

Six Things You Should Know When Looking for a Web Designer

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Most business people know they need a website but have no clue how to go about putting one together. How do they even find a web designer? Are web designers the same as graphic artists? Do they need to hire a separate person for that? Do web designers help with writing the web site? So many questions; where do you go to find the answers?

Here's a quick guide to how to find a qualified web designer to create your site:

1. **Have an idea of what you need on your website.** How will you use your website? Many people use theirs as the main link to your company. Others use their site as a complement: You've met me, now check out my site. How many pages do you want on your site? What will each page say? Do you have any ideas about how you want each page to look?
2. **Freelancer or large firm?** Do you want to work with a freelance developer or a large firm? There are positives and negatives to each. A larger firm has employees with varied skills and a large body of work; however, they often charge more and tend to be more bureaucratic. A smaller firm, or a single freelancer, usually offers lower prices and better one-on-one communication.
3. **Referrals.** If someone you know recommends a web developer, check it out. Find out what it was that person liked about them and see if that developer meets your needs. Don't let the fact that the developer isn't local be a stumbling block. The Internet and telephone are wonderful inventions.
4. **Check out the developer's site.**
 - a. **Its look.** Is it attractive? Easy to navigate? Organized logically? Are there any broken links (links that don't work)? How quickly does the site load? Look at the portfolio on the site. Do you like what you see? Does he or she only design websites or can they do software development and database design? The best developers know how to create a site, maintain it, market it and promote it. Does this developer do it all?
 - b. **Testimonials.** What do the customer testimonials say? If person's full name or company name is included, contact them and ask what type of experience they have had with the developer.
 - c. **Communication.** Don't just rely on email to contact the web developer. Speak to them directly to gauge their personality and see if they are willing to bounce ideas between the two of you. Ask as many questions as possible and see if you like the answers. For example, Who will own the website? (**Hint:** it should be you— not the web developer or a third party). Who will maintain it, and at what cost?
5. **Find the best price.** Many web developers don't post their prices online, but that shouldn't stop you. Contact them directly. Give them a few parameters or specifications, so they can provide an accurate estimate, which you then can

either accept, refuse or counter offer. The developer also has the option to reject your counter offer. You'll also need to know when the project costs are due, if a percentage of the payment is due up front, and your payment options.

6. **Read the fine print.** Insist on a contract; it protects you and the developer. Make certain the contract includes:
 - a. Deadline guarantees
 - b. Developer's availability
 - c. How much more you'll pay for changes to the project
 - d. If the developer will take care of any programming bugs you may find once the work is done
 - e. Again, that you are named as the website owner.
 - f. The computer language it is to be written in.
 - g. All legal and compliance issues if you are a part of a regulated industry.

Once you've chosen the web developer you are going to use, make sure you keep the lines of communication open. Remember, you are the one who is going to have to live with the website, so make certain it's what you want and represents your business the way you've always envisioned it would.

For more information on how to find the right web developer contact Warren Schultz at warren@tapsolutions.net or call him at 818-281-7628.