

Scoping a Project: Goals, Tools, and Price

The first stage of developing the site was to better define the project. This was accomplished through researching similar sites, meeting with the client, and digesting all of the client's existing marketing material. Some of the key questions that had to be answered and discussed with the client were:

1. What are the client's goals for this site? For example, is the primary purpose informational, marketing, content, or transactional—selling products online?
2. Who is the audience for this site? What are their demographics? What information about the product are they most interested in? What information do they already have? How sophisticated are they with using the web? How advanced are their browser and connection speed? What are the key use cases? (Use cases are the most common ways visitors will use the site.) If possible talk to users directly and test an early version of the site to determine their needs.
3. What is the client's wish list? What elements does the client think would be great for the site? Why would these elements be effective in achieving the client's goals? Can the client rate the wish list items in order of importance?
4. Who are the client's competitors? What are their web sites like? What techniques do they use?
5. Where will the site be hosted? What are the technical capabilities of the hosting service, or the client if they are doing the hosting? What platform will the hosting service be using?
6. What are the elements in existing company material that the client likes or that seem particularly effective? What resources already exist, such as pictures or a database of information? Is this material suitable for the web site?
7. What are the branding issues? Are there guidelines for a specific way material needs to be presented?
8. Is a web site the correct medium to present all the material, achieve the client's goals, and reach the intended audience? Would a disk-based interactive program, or even a video or a brochure, be more appropriate for some of the material?
9. What form does the intended information take? Is it numbers and statistics? Video? Graphics? Text?
10. How often and how extensively does this information need to be updated? Does the client have adequate staff to do updating, or will this require a maintenance contract?
11. Are there ways that we can present this information that are dynamic and customizable for the user?
12. Will this project need to pay for itself, for example by incorporating advertising?
13. What are the ways this site can be marketed to drive traffic to the site?