

Hire a Professional Web Designer... or do it myself? 970-WEB.COM

When determining whether you want to pay a professional to design and maintain your website or you want to do it yourself, you should take the following into consideration:

- what is your budget both short-term and long-term
- how much time do you have to commit to learning how to use HTML creation, image editing, FTP and other software
- how much do you want to spend on the "tools" such as software and/or hardware
- are you really saving any money by the time you have purchased software and/or hardware, paid for hosting services and spent the time learning how to use your new tools?

Remember... the time and money it takes you to learn how to design and maintain your web-site is time and money away from what makes you money.

- Plan on spending between \$200 and \$2000 for HTML creation, image editing, FTP and other software required for basic to advanced website development.
- Plan on spending 20-200 hours learning basic web-design skills; 200-500 hours learning intermediate skills; 500-1000 hours learning advanced skills.
- Plan on paying for a high-speed internet connection and keeping your computer hardware "up-to-speed" with processor, memory and/or other upgrades.

Choosing a Web Designer...

INSPECT SAMPLES OF THEIR WORK: Are their sites user-friendly and easy to navigate? Is the design consistent with the service or product offered? Is all "time-sensitive" material current? While grammar and proper spelling are important, the client is usually responsible for content - but check anyways.

CONTACT THEIR EXISTING CLIENTS: Are they pleased with the designer's work? is the designer diligent with updates, changes and deadlines? is there anything they would have done differently?

GET ESTIMATES AND HOURLY RATES: If you can be specific about what you are looking for, get an estimate for initial site creation and hourly rates for change-orders and updates. For a little more money, you can always have a designer give you 3-5 different layout choices before making a final decision. Always ask about "billing increments" or minimums. Always pay your designer on time - otherwise, your site can be subject to "interruption", reconnect fees and worse.

TEMPLATES VS. CUSTOM DESIGN: Ask to see any templates the designer may already have available - this will always be cheaper than creating a site from scratch. You can even start with a template and have it customized it to suit your own needs.

DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH: Before you even meet with a designer, you should spend some time browsing other web-sites offering services, products or information similar to your own. Print samples of these sites or create a list of these site addresses to share with your designer. Make sure you identify who your competition is and then develop a site that is unique and sets you apart from the rest. Remember... if your competition has established an internet presence - you can't afford not to.

CONTENT AND UPDATES: Most often, the client is responsible for providing the web-designer with content such as ad-copy (text) and images. The more "site-ready" this content is, the less your website will cost you. For example, 1) providing images from a digital camera avoids the need to scan photographs, 2) sending your text via e-mail reduces the amount of "data entry" performed by the web-designer, 3) providing your own graphics or images rather than having your web-designer create custom graphics or use stock images. The client is also responsible for notifying the web-designer of any desired updates and providing the content necessary for those updates.

SECURITY AND PEACE OF MIND: Whether you design and maintain your own web-site, hire a professional - or both... make sure you know the passwords to access your web-site and you have a complete back-up of all the files on your web-site. The backup may cost you a little more money (\$25-\$50 each event), but you'll have it in the event you and your web-designer go your separate ways.

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