

Guide for Selecting A Web Developer

So you have made the decision to implement a new Website! You have heard the horror stories, and you may have even lived one of them -- having a Website that just didn't work for you. One of the most critical decisions you'll make in the Web selection process will be in evaluating the capabilities and competencies of a potential Web developer. Of equal importance is your understanding of the Internet's potential and how it can make your Website work for you!

Here are some hints for choosing the developer and solution that best works for you...

Business Goals. Before you talk to a Web developer or designer, have some ideas as to how you want the Website to benefit your business. Don't get too far over your head, or drive yourself crazy over this; just think about what it is you want your Website to do for you to support your business goals. For a non-profit, this may mean generating revenue (donations/development/events), creating awareness, expanding membership.

Ask for ideas. Once you have an idea as to what you want to accomplish as a business purpose, now ask the Web developer to explain how they can help you achieve those goals. What will they provide you in your Website capabilities and features, support, and marketing techniques, to assist you in achieving your goals? Request a proposal, or scope of work, describing exactly what the vendor will provide, what you need to do, and how much it will cost! Tell all the developers what your budget is for the Website. Your objective shouldn't be to choose the vendor with the lowest cost, but rather to obtain the greatest value for the amount you can afford or want to invest.

View their work. Look at work that the developer has done and be sure to ask what their role was in the development. Did they do the design only, or the design and the build-out (development) of the Website? Do the sites seem to function well, have a sense of structure and are they easy for you to navigate (find what you are looking for on the site)? Do the sites look professional? Finally, check a couple of their references -- most importantly, ask if the developer delivered what they said they would do, and do they respond promptly if there is a question or issue?

Content Management. Some Websites are developed with their own Content Manager, or they may use a third-party application (i.e. FrontPage); while other sites are designed in hard code (i.e. HTML). If the site has a content manager, you or anyone that you designate, can easily maintain the content (text, images, video and audio) on your own Website. It is critically important to keep your Website updated, or your investment in a new Website will be lost! Know how your developer will provide this capability and at what cost. Having the ability to manage your own Website will offer two significant benefits: One, you can make the changes anytime you want or need to, without waiting for a developer. Two, it will save you a ton of money, as most developers will charge between \$30.00 and \$75.00 an hour to update your site's content.

Interactivity. There is a big difference between a 'static' Website and one that is interactive! In order for your Website to be flexible, and support your marketing objectives, you most likely will need to have some level of online communications with your community of interest. Some examples are online forms or surveys that you can easily modify as needed, or the ability for guests to register with your Website for future email notifications (permission-based), and online tools such as interactive calendars and more... These are critical success factors in making your Website an investment and not a cost. Make sure that your vendor can provide interactive capabilities as your needs require.

Professional Design. The look and feel of a Website can and should vary for a vast number of reasons, both business and personal. However, there are basic business techniques and design best practices that should be considered in your Website's design. These will support an overall ease-of-use, a professional image to your targeted market, as well as support your business goals and objectives. Having a student, a non-professional designer friend, or someone similar do you a favor and design your site for free, could be your greatest mistake and greatest expense! Your Website needs to tell your story and connote who you are to literally the world. Make sure that your Web designer can review the current best practices and that they will provide you a professional design for your Website.

Marketing Tools. Combining a Content Manager along with interactivity already makes your Website a marketing tool! How you administer your Website and the capabilities that you have to do so, is what can turn your Website into a proactive marketing machine for your business. Know how your site can be administered and if you can easily do it yourself. A few examples include optimizing your site for search engine submissions, uploading/downloading content (i.e. images), dynamic navigation schemes, viewing detail statistics to help you optimize your site, launching email marketing campaigns, as well as others. See more about Web Marketing at www.interPak.net.

These are just some of the basic guidelines to help you select a developer and a Website that will work for you. For more information, visit our Website or contact interPak Internet Solutions.



info@interPak.net
304-258-0068
www.interPak.net