



What You Need to Know Before You Build a Website

Before You Start, Ask Yourself a Few Questions:

Budget – How much do I have to spend?

It is imperative to consider how much you have to spend before you think about any other aspect of the site. The amount of content, functionality, design elements and complexity all have a direct impact on the overall cost. What looks simple to an average person may be extremely complex to a web programmer. Conversely, what may look very complex to a layperson may be very easy to a person who programs websites. Like automobiles, websites can vary greatly from the very simple and affordable to the extremely complex and expensive. Even if you know nothing about the internet, having an idea how much you have to spend and being realistic about your expectations will not only save you time and energy but may save money as well.

Targeting an Audience - Many forget to consider who they are trying to target with their websites.

Obviously, a website that targets men should have a completely different look and feel than one that targets mostly women. What you may not realize is that a website that targets medical doctors should be different than one that targets dentists. Both are professionals in the medical field, but their requirements can be completely different.

S.W.O.T. Analysis - Strengths, Weaknesses/Limitations, Opportunities and Threats.

This is a strategic planning method used to evaluate projects and business ventures. Answering these questions honestly can help you determine whether your objectives are attainable. It will also help you focus on what makes your business or product stand out. This is also a great time to look at other web sites, log their URLs (addresses) and make notes of what you liked, did not like, or the ideas they inspired.



Gather Your Content – Pictures, graphics, documents, copy and other media.

One picture is worth a thousand words. By having everything in one place it will make it much easier to visualize the site, expedite the process, and help assure nothing is missed. It will also assist the web designer in accurately quoting the project.

Project Scope – How many pages? Are their graphics that need to be developed?

Are you going to provide your own copy or use a copywriter? Is there any functionality needed such as a CMS (Content Management Systems) or some other design aspects that you may want to include?

Although you may not be an expert in the capabilities of the internet; you should have a basic vision of what your web site should look like. An idea of what you can and cannot supply for the project and how you think the website should work and function. To help convey this you can use the website examples from the above S.W.O.T analysis and the content you have gathered.

Also you want to have an idea of how often you will need to update the website. If this is something you will be doing on a fairly regular basis, then you may want to consider getting a CMS (easy way for you to make your own updates) type site. You need to weigh the additional cost as compared to what a web designer will charge to make regular updates.

Marketing - Marketing goal of your website

How will people find your website? All experts agree that there are more websites than there are people on planet earth. Therefore, just because you have a website doesn't mean they will come.

How will you measure success? How will this integrate with other marketing efforts?

You can have the best website in the world but if no one can find it you just wasted your investment. We like to say that even the ugliest of sites can produce results with proper

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marketing efforts. But this is something you will want to include within your budget. Internet Marketing can be one of the most cost effective and provide some the best results if done correctly.

Choosing a Web Design Company to Work With:

How Long Have They Been Doing This?

You want to make sure they have experience and the know how to not only complete your project, but also help guide you to the best possible solution.

Can They Provide Some Examples of Their Work?

All reputable web designers will have a portfolio for you to view. If they can't provide you some examples of their work you need to consider this as red flag.

How Much Will it Cost?

This is typically the hardest question for a web designer to answer. Like art work, web design is very subjective. What may look good to one person may look awful to another. As a result, you will want to know how many revisions and how much work is included. It's also important to establish who will be supplying the copy, graphics, images, and other media. Always insist on a written estimate.

Typically there should be only three basic costs involved:

- The domain name
- Designing and Programming
- The Hosting.

We use the word typically because graphic design, images, copywriting, and other services can be packaged into the cost.

Be leery of terms such as "maintenance costs" and/or other regular fees outside of hosting related services. Other than marketing services, once the website project is completed there should only be two costs involved:

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- Hosting services (the computer that stores your website on the internet)
- Your domain name (www.yourname.com)

How Often Do They Go Over Budget?

Another great question to ask is: how frequently do they go over budget?

Who Owns The Web Site and Content When Done?

This may sound like a silly question, but it's one of the most challenging and serious issues we face with new clients coming from other web design companies. Imagine spending your hard earned money on a beautiful website that isn't even yours. Unfortunately, some web designers use ownership as leverage to maintain their client base. It is imperative that you establish who owns the site when the work is completed. This is something that needs to be included within the paperwork.

Who Registers and Owns the Domain Name?

If you don't already have a domain name such as www.your-company.com, you will need to purchase one. Will they help you choose and register an affected domain name for your website? If so, and like the website itself, ownership is extremely important with domain names. Therefore, you will want to make sure that this is done in your name.

Will Your Web Site be Portable?

Another major issue we find with other web designer companies is that they create web sites that are not portable. Portability refers to the ability of a website to be moved to another web hosting company. If they do make portable websites; make sure that they use standard industry accepted methodologies when creating your site.

Many budget design companies utilize some sort of template based content management system that is proprietary and therefore married to their services. This means that you

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cannot take or move your website away from them. Don't be fooled, even large companies such as local yellow pages offer these types of sites.

Who Can Update The Site?

If you don't have a content management system, you will want to make sure that your web site is designed utilizing current industry accepted methodologies. This will assure that you have options since any qualified web designer can make updates.

Website hosting?

Do they offer web hosting services and how much do they cost? What is included in their web hosting services (e.g. e-mail, web analytics, control panel access and so forth)? To ensure longevity and reliability, it's always better to use a commercially certified web hosting company rather than a small ma-pa company.

Upon completion of the project will they provide you with FTP and/or control panel access so you can access the work product?

Its important that you have access to your final source code. Business relationships may change, and your web design company may no longer be available for changes you need. Having access to your source code gives you the controls over who can edit your website for you in the future.

Please contact us with any questions... information is free at Murnet Technologies!

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