

Choosing a web designer

If you're looking for a website designer, it's likely that sooner rather than later you'll come across agencies and studios who describe themselves as the best in their class.

It's equally likely that you'll encounter agencies and studios who describe their work in glowing terms such as "beautiful" or "amazing" or "stunning".

And it's even more likely that you'll find agencies and studios that are keen to register you for their Silver Package or Gold Package. These packages can usually be upgraded, especially if you take advantage of this month's special offer and sign up for the company's unique annual maintenance scheme. If you're lucky, you may even get a free t-shirt.

My personal approach to website design is somewhat different. In fact, it's similar to the approach adopted by professionals working in other industries. In simple English, I prefer not to speak too much about my work; instead, I let my work speak for itself.

A word or two about fees

Fees vary enormously. Sometimes I charge \$500; sometimes I charge much, much more. Before getting started, though, I always ask for an estimate of the client's budget.

If this seems intrusive, it isn't. Let's suppose you want a website selling 200 bakery products. I could make it for \$1000, and I could make it for \$5000. Both sites would work perfectly, but the differences between them would be enormous.

But this doesn't imply that the more expensive solution is necessarily the most appropriate. Less is sometimes more, and big is not always beautiful.

Regardless of the fee, I always require a deposit. The exact amount varies according to the complexity of the job; typically, though, it's \$500 or 50%, whichever is the greater.

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When I start working with a new client, I usually ask them to point me to half a dozen or so of their competitors' websites. This is a good way to get a feel for the industry and to see how other companies in the sector are presenting themselves.

I also ask clients to think carefully about color. An appealing, well balanced palette will usually consist of no more than two or three different colors, and it's important to choose a combination that will generate an appropriate look, feel and mood. Most people know that navy or royal blue works well for corporate imagery, for example. But a corporate-style design would obviously be inappropriate for a website that sells dried flowers.

Another major consideration is style. Are you looking for a minimalist online presence, or would you prefer something colorful and eye catching. Will you want photo-imagery, or are you looking for fun, cartoon-style graphics.

Typography is also important. I usually send my clients a selection of short paragraphs written in as many as 40-50 different typefaces. An example might be as per below:

Welcome to our collection for Spring / Summer
Welcome to our collection for Spring / Summer
Welcome to our collection for Spring / Summer

Typography is much more than choosing a typeface, though. Thought must also be given to letter spacing, word spacing, line height, font size, font style, font weight, padding and margins.

Putting it all together

Most websites I make include something called a Content Management System, or CMS. If you're not sure what this is, think of it as a sort of admin area that can be used to update, edit or delete site content.

Needless to say, only you and other pre-designated staff will be able to access the CMS (in other words, you'll need to login with a username and password), and all of the changes you make will show up immediately on the website.

Some of the Content Management Systems I make are very basic; others are more comprehensive and give site owners control over almost every aspect of their site.

A CMS can also be used to record information about clients. For example, it's possible to see at a glance who has been ordering what, and to use complex mathematical models to predict future trends and associated cash flow.

And finally

This introduction to my services is intended as a quick summary of what I do and how I do it. In all probability it will raise more questions than it answers.

So, to learn more ... please get in touch.

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