

A CHECK LIST FOR APPOINTING A WEB DEVELOPER

INTRODUCTION

Use this check-list to help you evaluate your web developers ability to cover all the bases. Web Development is a new profession, and there are few formal qualifications for the job and there are no courses that cover all the areas of expertise used in creating a successful website.

Many of the people who create websites come to the industry with backgrounds in Graphic Design and Desk Top Publishing, or Programming and a love of the Internet, a few of them come from a Marketing background.

Most of the large web development companies use teams to create websites. A Project Manager, heads the team and will call on the resources of a Business Analyst, a Marketer, a Graphic Designer, a Programmer to create the web pages and if the website is to have database capabilities there will often be another programmer and sometimes even a database designer. If the website is to talk to existing systems within the company there are more layers of expertise required. Once complete the website will then be marketed through traditional means and on the Internet through Search Engines and, or Pay Per Click Advertising.

Websites made by a team like this will probably have a \$50K(minimum) price tag.

If you are a small business you will most likely have a lot less than \$10K to spend on a new website and you may not have access to all the expertise you may need. This resource should help you evaluate your web developers' ability to cover all the necessary bases. And willingness to seek outside help when needed.

We have broken this check-list up into sections to help you move through it more quickly. Some categories will not be relevant to all websites.

INSTRUCTIONS

Prepare for the meeting, take some time to write down the goals you have for your new website. Have a short one sentence description of your target audience. A good rule of thumb to remember, one website – one audience. Decide on your budget. The people you interview should ask you about these things.

If you are organised and have a clear idea of these things you will be a more attractive prospect to work with and it may even allow the web developer to cut out some of the fat that they would normally include to deal with more difficult customers.

Try to take notes and fill in the check-list during a face-to-face meeting, but allocate the scores later.

1. Print off a copy the check-list for every web developer you will interview.
2. Before the interview go through the check-list and evaluate how important the different categories are to your new website. If you are not trying to sell anything through your website you will not need to worry about the section on e-Commerce. If your website is for the use of existing customers, then you will not need to ask the questions in the Search Engine Marketing Category.
3. Identify the categories that are very important to your website and highlight these. If the developer does not give really positive answers to questions in these areas, but you still favour them for the work, ask them if they know any specialists the area that they would normally work with and if not, would they consider working with someone you nominated.

EVALUATION CHECK LIST

CONTACT DETAILS	
Developer Name:	
Phone Number:	
Email Address:	
References	
Reference URL's	
Reference Follow-Up result:	
Quote:	

REFERENCES	
First Reference URL:	
Is this website similar to the one that you want built?	
Reference Contact Name:	
Reference Contact Details:	
Reference Follow-Up result:	
Second Reference URL:	
Is this website similar to the one that you want built?	
Reference Contact Name:	
Reference Contact Details:	
Reference Follow-Up result:	

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK THE REFEREES

- Was the website completed within budget?
- Was the website completed within the promised time-frame?
- Does the website meet the goals you set?
- How do you rate their support?
- How do you rate their attention to detail?
- Would you use them for future web development?

GENERAL QUESTIONS		
QUESTION	COMMENTS	SCORE
What are your/ company's strengths?		
Are there any types of websites that you prefer not to do?		
Once you win a job can you tell me what the process is from then till completion?		
Around how long does a typical website take to complete?		
What are your payment terms?		
How do you handle on going support?		
	AVERAGE SCORE FOR CATEGORY	

PLANNING QUESTIONS		
QUESTION	COMMENTS	SCORE
Do you give any advise on what should be included in the website or do you prefer to take instruction from me?		
If they give advice ask; Do you conduct any market research before giving your advice?		
Explain your approach to developing, or re-developing a website?		
	AVERAGE SCORE FOR CATEGORY	

DESIGN QUESTIONS		
QUESTION	COMMENTS	SCORE
Do you have a back-ground or qualifications in design?		
Will you create/supply the images for the website or will you need us to supply them?		
What do you think constitutes good website design?		
How many designs will you give me to choose from?		
	AVERAGE SCORE FOR CATEGORY	

Answers to the design questions should incorporate the needs of your users. For more information see: [Give Them What They Want](#).

USABILITY & ACCESSIBILITY QUESTIONS		
QUESTION	COMMENTS	SCORE
Do you follow any usability and/or accessibility standards?		
Do you do any usability testing in the development process?		
	AVERAGE SCORE FOR CATEGORY	

TECHNOLOGY QUESTIONS		
QUESTION	COMMENTS	SCORE
Do you use a standard package such as Dream Weaver to build the website?		
If they answer to the above question is no, ask; if the tool used is proprietary, or is it commercially available? Is it something other web developers commonly use?		
Is it a content management system that uses a data base?		
Do you generally use layers?		
Do you generally use frames?		
Do you use Flash?		
Do you use Cookies?		
Will I have statistics available to me when the website is finished?		
	AVERAGE SCORE FOR CATEGORY	

If they do use a database driven content management system ensure that you get a full explanation to all the questions covered in the Content Management category of the check-list. See resource: [About Content Management Systems](#).

In general Frames are not a good technology to use. If used, it should be sparingly and only for specific reasons. See resource: [About Frames](#). Layers can behave oddly across different browsers. Forcing Cookies is not search engine friendly.

Flash is not a Search Engine friendly technology. If used, like frames it should be sparingly and only for specific reasons. See Resource: [Is A Flash Website Really That Flash?](#)

HOSTING QUESTIONS		
QUESTION	COMMENTS	SCORE
Will you want me to move my website from where it is currently being hosted?		
If yes, why?		
If yes, will you want me to move my email too?		
Does your quotation cover the cost of hosting too?		
	AVERAGE SCORE FOR CATEGORY	

CONTENT MANAGEMENT QUESTIONS		
QUESTION	COMMENTS	SCORE
Is the Content Management System your own or is it commercially available?		
Do we need to be trained to use the system properly?		
Is training included in the cost?		
How many users or groups of users does the system support?		
Do you ensure that all the website's content is made available to Search Engines for indexing? If yes; how?		
Will I have to move from my current web hosting company to use the content management system?		
	AVERAGE SCORE FOR CATEGORY	



If your website is going to be maintained by more than one group of people and you require content to be approved before publication you may want the system to incorporate a staging and final approval process.

E-COMMERCE QUESTIONS		
QUESTION	COMMENTS	SCORE
Will the website incorporate a shopping cart?		
Does the shopping cart technology belong to you, a hosting company, or is it commercially available?		
Does the shopping cart use an SSL?		
Is it your SSL, my SSL or the hosting companies SSL?		
Is the cost of the SSL included in the quotation?		
Can you show me a shopping cart you provided that is currently being used?		
Will it use a Merchant clearing Facility?		
Will the set-up fees for this service be included in your quotation.		
Can you provide details of the ongoing fees and commissions for the service?		
	AVERAGE SCORE FOR CATEGORY	

SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING QUESTIONS		
QUESTION	COMMENTS	SCORE
Is Search Engine Marketing Part of the website development service?		
Which search engines do you specialise in working with?		
Do register my site with any search engines or directories?		
If yes, which ones?		
Do you offer an ongoing SEO service?		
If yes, what does it entail and what is the cost?		
Can you assist with other forms of on-line marketing?		
	AVERAGE SCORE FOR CATEGORY	

CONTENT QUESTIONS		
QUESTION	COMMENTS	SCORE
Do you write the content of the website from our existing marketing material?		
If not, do you provide guidelines on what to include in the content?		
Have you got standard documents or templates that we can model our content on.		
How do we handle updates to the content after the website has been completed?		
If they will do the updates for you, is it on an hourly rate, or is there a monthly fee that covers support and changes.		
	AVERAGE SCORE FOR CATEGORY	

SECURITY QUESTIONS		
QUESTION	COMMENTS	SCORE
Have you created websites that incorporate an area for information of a sensitive nature?		
Do/can you encrypt sensitive information.		
Can you limit access to certain information to registered users with passwords?		
Do you use email to convey sensitive information?		
Will you be able to assess if I should I have my own SSL?		
	AVERAGE SCORE FOR CATEGORY	