



EVERYTHING YOU NEED
BEFORE GETTING A
**WEB DESIGN
QUOTE**



SMALL BUSINESS MARKETING GUIDE

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Table of Contents

Why You Need to Read This!	3
Do You Need a New Website?	4
What Are The 4 Costs of a Website?	5
What's Needed to Get the Best Web Design Quote	7
Make Your Web Design Process a Success Before It Begins	9
Getting Your Web Design Quote	11

Why You Need to Read This!

TL;DR Version: Just getting quotes from random web design agencies or freelancers without doing the legwork will waste your valuable time.

We get it. Your website is not a top priority in your business. Until it is.

You want to **avoid**:

- Spending too much money
- Taking months and months to launch
- Wasting your team's time
- Partnering with the wrong web designer who doesn't understand your business

Most businesses skip the prep work and blindly dive into a website project by:

- Asking other businesses who they worked with before
- Seeing who built your competitor's or customer's websites
- Checking your trade association or chamber of commerce
- Scouring Google

That's a good place to start looking, but you're shooting blind.

- What questions should you ask?
- How much will a website cost?
- How do you get an accurate quote?
- Is there anything you can do to keep the budget down?

Your business website is a serious investment. By taking the time to do some prep work you'll get a better website, save a bunch of time, and save some serious money.

Do You Need a New Website?

TL;DR Version: If you're asking, you already know the answer is yes.

It is generally recommended that a website be replaced or overhauled every two years. Think about your cellphone. After about two or three years, you're ready for a new one. Why? Because technology has improved, it's not working very well, and it is getting slower and slower.

Of course, just like your cellphone, you're not sprinting to the store at the two year mark. You reboot it more often. You get a new case for it. You want to get just a little bit more from your investment.

Also just like your cellphone is the control center of your life, your website is the center of your business' sales and marketing world.

You're shaking your head. "My flip phone works just fine. My 6-year-old website also works just fine."

But if you're seeing leads diminish and sales taper off—it's as much of a sign as frequently dropped cellphone calls.

Some other reasons you could need a new website:

- Change in business ownership
- New branding or refreshed logo design
- New service or product offerings
- Design is out of date or doesn't work well on mobile devices (cellphones or tablets)

What Are The 4 Costs of a Website?

TL;DR Version: To build and own a website you will have one-time costs such as creative design and technical development and recurring costs like your domain name and website hosting / maintenance.

One of the biggest misconceptions about website design is that it's a one-time transactional cost. You pay a developer and you get a website.

In reality, there are four (4) main cost areas for building and owning a website.

1) Domain Name

Your domain name is how people find your website. E.g. Example.com. Believe it or not, you actually lease the domain name from a domain registrar like GoDaddy, Network Solutions, Hover, etc.

You must pay a recurring (usually annual) fee to keep your domain. You have the ability to lease it for multiple years and/or auto-renew it with a credit card number.

If you don't stay on top of this renewal process, you can lose your domain. It happens a lot. Here's what you need to do if it happens to you. ([Link to SF blog](#))

2) Creative Design

The actual website design is sometimes called the user experience (or UX). Signalfire's design team applies your brand, the site's objectives, and great design principles to create a custom experience.

This process gives you the ability to provide feedback and finalize the site design before the development begins.

3) Development

The creative design team hands off the prototypes to the development team. This is when the idea is constructed into a fully functional website. The complete site is built out and all the features are added.

Once approved, the website is launched!

4) Hosting and Maintenance

Website hosting is a monthly (or annual) cost to house the website on a web server. Think of it as renting office space on the web. Hosting services vary significantly in cost and services. Choosing the right hosting is crucial to your website's success.

Don't overlook maintenance. Just like you need to maintain your car, websites need maintenance, too. A maintenance plan will ensure that your website's software and plugins run smoothly and stay secure.

Heads Up! **A maintenance plan is NOT an SEO program.** While maintenance may help a tiny bit with your website's performance with search engines, it is NOT a replacement for an optimization program.

What's Needed to Get the Best Web Design Quote

TL;DR Version: In order to get an accurate web design quote you must determine what a successful outcome is, describe the functions you need, when you need the site to launch, and how much you want to spend.

A little bit of planning goes a long way when getting a web design quote. Getting an accurate quote is a process. Depending on the size of your business and the size of the website, the details might change a little, but still go into the process with the following items:

Determine How Success Will Be Measured

Imagine your website a year from now. How will you define it as successful? Increased leads? Bottom line sales? Increased website traffic or performance on search engines? Go into the project with a specific measurement for success.

List Your Features and Functions

Do you need a library of safety sheet PDFs? Will a user find a search box helpful? Do you need landing pages for digital marketing efforts? Make a list of the key features and functions. Also, be sure to outline the “must have” vs. “nice to have” features in case you need to adjust for budgeting.

Set a Deadline for Launch

Pick a date. Even if you don't have a deadline, create one. It is the best way to ensure the project is completed in a timely manner. A realistic timeline will depend on the scope of work, but plan for a couple months.

Set a Budget

Do you have \$50,000? \$25,000? \$10,000? Go into the process with a specific budget in mind. This will help getting effective proposals with realistic scopes of work.

Common Starting Points for Web Development Budgets

- DIY Site Builders (Wix, Squarespace, etc.) \$ 1,000+
- CMS (WordPress, Joomla!, Drupal) mobile responsive website: \$ 6,000+
- CMS and basic e-commerce website (WordPress + WooCommerce): \$ 13,000+
- Custom designed e-commerce platform: \$ 25,000+

Find Examples You Like and Examples You Don't Like

Time for some research. Search your competitors (and similar industries) for sites you think are impactful. Take notes on why. Also seek out sites you don't like and why you believe they're not successful.

- I like the drop down navigation on this website
- The industries served section on that website looks really sharp
- The contact form on this site is really clunky and way too long
- These images are too small, I can't see the equipment

The clearer you can communicate what you like and don't like will help guide website designers and developers.

Make Your Web Design Process a Success Before It Begins

TL;DR Version: The planning and preparation for a website should start before you look for web designer.

Assign a Working Team. Make Sure to Be Available.

Who will be the key stakeholders in the website? Will someone be in charge of making updates? Make sure the Sales team is involved as well as management. Groups in the 3-5 people range work best.

Make sure the working team knows that timely communication is important!

Get Critical Materials Organized

No matter which web design partner you select, there is key information and resources needed.

Gather Brand Assets

Make sure you have logo or brand resources ready for your partner. We recommend have the different variations of your logo available in AI or EPS file formats.

Also include a logo or brand style / usage guide to help the designers use your logo or brand correctly.

Gather and Review Your Content

Most people attempt to cut a corner and say, “just use what’s on the website.” When the new design is ready there is a sudden urge to read it in more detail and make changes.

You can speed up the process by copying the existing website content into MS Word or Google Docs. It will give your working group a chance to review the materials before placing it on the new website.

Gather Photos and Videos

Do NOT rely on the photos living on your current website. More than likely they’ll be incorrectly sized and too small to use on a new website.

Locate the original images from the photographer. The file sizes may be significantly larger than the ones currently online, but it will give the design team the greatest freedom for an innovative design.

If you don’t have any photos or the photos are significantly outdated, don’t panic. Use the opportunity to hire a photographer to take new ones. Make sure to include people in the photos when appropriate.

Document Important Information

Gathering critical website information at the start will save you time, money, and headaches. Once documented, keep a printed back up in case you misplace the electronic files.

Domain Name

Your domain name is a key element of your website. Having direct control is crucial.

Who owns your domain name?

It might sound silly, but many businesses have left their domain names with previous website developers. Immediately look to take ownership of your domain name.

Where is your domain name registered?

Domains are managed through a domain registrar. You can often find out where your domain is registered through a [WHOIS Lookup](#).

Do you have access to your domain name?

The email address, username, and password to your registrar account is VITAL for business operations. Make sure you have this information documented. Before beginning your website project, test the login credentials to make sure the domain information (and billing) are up to date. This includes auto-renewal credit card information—check expiration dates!

Existing Website Hosting Information

If you have an existing website, the hosting (see *Section 2*) may play a crucial role in accessing needed electronic files or databases.

Where is the site hosted?

Make sure you have a record of where the website is hosted. Include the hosting provider's business name, username, and password to access the account. Also, if there are additional tools or resources (cPanel, databases, etc.) be sure to document everything.

When does it renew?

Confirm if you have a month to month or annual renewal cycle for your website hosting. Depending on when your new website will launch, you may be stuck in an ongoing contract or need to pay a cancellation fee.

Never cancel an account unless the new website is already up and running.

Sharing Access to Google Analytics

Keep your historic website data! We want to track performance from the old website to the new. The best way to do this is by keeping the same Google Analytics and related product accounts.

Make sure you have “administrator” level access on all platforms. This way you can add future development partners and track future performance compared to the past.

Getting Your Web Design Quote

TL;DR Version: Great web design partners are selective about who they work with. Your initial contact should be a pitch about why you'll be their favorite customer.

Congratulations! If you've gotten all of the legwork done, getting a web design quote from a reputable developer will be a whole lot easier. Also, you'll likely get quotes that are more "apples to apples" to compare.

When you reach out to the developers or agencies you've selected, you don't have to send everything over at once. Remember that many of the best developers are very selective in who they work with. Your first contact with them is very similar to interviewing a new team member. You want them to see you as a serious opportunity.

Here is some information you should include when you initially reach out:

- Your name, business information, contact, etc. (they'll likely be entering you into their CRM and get signing you up for their drip emails)
- Describe your business in a sentence or two
- Briefly describe your website project in a sentence or two
- How did you find them? (Referral, Google search, seen their past work)
- Share your timeline and budget—this will help you save time finding future partners who can work within your budget and timeframe
- Ask to set up a phone call to confirm their interest

I know what you're thinking. "They should be accommodating me!" You're bringing them a web project on a silver platter. True, but agencies and freelance developers get a lot of web design requests and not all of them are a "good fit" for them.

An agency or freelance web designer will be evaluating you on several key factors:

- Is your project a good fit for their capabilities or specialties?
- Do they have experience with your industry or similar businesses?
- Does the timeline and budget fit?
- Will you be easy to work with?

Your best chance of getting a fast response will be to go through their sales process. Fill out the website form with the recommended information. Great partners will get back to you within a business day.

Once you've connected, you can begin sharing all the preliminary work you've completed. I promise you that they'll be thrilled.

Got Questions?

If you've got questions, we'd love to help. Just hit us up on the socials or contact our office directly!

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