



3 Media Web

# Finding the Right Web Designer

WHITEPAPER





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Do you have a sales and marketing department that is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week? If your website is an accurate and engaging representation of your brand, you do! Your corporate website is an interactive interpretation of your brand. And there is nothing more important than portraying your brand, your corporate image in a way that captures your visitors' attention.

A visitor's first few seconds on your site could make or break your opportunity to turn that visitor into a customer. When you make the experience interesting, provide visitors with the information they're looking for, and present an easy-to-navigate site, you have a winning combination.

A website is an important investment, and finding the right design partner is critical to success. But how do you choose the right web designer for your project? Here, we'll detail 7 valuable tips for evaluating designers and selecting the one that's right for you.





## 1 Location, Location, Location

The very nature of websites often takes geography out of the equation in many purchasing and business decisions. We can purchase goods from anywhere in the world. We can converse with people thousands of miles away directly through our computers and we can work from virtually any spot on earth. When choosing vendors – including web designers – your options are endless. First decide how important location is in your evaluation of web partners. Do you want to be able to meet with them face to face? Are you comfortable with video conferencing or Skype, or is e-mail enough? Next you can either cast a wide net, or you can narrow your search by obtaining more information.

### Questions to Ask:

- What's your preferred method of communication with your clients?
- How do you keep clients in the loop on their projects – and how often?
- Where are your clients located?

## 2 A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

Quality designers are proud of their work, and they include a design portfolio on their websites. Spend some time taking a look at their samples. What kind of work have they done? Some designers specialize in either informational sites or e-commerce sites. What types of clients or industries do they have experience with?

If they've worked with companies in a similar industry, they'll already have a basic understanding of your business and your client base. Take a look at their overall design style – does it appeal to you and does it fit your brand? A designer has to be able to bring your brand to life on the internet, interpreting your needs to create a visually appealing and functional website.

### Questions to Ask:

- Where do you get your design inspiration?
- How do you get to know your clients and their industries, so that you can design the most effective sites?
- What's more important – form or function?



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### 3 Size Matters

Web design firms come in all shapes and sizes. Some are very small, one- or two-person operations. Some are independent designers who freelance. Others are large agency-type firms that offer a wide variety of services. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages, but what matters most is what is right for you. Would you prefer the personal attention that often comes from working with a smaller design group? Or would you prefer the diversity and greater abundance of resources that can be available with larger design firms? If you're unsure, then simply talk to a few different types of firms and get a sense for what will be the right fit.

#### Questions to Ask:

- Will I have a single point of contact for my account?
- How many accounts does each designer work on at any one time?
- How much work is done in-house and how much is outsourced?

### 4 Short-Term or Long-Term

What's the scope of your project? Do you have the resources in your company to manage the maintenance and updating of your site once it's built? In that case, you may only need a company to provide the initial design and build. Do you need more than just implementation and want to have a company assist you with ongoing post-launch support and service? It is crucial that you understand your long-term requirements while you're evaluating vendors at the design stage. It will make the difference between searching for a designer whose specialty is simply site design, or finding a firm that has equal expertise in both design AND maintenance.

#### Questions to Ask:

- What percentage of your business is design-only?
- When you provide ongoing maintenance services to clients, how long is the average relationship?
- How long have you been working with your oldest active client?

### 5 Do You Like Them?

On a personal level, how do you feel about your potential vendor? Do you believe that you will enjoy working with them? A designer may look great on paper (or on screen) and they may have all of the requisite skills and experience, but at the end of the day, it will not be a successful partnership if you don't like each other.



You also need to be certain that your working styles will mesh. This is vital to achieving great results. You'll spend a lot of time communicating and collaborating as you work toward a common goal. You want to be sure that your designer will respond to you in a timely manner and that they're willing to listen to your ideas and your feedback. Take a cue from their initial interest in your business during the interview process. Do they ask probing questions about your company and your needs, or do they simply try to impress you with their awards and their client roster? That's a good indication of how the working relationship will develop.

#### **Questions to Ask:**

- How will you learn about my company and my brand promise?
- How would you describe your working style?
- What's your commitment to client response times?

## **6 The Wallet Test**

Few companies have unlimited funds to spend, so budget constraints are always a big consideration. Web design fees run the gamut, so it's important to find a balance between service level and cost. Not only that, but you also need to have a good sense for a firm's ability to provide accurate estimates. You don't want to be surprised with extra expenses down the road. Be clear about what your wants and needs are so that designers can provide more accurate quotes. In the end, you need a designer who can work within your budget to produce a website that will meet your needs.

#### **Questions to Ask:**

- How do you estimate the cost of a project?
- How do you ensure that you stay within budget on each project?
- How often do your final bills exceed your initial estimates?
- What can we do to help ensure that our project comes in on time and within budget?





## 7 Right from the Horse's Mouth

Don't take a design firm's word on its own; talk to their clients. The best way to get a read on a potential vendor is to hear directly from people who've worked with them. Visit the companies' websites and jot down names of clients they have in their online portfolio. Call these companies and speak with the marketing person who is in charge of websites. Let them know that you are considering Company X. You'll learn a lot just by listening to people who are in your shoes – other clients. You check references when you hire employees; you should also check references when you hire vendors.

### Questions to Ask:

- What is the firm like to work with?
- Do they adhere to deadlines and do what they say they're going to do?
- Are they responsive?
- How collaborative are they?
- How would you describe the interaction between your company and the designers?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how well did the designers meet your needs?
- For your next project, will you hire the same designer?



There's a lot to consider when evaluating design firms. Don't rush the process. Start with a little introspection, so that you are able to clearly articulate your needs and requirements to potential partners. Then, make sure you do your due diligence in thoroughly researching each vendor's experience, history and track record with clients. You're putting one of your most powerful business tools in the hands of another company – make sure it's the right one for you.

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specifically to your needs.*

## Interested in Learning More about 3 Media Web's Design Capabilities?

3 Media Web's team of expert designers produces innovative brand experiences tailored specifically to your needs. Whether you're in need of a website that focuses on marketing and branding, or you're after a comprehensive e-commerce site, our design team's talent is here for you. The careful attention our designers give to every aspect of your website allows you to rest easy in the knowledge that a veteran design team with years of experience is taking your online business presence to the highest level.

We work hand-in-hand with each of our clients, through every step of the web design process. 3 Media Web creates polished websites that are an engaging interpretation of your brand promise. A website that helps you to achieve your business goals ... and we do it at affordable prices. We want you to be 100% satisfied. That is our goal. Call or email us today to learn more about how we can go to work for you.







# Ready to Take the Next Step?

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