



How to Choose a Website Designer

What Types Of Web Designers Are There?

I don't think there is an "official" definition, so I'll give you MY definition:

- **Website Designer** - helps you to determine the page layout, graphics, text location and colors of your site, as well as the navigation and how pages will cross-link to one another. He may also do the actual computer programming and graphic art work for the site, or may hire out that work to a programming specialist. A Website Designer is the project manager for your site design.
- **Website Programmer** - takes the design from the Designer and creates the code to make the site run. She is also responsible for all the technical stuff that happens behind-the-scenes to make sure the site works properly for your visitors.
- **Graphic Designer** - creates the graphics for the site, including page layout, colors, etc. Think of this person as the "visual artist" for your site.
- **Internet Marketing Consultant** - helps you to determine how your website fits into your overall marketing strategy, and how to get more traffic and sales from your website.

Sometimes, if you're lucky, you can get all four of these skills from the same person.

A Note on Copywriting

You may find a designer who can also help you with the text for your website but don't count on it. Be prepared to write the text yourself, or hire a professional copywriter. Copywriters charge per page, sometimes up to \$500 a page (\$5,000 for a 10-page website.)

Consider a hybrid solution: get advice about simple website copywriting principles from an internet marketing consultant, then **you** write the text. Have the consultant **edit** the text to make sure that it works on the web.

Who Is A Good Designer And How Much Do They Charge?

Much of your choice of designers depends on whether you want to work locally with someone, or whether you are willing to work remotely with them over the phone. Here are some things to think and ask about when hiring a website designer:

- Pay attention to how much they ask you about YOUR BUSINESS. They should want to get to know you and your business intimately. How else can they design a site that reflects you and your business, unless they spend time to get to know you?
- Look at sites they've designed to see if you like their style. Is there a certain feel to ALL their sites, or are they flexible in their designs?
- Ask them if they did the actual graphic and layout design of the site, or if they just did the programming.
- If they don't do the graphic work themselves, can they recommend a graphic artist?
- Do they have a structured planning process that leads you through the design phase, and if will they document all the discussions and decisions? If they have a **Website Planning Guide** that you'll work through together, that's really helpful.
- Ask them what they know about internet marketing and search engine optimization. Be sure that they're creating a site for you that meets your larger marketing and business goals. (A pretty site is no good to you unless it generates revenue and prospects.)
- Ask the designer for their fees and what is the estimated cost for the site you want. They may not be able to give you a good estimate until you discuss content and features of the site. Expect to pay between \$60 - \$125 an hour, depending on their skill and their location. A **quality** website with good graphic design and layout will cost around \$2,500 - \$3,500 for a 10-page site. If you add a blog, newsletter, shopping cart, autoresponders, email address setup, SEO, membership site, or logo design (or if you have more than 10 pages), expect the price to be higher.
- Ask them how they bill you. Will they invoice you monthly, or when certain milestones are reached? Do you have to make deposits?
- Pay attention to whether they'll try to stick within your budget, or whether they keep suggesting new add-ons that increase to the cost of your site. Remember, designers aren't responsible for your budget -- you are.
- Talk to some of their current and recent clients, to see how smooth the process was. You want someone who has good project management skills AND good communication skills. They have to listen to you, not just give advice.
- Ask them whether they will maintain your site after the initial design, and how much they'll charge for that. Some designers want to create new sites but don't want to maintain them. Someone like a virtual assistant (VA) may be able to maintain your site for a lower hourly fee, as long as the VA is skilled in website programming. The more bells and whistles and complicated programming in your site, the less likely that an average VA will be able to maintain it for you.
- If you're going to maintain the site yourself, ask them if they'll design your site so that it is easily maintained by a business owner. We recommend Adobe Contribute for basic maintenance tasks to all our website design clients, as it's easy-to-use and if you make a mistake, you can "roll back" the website to a previous (good) version.
- Make sure that your contract states that **you** own the copyright to the entire website (except, of course, for stock photos and graphic...the original photographer/artist owns the copyright to stock images). All content, including graphics that you hired someone to custom-create for you, should be owned by you.

- Make sure you own your domain name, even if the website designer registered it for you.
- Ask your designer for original, editable source files. You need to be assured that you will be able to edit your website (or have another designer edit your website) with ease.
- You have got to enjoy talking and working with them. Do you *LIKE* the designer? Do you believe they'll act ethically? Do you enjoy speaking with them? Do they stay focused to the task at hand, or do they ramble and waste your time? Do you feel you "click" with their personality and values? Do they offer you invaluable insight and advice about your site design?
- Tell each prospective website designer what your deadline is and ask if they can meet it. Many good website designers are already booked for the next 4-6 weeks, so you may have to wait for the designer of your choice. If you don't have a specific deadline, brainstorm with the designer to create a good working deadline that you can both meet, especially if you will be doing the job of writing the website text.

Your website is crucial to the success of your business. By doing extensive interviewing of potential website designers, you're more likely to pick one that can do the work you want, is willing to really listen to you, can create a site that reflects you and your business, and keeps within your budget and timeframe.

For more information or to get a no obligation quote, please contact I.W.S. Internet Web Solutions on (03) 9437 2510