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## Articles

### 7 Key Pointers To Help You Choose The Right Website Designer

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As a business owner, you understand the importance of working with suppliers who provide reliable results, on time and within budget. You should consider your website designer in the same way. Unfortunately, apart from looking at examples of previous work, it's difficult for you to assess a website designer's competence.

How do you know whether a designer will provide the website you need before they start working on it? If you only realise that you made a bad choice after the website is complete, it's too late to look for an alternative!

Unfortunately, website designers don't have qualifications that really prove their ability. There isn't a widely-recognised professional association of which a reputable website designer will be member. And, worse still, website designers are often guilty of bamboozling clients with jargon, which may sound impressive but does it follow that the designer will also deliver impressive results?

Therefore, it's difficult to be sure that a particular website designer is the right choice for your business. But you need to ensure that you get a good return on the money you invest in your website, so it's vital that you make an informed choice when selecting your supplier.

Here are seven key issues to consider that will inform your decision.

#### **Graphic designer, multimedia artist or web developer?**

Website designers broadly fall into one of three categories. Graphic design firms will offer brand/logo design and traditional print-based design (business cards, brochures, flyers etc.) in addition to designing websites. This can be useful if you are starting a new business as a single supplier can provide a range of services.

Multimedia artists create sophisticated design work, often involving animation and sound. A multimedia artist is a good choice as a website designer if you have a need for these specialist skills. Three dimensional product demonstrations, virtual tours and video footage: these are examples of website content with which a multimedia artist would be able to help.

Web developers have more of an IT bias than graphic designers or multimedia artists. Their technical skills are well-suited to website projects that involve databases, online systems or **content management**.

*What type of website do you need? Does the style of your website lend itself to one of the three types of website designer?*

#### **Business first; technology second**

It's common for a website designer to get involved in the detail of the website and not give sufficient thought to the "bigger picture". Understanding your website's requirements in the context of your business is vital if a website designer is going to deliver a successful solution.

More often than not, people will comment that a website is a good website or a bad website based purely on its appearance. Of course, the look of your website is important... but if it doesn't achieve specific business objectives it is a bad website, regardless its appearance!

*When you meet prospective website designers, do they ask about the business objectives for your website? Do they discuss how to measure your website's success?*

### **Complete knowledge**

Few successful websites are developed in isolation as other factors are important to a site's overall success. **Search engine optimisation**, **website hosting** and **eCommerce** are services that often form part of a complete website project, in addition to the actual website design. A designer with expertise in all relevant skills, not just website design, is in a strong position to deliver an all-round, successful solution.

*Does your prospective website designer offer all the services involved in your website project? Do they have expertise in search engine optimisation, website hosting and eCommerce, as well as website design?*

### **Industry knowledge**

A good supplier can enhance your own knowledge as well as deliver a service. A good website designer will create the website you're after and also advise you on industry trends, make you aware of topical issues that have implications for your website and generally provide value-adding consultancy.

*Does your prospective website designer help you with wider, Internet-related issues that are pertinent to your business or do they just want to "get the job done"? Current topical issues with implications for your website include **website accessibility** and web standards - do your prospective website designers seem well-informed about these issues?*

### **Long term relationship**

Websites are living things. They grow over time and often need to develop and adapt to your business needs. You want a website designer who will support you through the evolution of your website; someone who understands your background and has a close knowledge of how you work and where your business is heading.

Working with a reliable website designer throughout the life of your website involves less effort on your part than engaging a series of different designers, each of whom contribute something different to your site.

*Find out whether your prospective website designer has long term relationships with other clients. Ask to speak to those clients and assess their view – do they feel "looked after" by the designer?*

### **Reputation**

Service-based suppliers such as website designers rely on a good reputation. New work is

often generated via word-of-mouth referrals from existing clients and this is a good benchmark of whether a particular designer is reputable.

A good website designer will have a reputation not only for delivering high quality websites, but also for producing work on time and within budget. Strong communication skills and a co-operative, “can do” approach are also important attributes of a worthwhile designer.

*What do your colleagues and contacts say about their website designer? Does that designer’s own website include testimonials that suggest a positive approach to work? Does the website designer undertake much repeat work for clients?*

### **Personality**

A supplier with the right skills to complete your work, a strong reputation among existing clients and a track record of delivering successful results is likely to be a good choice. But sometimes you have to trust your gut instinct and be guided by how you feel.

Your website project may take several months to complete and you will be working closely with your website designer during this time. You want this working relationship to be effective and comfortable and “getting on” with the designer is going to be as important to you as any technical skills they possess.

*How do you feel when you meet the designer? Are you both on the same wavelength? Do you get the feeling that your website project is going to be a hard slog? Is working with this designer going to drain your energy?*

Choosing a good website designer will make the difference between a successful, positive result and a failed situation that you look upon as a waste of time and money. A variety of factors determine which website designer is the right one for you and these seven pointers will help you assess your options and make a well-informed choice.

Iceberg Internet has developed successful website for clients from a variety of industry sectors and we would be happy to discuss your website requirements with you – please **contact us** to arrange an initial appointment.

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