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10 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK WEB DEVELOPERS BEFORE DISHING OUT THE DOUGH

Assuming you already have a fairly good idea of what you want on your web site and will more than likely be writing your own copy or having it written for you, here are 10 questions you need answered to help you create an effective web site without breaking the bank or delaying your plans.

1. Price by project or by the hour? Accepting an hourly rate agreement gives you little control over costs unless you put a spending cap into effect. If you have to exercise the spending cap, what if your site is only partially complete? Inevitably, you will have to dish out more dough to get it finished and this is a strain you want to avoid as you start your new business.

2. Once the site is complete who will maintain it? If the developer offers this service, what are the costs and turn-around time? If you'd rather assume modification control, do they offer access to and training on editing software?

3. What is the expected completion date for the site? You want to be in a position to plan ahead for the launch. Having this information will allow you to organize your marketing efforts and prioritize all other plans that tie in to "going live".

4. What is the payment structure? Do they want all of the money up front? Half now, half upon completion? Make sure you hold back partial payment until your site is complete and you are fully satisfied with the results.

5. Will your designer submit your site to the search engines or will this be your responsibility? If this is your responsibility, do your homework to ensure you cover all the steps. (Keywords and META tags must be done prior to submission.)

6. Who will be responsible for search engine optimization? This is usually an add-on service, so find out if your developer includes it with site development, offers it at an additional cost, or if you will have to contract it out to a third party.

7. Who will hold the master key to your site? Make sure you do! Don't leave this critical component of your business and marketing strategy in the control of a third party. Get all passwords and access to all data.

8. Will your developer teach you how to read your web logs/stats so you can understand the how, what, where and why of your visitors?

9. Has the developer designed other sites for your niche market?

10. Has the web designer provided a portfolio, testimonials or references from others in your niche market? Have you verified the references?

A web site is a major component of your marketing strategy and business success. Do your due diligence in selecting a web developer and don't hesitate to ask as many questions as it takes to fully understand both your and your developer's role in the process.