

People are often surprised at the differences in costs and deliverables between website design firms, agencies, freelancers, etc. To help you decipher website design proposals, and compare “apples to apples,” use the following check list.

1. Website Build Quality and Core Technology

Quotes often leave out important information. Ensure the proposal identifies key details.

ASK:

- Is the site an original design? Or is it built using a low-cost pre-made licensed template or framework shared by thousands of other companies?
- If you're using a pre-made framework or theme, which one are you using and why was it chosen for our business?
- Which Content Management System (CMS) will be used? (e.g. WordPress, Joomla, or a proprietary platform)
- Will the website be fully responsive, and what is your cross-device testing process?
- Do you have the technical capabilities to move our site to a new host, and is that migration included in the fee?

2. Content, Copywriting, and SEO

The hardest part of a redesign is the content. If a firm says they will “do the content,” you must understand the who and how.

ASK:

- Who is writing the copy—is it an in-house expert, a contractor, or AI?
- Does the writer understand the manufacturing industry and our specific customer base?
- Does the writer understand and incorporate Google's recommendations for content?
- Does the fee include professional photography or a curated shot list, or are we responsible for providing all images?
- Who is responsible for migrating old content or entering new text into the CMS?

3. Scope, Pricing, and Post-Launch Support

This is where “glitches” often turn into extra invoices. Define the boundaries of the quote.

ASK:

- How many rounds of revisions are included before go-live? Is there a cost for changes requested after launch?
- If we encounter malware, domain issues, or CSS glitches during the build, who fixes them and is there an extra charge?
- Will our team have full administrative access to make updates ourselves?
- Once the site is live, do you provide training for our staff on how to use the CMS?

4. Accountability and References

You aren't just buying a website; you are entering a partnership. You need to know who is on the other end of the phone.

ASK:

- Who is our point of contact? Will we work with a dedicated account manager?
- What is your typical response time, and what is the preferred method for status updates?
- Can you provide three references for sites launched at least six months ago?

WHEN CALLING REFERENCES, ASK:

- Was the project delivered on time and on budget?
- Is the site generating quality inquiries that help close sales?
- How responsive is the firm when issues arise post-launch?
- Would you recommend this design firm or consultant for my company? Why or why not?

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