**Abbreviated Design Document (for small sites)**

# Site Goals

The first thing you need to find out is what your client wants from their new design. Is this a redesign or reworking of an existing site, or is it a completely new design? Do they already have solid ideas for what they want their site to do or are their ideas more vague?

Getting your clients to nail down what their site goals are is important to creating a design that they’ll be satisfied with. After all, you’ll approach a design that’s meant to raise awareness or educated differently from one that’s meant to specifically sell a product or service.

# Budget and Schedule

Come to a consensus with your client about how much you can get done within their budget; likewise, set their expectations about how long it takes to make a website and if you can get it done within their deadline.

# Target Audience

Who are your clients trying to reach? A website designed for teenagers is going to look and work a bit differently than one designed for corporate decision-makers. Ask your client who they want to appeal to with their website right from the beginning.

If your clients aren’t sure who they want to reach with their site, ask them who their ideal customer is. I’m sure they have an idea of who buys their products or uses their services.

Ask them to describe those people, even if there’s more than one. If so, it’s your job as the designer to create something that appeals to more than one demographic.

# Project Scope

Not every project is as in-depth as every other. Some clients want a completely custom solution. Others just want you to adapt an existing template or other design. Some clients want an entire ecommerce site with a shopping cart, while others just want a brochure site that gives basic company information.
Sometimes, project scope is obvious from the goals of a project. Obviously, if your client’s goals are to sell products through their website, then they’ll need an ecommerce solution. But if it’s not obvious, you’ll need to ask. Make sure you ask about things like blog integration or social networking features, too.

# Available Materials

Does your client already have a logo, brochure, product photos, or other materials that would be useful to your design?
Looking at their existing promotional materials can shed valuable insight into what their design taste is and what their priorities are.
If your client doesn’t have things like a logo or product photos, then you’ll likely want to either offer to design these things, or refer your client to someone who can (if that’s not in your normal scope of services).
These kinds of add-ons can be valuable to both your client and to your bottom line.

# Overall Graphic Style

Getting a sense of what your client wants in terms of style is vital. They may have a grunge design in mind when you’re picturing something clean and modern (or vice versa). Most clients have very distinct likes and dislikes. But they’re not always good at expressing what their tastes are.

Asking clients for examples of designs they like and designs they don’t like, even if they’re the designs of their competitors, can give you valuable insight into what they like and don’t like. Your clients should provide you with a handful of examples prior to starting the design phase.

At least as telling as what a client likes and wants is what they definitely do not want.
Some clients hate certain features. Some clients don’t want an ecommerce site, or a three-column layout, or a slideshow. Getting an idea of what your client doesn’t want can save you from wasting time designing features your clients will then reject.