THE B2B WEBSITE BUYER'S GUIDE

What you should know, ask, and do when seeking a B2B website design firm.

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GOOD DESIGN IS GOOD BUSINESS

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LEARN MORE
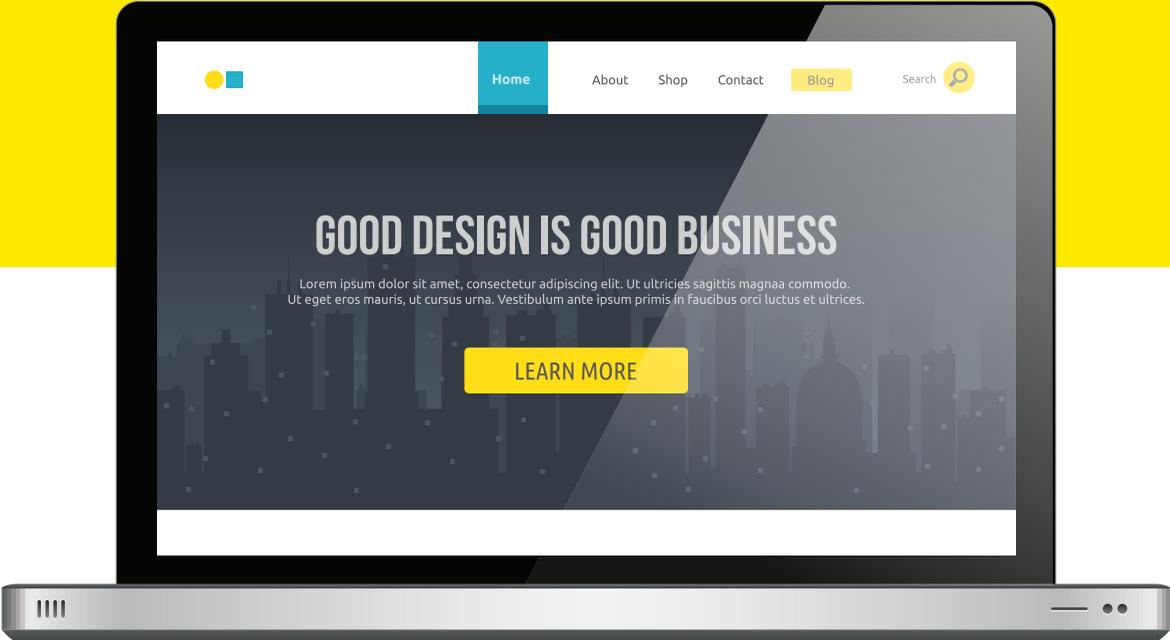
Before assuming it's time for a website redesign, ask yourself: Does my website possess the following qualities?

- *Serve as an effective credibility piece.*
- *Have an engaging and intuitive design.*
- *Have content that reflects my brand's tone and perceived quality.*
- *Is easy for prospects to find through a search engine.*
- *Is an effective lead generation tool.*

If you're having trouble saying "yes" to any of the above, it's time for a website redesign. But where should you start? In this guide, we'll outline the most important questions to ask so you find the right agency partner to put your new website on the path to success.
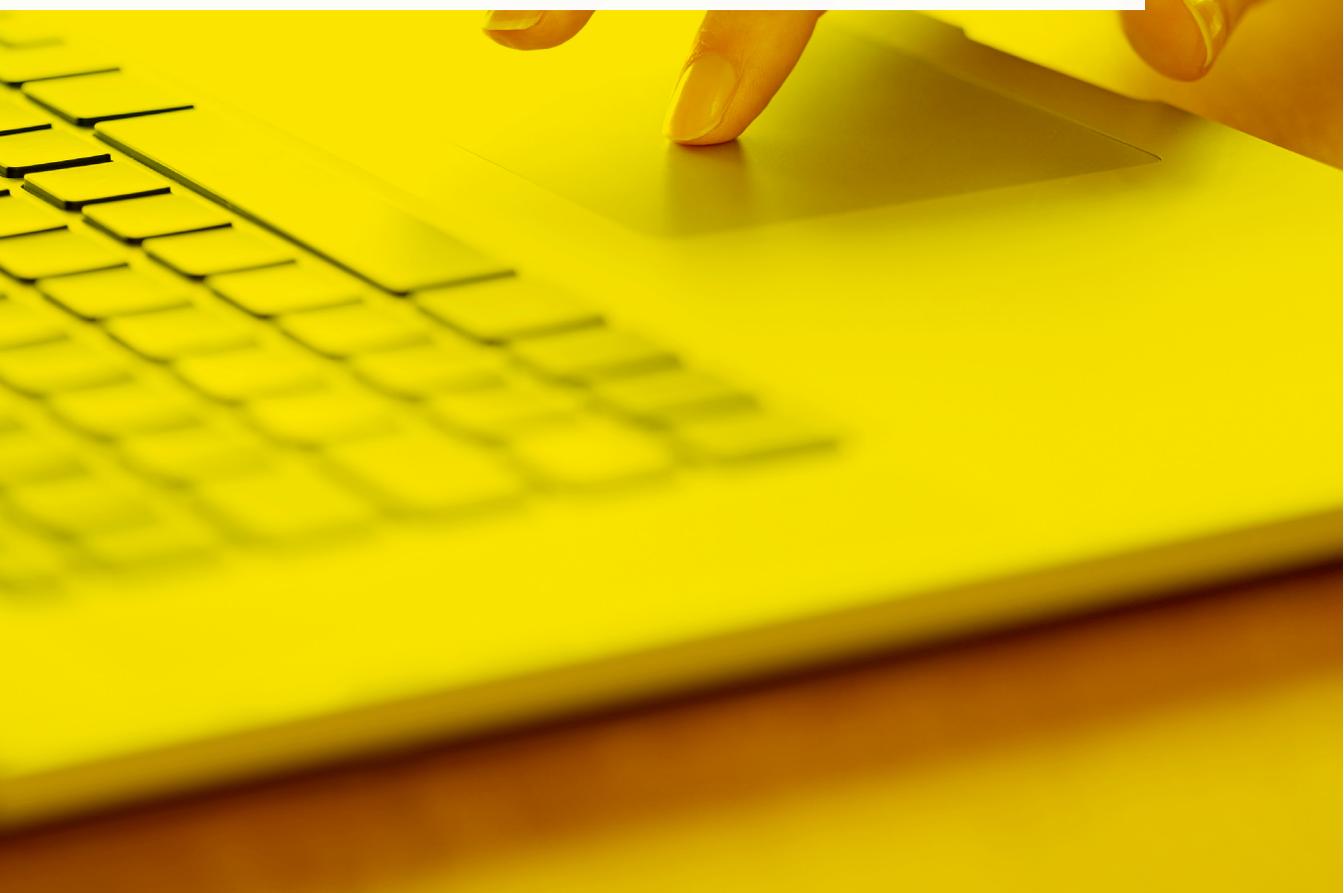
Website Project Requirements

Before approaching web design firms, it's critical to have an internal discussion about requirements for the new website. To make sure you don't waste valuable time, a consensus needs to be reached about budget, timeline, and objectives before meeting with prospective web design agencies. Here are some helpful tips on project requirements:

What Is Your Website's Goal?

Your B2B website can have a variety of different functions and serve your firm in various ways, including as a lead generation machine, a credibility piece, a resource center, an online brochure, or a customer service tool.

Before you start building a new website, you need to know what you expect it to do for you. Determine the main function of the website and how it can add value or support your sales and marketing goals. The only thing to keep in mind is that the more you expect from your website, the larger it will become (and often the more expensive it will be to create, manage, and maintain).

Determine Must-Haves vs. Would-Likes

Once you have established the goal(s) of your website, determine what you absolutely must have, what you would like it to have, and what you do NOT want it to have. This doesn't need to be a long, extensive list but it should be a clear list that takes into account all the stakeholders in your company.

The best way to create this list is to have a quick internal meeting with all the necessary stakeholders (this does not mean everyone). Invite a knowledgeable representative from each department and let them know they are responsible for gathering information from their own team before the meeting. This pre-meeting work and a select group of attendees will make determining website requirements efficient and effective.

Figure Out a Budget Range

A web design budget may or may not be something you and your team control. If you control your budget and a new website is a priority, you can determine what type of website you can build. However, it's more common that the budget is already set and you are simply given a maximum from finance.

It's essential to know what your budget range is before you start reaching out to web design partners since it will determine if you can work with a freelance designer, need to do the work in-house, or can hire a professional web design agency.

Know Your CMS Needs

Choosing a content management system (CMS) can be a big decision to make, although many firms never even make this decision. Many firms leave it up to their developer to choose the CMS for them and just deal with the outcome. Unless the developer is going to be managing the website, implementing all web design changes, and keeping the website updated, the decision should be made by you and your team.

At Bop Design, we only work with WordPress as a CMS. Why? Because, as one of the most popular CMSs out there, it has the largest support community, availability of plugins, and is the most user-friendly for updating. A quick tutorial is often all that anyone needs to start updating their WordPress website.

Find, Meet, Greet, Listen

Now that you know what you need, it's time to see what your options are for building your B2B website. It's always a good idea to reach out to a handful of designers and agencies to see what they have to offer. Interview a shortlist of potential web design agencies, meet them in person if possible, and listen to what they have to say. Make sure every offer is tailored to the needs of your firm and will fit with all your requirements.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

There are many critical questions to ask any prospective agency about their company and process. Here are the top 4:

☑ 1. Is all work being performed by full-time employees?

Many agencies can be a collection of freelancers causing instability and process challenges. Also, many agencies outsource or have offshore website development which can cause quality assurance challenges. It is in your best interest to have all work done by a stable, fully engaged agency.

☑ 2. Is the website utilizing WordPress as the content management system?

Almost 30% of websites on the internet currently use WordPress as their CMS. It's a testament to how easy it is for a non-technical person to manage the content and make changes on the website. It also allows a company to have much more development options. An open source CMS like WordPress is always in the client's best interest. A proprietary CMS is in the agency's best interest, since you will have limited development options and will always have to go to the agency for maintenance.
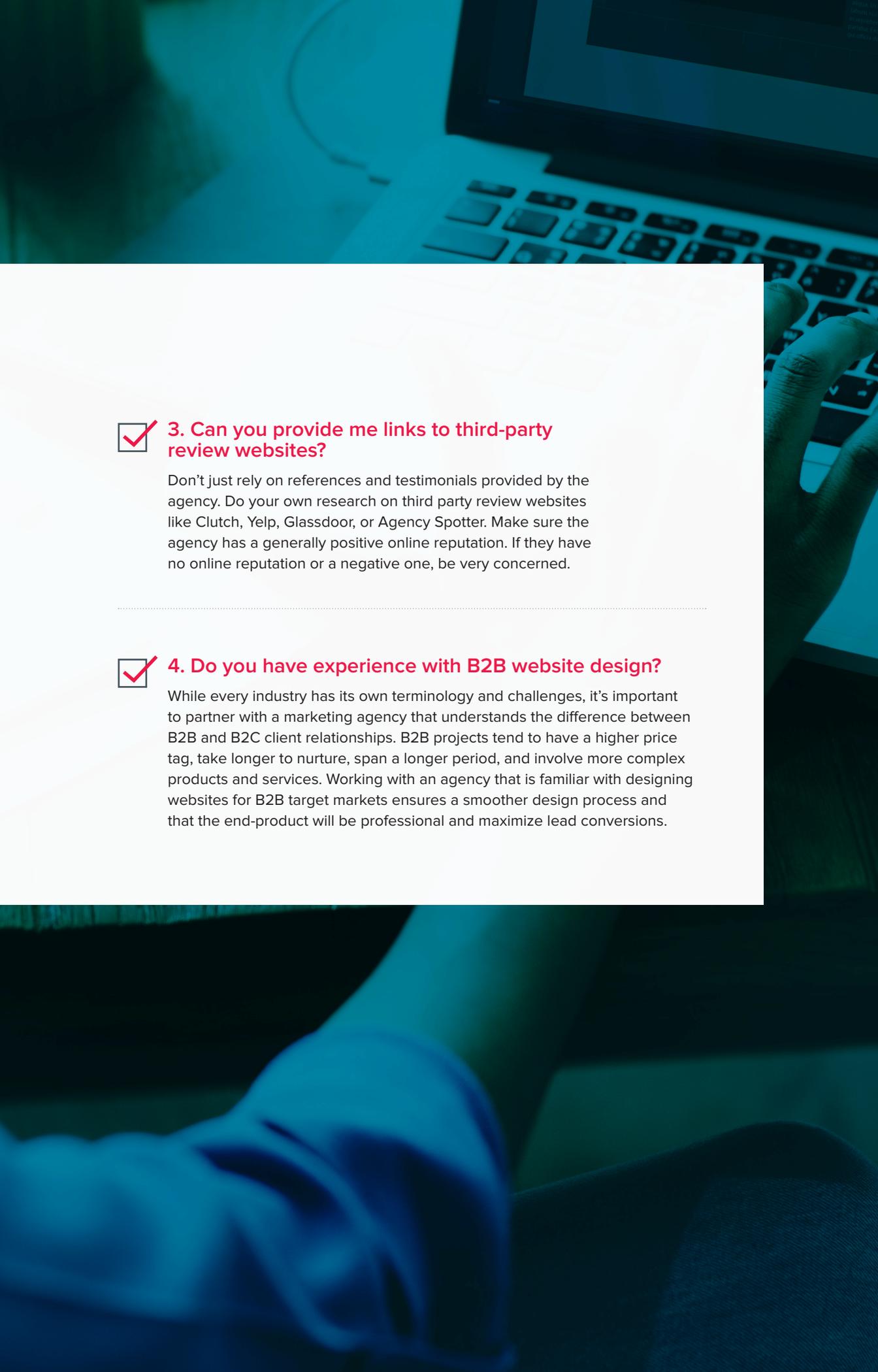
3. Can you provide me links to third-party review websites?

Don't just rely on references and testimonials provided by the agency. Do your own research on third party review websites like Clutch, Yelp, Glassdoor, or Agency Spotter. Make sure the agency has a generally positive online reputation. If they have no online reputation or a negative one, be very concerned.

4. Do you have experience with B2B website design?

While every industry has its own terminology and challenges, it's important to partner with a marketing agency that understands the difference between B2B and B2C client relationships. B2B projects tend to have a higher price tag, take longer to nurture, span a longer period, and involve more complex products and services. Working with an agency that is familiar with designing websites for B2B target markets ensures a smoother design process and that the end-product will be professional and maximize lead conversions.

1 DISCOVERY

Creative Meeting
Research
Analysis
Keyword Wishlist

2 CONCEPT

Site Map
Homepage Design &
Messaging Options

3 CONTENT

Interview
Writing & Editing
Integrate Keywords
Revisions

4 DESIGN

Subpages
Photo Research
Revisions

5 DEVELOP

Coding
Browser Testing
Content Entry
Final Edits

6 LAUNCH

Redirects
Launch
Website Manual

Website Design and Development Process

Knowing as much up front about an agency's process will ensure that there are no surprises. A typical project schedule can be broken up into the following six steps. Make sure that the selected web design agency implements a similar process.

1 Discovery

In the discovery stage, an agency will discuss your firm's unique value proposition, target market and role of the website in the sales and marketing process. Steps include client interviews, industry research, and analysis of a preliminary keyword wishlist for SEO.

2 Concepts & Site Map

Based on the creative discovery session, an agency should present the client with initial design and messaging options before any web development is performed. At Bop Design, we provide clients with two unique homepage concepts and a preliminary site map (a chart that maps out all the proposed pages for your website). We go through revision rounds until there is consensus on both the home page design and site map. It will be clear what the website will look like once it is developed, and key messaging themes will be in place. Once a client is happy with the home page and site map, we move on to content and design for the rest of the pages.

3 Content

The content (aka copywriting) phase of the website typically includes an interview call or meeting and up to two rounds of client revisions. Our copywriting process includes a dedicated, industry-specific copywriter. Throughout the content portion of the web design project, we work with clients to develop web copy that incorporates their SEO goals, brand message, and specific calls-to-action. While the copywriting process for a website is separate from the design portion, they often happen concurrently.

(4) Design

Once the content has been finalized (or close to it), the design team begins to lay out the design for the remaining pages of your website (the "subpages"). It should follow the same color scheme and general look and feel of your home page, but the structure will vary for each page category. Design elements may include infographics, iconography, and original or stock photography. At Bop Design, we deliver the subpage designs in PDF format for you to comment on, and provide up to two rounds of revisions to ensure all messaging and CTAs are presented effectively.

(5) Web Development

After the design and content are approved, the focus moves to the backend of the site. Make sure a web design agency is developing a website according to the most current web standards as determined by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). Also, the website should be set up to be easily "crawlable" by search engines—helping your website to be more prominent for targeted keyword phrases on search engines. If an agency says they're good at SEO, ask them about SEO success stories. Make sure they can deliver.

(6) Launch

If your website were a movie, this would be the big premiere. The website launch is the most exciting time, but make sure the launch is properly managed by an experienced marketing and development team. The website launch is a technical process that requires careful attention to detail and the know-how to fix any issues with hosting and coding. Ask an agency about post-launch monitoring and maintenance. At Bop Design, we set up 301 redirects, plus monitor and correct 404 errors for 30 days post-launch—ensuring your firm's website will not lose any valuable traffic.
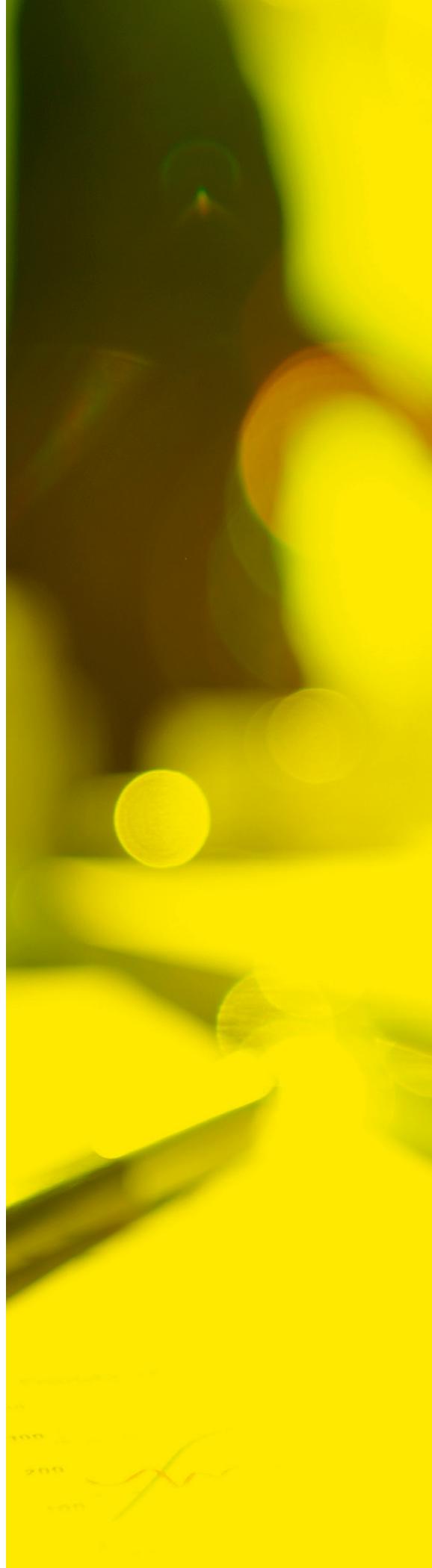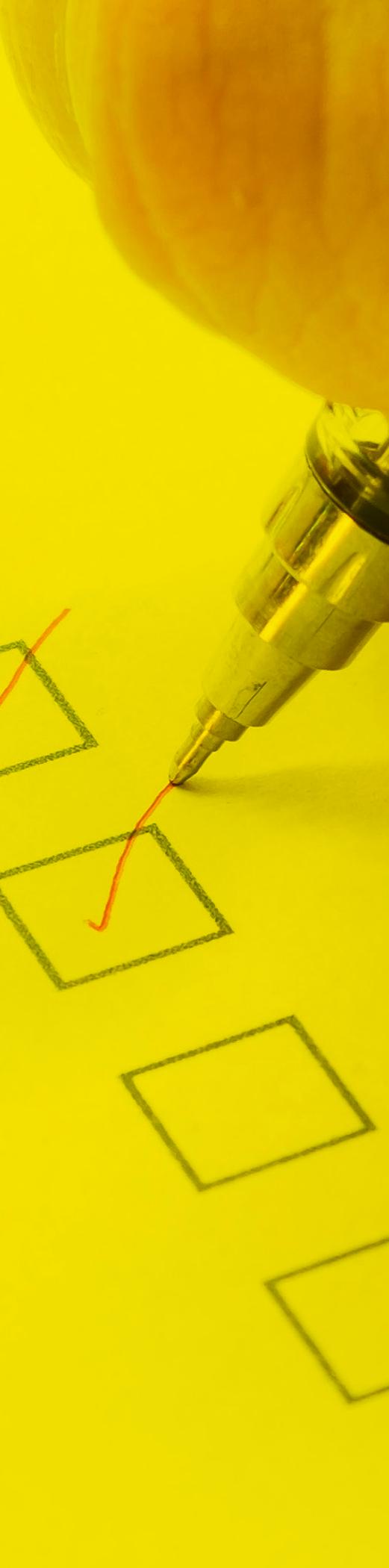
Content Marketing: Website as a Business Development Tool

Too often B2B firms view a website as just a branding tool and not a platform that can generate and nurture ideal client leads. While a B2B website can interest a prospective client to do business with you, it should also be guiding them down the sales funnel.

Living, Breathing Resource Center

For traditional and digital marketing strategies, the website is often the main hub of activity. Direct mailers and brochures often list a firm's website to direct prospects to for additional information. Email newsletters link directly to various pages and resources on the website to encourage prospective and current clients to visit and complete an action. A company's social media pages list the website and typically drive social media users to the website in order to learn more information or get in touch.

A website is often the foundation of a content marketing strategy. As such, the website needs to be functional and able to be continually updated with new, fresh, dynamic content. Ideally, a content marketing strategy will be in place before a B2B website launches to capitalize on the investment. Take into account, and ensure your web design agency is aware of, your future content marketing plans and goals when building your website.

Calls to Action

Calls to action (CTAs) are an important component of any B2B website. Acting as a special banner, button, or graphic text on a webpage, a CTA is meant to prompt the website visitor to perform a specific desired action and continue down the sales funnel.

So what makes an effective CTA? One word: Variety. CTAs should not simply say the same thing different ways. Rather, the CTAs on a website should address different client needs and compel the visitor to take different actions. Keeping your CTAs diverse and fresh keeps your prospective client interested in your business.

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WHAT WE OFFER

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Content Marketing: Website as a Business Development Tool *(continued)*

Varied Content

In B2B, a service or product is being sold that impacts an entire organization and often involves the input from multiple decision makers. Therefore, the sale is more complex—often resulting in a longer decision-making process. If your website only features a "Contact Us" page or a newsletter signup, you're missing out on the potential for visitors to move faster through the buying process. While effective, that content can only support certain stages of a sales cycle. For example, a visitor discovering your website for the first time may not be ready to subscribe to a weekly newsletter, but they would be open to downloading a tip sheet or watching a video.

By providing downloadable content that prospects will value and refer back to on an ongoing basis, you establish credibility for your brand and stay top of mind when they are ready to make a purchase decision.
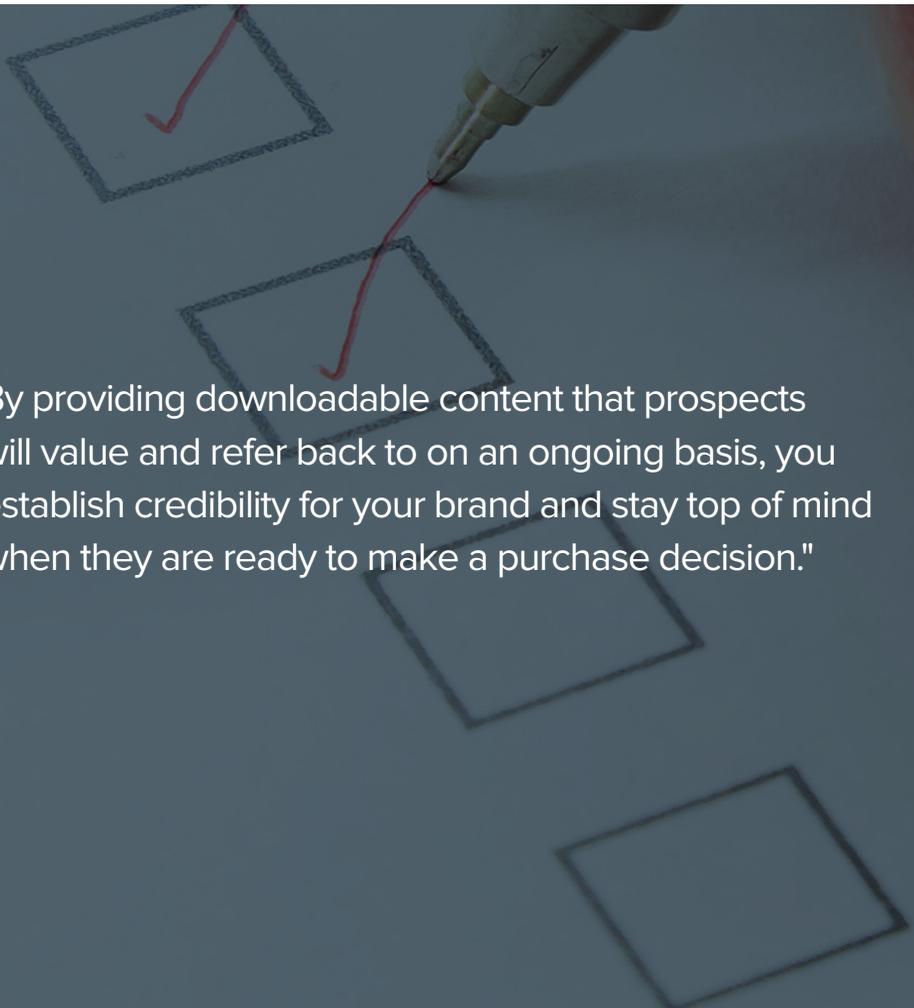
"By providing downloadable content that prospects will value and refer back to on an ongoing basis, you establish credibility for your brand and stay top of mind when they are ready to make a purchase decision."

Oftentimes this content is already lying around your office (literally or figuratively) and just needs refreshing for the web. Here are some new content ideas that can entice potential clients:
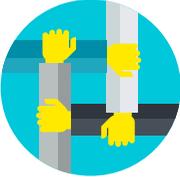
Infographic illustrating your service or onboarding process

eBooks

Portfolio or project gallery

Archived webinars

Customer testimonials

Videos

Case studies

Articles

Sales sheets

Press or awards

Recent presentations

Blog

White papers

Social media

BOP DESIGN®

We hope this guide helps you research, qualify and select the optimal web design agency for your B2B firm's needs.

For more insight into a website redesign, visit the Bop Design blog or all us directly.

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