



Top 5 Questions to Ask Your Web Designer

1. Will my site be compatible across a variety of browsers?

The answer needs to be yes. More and more people aren't just using Internet Explorer on a Windows PC. Your site will have to look good on both a PC and a Mac, and on a wide variety of browsers - Firefox, Safari, etc.

2. Will my site design be search engine friendly?

Here you should hear a resounding "Yes!" But what does this mean? Well, a lot of things. It means that:

- the site should not be designed entirely in Flash,
- the site should not be designed with frames,
- all photos, audio and image files should be as quick to load as possible (this will also make sure that you reduce your bandwidth costs),
- there needs to be an external style sheet (CSS) to reduce the coding on the site. This also includes placing any JavaScript in an external file as well.
- each page needs to have a DocType and be W3C compliant. You may not understand what this is, and quite frankly, you shouldn't have to...your Web designer should know... but insist on it.
- each page needs to be "crawlable" - any dynamic content needs to be given a stable URL, and there needs to be text-based links that search engine spiders can use to access the interior pages.

3. What deadlines do I have to meet, what deadlines do you have to meet?

This is a common stumbling block for the client. Many designers today (the really good ones) insist on having all the content before creating a design. Why? So, they can incorporate the average page length, draw inspiration from the "feel" of the content and choose images that work with specific pages. As the client it is your responsibility to work with your designer, and get them the items they need to create the site. Once the designer has this, they should be able to, in turn, provide you with a Web design timetable.

So, you don't know what you need, or what pages you want to have? Fine. A design firm can help you plan your site and guide you on your content needs. But this takes time, and it is usually an additional consultation charge. Often this is covered in the detailed proposal or agreement, which leads us to...

4. Does your firm provide me with a detailed agreement?

A detailed agreement between you and your designer is a must. You need to know what services are included for the price and which ones are not. It outlines responsibilities and includes a timetable or schedule of events. It also provides a payment structure. Read it over closely, and if there is anything you don't understand or are not comfortable with - address it from the beginning.

5. Who will be my contact person?

Get the name of the person who will be coordinating your project. To have streamlined, effective communication, there should be a project manager or someone at the design company who will oversee your project and be your point person.