



How to Choose the Right Website Designer

What to ask, what to look for in a proposal and how to decide whether a designer is a good fit.

Look beyond the portfolio

01



The work

Try live sites on your phone.

02



The process

Know who does what.

03



The proposal

Compare scope and ongoing costs.

04



The handover

Confirm ownership and support.



A designer who fits your business

Set clear expectations, from the first call to handover.



START HERE

Choose the process behind the portfolio.

A polished portfolio reveals only part of a website project. Proposals can hide different assumptions about strategy, copy, design, testing and support. The right partner is the one whose skills, process, responsibilities and communication fit the business problem you need to solve.

Use the same brief with each shortlisted provider. Ask for evidence, record open questions and compare the complete scope before deciding on price.



The work

Review live sites and the provider's actual contribution.



The process

Understand research, content, decisions and delivery.



The proposal

Compare scope, fees, terms and responsibilities.



The handover

Confirm access, training, recovery and ongoing care.

YOUR ROUTE THROUGH THE GUIDE

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USE THIS GUIDE ACTIVELY

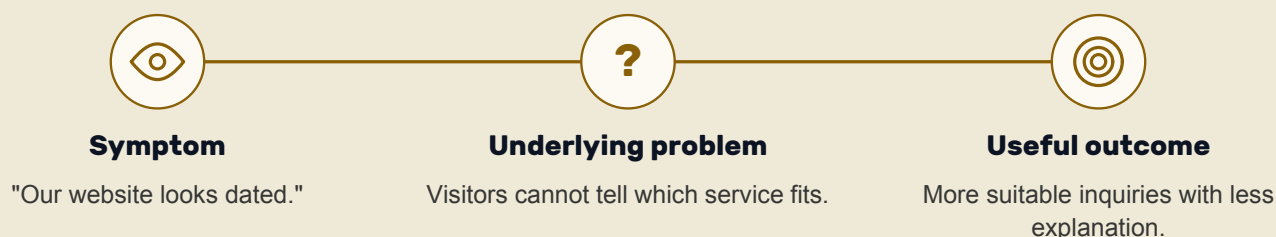
Print or annotate pages 20-24. Treat missing evidence as an open question, and agree your must-pass requirements before scoring any provider.



Start with the problem you need to solve

A short internal brief makes provider conversations more useful.

Write down why the project is happening now, the primary business outcome, the most important audience and the services or products in scope. Include required functions, integrations, launch timing, budget range, decision-maker and the person who will maintain the site.



Ask what a visual refresh would leave unresolved

The problem might involve positioning, lead quality, missing service content, a restrictive platform or a changed business model. Ask: "If the site looked modern tomorrow, what would still be wrong?" The answer helps you identify the expertise to buy.

Separate essentials from preferences

- Name the core journeys: inquire, book, buy, apply or find information.
- Identify where you need help: brand, research, copy, photography, search or software.
- List what you can supply and what the provider must create.
- Give a reason for the target date and record any immovable dependencies.

You do not need a perfect specification. A capable partner can help discover the missing detail. Be clear about whether that discovery is included, a paid first phase or work you must complete before the quote can be confirmed.

BRING TO THE FIRST CONVERSATION

A one-page brief, examples of real customer questions, any existing analytics, a draft function list and an honest account of your team's available time. Use the template on page 21.



Match the team to the work

A provider's title does not establish their capabilities or capacity.

Freelancer, studio and agency labels overlap. Ask who will do each discipline, who manages the project and who provides cover when someone is unavailable. Evaluate the named team and responsibilities rather than assumptions about company size.

Option	When it may fit	What you still need to check
DIY / AI builder	A simple site you have time to plan and maintain.	Your capacity for strategy, copy, testing and care.
Generalist freelancer	A coordinated scope with one direct contact.	Depth in each discipline, workload and backup cover.
Specialist freelancer	A defined need such as copy, UX or development.	Who coordinates the other disciplines and decisions.
Small studio	Several disciplines delivered through one process.	Actual team, senior involvement and subcontractors.
Full-service agency	Broader scope, stakeholders or ongoing marketing.	Assigned people, handoffs, overhead and accountability.
Development team	Complex accounts, integrations or custom software.	Product thinking, engineering, security and long-term support.

Check the whole delivery model

A strong specialist can be the right choice if your team can manage the wider project. A coordinated team can be useful when you need one accountable lead. A standardized package can be a good fit when its limits match your needs and are described clearly.

ASK EVERY PROVIDER

Who is assigned to our project? Which work is subcontracted? Who approves quality? What happens if the lead is unavailable? Which responsibilities stay with us?



Look beyond screenshots

Review live sites, then ask how and why the work was done.

Open recent work on a phone and desktop. Screenshots cannot show responsive behavior, loading, forms, keyboard access or the next step after a visitor clicks. A client may have changed a site since handover, so ask when the provider last worked on it.

A SIMPLE LIVE-SITE REVIEW

Can I understand the offer?

CLEAR NEXT STEP



**Check both
desktop and mobile**

- ☐ Can I understand the business and find the key services?
- ☐ Is the content readable, and can I navigate with a keyboard?
- ☐ Are the main action and form instructions easy to understand?
- ☐ Does the work show appropriate variation between different businesses?

Ask for the story and the evidence

Request the original problem, audience insight, constraints, major decisions and result. Confirm which parts the provider personally handled. For outcome claims, ask for the baseline, timeframe, data source and other changes that might have contributed.

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

An exact industry match can help, but comparable problems also matter. Look for experience with the buying journey, trust requirements, integrations and operational complexity you need.



Evaluate the discovery process

Ask what the provider needs to learn before recommending pages or layouts.

Useful discovery may include stakeholder interviews, customer or sales-team conversations, analytics, search research, a content audit and a review of competitors. The depth should fit the project, but even a small site needs a clear goal, audience and scope.



Evidence

Customers, sales calls, analytics and existing content.



Decisions

Priorities, audience needs, offer and required journeys.



Deliverables

An agreed brief, sitemap, content direction and requirements.

Ask	Look for
How will you learn about our customers?	A method and a named person, with realistic access needs.
What will we decide before design?	Priorities, page purposes, content, functions and success measures.
What comes out of discovery?	Specific documents or decisions you can review and use.
What if discovery changes the scope?	A clear process for revising cost, timing and priorities.

Scale research to the decision

A new solo business may need a focused workshop and a few interviews. A complex redesign may need much more. Ask the provider to explain what each activity will help decide; a long research checklist is not automatically better than a well-chosen one.

EVIDENCE TO REQUEST

A sample discovery output with client information removed. Look for a connection between the findings and the recommended scope, content and design.



Make content responsibility explicit

"Copy support" needs a definition, a deliverable and an owner.

Content can become a major scheduling dependency. Clarify whether the provider writes from interviews, edits your draft, supplies a worksheet or expects final copy. Business knowledge is valuable, but it does not create calendar space to write twenty pages.

Content task	Clarify the responsibility
Strategy + page briefs	Who defines page purpose, structure, search intent and calls to action?
Source interviews	Who supplies expertise, books interviews and checks facts?
Writing + editing	Is full copywriting included? How many pages and review rounds?
Photography + images	Who plans, creates, sources, licenses and approves each asset?
Migration + content entry	Which old pages are moved, rewritten, formatted or retired?
Proofreading + approval	Who checks accuracy, permissions, links and final live content?

Ask how AI is used and reviewed

Ask whether AI assists research, writing, images or code; who checks the output; and how confidential information is handled. The business must approve claims and provide authentic evidence. Do not accept fabricated testimonials, project results or customer imagery presented as real.

Google warns that generating many pages without adding useful value can violate its spam policies. Ask for original expertise and editorial review, not a promise of unlimited AI content. [1]

PUT IT IN THE PROPOSAL

List the content deliverables, required client inputs, writer, fact-checker, approver, due dates and entry responsibilities. Distinguish draft copy from approved content ready for design.

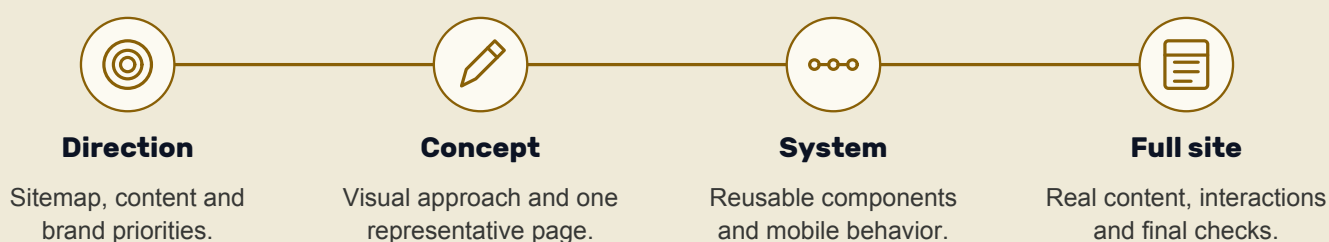


Understand how design gets approved

Good feedback connects a design choice to the audience and the task.

Ask how the designer connects visual decisions to brand position, content hierarchy, the visitor's next step, accessibility, mobile use, speed and future editing. You should be able to understand the reason for an important choice without needing design jargon.

ILLUSTRATIVE APPROVAL SEQUENCE



Agree what a revision round means

Find out what you will review, how feedback is collected, how many rounds are included and who consolidates comments. Ask which changes stay within a round and which reopen an approved decision or add scope. Unlimited revisions still need a defined process and exclusions.

Feedback that is hard to act on	Feedback tied to a decision
"Make it more impressive."	"The service difference is hard to find. Can we make it clear before the first call to action?"
"I do not like this layout."	"On mobile, the proof appears after a long section. Can visitors see it earlier?"

EVIDENCE TO REQUEST

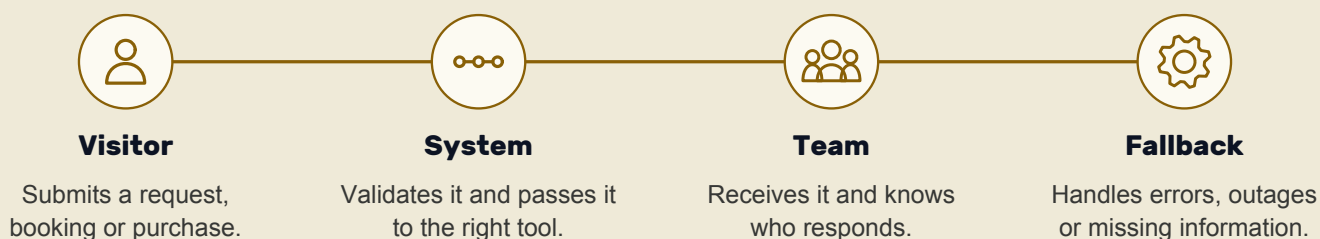
A sample presentation or review process. Look for clear choices, the reasoning behind them and a practical way to resolve disagreement.



Test the technical fit

Ask for a demonstration of the work your team and customers will do.

A familiar platform can make delivery efficient, but the provider should explain why it fits your requirements and where it limits you. Ask what the business can edit, which changes need a developer, what third-party tools are required and how content and data can be exported.



Request a practical editing demonstration

- ☐ Change service copy and replace an image.
- ☐ Add a page using agreed components without breaking the layout.
- ☐ Update a form recipient or another routine business setting.
- ☐ Show roles, permissions and the data or content export route.
- ☐ Explain the limits, recurring fees and likely next phase.

Look beyond the platform name

Review browser and device testing, image handling, scripts, caching, integrations, certificates, backups and recovery. Confirm who updates software, monitors critical failures and responds to an incident. A hosting package alone does not define those responsibilities.

ASK FOR AN ACCEPTANCE TEST

For each essential workflow, write what the visitor can do, what the business receives and what happens on failure. Ask how it will be tested on the live site as well as in staging.



Put accessibility and speed in scope

Ask for a target, test method, findings and responsibility for fixes.

Agree a specific accessibility target, such as WCAG 2.2 Level AA, rather than accepting "accessible" as a label. The technical scope and any applicable legal duties need appropriate review. Automated scans and overlays do not establish conformance; include human evaluation. [2]

WHAT A PRACTICAL ACCESSIBILITY REVIEW COVERS

- Headings, landmarks and meaningful links.
- Keyboard navigation and visible focus.
- Contrast, resizing and responsive reflow.
- Image alternatives and media captions.
- Form labels, errors and instructions.
- Usable controls and input methods.
- Reduced motion where appropriate.
- Manual assistive-technology checks.

Separate a lab test from real-user performance

Ask the team to test representative pages and important interactions on mobile devices and realistic connections. A single score cannot promise identical future performance. Images, video, fonts, scripts, embeds and later edits can all affect the experience. [3]

LCP

2.5 s or less

Main content loads

INP

200 ms or less

Interactions respond

CLS

0.1 or less

Layout stays stable

Google's current "good" Core Web Vitals thresholds, assessed at the 75th percentile of visits, separately for mobile and desktop. New sites may lack enough field data. [3]

EVIDENCE TO REQUEST

A sample issue log, tested pages and environments, the manual checks performed, severity of remaining issues and who is responsible for resolving them.



Ask what "SEO included" means

Separate the launch foundation from ongoing search work.

SEO-friendly, full optimization and premium SEO are too vague to compare. Ask who performs the work, which pages are included, what deliverables you receive and how the results will be reviewed. A useful search plan starts with customer intent and original content. [1]

Launch foundation may include	Ongoing work may include
Search intent, sitemap and page purposes.	New content, case studies and search research.
Titles, headings, internal links and image handling.	Content refreshes and internal-link improvements.
Crawl controls, sitemap and suitable structured data.	Technical monitoring and further improvements.
URL inventory, redirect map and migration checks.	Local profile work, outreach and reporting.
Search Console and agreed measurement setup.	Reviewing lead quality and making priority changes.

Protect the existing website's useful value

Ask whether the quote includes inventorying old pages and downloads, preserving useful URLs, mapping changed addresses to relevant replacements, updating internal links and testing redirects. The plan should include post-launch indexing and error monitoring. [4]

Use realistic expectations for search and AI

Google says established SEO practices remain relevant to its AI search features; no special AI schema or machine-readable file is required. Ask how the provider will add real expertise, maintain accurate business information and measure useful outcomes. Search visibility and ranking are not guaranteed. [5]

QUESTIONS TO RESOLVE

Which pages target which customer intent? Who writes them? What migration is included? What does the monthly fee buy? What evidence will show the work is helping the business?



Look for a schedule with dependencies

A launch date needs owners, review windows and a way to handle change.

Ask who is your day-to-day contact, how progress is reported and what your team must provide. The schedule should show dependencies, approval points and the effect of late content or feedback. Confirm the people and capacity assigned to the project.

A DELIVERY PLAN SHOULD MAKE THESE HANDOFFS VISIBLE

Milestone	Provider responsibility	Client responsibility
Brief + scope	Document priorities, requirements and assumptions.	Supply business context and approve direction.
Content ready	Create or edit the agreed material.	Provide expertise, assets and factual approval.
Design approved	Explain the concept and collect revisions.	Consolidate feedback within the review window.
Build accepted	Complete the scope and show test evidence.	Check business workflows and sign off issues.
Launch + handover	Release, verify, train and document.	Confirm access, availability and care ownership.

Evaluate the communication you experience

Notice whether the provider listens, answers the actual question, explains tradeoffs and meets agreed commitments. Record repeated missed meetings, unexplained delays or unclear answers as evidence. Ask how disagreements and changes are handled before the deadline becomes urgent.

Name one final decision-maker on your side. Agree who consolidates feedback, how long reviews take, what happens during a pause and who can approve added cost or a changed launch date.

EVIDENCE TO REQUEST

A sample project plan or status update showing deliverables, owners, dependencies, decisions due and current risks. Ask what could move your launch date.



Compare what is actually included

Replace broad labels with defined outputs and observable completion.

Use a common brief and compare the proposal line by line. A lower quote may depend on your team providing final copy, images, research or content entry. A higher quote may include that work. The key is to make responsibility and exclusions visible.

Term in a proposal	Definition to request
Pages / page types	Total pages, unique templates and who populates repeated pages.
Custom design	Original design, customized template or a fixed component system.
Copywriting	Pages, research, interviews, revisions and fact-checking responsibility.
Integrations	Named systems, data flow, credentials, error handling and testing.
Migration	Pages, files and data included; cleanup, entry and redirect work.
Quality assurance	Supported devices, browsers, manual checks and acceptance tests.
Training + support	Sessions, documentation, response targets and included period.
Revisions + changes	A round's meaning, exclusions, rates and approval process.

Define completion before delivery begins

Agree what must be true for each milestone to be accepted. A contact form is complete when an intended visitor can submit it, the right team receives it and the confirmation works. A screenshot of the form does not establish that the workflow works.

USEFUL PROPOSAL QUESTION

"What work will we still need to supply, buy or manage for this website to launch successfully?" Add the answer to the comparison worksheet on page 22.



Compare the complete cost

A fee is meaningful only when the scope and responsibilities are clear.

Ask for one-time fees, first-year recurring charges, later annual charges, optional work and usage-based fees. Include the time your team must spend producing content and managing the project. Use the same assumptions when comparing providers.

A PRACTICAL FIRST-YEAR COMPARISON



Project fee

Research, content, design, build and agreed testing.



Running charges

Hosting, software, licenses and care.



Client effort

Writing, approvals, asset gathering and coordination.

Cost or condition	Record for each provider
Initial project	Fee, applicable taxes, deliverables and assumptions.
Recurring services	Amount, billing cycle, renewal terms and what is included.
Usage / optional work	Seats, transactions, storage, extra pages and change rates.
Pausing / leaving	Cancellation, restart, export or transfer charges and obligations.
Internal contribution	Required work, owner and a realistic time allowance.

Review the payment schedule with the terms

Deposits, milestone payments, instalments and fixed packages can all work. Clarify when payment is due, what has been delivered at that stage, and what happens if the scope changes, the project pauses or either party ends it. Scrutinize large advance payments and the protections attached to them.

COMPARE VALUE

Document the expected benefit, complete cost and responsibilities retained by your team. If the budget is tight, ask for a smaller first phase with a useful, complete outcome.

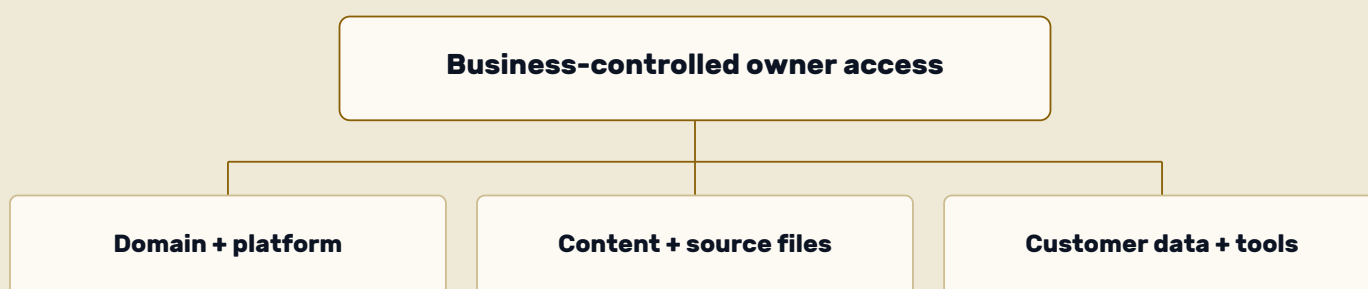


Protect ownership and access

Resolve control, licenses and exit arrangements before the project begins.

Ask who controls the domain, hosting, website platform, analytics, Search Console, customer data and third-party integrations. The business should retain appropriate owner access to critical accounts, with the provider invited under suitable permissions.

KEEP THE BUSINESS AT THE CENTER OF CONTROL



Separate ownership from permission to use

Written content or commissioned design may transfer under the agreement. Fonts, stock photography, plugins, themes and platforms often remain licensed. Custom code may depend on open-source libraries. Ask which rights transfer, when they transfer and which licenses continue if the relationship ends.

Asset	Confirm in writing
Accounts + recovery	Business owner, administrator roles, billing and recovery contacts.
Design + code + media	Deliverable files, usage rights, license holder and restrictions.
Content + customer data	Export format, access, retention and practical transfer process.
Provider exit	Notice, fees, documentation, migration help and dependency limits.

EVIDENCE TO REQUEST

An asset and account register. Use individual accounts, multifactor authentication where available and secure credential storage. Test the business's access before handover.



Read the contract for difficult moments

The agreement should preserve the decisions that keep a project clear.

Check that the contract and proposal agree on deliverables, client responsibilities, assumptions, dates and approval stages. Read the terms for changes, payment, pauses, cancellation, ownership, confidentiality, data handling, publicity, warranties and support.

If this happens...	The agreement should explain...
The first concept needs changes	Review stages, included revision rounds and a route to resolve disagreement.
A new feature becomes essential	How scope, cost and timing are assessed and approved.
Content or feedback is late	Schedule effects, pause conditions and any restart terms.
Either party ends the project	Payment obligations, work delivered, access and transition steps.
A problem appears after launch	Bug period, reporting route, exclusions and responsibility for fixes.
A license or supplier changes	Who pays, who acts, and what happens to continuity and portability.

Pay attention to guarantees and exclusions

Ask what a guarantee actually covers, which conditions apply and what remedy is available. Providers can commit to deliverables and service standards. Treat promises about search rankings or business results carefully because algorithms, demand, competitors and sales follow-up are outside their full control.

PROFESSIONAL REVIEW

Use a qualified attorney when the project value or risk warrants it. Ask them to review the agreement's legal effect, including liability and dispute terms. This guide helps you identify questions; it is not a jurisdiction-specific legal assessment.



Know what support means

Separate a launch bug period, ongoing care and new work.

Support included may describe a few weeks of email help or a continuing service. Ask about hours, response targets, escalation, emergency cover and what is excluded. A response target is not a promise that every issue will be resolved in that time.



Before launch

Confirm access, training, documentation and recovery.



After release

Verify live journeys and resolve agreed launch defects.



Ongoing care

Maintain, test, review and improve the website.

Type of request	Definition to agree
Bug	The delivered site fails an agreed requirement or acceptance test.
New request	A new feature, revised requirement or additional content work.
Urgent incident	An agreed critical failure, with an escalation and response process.

Document the care routine and handover

- Who handles updates, backups, recovery tests and renewals?
- Who tests forms, bookings, payments and connected systems?
- Are content changes included, capped or priced separately?
- Who reviews search, performance and accessibility issues?
- What happens if you decline or later cancel the maintenance service?

EVIDENCE TO REQUEST

A sample care plan and handover pack, including account access, licenses, contracted source files, exports, training and a demonstrated recovery process. Use the checklist on page 24.



Ask references about the working relationship

Listen for specific examples of delivery, decisions and support.

Ask to speak with recent clients whose projects resemble yours in scope or complexity. Provider-selected references are likely to be positive; detail is more useful than perfection. Confirm when the project happened and which team members were involved.

QUESTIONS THAT REVEAL THE PROCESS

- ☐ Were the scope, responsibilities and client workload clear?
- ☐ Did the project stay close to the agreed timeline and budget? If not, what changed?
- ☐ How did the provider respond to disagreement or a new requirement?
- ☐ Did the team understand the business and customers?
- ☐ Were training, documentation and account access sufficient?
- ☐ How has support worked since launch?
- ☐ What do you wish you had known before starting?
- ☐ Would you hire the same team for a similar project again?

Check outcome claims with context

If a case study reports more leads or sales, ask what was measured, compared with which baseline, over what period and alongside which other changes. Ask about lead quality as well as quantity. Good evidence explains the provider's contribution without treating every improvement as the result of design alone.

RECORD THE EVIDENCE

For each important claim, keep the example or document that supports it and the question still unresolved. Respect client privacy and do not ask for confidential customer data.



Use warning signs as prompts to investigate

Judge the explanation, evidence and written commitment together.

Signal to investigate	What a stronger answer looks like
A fixed solution before discovery	A clear rationale, assumptions and a plan to learn what is missing.
Vague scope or unlimited promises	Defined outputs, exclusions, limits and acceptance checks.
Guaranteed rankings or results	Specific work, transparent measurement and carefully defined terms.
Unclear ownership or recurring costs	An account register, licensing details, fees and practical exit options.
Dismissed content or quality work	Named owners for content, mobile use, accessibility, testing and care.
Pressure or repeated missed commitments	Time to review terms, realistic capacity information and clear follow-through.

Notice positive signs of fit

Strong providers ask about customers and lead quality, explain tradeoffs, define inclusions and exclusions, show how decisions are made and discuss ownership openly. They can recommend a smaller first phase or another specialist when that better fits the problem.

Similar-looking work may be appropriate for a transparent template package. It needs a different explanation when the offer promises deeply customized strategy. Ask what is standardized, what changes and why.

APPLY MUST-PASS REQUIREMENTS FIRST

An essential function, acceptable contract, business account access or required quality standard must not disappear inside a high average score. Resolve critical gaps before making the final comparison.



DECISION WORKSHEET

Use a weighted scorecard

Score the evidence after checking your must-pass requirements.

Set weights first: 1 = lower priority, 2 = important, 3 = critical. Use them for all providers.

Criterion	Weight	A	B	C
Business understanding	_____	_____	_____	_____
Relevant strategic experience	_____	_____	_____	_____
Quality of live work	_____	_____	_____	_____
Content approach	_____	_____	_____	_____
Technical fit	_____	_____	_____	_____
Accessibility + performance	_____	_____	_____	_____
Search foundation	_____	_____	_____	_____
Communication + delivery	_____	_____	_____	_____
Scope + contract clarity	_____	_____	_____	_____
Ownership + portability	_____	_____	_____	_____
Post-launch support	_____	_____	_____	_____
Value within your budget	_____	_____	_____	_____

Ratings: 1 = weak fit; 3 = adequate evidence; 5 = strong, relevant evidence. Use 2 or 4 between these levels. Mark missing evidence **U** and resolve it before final scoring.

Weighted score (1-5): add each rating multiplied by its weight, then divide by the sum of all weights. Complete every row before comparing the totals.

Example using two criteria only: ratings of 5 and 3 with weights of 2 and 1 give $(5 \times 2 + 3 \times 1) / (2 + 1) = 4.33$. Keep the evidence behind each rating.

YOUR DECISION

Weighted totals: A _____ B _____ C _____. Must-pass checks resolved: _____. Preferred provider and reason: _____.



Your brief for prospective designers

Give each shortlisted provider the same starting information.

BUSINESS / PROJECT / CONTACT

WHY NOW / PRIMARY BUSINESS OUTCOME / MEASURE OF SUCCESS

PRIORITY AUDIENCE / OFFER / MAIN CUSTOMER QUESTION

REQUIRED PAGES, FUNCTIONS AND INTEGRATIONS

HELP NEEDED / CONTENT AVAILABLE / CLIENT RESPONSIBILITIES

BUDGET RANGE / RUNNING ALLOWANCE

TARGET DATE / DEPENDENCIES

DECISION-MAKER / WEBSITE OWNER / MUST-PASS REQUIREMENTS

Keep passwords and sensitive customer data out of the brief. Put unresolved decisions in a tracker with an owner and due date.



Compare three proposals

Record what is included, who owns it and the evidence supplied.

PROVIDER A

PROVIDER B

PROVIDER C

Area	A	B	C
Strategy + research	_____	_____	_____
Sitemap + page briefs	_____	_____	_____
Copywriting + reviews	_____	_____	_____
Brand + visual assets	_____	_____	_____
Pages + unique templates	_____	_____	_____
Build + integrations	_____	_____	_____
Search + redirects	_____	_____	_____
Accessibility + QA	_____	_____	_____
Analytics + data handling	_____	_____	_____
Migration + content entry	_____	_____	_____
Training + documentation	_____	_____	_____
Launch + bug period	_____	_____	_____
Care + recurring fees	_____	_____	_____
Ownership + portability	_____	_____	_____
Exclusions + client work	_____	_____	_____

First-year cost: A _____ B _____ C _____

Later annual cost: A _____ B _____ C _____

Use I = included, E = extra, C = client responsibility, U = unclear, plus a document reference. Resolve unclear entries and important exclusions before choosing.



Bring these questions to the interview

Record the answer, the evidence offered and any follow-up needed.

1 What do you think our underlying website problem is?

2 Who will do the work, and which parts stay with our team?

3 What will we receive from discovery and content planning?

4 Can you show relevant live work and explain your contribution?

5 How will you test our essential journeys, accessibility and mobile use?

6 What is excluded, what costs recur and how are changes approved?

7 What will we control and receive if the relationship ends?

8 What training, bug support, care and recovery help will we have?

EVIDENCE TO REQUEST / OPEN QUESTIONS / NEXT ACTION

Ask for examples: a project plan, page brief, test report, handover pack or relevant client reference. Specific evidence makes answers easier to compare.



Check what you will receive at handover

Agree this list during selection, then use it again before final acceptance.

CONTROL + RIGHTS

- ☐ Business owner access to domain, platform, hosting and important tools is confirmed.
- ☐ Billing, renewal, recovery contacts and administrator roles are documented.
- ☐ Content, code, design and media rights are clear; required files and licenses are supplied.

CONTENT + DATA

- ☐ Approved content is live, with agreed redirects, links and search settings checked.
- ☐ Customer data and content can be exported using the agreed process.
- ☐ Analytics, form routing and any required privacy settings are documented and tested.

WORKING WEBSITE + RECOVERY

- ☐ Live inquiries, bookings or purchases work end to end, including receipt and confirmation.
- ☐ Agreed accessibility, mobile and browser checks are complete; remaining issues have owners.
- ☐ Backup or platform recovery has been demonstrated, with the responsible contact named.

TRAINING + SUPPORT

- ☐ The team can make agreed routine edits and has useful instructions or recordings.
- ☐ Bug-period terms, support hours, response targets and escalation routes are recorded.
- ☐ Care, security updates, renewals and future improvement have an owner and budget.

BEFORE FINAL ACCEPTANCE

Project owner: _____. Provider: _____.

Outstanding issues and due dates: _____.



NEXT STEPS

Common buyer questions

Choose the people and process that fit your business.

How much should I pay?

Compare the scope, responsibility, quality checks and complete running cost. There is no useful universal price without those details. Ask providers to explain which work drives the fee and how a smaller first phase would change it.

Freelancer, studio or agency?

Evaluate the actual team, skills, capacity, process and accountability assigned to your project. A company label alone will not tell you who does the work or how well the project will be managed.

Do I need a local designer?

Remote collaboration can work well. Local support may matter for in-person workshops, on-site photography or local-market insight. Choose based on the work and communication you need.

How many proposals should I request?

Two or three well-qualified proposals can provide a useful comparison. First check that the provider's services, relevant work, availability and likely budget fit your brief.

Should the designer also host the website?

They can, if the service, fees, backups, support, business access and exit process are clear. Ask what moving the site or exporting data would require.

What should I own when the project is finished?

Document control of critical accounts, content and customer data, plus the rights to use the design and code. Some assets remain licensed. Confirm the contracted source files, access and export routes.

What if I dislike the first design?

Use discovery and early visual direction to reduce surprises. Give feedback tied to the audience, goals and content. Follow the agreed review stages and revision process before expanding the build.

Choose the process behind the portfolio.

Utu Nanna Studio can help you define a clear scope and a sensible first phase. Bring your brief and the questions that are still unresolved.



REFERENCE

Sources and useful terms

Official guidance supporting the technical updates in this edition.

[1] Google Search Central / search and AI-assisted content

Useful original content, search foundations and responsible use of AI drafts.

[SEO Starter Guide](#) | [Generative AI content guidance](#)

[2] W3C / accessibility standards and evaluation

WCAG 2.2 criteria and the role of human evaluation alongside tools.

[WCAG 2.2](#) | [Evaluating web accessibility](#)

[3] web.dev / Core Web Vitals

Loading, interaction and visual-stability metrics, including good thresholds.

[Web Vitals](#)

[4] Google Search Central / website migration

URL inventories, relevant redirects and monitoring a site move.

[Site moves with URL changes](#)

[5] Google Search Central / AI features

Established SEO practices remain relevant; no special AI files or markup are required.

[AI features and your website](#)

QUICK GLOSSARY

CMS / System for managing website content.

QA / Quality assurance: checking the site works.

Staging / A test version before release.

Acceptance test / An agreed pass condition.

UX / The experience of using a product or service.

SEO / Work that helps search engines find and understand content.

Redirect / Sends an old address to a new one.

Portability / The practical ability to move content, data or a site.

September 2026 edition. Adapted and updated from the supplied Utu Nanna Studio buyer's guide. Design follows the corresponding "How to Choose the Right Website Designer" carousel. Examples and worksheets are illustrative. Consult the linked technical guidance for future changes and qualified advisers for legal or contractual questions.