

getting the right start:



what you
need to know
before hiring a
website design
company



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1 - Purpose:

This paper is an outline of a series of steps with one goal in mind -- for you to have a website designer build an effective website incorporating your goals.

Before beginning the process, it's important to determine the purpose of your website.

Do you want to sell products online? Are you planning to improve brand loyalty, provide information or perhaps just to keep up with your competition?

Be careful of website designers who promise incredible results. Results will vary - most things aren't a success overnight. Like all forms of advertising, it takes time to see results. Be a little cautious about any great success stories, as they will often be exaggerated. Don't expect to put a website in place and to sit back and have the sales pour in overnight -- there is a little more to it than that!

Focus on results, not technology, tricks, or jargon.

Your Website Designer should talk business and market share, not techie promises. A common approach to a new client is to talk of what the future will be, of how wonderful all the new technology will be. The key phrase here is "will be" - anyone predicting the future is looking in a crystal ball that changes every day. This might be nice for a psychic hotline, but death for a business.

Many website designers will explain different Internet technologies like video, sound, phone, music and so on. Watch out for designers that use new technology just because it's there. Ask yourself - Is this going to help promote my business and help my clients? Many of these new technologies require plug-ins (extra software that must be downloaded) or newer browsers, limiting your potential audience.

Discover a Website Designer's skills by what others say.

The true measure of any business is what its clients and reviewers say about it. Don't fall for the assumption that any old Website Designer will do - read what clients and objective outsiders say about the company. Word of mouth is your most powerful ally when choosing a Website Designer.

Look carefully at the Website Designer's own site. Watch out for the old line - "We are too busy designing websites to do our own site." Don't believe it. A comment like that wouldn't make sense at all in any other area of business. Would you hire a builder that lived in a small old shack because they were too busy doing work for others?

A good Website Designer combines excellent graphic skills, programming ability, content development and knowledge of how the Web works. Make sure you get this combination and don't settle for less. The look of the page, making the text easy to read and navigate around, and a simple focus on your business's bottom line are the most important requirements of any website.

Find a Website Designer with a business plan, not just production.

What is the process taken by the company to create your website? Do they customize your site or just put your company details into a template? The website that is unique wins out over those thrown up just for the sake of being on the Web. Your Website Designer should look at what you have to offer, make suggestions to present it that work with your current efforts, and provide the simplest design in a cost effective approach. Don't settle for less!

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2 - What To Ask Before Hiring A Website Design Company

We've prepared a set of questions to ask a website design company. We hope this information helps you make a more informed decision before you invest time and money in a website project.

Note: There are no website designer licensing requirements and no minimum training or experience standards. It's up to you to ask the right questions. Don't be hesitant to get the answers before making a financial commitment.

1. What steps are involved in creating a website?

Each website design company will answer this question differently. However, a typical project encompasses the following steps:

- Step 1 - Planning Phase
- Step 2 - Graphic Design Phase
- Step 3 - Web Design / Coding Phase
- Step 4 - Testing Phase
- Step 5 - Launch Phase

2. What do I need to supply you to get started?

The appropriate response should be something like this: "I have an extensive questionnaire to go over with you which will help us to create a powerful Internet strategy that will optimize your return on investment."

3. What is your average turnaround time per project?

Depending on the scope of the project, most websites should not require more than two to three weeks from the commencement of the project.

4. Are your website designs created specifically for your clients or are they pre-made templates?

Many people are against using pre-made templates. Others don't understand why you would use anything else. A custom website will pay for itself. This is because a custom site is really the only way to truly and accurately feature the uniqueness of your company. In addition, the programming code of a template may be years old and therefore may not perform as expected.

5. Can you show me websites that your company designed?

An established website design company will be able to provide references along with a portfolio of a sampling of its work.

6. Are your designs tested for multi-browser and cross-platform compatibility?

A website design company should at least create their websites so that the content and layout looks relatively the same on various browsers as well as other operating environments. Simply ask the website design company how and if they test to ensure consistency.

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7. Will you find/supply images for my site?

In the absence of a client having actual images, a website design company would utilize stock photography. An experienced designer will have access to a large inventory of stock photography so that there is no chance of copyright infringement.

8. In addition to website design, do you offer web hosting and search engine marketing services?

Make sure the web design company offers these additional services in-house so that they that can take full responsibility for your website project at all times.

9. Do you offer maintenance training?

A design company should have in place a training curriculum to provide training to assist in maintenance of the website. Additionally, they should offer maintenance packages for updates to the website.

10. How long have you been in business?

Longevity is important as a service provider. You should choose a company that has been in business for a number of years and has established a reputation within the business community.

11. Is this your full-time job?

Many would debate on this issue; but we believe you're either an Internet professional or you are not. Part-timers in this business have other commitments that demand their time -- at the worst possible times! Always work with full-time Internet professionals because they will be accessible when you need them.

12. Who owns the website once it is completed?

You should be sure that you own the intellectually property rights to the entire website which includes all programming, text and images, etc.

3 - Why Every Business Should Have a Website

As a business owner trying to find the most effective way to reach new customers/clients and/or stay in touch with current ones is an ongoing challenge. Incorporating a website as part of an overall marketing strategy will prove invaluable.

Consider these ways in which a website will contribute to the bottom line success of every business.

Save on Marketing Costs:

When prospecting for new customers, instead of sending an entire media kit, numerous clippings, case histories, etc., simply direct your potential customers to your business website. Include on your website; projects, testimonials, awards, special promotions, etc. -- the possibilities are endless.

Better Customer Relationships:

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A business that has its own website will have a vehicle of building new customer relations and bettering relationships with their existing customers. Through a regular email correspondence, business owners can establish good relationships with present and future customers. Staying in touch with customers puts your business foremost in their minds when it comes time for them to purchase the type of product/service you offer.

Round the Clock Business and Service:

Through a website, business people can conduct business 24/7; 365 days a year. Posting all pertinent information on your company website -- hours of operation, location, company history, products/services offered, type of clients served, etc. saves hours in telephone time.

Global Customers:

A website will provide exposure of your business to potential customers around the world. Your business will no longer be limited geographically.

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"Website Designer.Com has to be one of the best if not the only best web design company online. They are most helpful and have no problem answering questions. An outstanding company altogether."

F.M.A. Contracting & Mechanical Construction, Inc.

"Website Designer.Com provided me with exactly what I wanted in a web site, with quick professional service.... I am extremely pleased!!!! Thank you"

Rooms To Grow

"I can't thank you enough for all of your help and hard work. The site looks great, and it is more than I imagined it could be. Again, thank you!!"

Quint's Finest Gourmet Cookies & More

"Thank you so much Website Designer.Com for making our dream come true in a very short period of time after dealing with some other webmasters for so many months."

Le Bourguignon Catering

"I do not think any other company could offer the flexibility, courtesy, professionalism and promptness of Website Designer.Com. Thank you for all your hard work and effort!"

Fiore Automotive