

Choosing the Right Web Site Designer

Your choice of a web design company is a very important step toward producing an effective and attractive church, ministry or other Christian-based organization web site. There are literally thousands of options available to you including seeking an in-house team from your current membership to hiring a well-seasoned professional web development company. Examine these options carefully,

Building vs Architecture

There are plenty of carpenters, plumbers, masons and other skilled construction workers that build beautiful homes. But, for the most part, these craftsmen follow someone else's blueprint. There are two distinct processes toward completing a web site project: Design and Construction. The first is a highly creative process where the designer acts much like an architect using concept processes that include visual and functional aesthetics or the look and usefulness of the structure, in this case your web site. The second is the actual building of the site following the blueprint provided by the designer.

Creating a detailed blueprint for your web site is just as important as when you build a home, office building and, yes, your church. And, through the power of the Internet, you can look at plenty of web site "model homes" perhaps contacting the company that designed – and usually built – the "home" you find most appealing. You need to find an individual, team or company that understands the difference between design and construction yet incorporates both.

Template vs Custom

Many companies that specialize providing Christian-themed web site development offer sites that are template-driven. In fact, if your church or organization possesses a talented, competent – and very willing – web site development team, choosing commercially available web site templates offers not only an expedient method to accomplish design, but most likely an affordable option to starting from scratch. If your group is so blessed, you're 80 percent toward completing your web project. If not, choosing a company is much like finding the right church – it's got to be the correct fit meeting your specific needs.

Amateur vs Professional

As stated above, if your membership includes professional web site designers and developers, you are, indeed, blessed. However, be wary of "weekend warriors." These are usually well-intentioned individuals who "play" at something. Their experience may be somewhat limited – as well as their tools. Additionally, their effort – although unselfish – may fail to the level of "beginner" or, well, amateur. There exists plenty of "war" stories about situations where a professional had to be hired to "fix" the results produced by a well-intentioned "hobbyist." When it comes to 21st century use of a web site as an effective ministerial tool, you can either break out the "fine china" each time you receive a visitor, or provide paper plates and plastic ware.

There might be a few design incorporated functionalities that a non-professional cannot provide including credit card acceptance, automatic email features and other specific interactive items that might include not only design elements but how – and where – your web site is hosted. Consider a "one-stop" shopping approach where the design, construction and hosting of your web site is accomplished through one source.

Review the Portfolio

Choosing a well-established web design and development company is NOT as important as

choosing the right designer. There are plenty of HUGE design companies that will “assign” a manager and development team to oversee your web project. Consider how personal a service you require and how accessible communication is between you and the designer. There are many talented independent designers who don't possess extensive portfolios but are competent, trustworthy and competitive. Always “surf” the Net looking at those we site “models” discussed above, picking this feature, that look, which appeals to you and can be communicated to your designer.

Compare Prices

Pricing for web design, creation and hosting is as variable as exists in many service oriented businesses

- Unlike home-building, there's very little, if any, material cost. It's all about labor. For example, a web design company may charge you \$75 per hour. Your web site project may consume 100 labor hours, thus resulting in a \$7,500 price tag.
- Fixed Pricing is a popular method wherein you receive a quote for the entire project based on communicated needs during a consultation. Most companies offer FREE consultation that produces a quote
- By the item pricing sometimes works for web site development that takes on a “work-in-progress” theme wherein charges are established by page or by component, for example, a separate price for a “Flash” intro or header, a fill-in form, or an audio or video feature.

Always “get it in writing.” Make sure a contractual arrangement is written specifying all prices, describing, to both party's acceptance, the scope and depth of the project. Include specific dates for completion of both individual items and the entire project

Although price always weighs in as an important factor, shop around receiving several bids while investigating important aspects like communication, personal affability, concept philosophy and other “intangibles” that, along with competitive pricing, will deliver a “good fit” and a great web site.