



**SMITH**  
HOUSE

# The 10 Parts of a Great Website Design Request for Proposal (RFP)

## 01. Intro / Project Overview

The goal here is to grab the web design agency's attention and respect so that they'll keep reading. This is a paragraph that hits all of the basics of the project. You should write this section last after you've filled out everything below. If you try to write this paragraph first, it will be overwhelming because there are too many options about what to include.

## 02. Company Overview

Introduce your company and key leaders. What is your company culture? Talk about your products or services. Explain what makes your company different from your competitors. Talk about the climate of your industry and where your company is going. This will help bring an agency up to speed so that the rest of the RFP is easier to understand. This section doesn't need to be more than a paragraph or two.

## 03. Your Customers / Website Audience

Who are your customers today? Why do they like your products or services? With what new customers are you hoping to connect?

Share any details about customer demographics (age, education, stage in career, etc.) so that a web design agency knows what style of website would be most appealing to your audience. A website designed for teenagers will look very different than a website for business executives.

Don't write an RFP like you have anything to prove. Avoid techy language and trendy words. Use everyday language to describe what you want in your new website.

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## 04. Your Current Website

- How is your current website failing?
- Is it too hard to use?
- Does it look bad on a mobile device?
- Are the sections broken?
- Is it too hard to navigate? Does it look dated?
- Does it not match the company's personality?
- Is out-of-sync with other marketing and communications initiatives?
- Does it perform poorly on search engines?

If these questions are too painful to answer, it might be easier to point to other websites in your industry that you really admire. Agencies will respect your self awareness and honesty.

## 05. New Website Objectives

What are you trying to accomplish with your new website? This is big picture stuff. Are you looking to generate more sales leads? Are you eager to create a comprehensive content and social media strategy? Are you shifting your products and services towards a new industry? Or is this more about looking more established and “together” than your competitors?

If you have multiple objectives, it will help if you organize your objectives into primary, secondary, and tertiary objectives. Don't get overwhelmed ordering your objectives. This is not a permanent hierarchy of goals—it's just means to help an agency get inside your head.

## 06. New Website Requirements for Core Functionality

This is where you write the nitty gritty of what your website needs to do. Usually if you ask around your building, these are the first things that people will ask for. For example:

- “We need an industry-standard Content Management System. Today, it’s too hard to update the website.”
- “We need the ability to quickly add new pages and new sections.”
- “The website should be responsive and look good on a desktop computer and on a mobile phone.”
- “We need the website to be connected to a few third-party applications to move data around.”
- “We need an eCommerce platform for selling our products and processing payment.”
- “We need to create landing pages for our social media promotions.”
- “We need to show up to date brick-and-mortar store information.”
- “We need to promote upcoming concerts and also have logistical information available for concert goers on the day of.”

## 07. New Website Wish List

These are features and functionality that you would like to include, but they are not essential. If a company is trying to be careful about budget, they often will omit this section. But these items may very well be easy to build, and therefore pretty economical. Also, when a good agency is creating a proposal, they will look for creative ways to build your core functional requirements and also incorporate cool perks from this wishlist.

## 08. Budget Details

This is more important than you think. A lot of people hesitate to talk about money up front, because they're afraid of being taken advantage of. I mean, would you ever walk up to a car dealership and blurt out, "I have \$35,000 to spend. What will this buy me?" So why would I blurt out to web design agencies that we have a \$35,000 to spend?

I've heard this concern from many, many people. The analogy, though, is deeply flawed. To make this comparison fair, shopping for a car would look more like this:

*"I need these core features and functionality in my next car... I need the car to have this kind of style... and I have a budget of \$35,000. What can you offer for that budget? Also, I am sending these same requests to five other auto dealerships. Whomever proposes the best car to match these requirements will be chosen."*

Being up front about your budget will give you a better shot at finding the right agency to build your website.

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You could imagine that these dealerships would be very attentive to your needs and respond with their best offer. But if you never shared your budget for the car, how would they know what car to recommend?

Also, keep in mind that good agencies want to build long-term partnerships with cool companies. At smithHOUSE, we want to help our clients gain a competitive advantage. We want our clients to shine. We want our clients to hire us again. Long term partnerships do not happen if you overbuild a website just to grab up the service fee.

We have created many proposals for less money than a client had budgeted. Why? Because if we can save them money today, they are more likely to respect and trust us and come back to us in the future.

If you can't put a number on it because you've never done this before, then tell the web design agencies. But also be clear that your company has resources (staff and money) that they will commit to this new website. If you don't want to be too specific, then try to put a budget range and a note of explanation:

*"We have allocated \$25,000 - \$35,000 for the project. If this budget isn't sufficient, we have the option to revise the functional requirements, or perhaps launch the website in phases spread out over the next four quarters. This will bring us into a new budgeting year."*

## 09. Proposal Requirements

You need to tell a web design agency what you expect in their proposal. Otherwise, it will be very difficult to compare agencies and make a choice. Here's a simple outline that most agencies will follow:

- Tell us about your agency
- How will you build this website? What tools will you use?
- Who on your staff will be appointed to this project and what will they be responsible for?
- Examples of recent work that show that you can accomplish the scope of our project.
- Anything else that you want to share?

Usually proposals are about 10-15 pages.

## 10. RFP Process & Project Timeline Details

The goal here is to show a schedule of how all of this will go down. What are the critical dates of the RFP Process and then leading up to building the website?

- When is their proposal due?
- When should they expect to hear back from you?
- When the exploratory conference call?
- When is the date that you will be making a decision?
- When is your staff ready to start the project?
- When must the project launch and why?

Make sure your dates are realistic. It's inconvenient and embarrassing to reschedule deadlines and meetings.

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*Eager to learn more? Visit [smithHOUSE.co](http://smithHOUSE.co) and check out our blogs and resources. We have tips for managing your RFP process and key concepts for interviewing agencies.*