

How to Hire A Web Developer

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Okay, you tried to create a web site for yourself using some of the WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) website editors available, but you were disappointed with the results. It took you too long and you still don't understand why your site is not showing any credible results. When you viewed your web site at home, it looked completely different on your friend's computer or you hired the college student down the street, but he graduated and left you holding the bag.

Therefore, you've decided to hire a professional web developer, but before you do you will want to consider some factors that could influence your decision. To find the right professional web developer, here are some issues that can be helpful to you during the hiring and review process.

Complete A Web Development Worksheet. It is important that you carefully define your project before you begin. A Web Development Plan can assist you in outlining your web site. It will help you answer questions like what type of site you want created, whom you are targeting, and generally what you want your site to look like and include. Your project should have clear objectives, scope, and limitations. A thorough, well-written scope of work is essential to a successful project.

Once you have completed this important step, you can begin locating a web developer.

Look For Expertise and Technical Skills. It is important to hire a professional web developer with some interest and background in information systems

technology. It is not necessary that they have a degree in computers, but familiarity with them is important. It is great when a developer can "Wow," you with their knowledge of computer programming but do they understand design fundamentals and navigation principles? They can create a great looking homepage but what will the rest of the site reveal?

In contrast, make sure your web developer has a background or a fundamental understanding of design. It is crucial that your website incorporate some of the traditional design principles that are used in print.

Look for Business and Marketing Skills.

Hire a developer who focuses on how to help your business make money. You will need a web designer with a business plan, not just a production plan who can focus on results, not technology, tricks, or jargon. Look for someone that talks about your website as a real business, not some neat thing to do, or keeping up with the times.

Locate References and Use Word of Mouth. Know your web developer's skills by what others say. Ask your friends and associates who created their web sites. Visit the developer's website and ask yourself if you like it. Do you like the portfolio of sites they highlight and the diversity of the websites? If they don't provide a portfolio or list of clients with hyperlinks for you to visit, you should be hesitant to pursue this developer any further. Ask prior customers the designer's work history. Do they consistently miss deadlines or exceed agreed prices? Did they like the solutions provided?

Budget and Time Your Project. Keep your desires in line with your budget. The bigger

the budget the more gets thrown in. But as far as your average site visitor or potential customer is concerned, such a web site is often a waste of time. All those extra features slow the site down and make it harder and more expensive for them to access the information they need or came for. Ask yourself when you would like the project completed. I would question a designer who claims they can build a quality site within one week. Building a site takes time and hard work. Decide on a timeline and see how the developer can work within it. But be sure your timeline is flexible.

Be sure, also, that you can provide all of the content necessary for the site in a timely manner. For a timeline to work, both parties must work together.

Find A Price. Yes, price matters, but don't count on price as being the number one factor in finding a web developer. If you ask your friends or others how much they paid for their site, it may not reflect what you might expect for yours. Factors such as size, images, hosting requirements, customization, and maintenance play a large part in costs. Fees can range from one hundred to one hundred thousand dollars depending on needs, interactivity, and design. Rick Tracewell, [Teach Yourself Marketing on the Internet in a Week](#), advises that you split your list between necessities and niceties, *e.g.*, things you must have, and things you'd like to have. Be leery of a developer's refusal to give you a project price based on your plan and instead only gives you an hourly rate. It's hard to gauge how quickly they work. Ask for a not-to-exceed price in the contract and to stick to your budget. Per-page is difficult to price and some pages may take longer or less time and expertise than others to create.

What Is Their Process? Avoid "cookie cutter" web solutions – those offering free

sites or who promise to put you up within a few days. Originality is important and you are a distinct business. Make sure that your developer recognizes that and will allow your diversity to shine. With a clear goal and scope you create in the web development plan, you can contribute to the draft without infuriating the designer and frustrating yourself.

What other services do they offer? Will you have to look elsewhere for web hosting, domain name registration, database development, upgrades, or maintenance? Ask questions like, "what on-going support do you offer," or "is there any follow-up to the design process?" Be sure that you can communicate clearly with the developer and gauge response time to e-mails and phone calls. This can be an indicator later.

Get a Contract. Be sure the developer uses a standard web design contract and read it carefully to ensure that it not only protects the developer but you as well. You don't need to hire a lawyer, but consider it if you think your project will exceed ten thousand dollars. Make sure the contract discusses copyright, indemnification, deadlines, fees, and arbitration. Be sure that the contract states that all work the developer uses is royalty and license free, and you need to agree as to who owns any custom code or graphics produced. If they create a logo for you, do you own the copyright or do they? Getting it all in writing will save you lots of confusion and problems in the future.

Can You Work with the Developer? Ask yourself if you can work with this designer. Be careful of web developers in big cities, who have fast telephone connections and expensive systems. Technology can be tempting and dazzling. But it is the average Joe who owns a home computer, surfs on a slow Internet connection, and has little understanding of the latest technology who

uses the World Wide Web. It is not image but content that will get you the sale on the Internet. At the same time, consider the qualifications and personality of the freelance web developer. Is your potential web developer easy to communicate with or do they work alone for a reason other than necessity?

Will It Be Design By Committee or Corporation or Freelance? For large design firms, two or three committees of five people can complete the design. They will decide much of the design that can drag on and on. If you go with a large design firm, decide who will be responsible for the decision-making within your company. This can save time and money as well; but don't be anxious if the developer works out of their house. In today's virtual office, it is possible for a developer to employ several designers and programmers in several states.

You are now ready to choose a web developer that you can comfortably say will be there throughout the design process. You are on your way to joining the Internet community and promoting your business online generating new customers and sales.

But, before you call your designer, make sure you have created a web development plan. This will help you not only design the page but talk to the designer armed with information. They'll be impressed with your knowledge and preparedness.

Good Luck.