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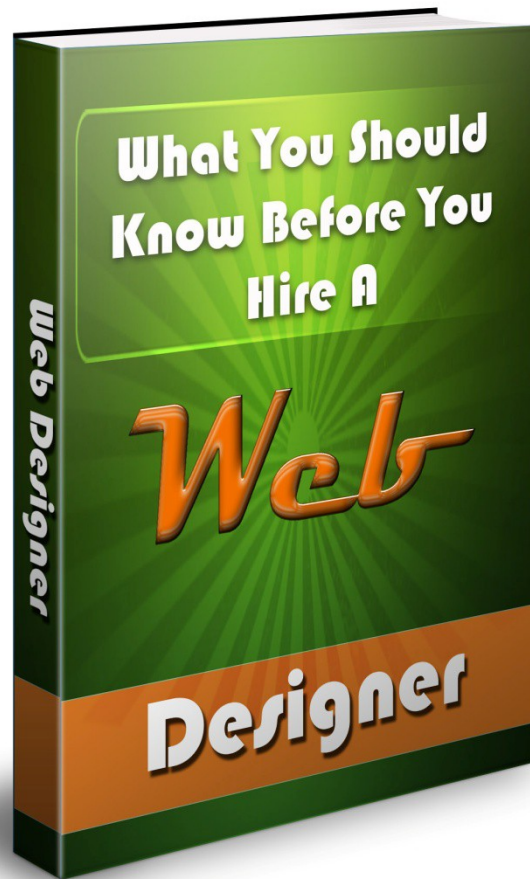
Internet and Web-Based Strategies

Hiring a Website Developer – What You Should Know Beforehand

By Christiana Augustine

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Introduction

Branding your business is at the very core of all marketing efforts. One of the most powerful elements in branding your business is your website. Your prospective clients and customers expect you to have a web site where they can find out about your business, products and or services.

Unless you are a graphic designer, marketing expert, and web developer all rolled into one, chances are you will need to hand the important task of creating your website over to the experts. Before you do, there are some issues set out in this report which you need to know.

I hope you enjoy reading this report and gain valuable insights from it.

To your off-line and online success,

--Christiana Augustine

Benefits of a Great Website Development

Those offers for a free or "bargain" site builder that you see advertised are hardly a bargain. You spend a lot of time building your site while your business suffers, for a result that is less than professional.

While it may be tempting to go with a bargain-basement deal, you really can't afford to cut corners when it comes to developing a professional website. There are a number of ways in which a well-designed web site can benefit your business and also many ways that a badly-designed site can hurt your business. Some benefits of great website design:

- **Branding.** Your brand is comprised of everything people see, feel, or think when it comes to your business. One of the most powerful players in the branding game is your website. A great website design will embody your business brand and help bring it to life. Poor design will work against your brand which, in the long run, costs your business money.

- **Professional image.** If you don't hire a professional to develop your website then your site's very important branding elements could end up looking sloppy or amateurish. Is that the message you want to send to potential customers?

- **Adaptability.** Great web design takes into account the inevitable need to adapt to change. Over time, you will need to update your website to keep it functional and relevant. It is highly recommended that you make regular efforts to keep your website current, for both your visitors and the search engines. A good website developer will create your site with adaptability in mind, so that you don't have to go back to the drawing board and start from scratch just to keep up with technology.

Elements of a Great Website

An effective site is one that attracts visitors, keeps them interested and engaged, inspires them to come back, and ultimately converts them into paying customers. Here are the elements of an effective website:

- **Navigation.** This is perhaps the most important design element. Your site's navigation features are what will enable your visitors to move from one page to the next, find specific items of interest, and form associations within your content. Without well-planned and executed navigation, you will loose site visitors and a lot of your valuable content could go completely unnoticed and unread. Navigation elements include primary/secondary navigation, menus, search bars, inbound links, and breadcrumbs, among other things.

- **Hierarchy of importance.** A good website design will naturally guide the viewer's eyes from what is most important to what is least important on the page, and in the right order. This is accomplished through the strategic use of fonts (including sizes, effects, and emphasis), spacing, graphics, and element placement.

- **Organization.** Before you can even begin to design a website, there first needs to be an outline (or "map") of the site's organization. A good developer will help you with this, but you must at least know what you want to accomplish with your site. Your site map should include every page of your site, as well as how visitors will get from each page to the other.

- **Design aesthetics.** It goes without saying that your site should be pleasing to the eye. A number of different elements contribute to a design's aesthetic value, including typography, graphics, colors, and layout.

- **Branding.** Your business website should be created with your brand in mind. It should be an extension of the message and feeling you want to convey with your brand. Therefore, an effective web design will incorporate your business brand logo, colors, tag line, and any other elements that will help people associate your site with your brand.

What to Expect from a Great Web Developer

Once you have arrived at what you want and need from your website, the next step is to commission your site's development. Your web development services include much more than just a simple end-product design. Here is what you can expect to get from a good web developer:

- **Research.** When you hire a developer to create your website, you are entrusting that developer to build something that is unique to your business. A professional developer will do the necessary research to determine that your site is not just a copy of your competitors' site.

- **Multi-medium translation.** Your website must translate well in a variety of mediums. This means it must look good on everything from a small smart phone screen to large desktop screens. Therefore, a good developer will ensure that your site is equipped to properly display on every device your site may be viewed on.

- **Design advice.** When hiring a web developer, you are not expected to know anything about the fundamentals of effective design. While it is imperative that you put a lot of thought into what your business stands for and what you want to get out of your website, it is the developer's job to offer you guidance on how you can best accomplish those things.

A good developer will have the knowledge, skill, and experience to help shape your ideas into a tangible and effective web site.

- **Search engine optimization (SEO).** It is not enough just to have a great website. You must get people to visit your website. Be sure to choose a web developer that is well-versed in search engine optimization strategies.

- **Support.** Your web developer should have the option to provide support to help you add, change, or remove content from your website, as well as perform other admin functions for your site.

How to Choose the Right Website Developer

When it comes to hiring a website developer there are many options. From part-time freelance artists to corporate-world web design teams, you have your work cut out for you to weed through all that's available in order to find your right fit. So, how do you choose the right website developer for your business?

The following comparisons will help you narrow your search:

- **Freelancer versus Company**. Each option has its own pros and cons, and you will need to weigh these out to decide which is best for you. You can expect to spend less money when you use a freelance designer from an online site; however, a developer company is likely to deliver a more complete customer service and technical support package for the cost.

- **Reputation.** The best way to find a great website developer, and fast, is to ask for recommendations. If people you know and trust, who are successful, refer you to a developer, then chances are you've found a talented and reliable professional to work with. You can also search the web for developers, and read customer reviews to gauge their reputation in the industry.

- **Experience.** Your web developer of choice should have a considerable amount of experience, and should be well established and time-tested. While getting a great design is extremely important, it is just as important that your developer sticks around long enough to provide you with the support you need. There may be no guarantee of this, but a developer with years of experience is a much safer bet than someone just out of the gate.

- **Portfolio.** Any reputable developer will be able to provide you with a portfolio (or at least some examples of work done in the past). One of the best ways to see the work of a web developer is to check out the developer's personal website.

- **Vision.** Website development takes a certain amount of knowledge and technical skill, but a great developer must also have an artistic vision. When you interview web developers, consider what they are bringing to the table. Is it just the technical ability to execute your site's creation, or can they actually offer up creative ideas to strengthen and build on your branding and commerce goals?

- **Pricing.** Because each design project is unique, it is impossible to estimate exactly what you will have to spend before you've hashed out all of the details of what you want and need. So look for the developer who does not mind meeting with you first before quoting you a price.

- As a general rule, most of your website development bids should be in the same ballpark, for the same job. An unusually high or low price in comparison with the rest could be an indication that the developer is unrealistic or inexperienced.

Final Thoughts

Your website is really the nucleus of your business. A lot goes into building your brand, and your business website is one of your most powerful branding tools. There is a sophistication that is now expected in the way your business is portrayed online. Don't skimp when it comes to creating, growing, and strengthening your brand.

Contact the experienced professionals at Augustine Business Solutions to handle all of your website development needs. We can be reached by phone, at 760-304-2218, or email: christiana@augenterprise.com.

About The Author

Christiana Augustine *is the owner/CEO of Augustine Business Solutions which specializes in helping local businesses build a meaningful online presence.*

She has been working in the Computer industry since 1985 and has been creating profitable web sites since 2004. Her background also includes extensive experience in Microsoft Office suite applications, computer training and working with various computer software applications, with strong organizational and project management skills.

Contact Christiana today to take your website solutions to the next level.