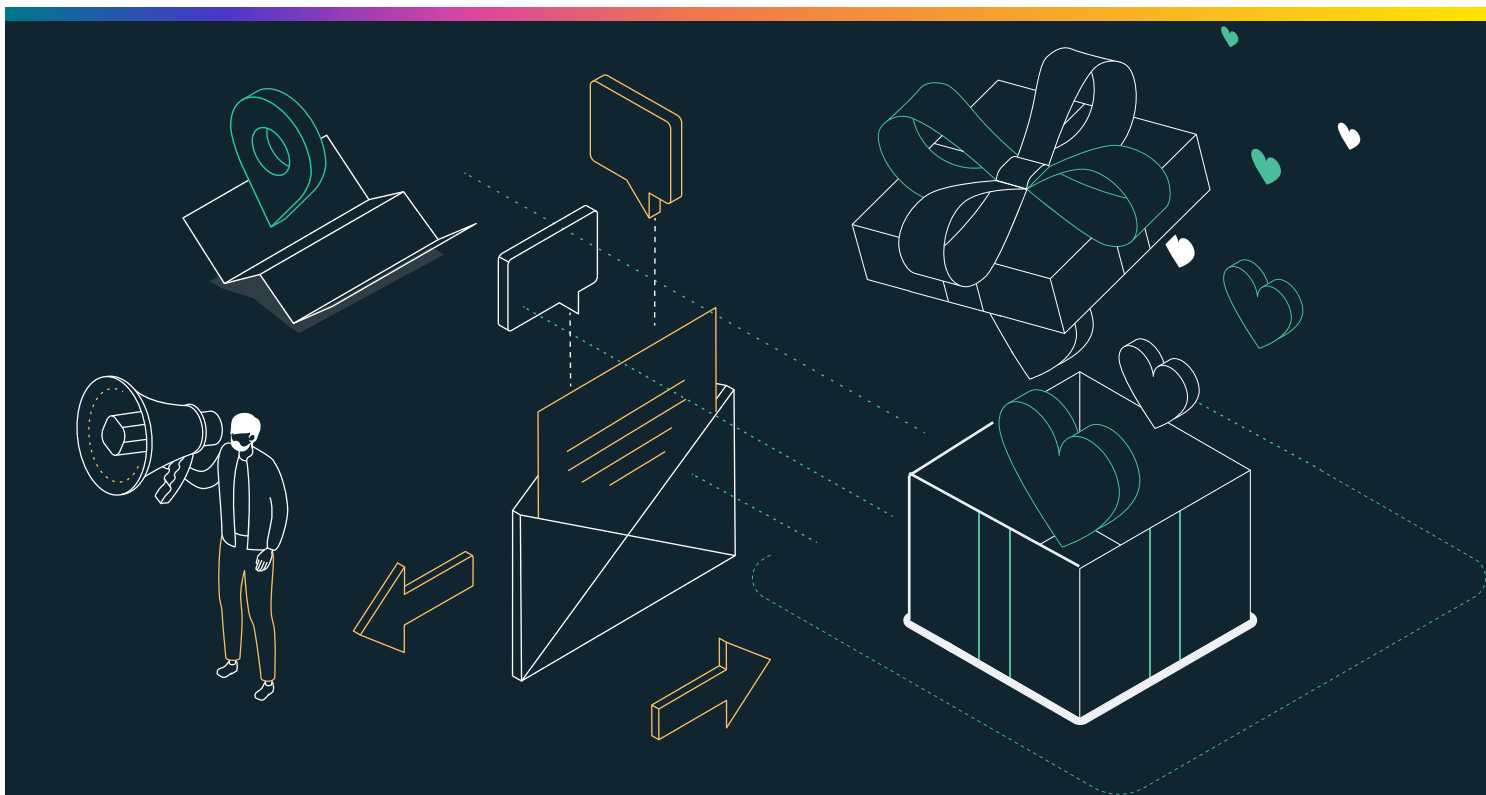
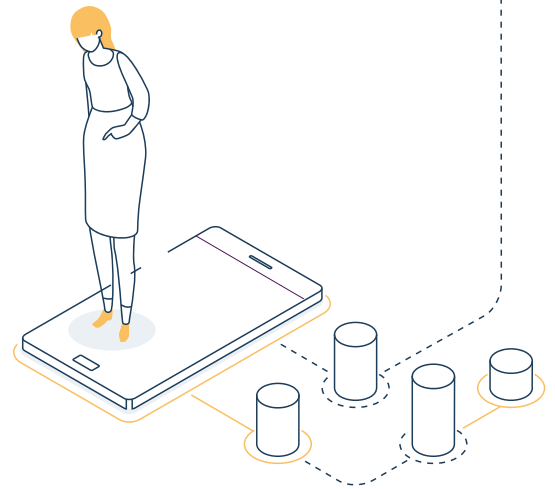
A website is often the foundation of an SEO and content marketing strategy. As such, the website needs to be functional and continually updated with new, fresh, dynamic content. Ideally, a content marketing strategy will be in place before a B2B website launches to capitalize on the investment. Ensure your web design agency is aware of your future SEO and content marketing plans and goals when building your website.



Calls-to-Action

Calls-to-action (CTAs) are an important component of 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.

What makes an effective CTA? One word: Variety. CTAs should not simply say the same thing different ways. Rather, the CTAs on a website should address different client needs, various stakeholders in the buying process, unique stages in the decision-making process, and compel the visitor to take different actions. Keeping your CTAs diverse and fresh keeps your prospective client interested in your business.

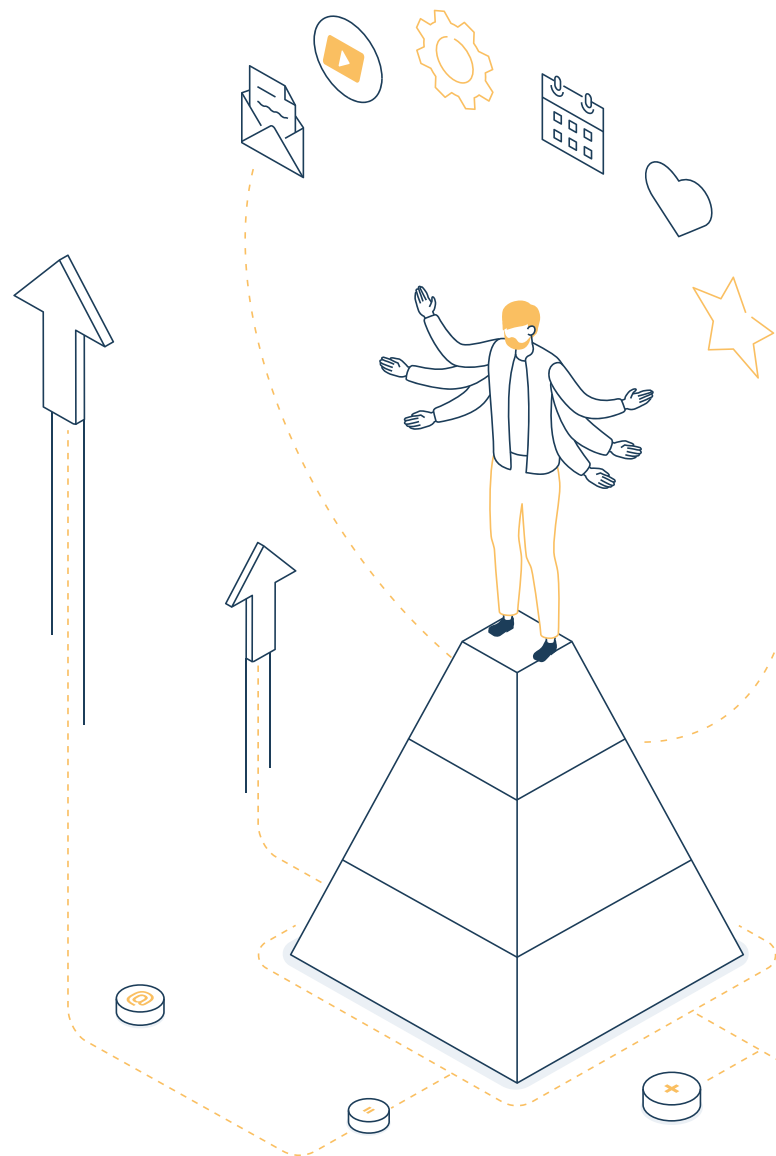


Varied Content

In the B2B realm, a service or product is being sold that impacts an entire organization and often involves 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 as CTAs, you’re missing out on the potential for visitors to move faster through the buying process. While effective, those CTAs can only support certain stages of a buyer’s journey. 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.

By providing educational content that prospects will value and refer back to on an ongoing basis, you establish credibility for your brand and stay top of mind when they are ready to make a purchase decision.

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 entice potential clients:

Videos

Customer testimonials

Articles

Case studies

Press or awards

Sales sheets

Blog

Infographics illustrating your service or process

eBooks or guides

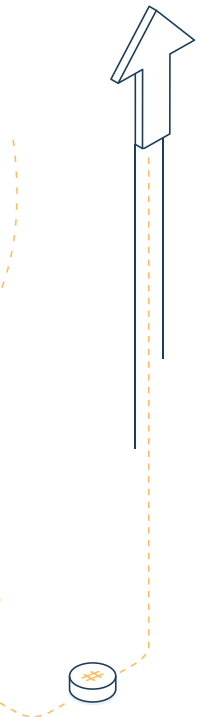
Portfolio or project gallery

Archived webinars

Product demos

Social media

White papers



Use this guide as a roadmap as 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
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