

# Planning Your Web Site

Questions you need to ask your Web designer.

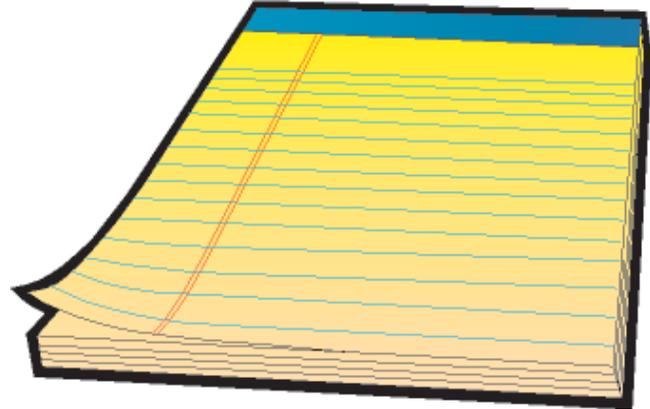
## Information you need before you hire a Web designer...

- The purpose of your Web site.
  - What exactly do you want your web site to do...
    - advertise your business?
    - introduce new products or services?
    - sell products online?
    - maintain a membership list or database?
  - What do you want as the 'mood' of your site...
    - classic, businesslike, hip, fun, cheerful, flashy?
    - what matches your current style?
- Define your target market.
  - who is your audience?
- Make a list of competitors and their Web sites.
  - decide what you like and don't like on the Web sites
  - have you seen other Web sites you like or are similar to what you're looking for?
- Gather all content information for your site.
  - this includes items like pamphlets, digital form of logos, and pictures of your products, store and employees you want to use on the site
- Map out your proposed Web site in story board or schematic form.
  - use index cards to symbolize the prospective web pages
  - index cards provide a simple way to visualize the structure of your Web site
- Identify 30 to 50 keywords with a description for the meta tags.
- Identify special considerations.
  - any design features you want
  - e-mail forms
  - shopping cart
  - secure log on
  - extras like calendars, newsletters, weather, news, search features, etc.
- Determine what your e-commerce budget is.
- Ask about a timeline.
  - when can you expect completion of the project?
- Any other questions you might have.

## Prepare an accurate and precise request for proposal (RFP).

Proposals should contain some or all of the following sections depending upon industry and project:

- Executive summary containing a brief description of your project development approach and costs
- Corporate information including financial details
- Qualifications including previous clients with contact information and relevant URLs
- A description of your development process
- Asset and draft delivery methods
- Project stages
- Milestones
- Quality control
- Testing
- The proposed team and their qualifications
- Proposed schedule
- Costs and payment details
- Terms and conditions



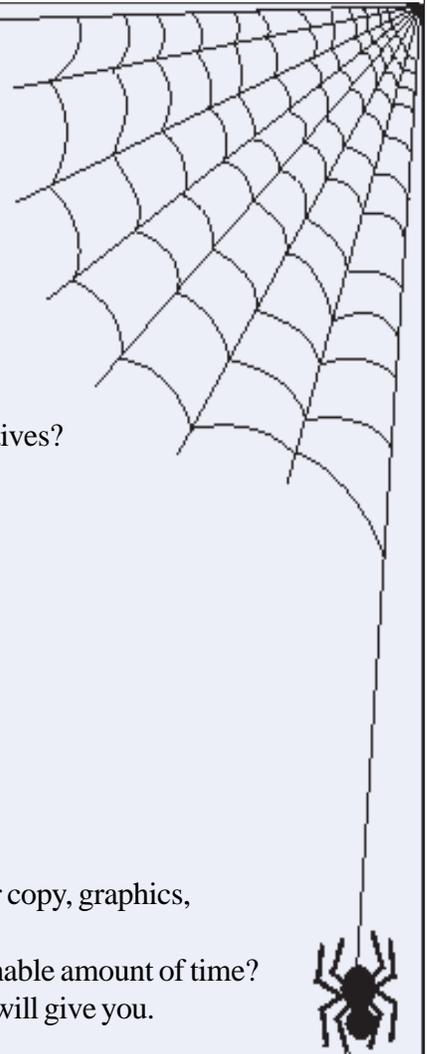
## Ask the Web designer these questions:

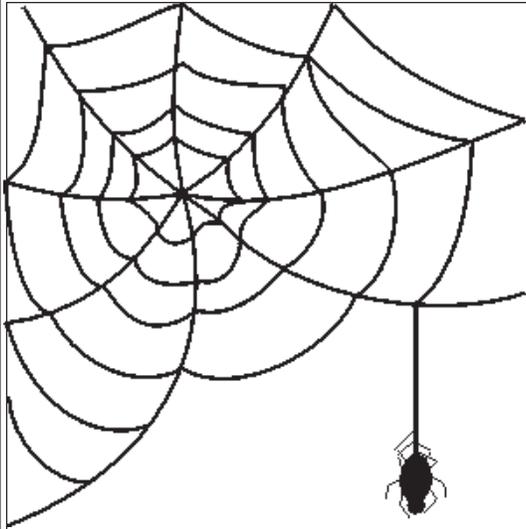
- ✓ Can and should I purchase my own domain name?
  - Where do I do this at?
  - Is the Domain name server located with the web server or a separate organization?
  - What about the mail server?
  - Are there extra fees for either DNS or mail service?
- ✓ How does the Web site design process work?
  - Do you create the sitemap or do I?
- ✓ How do I get a Web site design cost quote?
  - Have a “ball park” figure in mind that you are willing to spend.
- ✓ How much do you charge to create a Web site?
  - Does the number of pages or size of the Web site make a difference in the cost? (It’s better to be charged by the project rather than by number pages or per hour.)
- ✓ Where do I get information on graphics to put on my Web site?
- ✓ Once my site is completed, where will it be stored?
  - Or how do I find a Web host and what are the costs involved?
- ✓ What if my Web site needs regular maintenance and updating?
  - What are the costs?
- ✓ Are you willing to train someone within my business that can keep the site updated?
- ✓ Who develops the copy portion of the site?
  - Can they develop content, if needed, or are they affiliated with a copywriter?
- ✓ What is your marketing background?
  - Are you able to market my site?
  - What is your marketing experience/background?

- ✓ How familiar are you with the search engine process?
  - Do you register my site with search engines?
  - Is registering with search engines part of the regular service or do you charge extra for that?
- ✓ What software do you use for creation of Web site and graphics, etc.?.
  - Are graphics custom-designed or are packaged sets available?
- ✓ What happens if you go out of business or move?
- ✓ Will I get a copy of all the files on my Web site?
- ✓ Will I own the Web site after you have created it?
- ✓ How do you handle confidentiality and do you have a privacy agreement?
- ✓ What about copyrights?
- ✓ Do you use a written contract that includes a completion date?
- ✓ Once the site is finished and paid in full does the designer turn the copyright over to me?
- ✓ Who is actually going to do the design work?
- ✓ What type of tech support do you offer?
- ✓ How booked is your current schedule?

### Look at the Web designer's portfolio

- \* Ask to see three samples of the designer's work.
  - Do you like what you see?
  - Don't assume you can change the designer's style.
- \* Look for typos, grammar mistakes, images not coming up and links not working.
- \* Do the sites have a similar look and feel?
  - If so, are you okay that you may look like other sites?
- \* Does the designer specialize in a specific industry or market?
- \* Can you easily and quickly ascertain the sites goals and objectives?
- \* Do the pages download quickly?
- \* Is the information on the site relevant?
  - Does it have great content?
- \* Is the navigation easy to use and understand?
- \* Is the text easy to read and are there eye-catching graphics?
- \* Does the design add to the message?
- \* Do all the links work?
- \* Does every page look like it belongs to that site?
- \* Does the site encourage some sort of action?
- \* How well do the sites sell?
- \* Do the sites have strong navigation?
- \* Does the Web design firm have staff or use subcontractors for copy, graphics, programming, etc.?
- \* Does the Web designer answer your calls or e-mail in a reasonable amount of time?
  - This generally represents the type of customer service they will give you.
  - Were they friendly and did they answer all your questions?

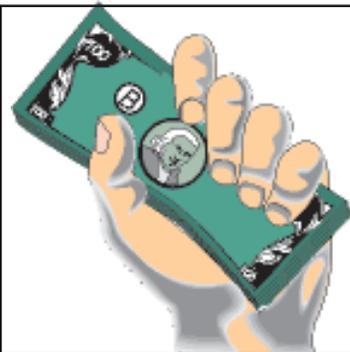




## Ask yourself these questions:

Am I comfortable with this  
Web designer?

Does this Web designer warrant  
the proposed fee?



Most web designers will expect a 50% deposit upon commencement of work. Set a realistic deadline and state that the deposit is due back in full if the deadline is not met.

Do not expect a web site with all the bells and whistles your competition has for the price of a cup of coffee. Understand that technology, design, art work and page and database coding will have a fee associated with it. And if your best friend's brother, son, daughter or mother-in-law can design the web site for 80% less than any professional, remember what you were taught in *Business 101* – “You Get What you Pay For!”

-- Ray B. Hielscher  
*Nationwide Management Services, Inc.*

# Top Ten Services You Should Expect From Your Web Designer



Familiarity with existing Web sites from like businesses. Should be aware of what your competitors are doing online so that you stay ahead in Web site development.



A free initial consultation. As a business owner you need to be prepared to discuss your marketing position, Internet marketing goals, and target audience(s). The Web designer should provide a proposal which includes the site design, sitemap, each page and their content, and all the functions and features that will be included. Cost and time to prepare the Web site, costs for hosting and future maintenance also should be stated separately.



Development of pages that look good in various browsers and/or screen resolutions and sizes. Ask the designers to show you several sites they have created, and look at them through different browsers (i.e. Netscape, Microsoft's Internet Explorer, Opera, Mozilla). Also look at them through different size monitors and various screen resolution settings.



Creation of interactive forms, setup of a database that you can edit yourself, bulletin boards, and other features if you decide they would be beneficial for your customers.



Creation of distinctive custom graphics, including logos, buttons, navigation bars, and other visual design elements. Again, look at samples of the designer's work.



Professional writing services (and proofreading).



Construction of site elements that positively affect search engine rankings including metatags, titles, text, links, and nonframes pages.



Ability to maintain site -- that is, make changes to the design and content according to your requests, *for a reasonable fee*.



A reasonable guarantee that you will be satisfied with their work, as specified in their proposal.



Marketing support to make sure your site is regularly listed with all major search engines. Search engine optimization.

# References

## Online References...

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How to Hire a Web Designer - Sandy Tapper

<http://www.tappernet.com/articles/marketingdesign.htm>

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Your Web Designer

<http://www.yourwebdesigner.com>

JumpStart Communications

<http://www.jumpstartcommunications.com/gooddesign.htm>

What to Look for In a Web Designer

<http://www.brina.com/designer2.shtml>

How the Heck Do I Hire a Web Designer? Women Designers Group

<http://www.womendesignersgroup.com/articledesigner.shtml>

Planet Portal Technology Solutions

<http://planetportal.org/links/hire-a-designer.html>

Our Web Design Process

<http://www.pacificwebsolutions.com/designprocess.html>

## Nebraska References...

Nationwide Management Services, Inc.

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