

## What Is In a Website Development/Design Proposal?

When competing for web design and development or marketing contracts; a professionally presented development proposal more often than not decides whether you win or lose the business. A web design proposal also decreases the incidences of misunderstandings between yourself and your clients when the project is under way and acts as a basis for a formal contract.

When putting together a basic web site proposal, you should include the following elements:

### **Information About You:**

Your background or company history, business qualifications, technical skills, past achievements and contact details, along with links to samples of your work so the potential client can see what your design or development aesthetic is and your level of experience. Giving references of clients you have worked with sometimes is helpful especially on larger projects.

### **Project Overview:**

The Overview is a high level description of the business you are submitting the proposal to, your understanding of their products and services, their target market, the goals of the web site and a rough outline of how you will achieve them. Here is the opportunity to exhibit your very best listening skills to what the brief of the customer wants, how well you researched their business and can translate that into what the website will be.

### **Project Theme:**

A description of style of site you are proposing. Elements from the client's current branding you will utilize or new elements you will develop.

### **Special Considerations:**

These are items such as language, security or other issues pertaining to the business, site or target market that will need to be addressed.

### **Web site Flowchart or Wireframe:**

Flowchart or Wireframe that is a diagram showing the different pages of the site and navigational structure, currently several tools to help you create this document are available. Online, Gliffy ([www.gliffy.com](http://www.gliffy.com)) is good or more conventional tools, such as Visio, Freehand or graphic tools such as Photoshop, Illustrator are available. I use MS Word because I can put text boxes anywhere on the page and layer them to create a dimensional feel for the many layers of a larger website.

### **Flowchart/Wireframe Description:**

A detailed description of each web page, how it fits in with the overall web site theme and the project element it addresses. Also any scripting you plan to employ needs to be described. If you are going to use forms then how the forms will report

data is important as well. No link or function should be left out as this becomes your guide when you start work.

Just like a blueprint to build a house this document becomes the plan for how the website will be built, function and integrate from page to page and gives you control over scope creep and change control.

### **Development Timeline:**

This should be a description of each stage of the web projects' development, the estimated completion date and notes regarding client consultation and supply of information/feedback from the client. This may also include milestone payments for involved projects and site promotion activities. Make it clear that traffic takes time to build up after implementation and promotion should only occur after the site has been tested thoroughly. Improper implementation can cost months of traffic and a great deal of lost business.

### **Project Costing:**

A descriptive breakdown of costing and total of quote including an end date before the price will need to be re-calculated. This will include items such as domain name registration, hosting fees and outsourcing for sections of the site you will not be able to develop yourself. Ensure you take into account business related items including travel time, electricity, telephone and consumables.

Factor in the cost of the development of the business proposal as well; a good proposal will take hours of your time and you should be compensated for that. In your eagerness to gain the contract, you may lose money if you quote too close to the bone. Bear in mind that things rarely go strictly to plan in web design and delays can be expected. Time is money. The going rate for web design services seems to be between US\$25-\$75 per labor hour at present; dependent upon the complexity of the task and the competency of the designer.

### **Terms and conditions:**

Expectations and commitments; it is not unusual for web projects to be delayed due to clients not supplying feedback or content necessary to complete sections. It is just as important to be clear in what you expect from your clients as well as explaining your commitment to them. Conflict resolution issues and feedback mechanisms should be described.

Your clients will need to know what will occur if they do not supply information when requested, or request changes mid-stream and the action that you will take if you are running behind in the project yourself. You need to be clear on payment details and consequences of failure to pay for the services that you provide.

### **Mock-ups (samples).**

Be careful not to give too much away, just enough to give the client a good idea of what the site will look like. Ensure copyright notices and intellectual property statements are in place.

My suggestion is to give the client a couple of different looks, especially if you want them to make a change to the current look and branding of their website because it is old or out of date.

### **Ongoing web site maintenance.**

Summarize an offer of ongoing site maintenance or the implications of the client deciding to update or maintain the site themselves after the initial project has been completed, sometimes clients don't realize the value of how the updates are done to the overall SEO and rankings of the website.

The above points are usually sufficient to put together a professional web design proposal for a small to medium project. If drafting a business proposal based on criteria given to you by the prospective client; be sure to address all the points.

If the client suggests the proposal documentation be a certain format, respect that. In the culling process, the first proposals to be binned will be the ones that do not address all the criteria the client has laid down.

Bear in mind that not all the web design proposals you submit will be accepted. Be prepared to do some heavy revisions to satisfy your clients and to find a middle ground where all parties feel comfortable. A prospective client asking for revisions is a good sign - they are genuinely interested.

Also remember that some companies will ask you for proposals purely to use as a comparison against another designer that they are interested in utilizing; so try and limit the amount of time you spend on the draft until the client gives indication of serious interest.