

From: [Your Name]

Date: [Date]

Re: Website Redesign

[Our Agency] wants to redesign its website currently found here:

<http://www.google.com>

You have been selected as a vendor to respond to this request and would like to ask you to prepare a proposal to accomplish the task that includes timeline, cost, and deliverables. The following RFP includes a background of our organization and describes the purpose of the redesign, its desired functionality, and specific requests relating to the proposal. We understand that details may be subject to change upon vendor recommendation and / or research of more optimal solutions. In your proposal, please feel free to suggest alternatives where noted.

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Guide to this RFP

Sample text: “Our expectation is that this document will convey our vision for the new site and specific challenges with the existing one. It includes a background section about our organization, suggests an outline for organizing the content of the new site, and desired technologies. In providing these details, our intent is not to convey that we have all of the answers in creating the best possible site. The ideal and preferred vendor will bring its own ideas and vision based on industry expertise, technical capability, and client relations, guiding us to incorporate our goals into that vision. Please feel free to email [email address] with questions or comments.”

Project Overview

Introduce your organization and the purpose of the RFP. State not only what you want the service provider to do but also why: what is the main “pain point” your organization has? If it’s a web site redesign, what about the current one isn’t working for your purposes? This is high level, so be brief. The details will come below and a birds-eye view is fine.

Background

Describing your organization, what it does, and what you do. There’s a good chance we’ve never heard of you and may not be able to figure that out by visiting your existing web site (which may be why you need a new website!) Additionally, tell us a little about your values. What makes you unique? Why does what you do matter?

Project Goals

Explain what you plan to accomplish or what outcome you have in mind. What are the three most important things that, if done well, you’ll consider the redesign a success? Do you know of any quantitative metrics that will help, such as increased sales or more newsletter subscribers or better-qualified leads?

Whom do you plan to serve with the web site? Which constituencies most rely on a successful web site, in order of importance? Sometimes, the audience you’re intending to reach or serve with the web site is not the same as your wider market. For example, a non-profit site might need mainly to demonstrate its programs’ efficacy to donors and supporters, not necessarily serve its beneficiaries. Similarly, a startup may be more focused on attracting investors than customers and an established business may only really care about their largest 5% of clients.

Proposed Sitemap

As much as the visual design impacts visitors' perception of your company is the information design: how well thought out is your major site sections and navigation schema? If you already have a good idea how you'd like to reorganize it, include that here. (If not, that's OK too -- that'll be one of the first things you'll do during the discovery phase with your vendor.) Moreover, not all the content from the existing site will be migrated: some of it may be outdated or irrelevant and much new copy will need to be written. What does make it over to the new site will have to be hand-entered into the content management system and be sure to let the vendor know whether that's something your team plans to do or whether you expect the vendor to handle it.

Scope of Work

Here's where you want to provide more detail about the project. To the extent you can, describe all the services you know that you'll be hiring a web team for. For example, with a web redesign project, you might be paying for:

- Project management
- Content strategy
- Copywriting
- Illustration
- Information design
- Visual design
- Search engine optimization
- Front-end coding (HTML/CSS, animations)
- Back-end coding (CMS, 3rd party APIs)
- Custom software or app development
- Mobile device optimization
- Testing & quality assurance
- Paid search placement / advertising
- Software training

For a task like Information Design, maybe the deliverables are a site map and wireframes. For Visual Design, it might be source files in Photoshop or Sketch format. Something like Project management doesn't really have a deliverable but it's a non-trivial part of the process and doing

it well is a valuable part of successful projects. Aim to be explicit about what you want delivered but it's OK if you don't know exactly what's involved.

Additional things to include in the scope here, if applicable:

- Analytics Software
- Ongoing Support / Retainer
- Timeline for Completion
- Deliverables

Technical Requirements

This is a pretty broad subject but your goal here is to describe what limitations or requirements you know in advance. A website is, at its core, a technical product, so these are the details that may most materially impact the schedule and deliverables. Some examples of technical requirements include:

E-commerce

Do you expect to sell products or charge credit cards? A non-profit may only want to accept simple (or recurring) donations but retail merchants require shopping carts, user accounts, inventory control, and shipping calculators. You'll definitely need to encrypt the transmission via SSL, which incurs an additional annual fee, though depending on the solution, this may be included.

Content Management Software

Do you require something specific, such as Drupal or Wordpress? Are you open to alternatives you may not be familiar with? (There are literally thousands of CMS packages.) We may also have developed an in-house solution that will meet your needs well.

Programming Language

For custom web software development, is your system compatible only with a specific language, such as PHP, or Ruby, or Python? Do you have an existing infrastructure that the vendor needs to be fluent in?

Web Host

Does your organization have one the vendor must use? If not, can the vendor select or suggest one? Web agencies almost always have a preferred web host.

Browser Support

How many visitors are still on old browsers, such as Internet Explorer 8 (released March 2009)? Do they need to be supported? To make a website perform or display in a legacy browser almost always requires additional development time.

Integrations

Does your organization depend on 3rd party services for things like email newsletters, marketing automation, CRM / contact management, inventory control, intranet, accounting / Quickbooks, or inventory management? If so, be sure to include the ones for which syncing / integration with the website is essential and describe how you expect it to work. For example, when someone subscribes to a newsletter, the contact should be added automatically to Highrise or Salesforce. If someone purchases a product and opts in, she should be added to our Mailchimp database, etc. Sometimes this functionality will be included out of the box and sometimes we'll have to write something custom.

User Accounts

Do you require membership management on your site? This would be for allowing people to access special or hidden content on your site, perhaps after submitting an email address or paying to view a whitepaper. A simpler example would be password-protected pages that anyone can see with the same password and does not require a logged in account.

Accessibility

Do you require the website to be accessible to blind or limited-vision users? For websites whose audience skews older, larger default text and click areas will inform the design. Government & public sites often require Section 508 compliance.

Mobile Responsive Design

Do you require a separate mobile-optimized version of the website? Most smartphones have no trouble displaying the full site and that's enough for many users. But a layout optimized for small screens and tablets can make a big difference in the delight and satisfaction of site visitors. This will require additional development time, which adds to the scope.

Budget

Yes, you have to include your budget, even if it's your best guess. If you need to specify a range ("We'd like to spend \$x,000 but are willing to go to \$y,000 for the right proposal"), that's fine too. Web sites are like cars: you can get good ones anywhere from \$5,000 to \$500,000 and, frankly, there is no price point for which you cannot find a tinkering undergraduate freelancer to put something together for you. Meanwhile, professional agencies will do professional work and the proposal will let you know the difference.

Finally, if you have a separate budget for assets like photographs, illustrations, software licenses, services, etc., be sure to include it. These don't often end up being a substantial part of the overall cost but they can eat it into the final calculation. To extend the car metaphor, a mechanic has to buy the new part before installing it, which is separate from the cost to perform the service.

Project Timeline

You may not know how long something will take to do, but you do know what timeline you have to accomplish it. Is there some hard deadline you need to hit, such as the launch of a new product or ad campaign? Maybe you have a big trade show coming up and need the site live by then? Be sure to mention any firm dates beyond the vendor selection process.

Criteria for Selection

You're going to get a lot of different proposals back and each company will have different strengths, reputations, and capabilities. Some will compete on low cost; others on best quality; still others on more features. Figure out what you want in a vendor: cheapest option? Fastest delivery? Highest quality? Is a distributed team OK, or do you need every member to be local to your headquarters? Are sub-contractors OK or only full-time in-house staff? You're balancing the expertise of the team with the limitations of your budget but in the end, you want the best work (and partner) that you can afford. No doubt several of these are typically important, so weight them according to what matters most to you.

Remember, the goal of the proposal you receive back is to evaluate the quality of vendor fitness for your project. Some questions you might ask the proposer to include in the reply:

- Examples of similarly-complex projects (to assess technical capability)
- Client references and whether email or phone is better (to assess credibility)

- Project timeline with major tasks and milestones (to assess process)
- Project budget by line item (to assess process)
- Plan for mobile / responsive design (to assess familiarity with current trends)

Finally, ask yourself how important these elements are:

- Technical expertise: Previous experience in building interactive, responsive sites.
- Communication and autonomy: Manage project independently in addition to teamwork; pursue and meet established timelines without monitoring/prompting.
- Partner: Act as a partner in the project build by involving our team but also taking the lead when needed.
- Flexibility: Adapt when needed to unforeseen project changes.
- Vision: Provide ideas for project beyond what is presented initially based on expertise in the field.
- User interface design: Ability to create user-centered design, making the user's experience as seamless as possible.

Format & Proposal Details

Anything else unique to your project? Does the proposal need to be submitted in a particular format, such as MS Word or PDF? Do you require signed & notarized hard copies? Does it need to be single-spaced with no staples (we've actually seen this a few times, believe it or not)? Is it OK for the vendor to use freelancers or sub-contractors or does every member of the team need to be full-time? What's the timeline for submitting the proposals? Typically, there's a deadline for receipt, for selecting semi-finalists, for scheduling interviews and for final selection. Do the semi-final interviews need to be in-person or is remote OK? This is all standard fare but it can be easy to overlook.

Ultimately, how much detailed information do you require? Who will be available to work on the project may change depending on our production schedule.