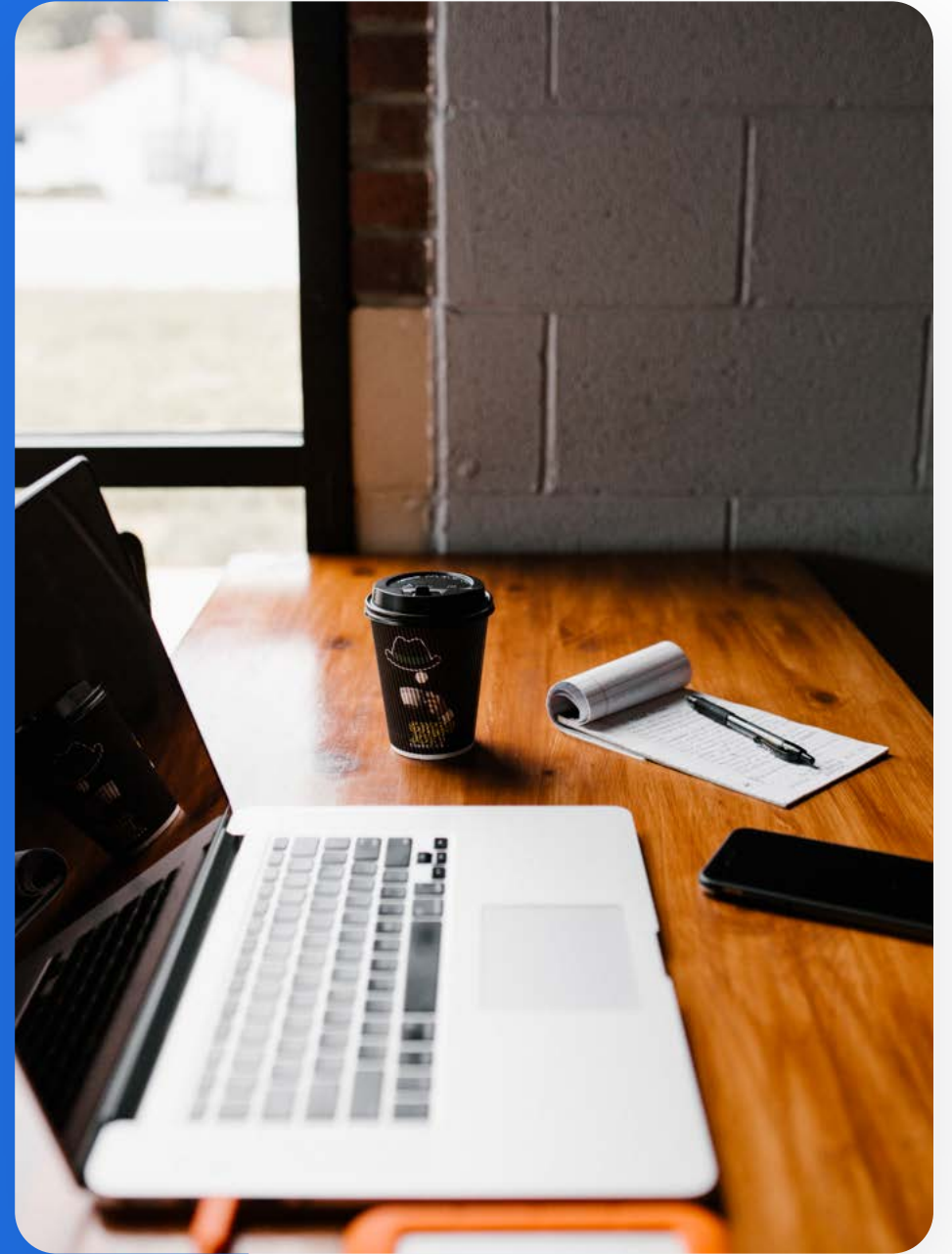# Your Guide to a Successful Web Project

CLARITY

Project

Success through planning

Statistics state that 85% of all projects go over budget, and the number one reason is scope creep (changes that occur after the project has been estimated or started). So how do improve your odds that your web project will end on time and on budget? Read on - that is the goal of this guide.

The real key to every project's success is proper planning. With a quick search, you can find hundreds of project "quick checklists" that only scratch the surface in getting you prepared to succeed.

This guide takes a different approach. In it we ask you the hard questions, and if you can answer them, it will mean that you're ready to start a successful web project. If you can't answer some of the questions or do not understand their importance, then Clarity is here to help. Give us a call or visit us at Clarity-Ventures.com to get ready for your project.

85%

of all projects go over budget

6-steps to a successful project

Step 1

Project Planning

Once the scope of features / tasks has been defined, then adjustments to any of the three triple constraints (time, money/quality, resources) or what's in scope can make a big difference in finishing the project on time and within budget.

Step 2

Design Planning

Even if you're the project champion, make sure you know who wants to be involved with approving the design. Stakeholder involvement, or buy-in, in a project can have a significant impact on how they feel at the end of your project.

Step 3

Content Planning

One of the most important things you can do before, or as part of, the project is to do your SEO research to ensure that your content supports your business, and that you're building domain and page authority with every word.

Step 4

Functionality Planning

Before specifying functionality and features you need to define the role of the site within your organization - sales, marketing, eCommerce, etc. and what other applications hold data that the site needs.

Step 5

Testing & Validation

Change is inevitable. Make sure before you start your project that you've determined what success means to you or your company when it comes to your project and decide how you'll measure it going forward to allow for change.

Step 6

Ongoing Maintenance

Almost all web projects are never "done." Prepare a project performance report for key stakeholders. Gather their input both during and after the project. It will influence their perception of the project's current and future success.

> If you can't describe what you are doing as a process, you don't know what you're doing.

W. Edwards Deming

Project planning

Purpose / Requirements

Why are you undertaking this project? What are your goals for the site? What issues are you trying to fix or caused you to do this project?

Budget

What is your budget? How much flex does your budget have? How will you measure spend along the way?

Time line

What is your time line? What event is driving it? What is your back-up plan if you don't complete it by then?

Technology requirements

Are there any technical requirements for this project (.NET, on-premises, SaaS, integration to ERP / CRM / Financial package, etc.)?

Roles and Responsibility

Who is the key decision maker for the project? Who controls the budget? Who can authorize changes in scope / budget? Who is responsible for each part of the project (RFP definition, Vendor selection, Budget setting / approval, Domain registration, Marketing objectives, etc.)? Who are the stakeholders, core team, project sponsors?

Tracking

How does your vendor track your project's progress, budget? Do you have transparency into the project?

Traffic

How many visitors does your current site have (daily, monthly, etc.)? What are your future goals? How will you get there? What is the site's role in driving and converting traffic?

Project planning

Target Audience

Who are you building the site for? Who is your audience? What are their typical behaviors on sites like yours? What do you want them to do?

Hosting

Do you have a current hosting provider? Are they equipped to handle (optimal provider choice) your new site? What are your plans if the site out-grows your current provider?

Hosting

Do you already have a registered domain URL? If not, how will you find a good one? Does your vendor have a strategy to help?

Success Criteria & Analytics

What constitutes success? How will you measure ongoing success? What tools will you use? Do you know what's available?
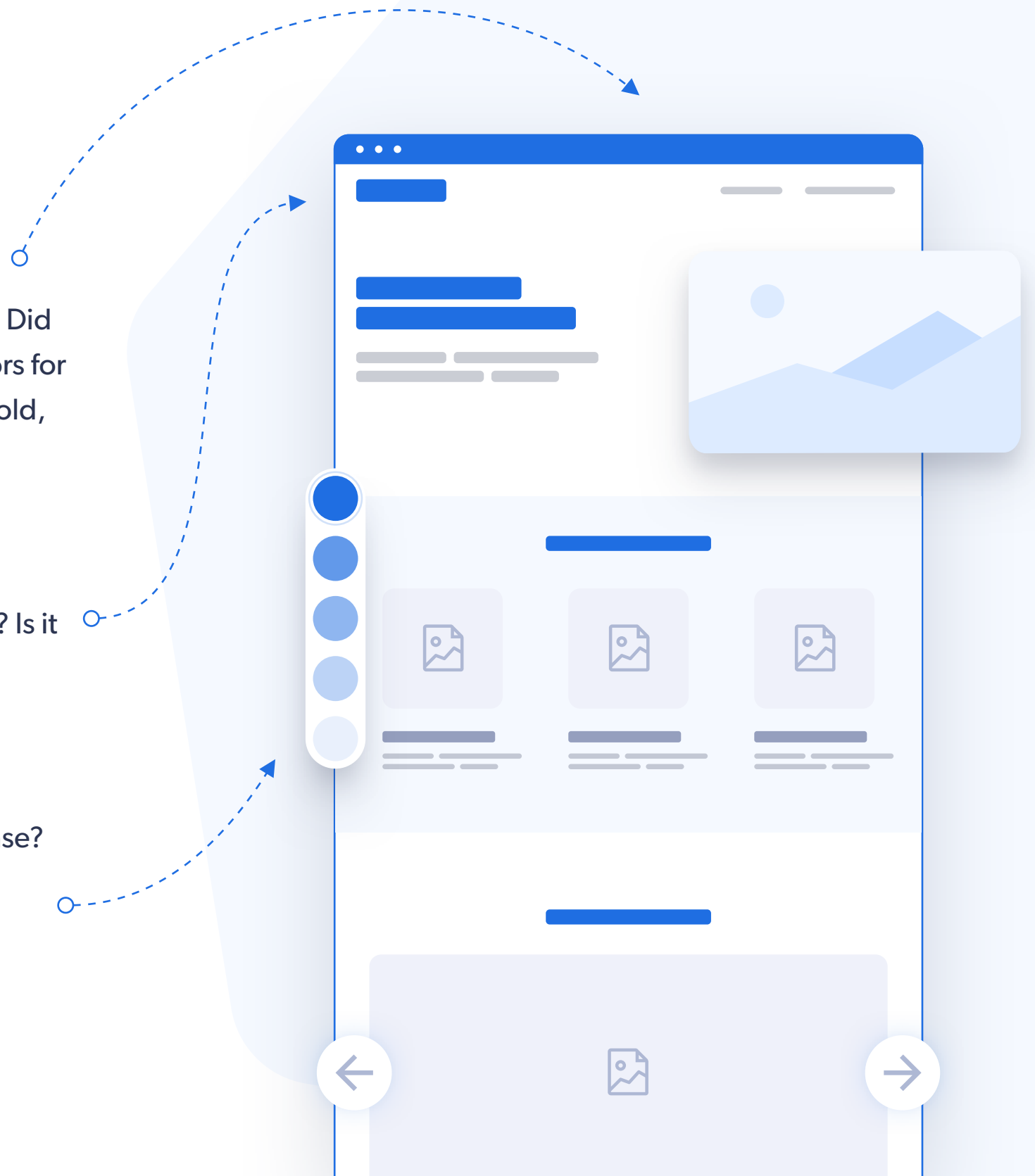
Design planning

Design Ideas

What ideas do you have? Did you collect sites that you like? Did you check your competitors? Do you have a list of descriptors for your designer (fresh, contemporary, high-tech, beautiful, bold, clean, simple, elegant, etc.)?

Logo / Site ID

Do you have one? Is it good? Does is describe what you do? Is it brand-worthy?

Style guide

Do you have one? Does the designer have full creative license? What are your inspirational sites or digital assets?

Design planning

Images / Graphics

Do you have a hi-res version of your logo? Is it time for a new logo? Do you have any special images you want / need to use (customer logos, executive headshots, projects you've worked on, etc.)?

Favicon

Do you have one? Do you know why you should have one? Do you need one created for you?

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Content planning

Tagline / Site Description

Do you have one? Does your content flow? Does it help the logo / brand describe the purpose of your business and site?

Page Titles

Do you have good page titles? Are they descriptive, unique to every page, heavily targeted for the keyword(s) you're trying to rank the page for? Are your Meta keywords and page descriptions unique and keyword-heavy?

Great Content

Did you scrub / update your site content? Is it written around your SEO research? Is it clear and concise, correctly spelled with proper grammar and target your defined audience well?

Import

Is there content that needs to be imported into the new site? Is it in a usable format?

Access control

Do you need to dynamically serve content to different users / roles on the site? If so, content, documents, case studies / files, or both? What do you use for document management?

Volume

Are there any technology requirements for this project (.NET, on-premises, SaaS, integration to ERP / CRM / Financial package, etc.)?

Calls-to-Action / Marketing Hooks

Have you defined your calls-to-action? What goals and funnels will you create? Do you have a clear call-to-action for every page?

Navigation

Have you decided on your navigation design? Have you prioritized the design to guide user behavior? Did you consider other designs? Did you look at competitors? Did you include an intelligent search? How about bread crumbs?

Content planning

Languages

What languages does the site need to support? Is it the exact same exact content for each language?

Regulatory

Are there any regulatory or compliance standards the project needs to meet (HIPAA, PCI, ADA, 508, etc.)? Do you have any SSL or code signing certificates?
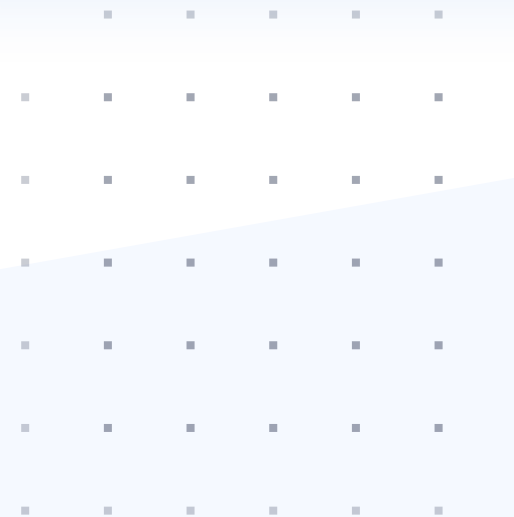
Legal

Do you have a Terms of Use and Privacy Statement? Google wants to see them. If SEO is important, make sure you have them. Do you need any other legal protection (release for uploaded, possibly copyright protected material)?

> **If a writer knows enough about what he is writing about, he may omit things that he knows.**
>
> Ernest Hemingway

Functionality planning

Features

Do you have a list of items you want on the site (blog, social media, calendar, shopping cart, executive BIOs, an FAQ page, contact us form, live chat, RSS feed, predictive search, job module, video player, rotating images, etc.)?

User Registration

Do you plan on gating certain content? Will you have user profiles? How do you want to manage them?

Integration

What systems will the site integrate with (ERP, CRM, tax calculations, shipping companies, EMR, database, email clients, marketing automation, etc.)?

Integration Goals

What do you hope to accomplish through integration with each system?

Workflow

Have you defined any workflows needed (approvals, email notifications, drop shipping, purchase limits, etc.)?
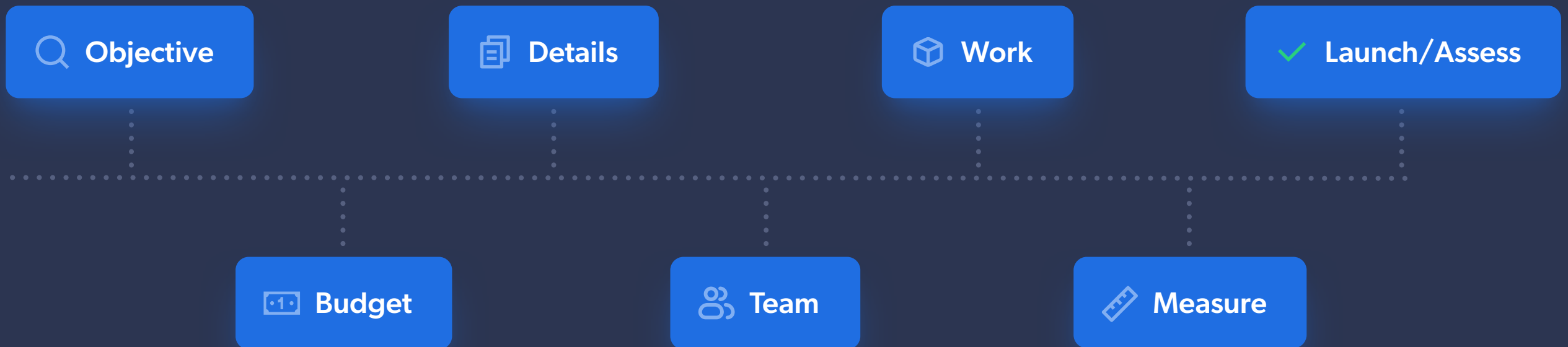
Mobility Optimization

Which of the mobile phases will you support (pinch friendly, unique mobile pages, complete responsive site, mobile application)?

Management

What administrative reporting / management do you need? What roles / scopes need to be created?

Project Lifecycle

Objective

Details

Work

Launch/Assess

Budget

Team

Measure

Testing & Validation

Cross-Browser testing

Which browsers are you going to support? Do you know how to determine which ones to support?

Validation

W3C Validator - does your site pass? Are you okay with what doesn't validate?

Analytics

Did you install an analytics tool? Will you need another tool like Optimizely, Clicktale, Visistat, etc.? What will you measure? Why?

Content Review

Who will verify functionality? Content accuracy? Search engine optimization? Consistent voice? SEO, CRO, ADA?

Degradation

Does your site have JavaScript turned off? Do you need it?

Robots.txt

Do you want the engines to crawl your entire site? If not, have you created a list of those pages you don't want crawled?

Forms Validation

Do you have any forms? Do they need Captcha? Are the email notifications being sent? Are your analytics being tracked as designed (marketing tactics, etc.)?

Links

Did you link your logo to the home page? Are all links to external sites properly tagged (http://)? Do all links work? Do they target the correct parent or new tab /window. Where are your 301's?

Sitemap.xml

Do you have one? Do you need one? If a crawler encounters any problems with your site, how will you know? Did you register yours with webmaster tools?

Testing & Validation

Smart 404 Page

Did you design one? Do you know why you should? Where do you want to send people that hit a page that doesn't exist anymore (home, sitemap)?

Performance

What will you do to measure performance? Have you optimized your page load speeds? Did you group images (CSS sprites, image maps)? Are you caching pages on the server? Which ones?

Back-up / Disaster Recovery

What is your plan if the site goes down? What is acceptable downtime for your business? What SLAs, strategies, partners, and technologies are you using to achieve your goals?

# Ongoing Maintenance

Post-launch Support

What's your plan? Does your vendor provide support / maintenance? Hosting? Hosting support?

Maintenance

Who will make the updates to the site (content, user accounts, links, calls-to-action, modules / functionality, security, etc.)? Who will respond if the site goes down / has a problem?

SEO Strategy

Do you have one? How will you drive traffic to the site? What is your budget? What is your plan to keep the website rankings? What are your ranking goals? What strategies and tactical steps will you take to accomplish those goals? Do you know what options you have and who can help? Are your 301's all working? How do you stack up against your competition?
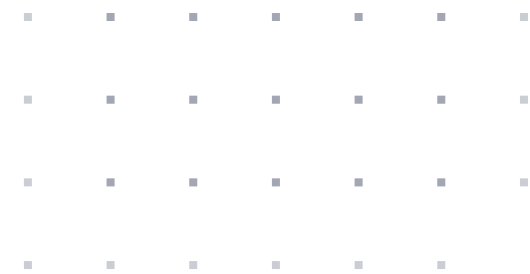
CRO Strategy

Do you have one? How do you measure your goals and funnels? What are your plans for improvement (A/B testing, etc.)?

Social Strategy

Do you have one? Do you need one? Where do you start, and where do you spend your efforts? Who can help?

PPC Strategy

Do you have one? Do you know why you should / shouldn't? What is your budget? How do you create and measure success?

Future

Have you considered what else you may want from the site? Do the current vendor / design take those into consideration? Have you communicated those to the vendor?

Get in Touch with Clarity

If you are a business, ready to move forward with your project,
please give us a call or visit our website.

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