

# Hiring the Best Web Designers



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## **The Best Things To Look For In Web Design**

A website is another tool by which companies and individuals alike can bring their services, products or specialties to the marketplace. While this awesome way of doing business is still relatively new, it has grown into a very profitable companion to many brick and mortar stores. Some websites are strictly online, while others have both a storefront and online delivery method as well. It really does not matter what the purpose of the site is or even what the company wishes to deliver, however what does matter is how it is delivered to the public. A website, just like a retail store is the face of the business, meaning that what people see creates their first impression. Now all companies hope for a good impression, however it is more than just hoping, it should be about ensuring instead!

### **Web Designers Can Create Impressions**

A good web designer can build a site that is impressive, delivers the correct message and is easy for visitors to maneuver. This makes visitors, customers and prospects feel good about the service that they are requesting, because things work correctly for them. Just as if an individual went into a retail store and all of the jeans were in different places throughout the store and sizes were in a jumbled mess, they would become frustrated as well as consider the store a poor operation. They might not ever seek the services of that store again, which can hurt retail sales greatly! The same stands true for a poorly designed website, one that is not organized well or does not deliver what it is supposed to. Remember consumers are spending their hard earned money and they want to feel that the company is an expert in whatever field they are shopping, so if the website is of poor quality they will likely assume the same about the products or services.

### **What To Look For**

A web designer should be someone that designs websites for a living. Not a person that likes to play on the computer or has set up a blog or two. From professional experience to the ability to understand search engines and create the message that the company is sending, designers should be able to provide samples. This is commonly known as their portfolio; so that prospective clients can view they work. This is a good form of advertising for the web designer, as well as tool for the client to ensure that the workmanship and quality is what they are looking for.

### **A Good Web Design Addresses The Core Functions**

A typical website is one that is made up of images, texts and informational sources that cater to those searching for a particular product or service. In order to deliver those results it is a complex make up of many things. A good web designer is more than a person that knows how

to make a webpage look good, they are skilled individuals that are able to take those creative ideas and build a well organized website to meet the mission of the business. While there are a number of things that could be considered when searching for a good web designer, it is advisable to look to the core functions of what a good website should be.

### **Usability & Visitor Friendly**

In order to obtain a user friendly site a web designer must first organize the site as well as the content. Without organization it can be quite difficult to find one's way around a site. Since information is the reason that most people visit websites this is important. That is the absolute beauty of the internet, information is right there at consumers finger tips. Make sure during the review of the designers portfolio that the flow and organization of other sites that they have created is well organized and flows appropriately. Other factors in a sites ability to be user friendly are the navigation system that links properly and works without fail. Web users become very distracted and frustrated when they click the navigation bar to find that the link is broken or takes them to a completely different area! The reliability of a website is extremely important as well, the site should be properly structured so that it loads correctly, every time and does not make a user sit there waiting for too long.

### **The Appearance**

A site must look good, provide good graphics and have a pleasing color scheme to catch the eye and hold the attention of visitors. Remember this is the first impression given to a visitor so it must be a good one. The web designer should be one that is creative and has a flair for delivering an aesthetically pleasing site, which also accommodates or matches the theme of the site. For example, the appearance could be compared to a catchy slogan that businesses are associated with. Remember to also take the advice of the web designer for appearance suggestions because they are well versed in how sites work, as well as the impression that they give.

### **A Broken Promise Of A Web Designer**

Web designing firms are in the business of creating websites and making a good profit off of doing so. Sometimes firms and individual web designers promise things that they simply cannot produce or may even be impossible. Unless they are working for a client that has vast website and internet marketing experience, they generally get by with these grandiose promises, until they belly up a few months down the road. Information and knowledge is key in avoiding large hypes or sales pitches that promise the ratings of a national retailer simply by building a website from scratch! Read on for more details about things that shouldn't be promised by a web designer.

### **What Web Designers Should Never Promise**

Web designers can build a grand site, achieve all goals and make it look professional all at the same time. There are, however some limitations to what any designer can do regardless of their experience, portfolio or references. These are things that are out of their control such as internet ranking, and that is one promise that is sometimes “guaranteed” by designers. While they can optimize the site for a good ranking, they cannot guarantee that the site will be in the top rankings. These designers do this so that they can establish themselves as a higher authority or expert in the hopes of gaining business!

### **A Good Web Designer Admits Limitations**

A good web designer will admit that they have limitations as to what they can do. It may be with the programming of advanced site lingo, particular graphics or authoring content, however they should be able to admit that there are things that they may need to source out or have another professional complete. Because there are so many facets of a website this is where a larger design firm sometimes supersedes individual contractors, because they have a variety of expertise in house. Some designers that work independent have built a large database of other professionals that assists with all their building projects, therefore making a great team!

Finding the right web designer or firm is about being comfortable with their abilities, experience and with them as a person. If it is someone that does not have time to listen or does not come up with creative thoughts or ideas in regards to the site, they might not be the correct designer for the job. The best way to find the right person for the job is look to their work, experience and most of all their listening abilities!

### **A Project Manager Or A Web Designer**

There are many projects and details that go into building a website. This means that a good web designer is aware of all those details and maintains them accordingly. Because it is not only constructing the site, but also finding the right information, developing good content, creating the internal workings of the site and much more. For some, this description seems like a project manager instead of a web designer and in some sense that description or assumption may fit. There are some major differences though; a project manager alone would certainly not have the expertise or ability to create a professionally designed website. A web designer on the other hand does have the ability to multitask and create that site! So, how can understanding the many jobs and details of a web site designer help find the best one? That is the purpose of this article, so that businesses and individuals might find the right designer for their specific needs.

### **A Group Of Professionals**

When interviewing web designers it is a good idea to ask them several different questions. Not only about their experience, cost and how they plan on taking ideas to turn them into a wonderfully designed site, but also more in-depth questions. Questions such as do they build the entire site themselves, are they proficient in HTML, graphics embedding, search engine optimization and so on? Do they have a team that helps them with any of these jobs, and if so

what are their qualifications, are they experienced or just whoever is not busy at the time? These are all important questions and a good web designer should have the time to answer these questions for a prospective client. A few of the professionals to ask about include the following:

- Writer for content
- Graphics specialist
- CSS file specialist
- Marketing specialist

### **Learning The Scoop**

Because most businesses interview or speak with many different web designers and firms when they are looking, it is a good idea to take notes. Not only will these notes help recall specifics about each designer, it can also provide information that will allow for comparison and additional questions. One web designer might freely offer the fact that their company provides affiliate marketing built into the site or that all their sites are highly optimized through content and keywords. This would allow a person interviewing the next few web designers to inquire about those very topics, plus that way the best price and services can be compared!

### **A Web Designer With All Those Web Awards Must Be Good**

Looking for a web designer can yield a ton of results and a lot of great work. Some can automatically be ruled out for the expense, others for 'shotty' work, but what about those that look good, and have a ton of web awards? They must be an excellent designer and full of knowledge to get all those awards and have a site that looks so great, right? In all honesty, it is difficult to tell! Just because a site looks good, and they have awards on their site doesn't necessarily mean that they are better than others or good at all! Granted, that sounds scary, because now the mind switches to the question of, how does a person tell if the web designer is a good one or not?

### **About Webby Awards**

The first thing that a business should know when they are searching for someone to build their website is that all those impressive emblems are not always indicative of an award won! When a person sees a certificate or won award they automatically think that a group of people or experts has awarded the top or best, however webby awards oftentimes work a little different! Many of these awards can be obtained by the site owner by simply linking or signing up for that service, therefore winning the award. That means that just about anyone could start up a web design company, sign up with the award company and then proudly display that award emblem. So, just be careful and base decisions on more in-depth information, do not let the award be the determining factor alone!

### **Comparison Shopping**

Shoppers compare pricing for electronics, appliances and vehicles, so why not when they are looking for a company to build their website? Competition can drive down prices and allow a business to get a professional website designer for less. Make sure however when comparison shopping to ensure that all the specifics are the same. Compare apples to apples, because cheaper is not always better. Do not let pricing be the only determining factor either, look for reputation, technical experience, past work as well as a good understanding of the integral working of a website and especially in relation to the internet.

Finding a good web designer can sometimes take a little work and even speaking to several. Not only should their work be good, they should also be willing to visit with the person requesting a site, work within their budget and give good creative ideas based on the information that they are supplied with!

## **After Built Who Maintains & Updates Websites**

Setting up a new business is a time of questions, research, a learning curve and new discovery. Most individuals are not well versed or highly educated in web site design, nor do they want to be. Their first goal is to bring products, services or information to customers, not worry with the daily running of a website! That leads to a critical question that usually goes unnoticed until a few weeks after the site is up and running. After the design and building, the work is not completed and in fact many would say that it is just beginning.

## **Maintenance & Site Building**

A well built website will have a few features designed into it that helps search engines recognize the text, content and graphics of the site. This is to ensure that those surfing the internet can readily find the site when they plug in terms that are relevant. There are a number of ways in which that web designers can optimize the sites that they build, but almost all use a system of fresh and unique content. This is by far one of the cheapest tools for traffic boosting alive today, not to say that it does not need to be coupled with other marketing schemes, but it is one of the most demanding. The reason for the demand is the fact that “unique and fresh” content does not stay new for long. In fact, once a visitor or customer has read it once it becomes old to them; the search engine is much the same way, since it is looking for new information constantly. So, that leaves the question of who maintains content, as well as other upkeep, once the site is built. The answer depends on the terms of the contract between the site owner and web designer. Some agree to include maintenance and marketing for a period of time, while others only build the site.

## **Having A Web Master**

For those that want a more hands off approach to running a website, they need to ensure that they hire a web master. These individuals maintain the daily workings of the website, ensuring that all the pages are validated, codes are correct as well as pages are loading appropriately.

Many web designers provide like services, however it generally comes with a monthly fee. Be sure to check with the designer to ensure what they offer and if they will include some maintenance as well.

## **Choosing Between Web Builders For A Great Site**

Choosing between the many different providers can be a chore in itself. Most companies or individuals believe that they have taken the hardest step which is putting themselves out there, by starting a business! Then they begin looking through all the web designers to find the right one and soon realize that the choice is not an easy one. There are many things that make the choice difficult, since many of the providers are well qualified and their portfolios detail their vast experiences. Searching through all of those professionals can be tiresome, so it is important to determine a priority list, what is important and other factors such as allotted budget to help comb through those many firms and designers.

## **Considering An Off Shore Firm Or Designer**

The blossoming of the internet has allowed professionals from around the world to offer services of all kinds. Of these are web design and while many of the off shore companies have well qualified individuals there are many other factors to take into consideration before making a final decision. Hiring an offsite provider or company can produce a good website and at a good rate in some cases, however there are some fundamental barriers that can cause serious troubles. First and foremost most of the overseas providers speak little English, and then it is often very broken. Now it might not seem like a big deal, but when it comes to communicating what is needed and understanding it can become very frustrating. Another issue with hiring providers or designers from overseas is the fact that the content and writings are commonly based around their own language, meanings and even clichés. This can make the site hard to follow, incorrect language or at minimum very poor, is that the message that a site owner wants to send?

## **What Experience Too Look For**

Most web designers will readily detail their experience as well as provide samples of their previous work. This is generally presented through a list of built websites, references, education and specific skills that are possessed. There may be many skills that are listed, but here are a few to look for: design, graphic design, content writing, HTML experience, copywriting skills, Ecommerce skills, SEO and marketing skills, others might display programs such as Flash for multimedia integration. These are certainly not all of the skills that most web designers possess, because there are many more of which are highly technical, however just a few to simplify the search!



## **Design Versus Development & The Web Designer**

Web designers might refer to design and development when talking with a company about their website needs. Though the terms are related, they are fundamentally different. Design refers to the appearance or looks of the site, and development refers to how the site works or functions. Again they may seem close, but it is important to be on the same page with the web designer. The less work the designer has to do, whether it be explaining, finding graphics or any of the other many jobs, the less their web site building fee will climb!

### **No DIY (Do It Yourself) Site Projects**

Do it yourself website building can be tempting. After all there are companies that provide templates, hosting and can have a business up and running with a new site quickly. While some of these sites might look acceptable, underneath those colors and images, are they really? The lack of programming and experience can cause errors within the site, meaning a range of problems. Nothing compares to the education, skills and experience of a good web designer, so avoid the DIY temptations! Cheaper or saving money is not always the best route to take, especially when it is something as important as the first impression of potential customers!

### **What The Site Owner Can Do**

A site owner does have a very important job even though they shouldn't build their own site! The most important job of the owner is to have a clear view or outline of the site, size, what is needed and the overall purpose of the site. This should be completed before the initial consultation. Here are a few questions to work through to devise that outline.

- How big will the site need to be?
- How many pages should the site have?
- What kind of site; static, dynamic, E-commerce?
- Is the site meant as a long term or short term site?
- Will the designer furnish graphics or the owner?
- What about marketing, content management and maintenance?

These are all questions that a business owner can use to help prepare for what they want in a website and cut down on the work load of the web designer. Having a clear picture and outline of the website, helps tremendously and also ensures that their needs are met. It may mean learning a little more about websites and looking at others to determine the best route, but it will be well worth it in the long run.

## **What To Look For In A Web Designers Portfolio**

Looking at a portfolio to choose a web designer is a good way to narrow one's search. It is however more than just a few pages that look good though, there are a number of other things to look for and consider. This is especially true for those individuals or sites that have the same design in their portfolio, the only changes are a couple of the graphics, colors and business name. Since not every business wants the same design or look it is important to find a professional that can create unique sites based on ideas, not changing up a template. Almost anyone can build a website, but can they design?

### **A Few Technical Understandings**

Building a website must be more than putting a few graphics on a couple of pages, slapping a title up there and calling it good. There are many things to consider about those graphics, text and how it will affect the sites overall internet rating. The graphics should look good on the site for a good visual appearance; however it should not hinder the opening of the page or load incorrectly. A good web designer will know the correct balance of graphics, yet does not provide too much bloat that causes the page to load too slowly. This is something to look for when reviewing samples or previous sites that the designer has built. SEO is very important, but it does not need to be included in the graphics or flash because search engines will not pick them up, plus many have trouble loading graphics presented in flash. All of the building programs such as FrontPage and Dreamweaver will cause site pages to load too slowly when they are too heavily populated with graphics!

### **Good Representation & Organization**

When looking at a web designer's portfolio ensures that all their work is well organized and presented in a logical manner. In other words are things laid out in a manner that the average person would be able to maneuver and find them? The site needs to have a good flow to it as well as every single page, with no exception. Make sure that all links, text boxes and advertisements work on their sample sites, those broken links or faulty workings can lead visitors away, because of the hassle. If you would stay on the site and think it was a good one, than the designer did a good job, otherwise look elsewhere.

## **Technical Terms To Familiarize With In Search Of A Web Designer**

Many of the terms that surround website design are quite complicated and the average person would not know what they were much less how to ask questions about them. Some web designers will freely use these terms leaving clients in the dark about what they are talking about. Now this is not a suggestion that those looking for a good web designer should take a class on the topic, but having a good working knowledge can help choose a designer that speaks the right lingo! Otherwise they could be talking in gibberish and no one would be the wiser.

## **The Language Of Websites**

The language used to make the website work is sometimes referred to as the markup language. One of the most commonly used is the HTML, which is the language that text is distinguished from programming language. Basically it is the computers way of knowing what to do with the text that is entered. Without getting too technical this is the semantics that provide the desired effects on the webpage based on the information entered. Now some web designers have a good grasp on that language, while others use templates that do the work for them. Templates are acceptable, however to have a professional and customized site it is important that they be well versed in computer language!

The style sheet language is another area of web programming that a designer might mention. One of the most common is the CSS, which stands for Cascading Style Sheet. This again is the computers language and details how structured documents are presented. There is definitely a good way and a bad way in regards to the way by which these items are presented and without a good working knowledge it can cause troubles with font, colors, organization and others. Think about it this way, this is the computers rules of knowing how the information is presented, such the visual factors.

## **About Multi Media**

Another very common area that a web designer will speak of is multimedia programming. The designer needs to be well versed in this area because this is oftentimes the backbone of interest for visitors. Multi Media is generally carried out through the use of Flash or Silverlight to bring text, images, videos and others to life on the site. This is not something that is easy so the web designer should have a good working knowledge as well as experience or it can create trouble with loading the site as well as given an overall poor performance.

## **Guide To Sourcing Web Designers**

The ability to source or hire a good web designer comes through understanding and having an idea of what all is involved. Not only are there many decisions involved in the building of a site, but many technical aspects as well. In order for both the designer and client to be able to come to a good grasp of the type of site that is needed it is a good idea to learn a little more about how it works. It is difficult to communicate effectively with the designer if there is a lack of knowledge. For that reason this article will detail a few pieces of information that is good to take to the table or interview.

## **Different Types Of Sites**

There are different types of sites; they range in size as well as fundamental functioning. The need for size generally comes from the type of business and the goals for the company. For those looking to display an online advertisement, a business card site might work best. This type of site generally consists of a single page that is comparable to a flyer. The cost for the

business card site ranges, but is generally very affordable. A brochure site is a larger site that may consist of 4 or 5 pages. Along with information the site may contain graphics and other user friendly tools. These sites are more in depth and can arrange from hundreds to thousands depending on what the client desires.

### **Ecommerce Sites – A Topic Of Their Own**

An Ecommerce site is one that is designed like an online shop or store. It might provide catalogue ordering of thousands of products to look choose from. Most of these sites are very intense, because of the many categories, carts, check out process and payment handling. Web designers must have a good background to develop this type of site, because programming for the Ecommerce site can be great to say the least! Now, some Ecommerce sites are huge while others only offer a few products, so this should be discussed with the designer during the interview process.

### **Choosing Between Static & Dynamic Sites**

A dynamic site is one that is interactive and has information that changes on a consistent basis. These sites allow the company or owner to provide news, messages or product updates and upload to the site. A static site on the other hand is one that does not change, for example a company page that details contact information, mission or history of the company. Most sites are dynamic; however knowing the difference can help more effective communication with the web designer.

### **The Importance Of Web Designers Priorities**

As with any profession, individuals often times overlook some things and spend too much time on something else, no matter how good they are at their job. Now a good team of builders that works with one another to ensure that a website is complete might forego these issues, however when searching for a web designer or team to complete a website, one should also question their priorities as well as feelings about issues involving function and marketing. It can make a world of difference, and here are the reasons why.

### **Form Versus Function**

Both the form and the function of the website are very important. If they are not working hand and hand, then the site is not running at optimal capacity. The form of the site is the basic workings of the website, how it is designed, displays text, graphics and other contents. These things are very technical as the computer works off of an entire different language. These programming languages range from every task that the computer runs to the ability to display images and other media such as videos. The web designer commonly gets caught up in the technical aspects, with good right because they are the overall site, however if they leave out the function it can prove detrimental to the business owner. The functioning of the site is how it is displaying the information, products or other issues to the World Wide Web. This is primarily

through marketing that is integrated into the site. It might be through keyword driven articles, affiliate marketing or banner links to other sites, however those need to be there. After all the site can be the most professional and properly site designed, but if consumers cannot find it, what good is it?

### **Integrating A Good Balance**

Some believe that function follows form and vice versa, but this is not always true. Even when a site owner pours hundreds of dollars into the site after it is designed it can still not be receiving the attention or visitors that it needs because creativity of the design has cost some of the ability to market the site. A good way to achieve a healthy balance is to ensure that the web designer understand how important the marketing embedded into the entire site truly is. Ask them if they combine the two and specifically ask how, what they do to bring that balance. This is a good way to learn more about their thoughts as well as determine where priorities rest.

### **Finding The Best Web Designer Available**

Building a website is a big job and something that should not be done haphazardly or without the correct knowledge and tools. The site will likely have problems ranging from minor issues to full blown glitches, if the designer is not professional or does not have a good understanding. Now that puts more pressure on those that are looking for a good web designer, but it is truly in their best interest to ensure that their choice is one of knowledge and professionalism.

### **Basic Site Knowledge**

Might sound too obvious, but a good web designer is someone that has a good understanding of the inner working of the web. Now the next questions may come with how to find out that information. Most businesses have their basic experience and knowledge listed; however speaking with them is a good way to find out more about their true understanding of building a website and all that goes into it. Don't be afraid to ask questions, ask about images and how they determine the graphics ratio for page loading time. Is unobtrusive Java Script used? Or is the HTML validated the way that it should be, as well as what tools are used to check for errors in the HTML, or pages? This validation process is finding any errors that are in the inner workings of the page, meaning that some part of the process would not work correctly. That can cost reputation as well as visitors, so it is important that a web designer have safety precautions for internal errors.

### **Personally Test It Out**

While interviewing web designers or firms ask for active websites or references that will speak to you about their current site and experiences. Another way to obtain this information is to do a basic search engine search for the company or designer in question, find jobs that they have completed. Contact these individuals to ask them about their website, any concerns, complaints or issues that they have had or are currently experiencing with the designers workmanship. Also

try out all the links and site for yourself. Take a look at the website, visit the pages and ensure that it is something that meets your standards as well as goals. Taking the time to do a little research can keep a company from wasting money on those that are not true web designers. Again any one can make a site look cute or program a few goodies into one, however true experience and professionalism will prevail any day!

## **Finding A Web Designer That Delivers**

Having a website built is not a cheap feat. Because they are labor intensive and completed by talented professionals the fees or costs are commonly reflective. Consulting by a large firm can lead to site building expenses well into the thousands quickly. Of course the more that an owner desires in their site can greatly influence the overall cost. Here are a few tips on searching for a good web designer that will provide excellent quality for a reasonable rate. Taking a little time to search for a web designer that has a good reputation and provides professional work, while still at an affordable rate can be done; it just takes a little looking!

### **Do A Little Searching**

Search the internet for websites that are like the one that needs to be built. The search does not necessarily have to be the same field or niche, because it is the design, appearances and other features that an owner might want to accomplish with their own site. When a site is found that is liked, look for the name or contact information for the design firm or web builder. It is generally displayed on the site, so it shouldn't be too hard to find. Be sure to take notes about designs, features, lay outs and appearances that might be something that would be good on the proposed site. Features and different themes can be taken from a variety of sites and combined into one, just find the contact information for each!

### **Recommendations & Referrals**

Speaking with other individuals and companies that have experience with web building is a good way to get a good recommendation as well. Since these individuals have dealt with a particular firm or web designer they can give information as to the site, professionalism, cost as well as the overall transaction. If they had a good experience with the web designer it might be something to look into further. This is the best way to find a web designer, because a person simply cannot get any better than first hand, honest opinions.

### **Directories Online**

There are a number of online directories giving the names of web designers and website building firms. Some of these provide opinions and even reviews of the designers so that potential clients can read through them. Researching what others think about the company, their abilities and work can help make an informed decision. Take time, look around and do not make a hasty decision, it is too important of a decision!

## **Best Way To Find A Good Web Designer Is Communication**

Communication is a vital part of any business agreement or deal. Without clear communication and an open discussion about what all parties expect it can lead to unhappiness and unfulfilled goals in the end. The best way to avoid these types of situations is to speak freely in the beginning and once an agreement has been reached, put it in writing. A good web designer, one that is professional will have a contract that they will ask their clients to sign. It simply spells out all the terms, agreements and other specifics so that each party can be protected. Not only is this a good idea it can also save a great deal of hassle, money and lost time. Here is a little more about finding a good web designer and what should be detailed before any work is begun.

### **What A Written Agreement Should Include**

Many web designers already have a legal contract that they work from, however once in a while professionals do not require contracts. That doesn't mean that they are not good at what they do, however even if they do not require a contract, you should be sure that all terms are put into writing and signed by everyone involved. These contracts would of course include the parties that were involved and the roles that each is agreeing too. Other things should be spelled out, such as the rate for web design and what that rate includes. Is it just the building of the site, or is there content included as well? How many pages does that price include, are the graphics included in that price or a separate fee? Leave no stone unturned when detailing what all is included in the package, because that helps the designer know as well as the client as to what is expected and what the entire final site will include.

### **What About Paying For Freebies**

Services and tools that are found online and would be free otherwise should be excluded from the charges of a web designer. This would be over payment and is completely unnecessary. Now there are tools and products that might be given away online, however the placement or installation on the website would be a service that would not be free. A client wouldn't expect a web designer to implement these freebies for no charge, so just ensure that the terms are clearly defined to minimize confusion.

## **The Importance Of A Web Designer With Marketing Experience**

Sometimes web designers get so caught up in the programming and look of the site that they forget other important aspects. Now some might say that the web designer is not responsible for marketing, but many clients disagree. Designers should be able to build the site with the knowledge that marketing tools are needed for site survival. That keeps their client from spending additional money reworking the site to be more marketing friendly.

### **One Stop Shopping**

Some clients do not mind splitting the many needs for a site, however most prefer the one stop shopping approach. This makes it easier and the marketing can be integrated into the design.

Whether it is SEO (keywords) optimization, affiliate marketing or a different type, a web designer should build a marketing friendly site. Many of the design firms have many professionals that create a make ready site for their clients. It may be more expensive; however it is all done and no need to find several different providers or professionals to complete the site.

### **Get References**

Most site designers or companies will provide a list of references. Most prospective clients will ask these references about the design, navigation and overall experience with the designer, however there are other questions that should be asked. Prospective clients should ask about the marketing that was integrated in to the site. How it transferred to them from the web designer, was the process smooth or troublesome? What types of marketing were integrated into the site, were there additional charges or was it part of the package? If any content was written for the site, was it SEO friendly, and professionally written? These are all questions that can be asked of the given references to get a better idea of the work, experience and abilities of the designer.

### **Get A Quote**

Lower pricing can definitely be an enticing factor. After all saving money on the site building means a bigger budget for another project. While it might work out that way, chances are that it will not. The design, programming or content may greatly suffer so clients should look for a good value, but also a good service. No one wants a cheap site, there is a great deal riding on the quality of services, and sometimes that means spending a few extra bucks. That doesn't however mean that a person or company should not comparison shop, just be sure not to trade quality for less money!

## **Things To Look For When Hiring A Web Designer**

Having a guide of things that are important, when looking for a web designing firm, can help a business owner make the right choices. There are many providers and most have excellent portfolios as well as experience, so using a series of questions or things that are important can help ease the process. Read the following bits of information and remember them when searching through the many web design professionals. The choice does not have to be a painful one!

### **Experience, The More The Better**

Experience is something that cannot be replace with anything else. The longer that a person has been doing a particular task or job, the more that they have seen and understand. That does not mean that a person that does not have years of experience is not proficient, however they have not worked through as many projects, or dealt with as many problems. When comparing web designers look to see how much experience they have, what kind of training they have as well as some of the items or programs that they have worked with. Of course



those that have more experience will have a better looking resume, however be sure to view them completely! Experience does not always mean that the client will be happy with the work, but it is a good place to start.

### **Professional Content & Graphics**

When looking at the portfolio or samples of designers be sure to look for the professionalism of the site. Can a person readily look at the website and determine whether the content and graphics were designed by a friend of a friend or a professional? There are many websites that have been comprised by a friend or cousin with a few computer graphics, but the aim is to have professional graphics that give a hint of expert in them. Content is the same way, read through the text on the site, whether it is articles or the companies informational spill. Is the content professional, or is riddled with misspelled words, fragments or improper parts of speech? Remember if the web designer is using this site in their portfolio, they are saying that it is their best work; make sure that their best is good enough!

Take the time to research and review websites before hiring anyone. It is a good idea to speak with the web designer about the proposed site in depth. Get their feelings, ideas and what they believe might be better! Web designers should also provide excellent customer service as well!

### **Finding A Good Web Designer Without Spending A Fortune**

Web designers are talented professionals that combine their technical knowledge with an artistic flair to create a medium between a business and their owner. Because these individuals are highly talented their fees generally reflect it. There is a happy medium though, a good web designer at prices that the average individual can afford. Now they may not be the large firms that have all the webby awards behind them, but still excellent designers that provide good work! Finding these professionals is much like searching for any other type of services; it is a matter of comparing, researching and making the right choice with your goals in mind!

### **A Budget Helps Narrow The Search**

Before searching for a web designer it is a good idea to have a budget in mind. There are a few actions that need to be taken before consulting with the designer, of those include finding a domain name, detailing what type of site is needed and how much is in the budget for the website. It might seem that this is a no-brainer, however many people find a web designer and cease contact to compile the information that they need, therefore wasting precious time. The designer needs a good idea of what is needed, the type of site, how it should be set up as well as the level of technicality, so if this is taken care of beforehand it speeds the process and also allows them to give a more accurate quote.

### **Factors In Choosing A Web Designer**

There are many web designers, but they are not all created equally. Some mistakenly think that a computer whiz would do fine at designing a website because after all they know all there is to

know about the internet and working of the computer. This couldn't be further from the truth, because while these individuals do need the technical knowhow they also must be well versed in a variety of other areas. Along with artistic creativity they need to have an understanding of the internet lingo, as well as HTML code, content optimization, graphic design, research and much more. A good way to determine their understanding and experience is to ask them as well as review their work. Every professional web designer will have a portfolio or samples of their past work, for potential customers to review. Make sure the pages load correctly, look good, do what they are suppose to as well as have a good organized theme!

## **Tips For Finding A Proven Web Designer**

One of the most important aspects of looking for a good web designer is to determine whether they have proven their abilities or not. There is typically a great deal of money that is laid out on the design and implementation of a website, so proven results is the best way to ensure that money is not wasted. This might sound like an easy task, however what some fail to realize is that establishing credibility and a proven track record can sometimes be difficult with all the fluff on the internet. There are a few tips that can help individuals, business owners and others looking to establish themselves on the web find the right individual or firm to design their website though. While there is no "set guidelines" or formula to finding a good web designer, history, reputation and the fine print should always be factored in.

### **The Internet Search**

Without having a web designer recommended by a coworker or friend the next best way to find one is through an internet search. Now the search should be specific, maybe even pertaining to the proposed niche or subject of the site. That way the results will return accurate or like returns to what is needed. Now, this is where the search can become confusing because there are tons of web designers, firms and other related topics that will appear. All claim to be the best; some claim to be the cheapest and others claim a website that has top Google results! The best thing to do is not get caught up in all the hype, instead look through the site, and look for samples as well as references. If the work looks like something of interest, than check references and speak with others that have used the website building services in the past.

### **The Package & Site**

Next, request a quote. This is where all information, vision for the site and specifics are detailed. This will allow the professional to give an accurate quote. Make sure that what is included is detailed, that way there are no surprises! It is also a good idea to ask whether the quote is based on the number of pages or the entire building of the site, as this is sometimes a huge source of confusion for consumers. There are generally contracts, so make sure to read the fine print, look for additional fees, restrictions and guarantees before signing on!

## **The Resume Of A Web Designer**

Web designers either work for design firms or they have branched out to provide contract services to individuals. Now those working for larger design firms generally have high skills and their qualifications are impressive. That doesn't necessarily mean that they are any better than a web designer that lacks experience, however when trusting the building of a website to anyone, their resume should be reviewed and have a few critical details included. It is often through faulty assumptions that clients feel because a person calls themselves a web designer, that they are good at what they do, chances are they provide excellent services, however potential clients should look into the background of the individual before entrusting their business ideas to them.

### **Professional Ethics**

It goes without saying that web designers should have a good and professional ethic. After all they are entrusted with secret ideas, company secrets and oftentimes the inner workings of a company when they are building a website. One of the things that any web designer should be able to add to their resume is their ability to provide confidential work to their clients. This is sometimes carried out through the signing of non-disclosure or competition contracts. These contracts are meant to protect the designer as well as the client from any information being sold, given or transferred to anyone else. This is, what is often referred to as professional ethics, and a design company or individual lacking in this professional courtesy should be tossed to the side. A good way to determine the designers or firm's professional ethics is to research their reputation, look for complaints as well as speak to past clients. Now when this is done, make sure that any information is legitimate, because the designer has competition and it is sometimes normal for them to downplay or exaggerate circumstances to win business.

### **Work Time & Expectations**

A good web designer or firm should be able to give a prospective client a good time line as to when their website will be completed. Everyone understands how important timely work is, so ensure that the designer has a good reputation as to keeping their word. Now remember there are bumps in the road, and sometimes running into problems or technical difficulties is inevitable. This can slow the process and even delay the completion of the website, however by looking at past commitments of the designer as well as what others have to say about them, it is a decent representation of how they manage their time and meet expectations.

## **Things To Speak With A Web Designer About**

There are many issues that should be discussed with a web designer. They can and should be discussed before the project ever even starts though. Take the time to familiarize with a few terms and topics regarding websites and their design to help better the conversation or interview with the designer. This actually assists the client with the things that they want in their site as well as gives the designer a good idea about what the site should be as well.

## **Accessibility & Looks**

Appearances are important for a website, the colors, graphics and layout gives visitors a first impression and more information about the site. It is however important that the appearance not hinder the accessibility of the site though. Tons of graphics and flash items might make the site look great, however if they interfere with functioning than they are not worth it. Now the experience of the web designer might be able to combine those graphics and keep the site appropriately functioning, just take their advice. Pages should load within 12 seconds, if not it can cause visitors to become frustrated, and maybe even cause them to leave the site with a poor impression of the company.

## **Bandwidth Issues**

The bandwidth refers to the measure of the amount of data that can be transferred at any given time. This was a much bigger problem before high speed internet came along, however web designers need to be able to balance the bandwidth and content of the site, making it more effective. Remember how the site functions, loads and transfers is a direct reflection of the company. In order for the site to load properly and not have errors such as timing out it is important that the web designer be well versed in balancing all the technical issues involved with the specifics of web design. Without out that knowledge and adhering to the rules of web building it can lead to problems within the site and sometimes even bigger problems such as lost information. Those things can all be devastating for companies, so choosing a good web designer should be a great priority.

Take the time to interview the web designer or firm, ask questions and for samples as well as references. Remember they want the work so it is acceptable to interview before hiring them. Also talk to the references that they give, ask questions, visit their site and find out how everything is working out for them. If there are problems or concerns be sure to address them before hand!

## **Top Skills To Look For In A Web Designer**

What is the definition of a web designer? Someone that creates websites or a person that builds creative, interactive webpage's that is pleasing to the eye? Are they professionals that have training, skills and the technical experience that it takes to deliver a company's message to others searching the internet? Because there is so much that goes into even one webpage it can be difficult to completely define the term web designer. The definition can also change from person to person because everyone has a different vision as to what a web designer means. What is apparent is that a web designer must be someone that is able to take the information and requests of a person and implement it into a website through technical development. Here are a few areas in which the designer must have a good grasp of web design and building.

## **Writing & Editorial**

The content of a website is important because it is used to deliver the messages of a company. It may be the information that gives a person instruction on ordering products or learning more about a service that is offered. This is generally the messages that a company needs to offer or advise their visitors of. The ability of the web designer to put those messages into written content is very important. Some might even say that the ability to provide good written content is more important than producing graphics in Photoshop! At minimum the web designer needs to be someone that can make their words professionally or they need to outsource that part of the building process.

### **Graphic Design Experience**

There are many different levels of graphic design, it starts at the inner and moves to the surface. Factors such as spacing, proportion and balance, grouping, and flow are extremely important. This is what visitors view and allows them to develop a feel or opinion for the site as well as the company in generally. Graphics are an important part of any website and while they vary greatly, a web designer needs to be good enough to accommodate regardless of the requests. Understanding that all sites do not have to have creative graphics, but some owners require them. So the web designer needs to be able to provide these with customized service if requested. At minimum the designer needs to be able to develop the site through their skills, but be flexible enough to incorporate the client's requests.

### **Researching Companies & Web Designers**

Attempting to locate a webs designer or site building company is not difficult, however finding the right one might be more trying. Those looking to build a site should devise a plan of what they want on their site, the budget and other specific requests before they start their search for a designer. Once this is done there are several ways to begin researching companies as well as individual web designers to find the right one for the job.

### **Where To Look**

One of the best ways to find a good reputable designer is through a recommendation. These recommendations can come from friends, coworkers or even other businesses. This is a firsthand account of the company or designers work which is a great way to find the best. If this isn't possible there are directories that house designer's information and as well as company information. Look through the directory, visit the sites of those listed and begin interviewing based on that information. The directory will often have information on the company, their contact information, link to profiles and possibly whether or not the company offers a free consultation.. This can save a great deal of money, because it is a good time to disclose ideas and find out a little more about the designer and their style. Some directories also detail designer's specialties as well as experience in certain areas or expertise. Those web designers with specialty experience understand the industry, values ethics and can help set a company apart from others, especially competitors.

## **Take A Look At The Designers Site**

A good way to determine ability, ethics and building abilities is to look at their site. Does it look good and work well? Is it slow loading or poorly organized? Again look at the designers or companies site for samples and see if they are a good fit for the project at hand. Remember design and style is a matter of taste, what one person likes another might not, so the looks are not the only way to determine if the site is a good one. Now organization and a good layout is something different. In most cases a person can look at a site and tell whether it has a good design and was professionally created, look at the provider's site for those things. A prospective web designer should portray a presence of professionalism, creativity and good customer service on their site!

## **Web Design That Is Creative, Functional & Interactive**

A web designer's ability to combine all three factors, creative, functional and interactive is one that can be considered the best of their profession. Building websites are not always easy and in fact they can be quite difficult. For those that have the expertise and experience they can take information from a client and turn it into a site that is quite impressive. Everyone has been to a site that is impressive and it really stands out in the mind even for a while to come. This is the impression that site owner wants to make on those visiting their site. This establishes interest and research has proven that when something is of interest or provides something for the visitor they are more likely to return again.

## **A Niche Or Specialty**

Most web designers have a specialty in which they do the majority of their work. Now this may not necessarily mean that they only design sites for auto dealers and would turn down a bridal business, but what they do for those sites is commonly specialized. It might be that they are best at creative design or technical programming, another designer might be best at marketing terms for the site. This is something to visit with the designer about before hand, because they can detail these specialties and whether they attempt to build the entire site or bring in other experts to help through the process. In some cases, searching for a web designer within the proposed sites niche will result in a designer that has special skills or specific knowledge about those sites.

## **Content Management**

Web designers should at least be versed in the content management or implementation when building a site. Now that designer might be very honest and detail that they are not going to write content for the site, and that will need to be completed by a professional writer. This is something that would need to be asked of the designer before they begin building the site, so that the terms are clear. Now no one expects a web designer to be a jack of all trades, however when it comes to content management and other marketing tools the site needs to

accommodate those methods. This is important and something that needs to be asked during the interview process.

A web designer should at least have a working knowledge of just about every aspect of websites. This gives them the ability to build it so that site owners can customize their site, without a great deal of hassle or reworking!

## **Web Site Planning – What A Good Designer Should Ask**

In order to build a professional site through the instruction of a client, the web designer needs to have certain information. Now when looking for web designers oftentimes information such as past sites, building experience and education come up, however few really understand what questions the web designer should be asking them!. Finding a good designer is a healthy balance between their experience and professionalism, but it should also be based on what they look to their client for, after all they are the ones that are footing the bill for the new website!

### **Context & Purpose**

A web designer should ask the purpose of the site as well as other vital information such as how it should be delivered and what goal the client is attempting to achieve. Examples might be their asking whether the site is to be a blog full of information, a store front or maybe even an informational site only. The purpose would be whether the site is only for building email addresses or contact information or is it to sale wholesale products? All of these factors must be known to get it right! Without knowing what is to be delivered, how and with what purpose it is quite difficult for them to build the appropriate pages and site! It is a good idea to allow the designer to ask for the information, however have it ready when they do!

### **Site Design**

Of course the designer should be quizzing a potential client as to what they envision for their site. Is it full of moving graphics, homemade member videos or packed full of content? Designers should be interested in their clients input as to layout, colors, font styles and the overall feel that the website gives. If this information is not asked for, it is like a guessing game and chances are that the client will not be happy with their site. So, unless comfortable with a web designer that does it all from scratch through their own accord, make sure that they are seeking your input for the visuals and looks of the website.

### **Take Information & Make It Work**

While the designer should be asking for input about the site they should be planning the logistics of the site. Clients are not going to specify whether they want static or fixed graphics, or even the creative balance, however it is their job to take those desires, ideas and wants of the client and make all those technical factors come together appropriately!