



What To Look For and Questions To Ask Of A Web Design Company

Have you ever noticed how many roofing companies there are in town after a hailstorm? Everybody who owns a hammer is suddenly in the roofing business. These days, web site design is undergoing some of the same professional problems. Many companies have websites that were “designed” years ago. Now that these companies see how poorly done their websites are by comparison, and how ineffective they’ve become from a marketing standpoint, they are looking to upgrade, improve, and create an effective marketing presence on the internet. Unfortunately, there are a host of people and “design companies” that consider web site design as a way to make a little extra cash doing work “on the side” or to “make a quick buck”. We ourselves receive no fewer than a dozen telephone calls a week and numerous e-mails from everyone from radio disc jockeys to “companies” in India, all wanting to create a website for us. And we’re in the business of web site design! So here are a few questions you may want to consider asking of any potential web site design company or person you may be considering as your internet marketing partner:

1) What is the company’s background?

Is this something that this person or company does full time? What percentage of the company is devoted to web development and internet marketing? Does anyone in the company have any credentials in marketing or emerging media? How long has this person and/or company been engaged in internet marketing and web design development? Ask for a written list of no less than 5 websites they’ve designed and the web site addresses, and the names and phone numbers of the people they work with at those companies.

2) What tools do they use?

There are a wide variety of ways to perform web site design, ranging from robust creative software suites to “do-it-yourself” internet based step-and-click designs that require nothing more than an internet connection. More and more we see “companies” and “web designers” who work in Microsoft FrontPage, a low end, low cost web site design software program that was popular in the early to mid 1990’s and so fraught with problems that Microsoft discontinued it entirely, and stopped supporting it years ago. We utilize the full Adobe Creative Suite For Professional Web Development, a high end, industry-leading package that includes Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe (Macromedia) Flash animation, and Adobe (Macromedia) Dreamweaver.

3) How quickly can they make changes?

Websites are supposed to be dynamic. They need to change, be updated, and have new information. This is one of the ways that search engines will raise you in their rankings. Our company can provide changes to a website and have it viewable globally in as little as 10 minutes.



4) Will the website include SEO? What aspects of the site will be optimized?

SEO, or Search Engine Optimization, is absolutely critical to the success of your website on the internet. This is special coding that occurs “behind” what you see, in the code of the website itself. This includes such things as Keywords – those words your potential web site visitors may type in to a search engine such as Google to try to find you, your products or services. Optimization should also include Meta Tags, Descriptions, Content, and of course, Titles. Additionally, most web site designers will, if they do this at all, only code the “Home” or Index page. We code every page on your site.

5) How will the new website be tested?

If you only look at a site in “Preview Mode” on a computer, it has little bearing on how the design will work and look on the internet. So we set up a test site through our servers on the internet for every design we create, whether we are hosting the site or not. The site is only viewable by those who would know a unique address specific to our test site. Then we test the site using a variety of the most common internet browsers, including Internet Explorer, Safari (Macintosh), Firefox (Mozilla/Netscape), and Opera. And just to be sure, we test the site on both Apple and Windows-based computers.

6) Does this person/company also host websites?

Hosting websites involves knowing more about how a web site works than simply a flashing button or a picture that moves. Hosting websites means an expanded knowledge of how specific “scripts” on the server will interact with the website to do things like generate form mail, or where code needs to be placed on the server to enable, for example, any Flash animation to be viewed. It also means that the person has some working knowledge of servers and what is required to make the website function as it was intended. Henry Lester & Associates’ web server division, called HenryHost, is a private server, providing internet hosting and, what we believe to be unparalleled personal service, only to our clientele. We also post your website to the major search engines for them to “crawl”, or view the code, so that they can include your website in their index.

7) Will this designer provide a disk copy of the site for you?

Every six months we make a disk copy of current version of the client’s website, for their files. After all, it’s your website. We also make a disk backup copy on our server in case of a catastrophic failure (which has never happened, by the way).

We hope this helps. If you have any questions, feel free to give us a call, or drop us a line.