



The Website Agency Interview Guide:

15 Questions to Ask Before You Sign a Contract

Think of these questions as your professional BS-detector. Your website is too valuable to leave to chance, and a bad hire is an expensive mistake.

Bring this list to every conversation, take notes, and don't be afraid to ask the hard questions. You're looking for a partner who cares as much about your business goals as they do about hex codes. If an agency can't handle the heat of these questions, they probably can't handle the energy of your brand.



What You're Getting



01

Will the site be a custom design or a template?

There's no wrong answer here as long as they can show you the receipts.



What to Listen For

Specifics about what gets tailored and why. If they use templates, they should be able to show you a before-and-after so you can see how far the customization goes.



Red Flag

Dodging the question entirely, or positioning a lightly modified template as a 'custom design.'

02

What platform (CMS) do you build on, and will I have full administrative access to the domain and hosting?

Ask why they build on their chosen CMS, how easy it is to make updates, and confirm that the domain, hosting, and all credentials will be in your name.



What to Listen For

A clear explanation of the platform's strengths and limitations for your needs, plus written confirmation you'll own every credential and account associated with your site.



Red Flag

The agency keeps the login info in their name, effectively kidnapping your site if you ever want to leave.



03

What's your approach to mobile-first design and ADA accessibility compliance?

Find out whether they design mobile layouts first and scale up, or build for desktop and shrink things down. Those are two very different approaches.



What to Listen For

A defined process for both, including steps like contrast testing, screen reader QA, and designing mobile layouts as a primary deliverable.



Red Flag

Vague promises like "it's responsive," which usually just mean the boxes move around, not that it's easy to use.

04

Do you write the website copy, or is that my responsibility?

Does the agency have a dedicated strategist or copywriter on the project, or is the designer writing headlines between layout revisions?



What to Listen For

A defined content development process with clear roles: who's writing, what they need from you, and how copy gets reviewed and approved before it hits the design.



Red Flag

"We'll provide wireframes and you fill in the text." Unless you have an in-house writer who understands web content strategy, you'll be the one stuck staring at a blinking cursor.



05

How do you balance writing for human readers with writing for SEO and generative engines (AI-driven search)?

Ask the agency how they structure content so it performs across traditional search and the AI-powered tools your customers are using.



What to Listen For

A focus on topic authority (being the expert) over keyword stuffing (gaming the system).



Red Flag

Talking only about keyword density and meta tags, or dismissing AI-driven search as a passing trend.



How You'll Work Together

06

What's your content development process? Does design come first, or does messaging drive the layout?

The order of operations reveals how an agency thinks about building a website.



What to Listen For

A process that starts with content strategy or messaging, with design built around what the site needs to communicate.



Red Flag

"We'll design the pages first and then drop the content in." This usually means the copy is an afterthought.



07

How do you make sure the website sounds like us and not like every other company in our industry?

Ask the agency to walk you through exactly how they plan to learn your voice.



What to Listen For

A multi-step discovery process with interviews, internal document review, and competitor differentiation exercises.



Red Flag

"We'll review your competitors' sites and use that as a starting point." No. Just no.

08

Who will be my primary point of contact?

Beyond knowing who to email, ask how communication works day-to-day.



What to Listen For

A named individual with a defined role, a clear communication cadence, and a straightforward process for raising concerns.



Red Flag

Vague answers about 'the team' handling things, or the impression that you'll be shuffled between team members depending on the day of the week.



09

Will I communicate with the people designing and writing, or strictly with the account manager?

There's a difference between having a project manager who keeps things organized and never getting direct access to the people doing the work.



What to Listen For

A clear explanation of the team structure and whether you'll have opportunities to provide direct feedback with creatives.



Red Flag

All communication funneled through a single non-creative contact with no option to speak with the people designing and writing your website.

10

How many rounds of edits and revisions are included?

Every agency has limits on revisions, but you should know how those limits work and what happens if a round of feedback needs more attention.



What to Listen For

A clear revision structure with flexibility built in; willingness to discuss what happens if the project needs more iteration.



Red Flag

An inflexible policy that treats feedback like an inconvenience, or surprise charges for revisions that should fall within the scope.



11

What does a typical project timeline look like?

Understand what a realistic timeline looks like and where the common hang-ups are.



What to Listen For

An honest timeline with built-in buffers and transparency about what depends on you (feedback turnaround, content approvals) vs. what's on them.



Red Flag

Unrealistically fast timelines ("We'll have you live in three weeks") or refusal to give you any range at all.

12

How do you manage feedback when there are multiple decision-makers involved?

If more than one person on your team is weighing in, the agency needs a plan for consolidating feedback without the project stalling.



What to Listen For

Experience navigating multi-stakeholder projects, and a process for collecting and synthesizing feedback.



Red Flag

"That's really on your end to manage" with no offer to help with alignment. Translation: "We don't want to deal with it."



Post-Launch

13

Once the site is live, can I make updates myself without calling a developer?

You shouldn't have to submit a ticket every time you want to update a team member's headshot or tweak a paragraph on your services page.



What to Listen For

A CMS and site structure designed for non-technical users to manage routine content updates; training or documentation included in the handoff.



Red Flag

A site built with tools or code frameworks that require developer involvement for basic content changes.

14

Do you offer website hosting, and what does ongoing maintenance look like?

Hosting and maintenance aren't glamorous, but they keep your site secure, fast, and functional.



What to Listen For

A hosting option and clear maintenance plan covering security updates, plugin management, performance monitoring, and regular backups.



Red Flag

"We don't handle that. You'll need to find a hosting provider and manage the site yourself."



15

How do you define success for a website project, and how do we measure it after launch?

The agency should be thinking about outcomes, not just deliverables.



What to Listen For

A conversation about your business goals tied to measurable metrics like traffic, conversions, time on site, and lead quality. Even better if they offer post-launch reporting or analytics setup.



Red Flag

Vague talk about brand awareness without any mention of leads, calls, or sales. That's how YOU measure success.



AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Next Steps:

- Compare your answers**
Build a simple spreadsheet with your agencies across the top and key questions down the side.
- Read the fine print**
Check for hidden costs like launch fees, ongoing maintenance, or extra charges for mobile optimization.
- Call their references**
Ask previous clients about communication, timelines, and how the agency handled it when something didn't go according to plan.
- Get your team aligned before you sign**
Make sure everyone agrees on priorities and expectations now, not after you start the project.
- Look at work that's similar to what you need**
Ask to see projects from businesses in your industry or at a similar stage.
- Do a vibe check**
If they're annoyed by your questions now, imagine how they'll handle your feedback mid-project.

Still deciding between agencies?

We created this guide because too many businesses choose a web agency based on a quick portfolio review or a low quote, then end up with a site that creates more problems than it solves.

A good website supports your business for years, not create problems six months in.

If you'd like an honest conversation about your options, we're here.

[START A CONVERSATION ↗](#)

