



A Dozen Questions to Ask Your Web Designer

Having a successful web site has everything to do with good design and functionality. Have you ever been to a site that makes you wonder if it is a real company? A talented web designer will make sure your site attracts and keeps visitors and make a solid return on your investment. How to be sure you are hiring a professional web designer and not someone who creates web sites in their spare time.

1. **Is this your full-time job?**

Make sure your designer has some "skin-in-the-game" and will be there everyday to provide you with the service you deserve.

2. **How is your company organized?**

Rarely do you find a one-person company that can handle all of the different tasks to design a website. Why? Because designing websites takes a variety of skills rarely found in one person. The first impact or look of the site comes from the **graphic designer**, or artist.

Most people who excel as graphic artists prefer not to be hemmed in with deadlines and details. The **project manager** will be the person to make sure things get completed on time to your specifications. The **programmer** or **technical analyst** will be the person to handle all the technical details of the site and any problems that may arise. The **copywriter** works with you to write the content for your site. The **marketing person** makes sure the site is designed to achieve desired search engine results and spends time on the SEO process.

Figure out how the company is organized and whether or not they seem equipped to handle all aspects of your website design.

3. **How will you market my website?**

Marketing a website is not a 30-minute task; it is an on-going process of testing and monitoring. Make sure you understand the SEO process and what your website package actually includes. Most companies offer separate [Search Engine Optimization \(SEO\)](#) packages.

4. **Will my site be designed from scratch or will you use a pre-made template?**

We have nothing against pre-made templates, they can be a great way for a company to get started on the Internet without a huge investment. Just be sure you know what your getting, and you should get a significant discount for customization of a pre-designed template.

5. **What is your average turnaround time per project?**

... How long will my web site take to complete? Will you update me on the progress regularly?

This just might be the most important question. We have had so many businesses come to us, frustrated, after their designer has been working on their site for months, with nothing completed. Here's what to expect at most reputable design companies. After you have contracted to design a site, you should see the graphic design comp for the site within a two weeks. Once you approve the design, the programmer will work on developing the backend which will take another week. Finally, your content will be loaded and you will be trained on updating the site using our Content Management System software. The biggest delay

we experience comes from the client who is slow in providing content for the website. If you don't have any pre-prepared content, we recommend working with our copywriter to develop your content. Overall, we average about 6 - 12 weeks to complete a web site project, but we have completed sites as quickly as two weeks.

6. How will I be able to make content changes to my web site?

What will I pay for updates to the site?

The days of paying for every single change to your web site are over. ***At least at our company.*** All of our websites are [Content Management web sites \(CMS\)](#), which allows anyone with basic MS Word skills to easily maintain your web site.

7. What types of web sites do you specialize in? Do you have a list of features?

Most web designers who have been in business for some time will have some collateral marketing materials. Make sure you ask for and get written descriptions of all of the features of your web site. Take the materials home, read them over carefully, highlight the most important features, and discuss at follow-up meeting with site designer.

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

Thoughtful designers will have a detailed questionnaire covering all aspects of your website that they will complete with you. Beware if they say, all I need is your logo and domain name!

9. Have you done any e-commerce or shopping cart web sites? Can I look at examples?

Be sure to look at example sites and note what features and looks you like best. This will help in the design process.

10. Can I contact a few of your customers?

Most companies will give you a few names of happy customers. You ought to check on the other customers that they display in their portfolio. ***Go ahead, play detective and make a few calls.*** You'll be glad you did. If you mostly good feedback from customer, but perhaps receive negative feedback from one customers, have a conversation with your designer about it. If you receive lots of negative feedback, keep shopping.

11. What is included in my hosting package? Will I own my domain name?

Find out exactly what you'll pay on a ongoing basis to host your site on the Internet. Does it include maintenance? Training? Email? Just be sure to ask. Make sure you own your own domain name, some designers have been known to hold a domain name ***hostage*** if you try to change designers.

12. How do I notify you if I want changes to my site after it is completed?

Find out what the process is to contact your designer to make changes to the site after your site has been completed. Make sure you understand the turnaround time for emergency issues and changes. Ask how they manage changes along with their development schedule.

The decision of choosing a web designer is important. Be cautious of choosing a friend or volunteer to design your site, it could lead to disappointment and major delays. A successful web site begins with your involvement, through every step of the process. Good Luck!