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# **12** questions to ask before you hire anyone to build **your website.**

What a good answer sounds like, and the red flags that should end the conversation.

# Why this exists

Almost every rescue job we take on started the same way. Somebody hired someone, didn't know what to ask, and found out eighteen months later that they don't own their domain, or that the monthly fee never ends, or that nobody can update the site without paying for it. None of that is exotic. All of it is preventable with a twenty minute conversation.

So use these on whoever you're talking to. Use them on us. We wrote them knowing you would, and we'd rather you hire us with your eyes open than hire us because you didn't know what to ask.

How to use it. Print it, or keep it open on your phone during the call. You don't have to ask all twelve. Questions 1, 2, 3 and 6 are the ones that prevent the most expensive problems, so if you only ask four, ask those.

## 01 Do I own the website when it's finished?

This is the one that catches people. Some agencies build on a proprietary platform you can never leave, so the site isn't really yours. You're renting it, and the rent doesn't stop.

### WHAT A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

Yes, completely. It's your account, your content, your logins, and we hand you the keys at launch.

### RED FLAG

Any version of "you own the content but we own the build." That means you're stuck.

## 02 Who owns the domain name?

Your domain is your address. If it's registered in the designer's name, they control whether people can find you, and getting it back can take months if the relationship goes sideways.

### WHAT A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

It's registered in your name, under your account, and you have the login.

### RED FLAG

"We'll handle the domain for you" without ever giving you access to it.

## 03 Is there a monthly fee, and what happens if I stop paying it?

There's a difference between paying a platform for hosting and paying a designer a monthly fee for the site to keep existing. The first is normal. The second means your site is hostage.

### WHAT A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

A clear answer on both: what the platform costs per year, paid by you directly, and whether any fee to the designer is optional.

### RED FLAG

A monthly fee where the site goes offline if you stop. Ask that question directly and listen closely to the answer.

## 04 What platform will you build it on, and why that one?

There's no single right answer here. There is a wrong answer, which is a designer who can't explain the trade-offs, or who picks a platform because it's the only one they know.

### WHAT A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

A specific reason tied to your situation, and an honest account of what that platform is bad at.

### RED FLAG

"It's custom" with no further detail. Custom often means only that person can maintain it.

## 05 Can I update it myself without calling you?

Your hours change. You add a service. You want to swap a photo. If every small change requires an email and an invoice, you'll stop making changes, and the site will go stale within a year.

### WHAT A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

Yes, and here's a walkthrough of how. Ideally they'll show you before you commit.

### RED FLAG

"Just send us the changes and we'll take care of it." Fine as an option, bad as the only option.

## 06 What exactly is included, and what costs extra?

Most unhappy website projects are really disagreements about scope. The word "website" covers a four page brochure and a two hundred product store, and the gap between them is enormous.

### WHAT A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

A written list. Number of pages, what features, who writes the copy, how many rounds of feedback.

### RED FLAG

A price with no scope attached to it. That's not a quote, it's an opening bid.

## 07 How many rounds of revisions do I get?

You will not love the first version. Nobody does. What matters is whether fixing that is part of the deal or a change order.

### WHAT A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

Either unlimited until launch, or a specific number with a clear hourly rate after that.

### RED FLAG

No answer at all, or "we'll see how it goes."  
That's how a \$3,000 project becomes \$6,000.

## 08 Who writes the words?

This one gets skipped and it's the most expensive thing to get wrong. Design is what people notice. Words are what make them call. If nobody has agreed to write them, the job lands on you.

### WHAT A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

Either they write it, or they're clear that you do and they'll tell you exactly what they need.

### RED FLAG

Silence, or a plan to fill your site with placeholder text you're expected to replace later.

## 09 What happens if it isn't finished on time?

Delays happen and most of them are fine. What isn't fine is a project that drifts for months with no date attached to it and no way for you to raise the issue.

### WHAT A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

A specific date for the first version, and an honest note that the timeline depends on how fast you get them content and feedback.

### RED FLAG

"A few weeks" with no start or end. Ask when you'll see version one.

## 10 Will it be built to be found on Google?

A beautiful site nobody can find is an expensive brochure. The on-page basics belong in the build, not in an upgrade you find out about after launch.

### WHAT A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

Title tags, meta descriptions, image alt text, internal linking and the rest of the on-page basics done as standard, plus a checklist you can keep working from with tips specific to your own site.

### RED FLAG

"SEO is a separate package" where the package turns out to be things any careful build already includes.

## 11 Who do I call after launch?

On a well-built site, hosting, security, backups and updates are part of the infrastructure and handled for you, so real problems are rare. You'll still have questions though, and you want to know who picks up.

### WHAT A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

A name, a real number, and a straight answer on how quickly they get back to you.

### RED FLAG

A support inbox with nobody's name on it, or a paid plan you have to buy before anyone will answer a question about the site they built.

## 12 Can I talk to two of your recent clients?

Testimonials on a website are curated. A five minute phone call with someone who actually went through the process tells you more than a portfolio ever will.

### WHAT A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

Two names and numbers, given without hesitation, ideally in a business like yours.

### RED FLAG

Reluctance, delay, or only offering clients from three years ago.

# Now ask us.

We wrote this knowing you'd point it back at us, so here are our answers before you even ask.

- You own everything. Your domain, your account, your content, your logins.
- One flat rate. Half up front, half when you love it. No monthly fee to us, ever.
- Unlimited revisions until launch. It's done when you're proud of it, not when we say so.
- You'll see version one in about a week, and you'll have our personal cell phone number.

If you want a second opinion on your current site, we do a free twenty minute call. We'll tell you what's working, what isn't, and whether a new site is even worth your money right now.

**Book a free call**

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