

HattenDesign

Strategy

Why are you creating this web site? What do you expect to accomplish?
What are you offering your audience?
What do you want users to do on your web site?
After they've left?
What brings your visitors back?

General Site Description

What kind of site is it? (Purely promotional? Info-gathering? A publication? A point of sale?)
What features will it have?
What are your most important messages?
Who are your competitors? What are they doing right? What could be improved upon?

Target Audience

Who is your primary audience?
How Internet-savvy are they? How technically savvy?
Can you make assumptions about an average user's connection speed? Platform? Monitor size? Browser use?
How often do you expect them to visit your site? How long will they stay during an average visit?

Content

Who is responsible for generating original content?
How will content be submitted (process and format)?
How often will the information be updated (daily, weekly, monthly)?

Resources

What resources have you dedicated to the site ?
*budget * staff * time*
Does the site require a full content management system?
Can maintenance be handled by the client's staff?
Do you have a server for your site?
Have you registered a domain name for your site?

Graphic Look and Feel

Are you envisioning a certain look and feel for the site?
Do you have existing standards, such as logos and colors, that must be incorporated?
Is the site part of a larger site or group of sites with design standards that need to be matched?
What are some other web sites you like? What do you like about them? What sites do you not like?

Many large web development and design firms spend more time on researching and identifying clients' needs than on any other stage of production. For large sites, this step may include case studies, interviews, and extensive market research. There are even firms dedicated to developing web strategies for emerging and established companies.

You may not need to put that sort of effort (or money) into a web site's preparation, but it is still wise to be clear about your expectations and resources early on in the process, particularly when attempting to work within a budget.