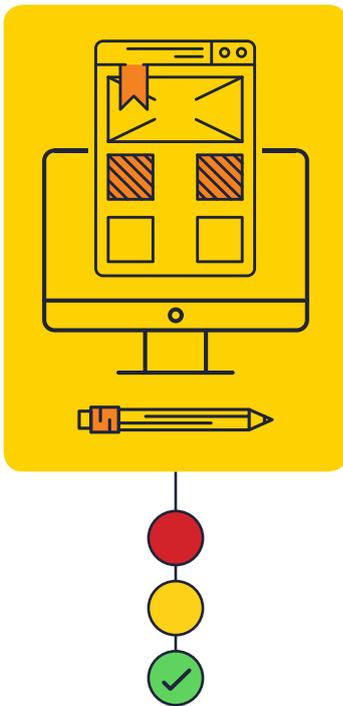


ESSENTIALS FOR BRIEFING YOUR WEB DESIGN TEAM



This is a trickier task than you think and we recommend that you draw up this document WITH the website design team. Or if you have yet to appoint them and the brief is part of the selection process, work with a digital consultant to support you with the brief and selection process. This will cost some budget, but money well spent in creating a watertight brief and selecting the right agency to fulfil it.

The kind of brief you create will depend on what kind of company you are, what your target market wants, what technical functionality is required and what budget you have.

There is no sure-fire template to draw up a brief, apart from that a good brief will provide clear and detailed guidance, and in doing so produce good results. A bad brief will do the reverse, wasting time and money and no doubt fraying nerves in the process.

Web projects are in a class of their own in that they are a hybrid of pure design and technology. Most project managers will be well versed at briefing in creative projects such as print, but not all will have had experience in web projects. It is also often hard to know what level of detail to provide a web development agency when it comes to your technical requirements. How do you know what you want when maybe you have never been in this position before?

However, if you combine the steps below with knowing your own business then you will have the bases covered. You will always know a lot more about what you do (and don't want) than you might think. Don't get techno phobia and always ask for clarification of web jargon.

So, always cover...

1. BUDGET

Why do people play 'guess my budget'? There really is no benefit in withholding something as crucial as this...it wastes so much time and energy. Everyone ends up miserable as it affects the whole approach to your website project. Even if you can provide a bracket "between £10,000 - £15,000." an agency can then better tailor their recommendations to meet your expectations. Everyone will end up happy.

2. WHAT DO YOU DO AND WHAT DO YOUR VISITORS WANT?

It might sound weird but it's not always 100% obvious what you do, take time to explain this - it will help formulate a message that everyone can understand. It might sound weirder, but it is rare brief indeed that is written truly from the view point of the users. More often a website is built based on what the client wants the public to see of them and their services. Ego! How could the site better aid your customers or prospects. Speak to your customers and get them involved in the briefing process, how could the website better serve their aims and objectives, even their day to day contact with you. We think you'll be pleasantly surprised as to how keen they generally are to be consulted in such a process.

3. WHAT DO YOUR STAFF WANT?

Again, very often overlooked. We bet that you will have numerous processes that could be made easier by the clever use of a website. Take the time to consult your staff and bring them onboard - they might even have some ideas you haven't thought of. You need to ensure that by the time you consult an agency to design and build your site you have considered every way in which that site can streamline back office functions. Save their time and save yourself some money!

4. WHAT SITES DO YOU LIKE?

And not just a page of links please.... with no explanations. And please don't say the BBC... This should not be seen solely as a subjective beauty contest try to find sites that fulfil some of the functionality you are after:

- > **A chance to critique your competitors' sites what fun!**
- > **Which of these have clever functionality (which, what, and why is it of interest?)**
- > **What sites have design features that I like (any sites, what features do you like and why)**
- > **What sites have a photographic style that you like?**
- > **Any sites that have a typographic style / tone of voice that appeals**

Be mindful at all times as to how these design features or functions will benefit your users, rather than letting your own preferences get in the way. Don't forget to include your brand guidelines if you have them

5. HOW DO YOU UPDATE YOUR SITE?

You need to think practically about how you and your business plan to produce this content. The web team at your organisation (or agency) need to produce content and ideas that keep it fresh and engaging. Being clear about what how you envisage this working will be invaluable when you scope out what Content Management System (CMS) you require. It will also give them a head start on collating content, while the site is still in production. Issues to consider should include provision in house to resize graphics, sourcing and editing photography if you need to update images? Make sure that your agency doesn't produce a design that relies on retouched photography that you can't maintain. Avoid those future frustrations!

6. CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Being realistic about exactly what level of control you require over a site is fundamental to ensuring that you get the system that is right for you and save money by not developing unnecessary features. Most clients say they require 'TOTAL CONTROL' but this level can result in a higher bill and spending weeks constructing a CMS where only a small percentage of its capabilities are actually used. Hopefully you now know exactly what content you will be producing in which case you will know what level of CMS edibility you must have, and any further functionality you can afford is a bonus. Consider updating text, updating, resizing and retouching images, adding files for download, creating links, creating pages, restructuring pages, displaying news or content from third party sites, providing a facility for customers to comment or get in touch? Granted they are common requests, but if you are to give clear instructions to an agency, and vitally get value for money, think about exactly what you want well in advance.

7. TIMINGS

Obvious we know, but be clear from the beginning who makes up the website project team your end, what the process of approval is and who is sourcing content. Probably the greatest cause of delays in web projects come from an under-appreciation of just how much time it takes to source images, text and quotes for the site. Allowing enough time and resource to source the material, show any new designs to establish accurate timings will result in a far smoother project.

8. MEASURE YOUR SUCCESS

Has it worked? Or do we have the same problem only with new pictures and copy? How you will judge whether the new site has been a success? An increase in enquiries? More newsletter sign ups? More sales leads? More visits, or a drop in telesales calls needed? Being clear about the objectives means you can put in place the systems to record, measure and report on this data.

9. THE FUTURE & ONGOING MARKETING

If you have a vision for the future of the site then your web agency has a chance of future proofing the site. Then the hard work really starts. To promote the business through cross-marketing channels to drive the RIGHT kind of traffic to the website. And then to convert that traffic into meaningful sales leads. Don't forget print, word-of-mouth and networking, capitalise on digital marketing such as SEO, PPC, re-marketing, social media and email marketing. It's still a marketing mix!

 CONTACT US NOW FOR THE TEMPLATE WHICH INCLUDES EVERYTHING ABOVE, PLUS ALL THE STANDARD STUFF YOU'LL NEED TO BRIEF A KILLER WEBSITE - HELLO@BANGANDERSON.CO.UK