How to choose a Website Designer

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How do I choose a Website Designer for my Business?

Why small businesses will be happiest hiring a small web design company to design their website.

Ok, so you have a great business, you have great services, and you know that the Internet is today's greatest resource for potential customers. Only one thing stands between you and the people in the world who have Internet access: you aren't a web designer. At this point, you say to yourself, "I need to hire a web designer to get my business on-line."

It's a defining moment, and then you go to your computer and start trying to find a web design company and are instantly overwhelmed by the number of options that seem to be out there. The purpose of this article is to help you narrow down all the options so that you have defined both what you need and which web design company will be right for the future of your business.

Why we've devoted this article to web design for small businesses.

We all know that out there, huge corporations are conducting business on a scale that would make most of our heads spin. At **Liberty Website Design**, we'll be the first to say, we are pretty much utterly lacking in that grand-scale corporate mindset. What we *do* understand is the small business. Why? Because Liberty Website Design *is* a small business. And, the majority of our web design clients *are* small businesses, being run either by sole proprietors, husband-and-wife teams or multi-generational families.

We understand that small business owners are striving to support themselves and their families through their companies because we are in the same boat. Like you, we are dependent on Internet visitors finding our website, liking what they see, and doing business with us. Because of our real-life understanding of this, we take our clients' needs to heart and become immersed in them. We realise that they are entrusting us with something extremely important when they hire us to design their website.

How is this different than hiring a big web design company?

Simply put, if you have your small business website designed by one of the larger design companies or corporations (we've all seen them advertised...), you will not be talking to the owner of that company. You will be speaking to his/her employees whose job it is to work 9-5, endlessly turning out web pages for an hourly wage. Unless the designer really loves their job, chances are, their only personal investment in what you've hired them to do is to make sure they pick up their salary at the end of the month.

They do not sit at home at night wondering how *your* business is doing. They can't be reached after hours to chat over a great new idea you've had for your business. More than likely, if you do ever get to speak to a live human being at one of these firms, you will be talking to a very poorly paid employee in India who will have to try to bring your Username up on a screen to even have an inkling of who you are. For the most part, you will find yourself processed through automated voice messaging systems and truly unhelpful on-line help desks.

Basically, the point we are trying to make is that if you go with a big company, you are bound to end up being treated like a number, and we all know how frustrating, and even dehumanizing, that can feel.

Many of our clients have gone down this dead-end road before coming to us, and we confess, it makes us feel pretty good to hear how delighted they are to be finally speaking to real people. Though the Internet is all about technology, *humans are all about communication,* and you need to be able to communicate, one-on-one, with the person whose role in your business is going to be so very important.

But why not just buy one of those build-it-yourself website packages?

The answer to this can be summed up in one word: rankings.
Build-it-yourself websites are great if your goal is just to have some fun playing with a program that will allow you to easily create a web page with no programming skills. If your intention is to make a personal website about your life, your family, a hobby, and you really don't care if anyone ever finds your site, this is a fine solution.

Many such programs are available and they generally won't cost you a lot of money. Unfortunately, they behave like they didn't cost you a lot of money, too. Because these template-based programs are mass produced, what you end up with is a site which not only has not been created to fit your needs, but which has also not been created to meet the needs of customers or the search engines. Most of the do-it-yourself web templates out there are built with absolutely no regard for SEO (search engine optimization) standards, and because of this, they will not rank well in Google, Yahoo or MSN (the Big 3 search engines). Without the rankings, you will not have the traffic you need, and you will not be making the profits you want.

Your company is very important to you. You intend to run your business in a professional way. In order to do this, why not get it right the first time by hiring a professional web designer who has spent years perfecting their coding, their design skills and their SEO abilities? Remember, you started your business because it is what you specialise in. **You shouldn't have to become a web designer before you can start promoting your services or products.**

Not all web design companies are created equal.
Chances are, you are going to need to shop around to find the web design company that is the perfect match for the needs of your business. First, let's help you to weed out some undesirable qualities you may find in companies you contact:

- They are charging too little
- They are outrageously expensive
- They are hard to communicate with verbally
- Their written communications are hard to understand
- They do not respond to your questions promptly
- They do not have a portfolio of past projects
- They make you feel foolish about your lack of technical know-how
- They strike you as abrupt, disorganized, or even rude
- They do not sign contracts with their clients
- The designer is a kid (despite abundant talent, children's lives are simply too unsettled for your business to depend on)

So, now that we've looked at some warning signs of a bad web design company, here are some things to look for which would bode well for the success of your small business's website.

- The designer is friendly and very interested in hearing about your company
- They have a fair-sized portfolio of live websites to show you.
- They have at least a few clients ranking in Google's Top 10
- They can be reached after normal business hours should something go wrong with the site.
- They invite you to contact their other clients for references.
- Their verbal and written skills are above average.
- They tell you that there are no instant results on the Internet, but that they are with you for the long haul.

By following these basic guidelines, you will hopefully be steering toward an ethical and competent website designer

One last word of advice to small business owners

Designing websites for small businesses is certainly a niche market. It requires a very different mindset than designing for corporations, and we believe that it is the far more human element involved in the work that makes it such a rewarding undertaking for us.

For almost any service or product you offer, you will find yourself competing with many many other websites. Feeling lost in the crowd should not be the sense you get from working with your web designer. ***Rather, it should be their sincere interest in your business needs, and their skill at what they do that will enable your website to shine out amidst all the others.***