



It's all in the details:
How to write a perfect website brief

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HOW TO WRITE A PERFECT WEBSITE BRIEF

Designing, building and launching a website is a serious challenge. There's a lot of different people involved, tonnes of new jargon and hundreds of decisions to be made.

From a marketing perspective, a website must be perfectly on brand and targeted to personas, which is a task in itself. On top of this, a good website also needs to meet the functionality requirements of your business and fit the time and budget restrictions set for the project.

As every website is unique, there's no cookie cutter way to go about the project. That said, if you've been tasked with managing the launch of your organisation's new website, there's no need to fear.

Like anything, preparation is key to making a website project go smoothly. If you write an excellent brief for your external or internal teams, they'll be equipped to deliver your website within the budget and timeline set.

In this guide, we've put together all of the important questions to answer so you can write the most thorough brief your team has ever seen.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

What is the main purpose of your website?

Depending on the goals of your business, this might be to generate leads, raise awareness, increase sales, demonstrate your track record or provide information for your audience. Agreeing the purpose at the beginning of the project will ensure your website is working to meet the same goals as your other inbound marketing tools and the business as a whole.

What are the key messages and values the website needs to reflect?

Share your organisation's values and key messages with your team, so that they can design a website that communicates these clearly. If you haven't developed these already, you check out [our guide](#) to running a successful values workshop to get started.

What information do you want to capture about your visitors?

Capturing data on your site visitors is an important goal for any website, as it gives you insights into the audiences most engaged with your site and the opportunity to contact them through email marketing. List out all the information you want to capture, such as email address, job title, or phone numbers.

What are your main calls to action?

You should list out the key call to actions that you want your users to make. Mapping user journeys is key to understanding the specific CTAs that are needed to drive conversions.

How do you want users to make contact?

Include your preferred method of contact, whether that's email or telephone. This will allow your team to build contact forms and pages that are the most effective for your business.

USERS AND AUDIENCES

Who will be using your website?

Let your internal and external teams know who will be using your website. This should include your buyer personas, internal stakeholders and strategic partners. If you don't have buyer personas, find out why they're so important [here](#).

Why would people visit your website?

With your list of potential users in mind, list out all the reasons people might visit your website. These could include making bookings, viewing events calendars, purchasing products or services, and finding out information about your business.

How aware is your target market of your organisation?

Look at each of your buyer personas and think about the level of awareness they have of your organisation. You may have a persona that you're yet to raise awareness with, or a group that is already well connected with your business.

What are your visitors' motivations and triggers?

Motivations and triggers are key parts of your buyer persona profiles that allow you to understand the reasons why they would engage with your business. If your buyer personas don't include this information currently, you can find out this information in a [persona workshop](#).

What do you want your visitors to do with the information they find on your website?

Once you've got your ideal personas visiting your website, it's important to think about what you want them to do when they leave. It could be to share information they have learned with others to generate further awareness, to get in touch, make a purchase or visit a store.

COMPETITORS

Who are your competitors online?

You should have a good awareness of who your organisation's key competitors are, so spend some time checking out their websites and collate a list of their names and site addresses.

What do you like and dislike about your competitors' websites?

For each competitor on your list, write out all the key aspects you like and dislike about their website. Consider what works well and what doesn't from a visitor perspective, so that you can either replicate or avoid these in your own website.

What marketing activities are your competitors running?

Spend some time investigating the main marketing activities your competitors are using. This could be PPC adverts, social media campaigns, events or articles.

Are there any specific aspects of their website's functionality that you would like to replicate on your own site?

Whilst you're investigating competitor websites, keep an eye out for any aspects of functionality they use that you think would be useful to replicate on your website. This might be a live chat function or a virtual tour of a venue.

SITE ARCHITECTURE

What information do you need to house on your site?

Consider exactly what information you need to house on your website. This will inform the structure of your website and what pages need to be developed. Be thorough at this stage to avoid extra costs creeping in later down the line.

Do you have an idea of the structure of the website?

If you have an idea of structure in mind, it's useful to share it with your web team at this stage. If not, don't worry – your internal and external teams should be able to construct user journeys based on the information you provided above to determine your site structure.

Should there be any gated areas of the website?

Many organisations require a gated section on their website. This means having a private section of your website that can only be accessed using a log in or by entering personal information like name, job title and email address. Gated content is an effective way to capture visitor data, so have a think about how this could support your content marketing strategy.

MEASUREMENT

Would you like to monitor website traffic and data?

There are very few cases when a website won't need ongoing measurement. As a marketer, analytics is likely one of your biggest priorities, as it allows you to get insights into the behaviour of your users and the channels that are successfully driving traffic to your website. Google Analytics is a great tool for measuring websites as it integrates with many of the other platforms in a marketer's measurement toolkit.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

These questions are all focused on the management of your website and will be entirely unique to your business. Outlining core responsibilities from the outset will help your website project run smoothly and will minimise any confusion around expectations and delivery dates.

How many people will be on your project team?

Who will be on the project team?

Who will be the main contact?

Who will be signing off designs for the website?

Who will be responsible for content creation?

Who will be responsible for content input?

Do you have a specific go live date in mind?

Is your go live date determined by any business-critical dates such as a product launch or industry event?

Do you have any key milestones you need to hit?

BUDGET

Budget is a big factor in determining what your website can do. Everyone involved needs to be fully aware of the budget to ensure that it is not overspent and that it covers all the essential requirements of the site. Discuss the maximum budget with your senior or finance team and make your team aware of this from the start.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Answering all of these questions should give your website creators the information they need to design and build a website that suit your organisation's needs. However, since every website project is unique, there might be some additional factors for you to consider.

If your organisation has them, be sure to supply brand guidelines along with any visual identity assets you wish to include. Your website works as your shop window online, so it needs to be perfectly aligned with your brand. Photography plays a huge part in bringing your website to life, so gather any existing photography that you want to include. Then, if you find you need further images, you could look at organising a photoshoot to get some engaging photographs which can be used both on the website and in your other marketing materials.

If you are outsourcing your content writing, then supplying the copywriter with tone of voice guidelines is essential to making sure that your website is consistent with your social media and other communications. It's also important to consider if this content will need optimising for search. Search Engine Optimisation, or SEO, is key to making your website visible on search engines like Google and is an important factor in any future online content, from articles to PPC campaigns.

Once your shiny new website is live, then you'll likely want to raise awareness of it to your audiences. Planning a launch campaign to promote the website is a brilliant idea as it will re-engage your current audience, as well as attract new prospects. The campaign could be planned alongside the build, so it is ready to go as soon as the site is live. Social media and email marketing are tactics well suited to promoting a new website, as you can drive traffic to directly to the site. As a marketer, you should think about the key message, visuals, implementation and budget of this campaign.

A final consideration to be aware of is that if you're tendering to agencies for the website project, instead of using selected team, then your brief needs to include specific requirements of their submission. These might include a mock-up of designs, a proposed timeline and of course costs.

WHAT'S NEXT?

So, you've answered all these questions (well done you!), the final step is to write them up into a clear document. Make it easy to navigate and remove any duplicate information that might have appeared in more than one question. Once this is complete, have a final once over to make sure everything essential is included in the document. An experienced digital team will be able to take this information and turn it into a scoping document. A scope is contract between you and your website creators that agrees the build process and deliverables, so always make sure you secure one at the start of any web project and only sign it off once you're certain you're happy with everything.

Now that you and the developers are equipped with a thorough brief, you should be able to look forward to a smooth-running project.

To make sure that you're on track to having an impactful website that resonates with audiences, you can check out [our guide](#) to delivering a website your customers love.