

# Client questions to ask before creating an Adobe Muse site

Before you start a website, even before you put pencil to paper, there are a few things to think about. Below is a list of sample questions and expectations for your client-to-be (whether it's you or a paid client). Some of these questions may be pertinent to your situation and some may not.

## 1. WHY are you creating this site?

Your boss "nominated" you to redo the entire company website, but before you begin be sure to ask questions like these: Is this site for information? To sell things/services? Create a web presence for your business? Keep your friends and family informed? Document your travels? Help others?

A website is about communication, so you need to figure out exactly what each site is meant to accomplish.

## 2. Do you already have a website?

Remember to ask this question. It can give you a lot of information on likes and dislikes so you can more thoroughly understand why they want you to build them a new or revised site.

## 3. Briefly describe what the company does

This can include adjectives that you think describe the company in order of relevance/importance. Also list the top products and/or services the company sells.

## 4. Competitors

Are there any websites/companies that are competitors of the company? It's helpful to get a list of the company names, web addresses, and a list of terms that describe what they do and/or sell.

## 5. Favorite sites

Ask the client to list a few of an industry's websites that they like, in terms of design (aesthetics) and ease of use/navigation. This will provide a sense of what qualities the client looks for in a site.

## 6. Least favorite sites

Ask the client to list a few of an industry's websites that they don't like, and why. This will provide a sense of what features the client does not want to include in a site.

## 7. Selling points

Ask the client to make a list of ways in which their products and services are better than the competition.

## 8. User goals

Why do you think people will visit the site? When people don't know a company exists, why would they find the company or happen upon the site? Why would they come back? If they do know the company, why would they take the time to visit the site?

## 9. Target audience

Write down your intended audience, their background, interests, skills, and knowledge.

When someone visits a website, they're looking for information, to be entertained, or to buy something. A website can have more than one goal, but it's important to define them at the outset. If you don't have any clearly defined goals for the site, how are you going to be able to tell if the site is successful?

Determining the target audience is also very important because how the site is designed and built is determined by the audience. Suppose you are building a site for first graders learning to read. You would attack that site design and navigation much differently than you would if you were designing a site for a company like Adobe.

## 10. Technical

How technically savvy is the target audience? This is a question that I pay particular attention to. For instance, you may wish to include Flash content on the site, but if your client knows (via analytics, for instance) that the bulk of the audience views the site on an iOS device like Apple iPad, Flash content won't run natively.

If the client can go so far as to answer what browsers and versions of browsers their audience uses, all the better. This usually only happens when you are building a site for an intranet (inside a company's firewall).

## 11. Accessibility & usability

Will web visitors have any special needs, such as hearing/sight impairment, language differences, mobility issues, or reading difficulties?

When you are creating a website, you need to make sure your content is accessible for end users AND for search engines.

## 12. Site goals

What are the goals for the website in terms of the company goals? How is your site supposed to help the business? What is the purpose of the site?

## 13. Site analytics

What are the goals for the website in terms of popularity and exposure?

This question has dual purposes: The first is to help set numeric goals for the site that can be tested with common analytics (like Google Analytics, for example). The second is to gauge the sense of reality of the client: If they expect to reach a million page views their first month, they'll let you know their expectations via this question. This is the time to talk some sense into them so they aren't disappointed and don't set their expectations too high.

## 14. Site features

What features do you think your website should include (calendar, shopping cart, login, price comparison chart, contact form, anything)?

Some clients want the moon. By stating the goal of each feature, they may realize they don't need the moon. Other clients have no clue what is available to them. They never ask for a contact form at the initial contact, but I have yet to have a sole proprietor client who doesn't want a contact form after reading this questionnaire—they just never thought of it. This question helps define which features are necessary even if they weren't originally thought of, and which ones sounded good originally, but really won't help.

This is where your expertise comes in. Even if you are designing the site, it is helpful to know WHAT can be done and what can't.

## 15. Mobile optimized

These days, you need to deliver an optimal viewing experience for site visitors, whether the website is viewed on a large monitor or on a small screen such as on a smartphone or tablet. This can mean making the content easy to read and navigate, with a minimum of resizing, panning, and scrolling.

While relatively easy to do in Muse, optimizing the site for mobile does require more time and should be included in the initial budget.

## 16. Things to avoid?

Does your client have any strong opinions on what NOT to include in the website? Sharing why they don't want a feature will help you get an understanding of the client's user experience tastes, so they should feel free to elaborate.