

## Finding A Good Web Designer

If you just started an online business, you probably have no idea how to go about hiring a web designer. Who should you call? Should you look someone up in the yellow pages? Should you hire someone who works for a company that employs many different web designers, or should you hire a sole proprietor? Or, should you hire a freelancer who does web design part time? How much does it cost? If you need someone to develop a very simple, static website that is merely a personal homepage or just an informational site about your business, then you pretty much have carte blanche. The only issue in this case would be cost. A freelancer will charge a lot less than a professional, but a freelancer might not do a thoroughly competent job. There are numerous website directories that contain a database of freelance web designers who are seeking work. If you hire one of these individuals, make sure you request to see samples of web designs they have already done, just to make sure they have not done shoddy work in the past. I find it best to hire a professional in this instance, because even though a professional will charge more per hour, they can usually do much better work and get it done faster. So, in the end, a freelancer could actually charge more and you might end up getting a design of inferior quality. Let us take a moment to delineate what the differences are between a freelancer, a sole proprietor, someone who owns a small, reputable web design business with a few employees, and a designer who is part of a huge company that employs up to one hundred web designers (there are quite a few companies out there that employ hundreds of web designers under a single company umbrella and also provide domain name registration and web hosting services all in one package). First of all, a freelancer is usually someone for whom web design is merely a hobby. This sort of a person has probably taken a few courses in simple web design at a local institute or college, or might be self-taught, and dabbles in web design as a part-time job or a way to earn extra cash. Some of these freelancers might be quite talented, but their designs are ordinarily not as crisp as what a professional can produce. To reiterate, a freelancer is someone who only moonlights as a web designer. So, they are typically busy with their other career, and will take a longer time with your project because of time constraints. In the end, the freelancer probably will not give you the design you really want, and will refuse to refund your money. A web designer who is part of a larger company that employs one hundred or more designers is just as bad as a freelancer. These sorts of web designers do not have much design skill, and are often given many different jobs to do at once. As a result, they will throw your design together haphazardly. You will be very disappointed with the work they produce. The best web designers to hire are professionals who do web design as a career, and do focused projects. You should hire either a sole proprietor who has a large portfolio of work to show you, or a small firm of web designers who work together and have extensive web design experience. Professionals charge more than anyone else, but because they have so much experience and such a wide variety of designs for you to choose from, they will do a fantastic job in only a fraction of the time. The only time you should use a freelancer or other inexperienced designer is if you can meet with that individual in person, explain exactly what you want, and if the project itself is very simple and the design work necessary for the job is not too extravagant. Do not make the mistake of hiring a freelancer over the internet that lives in a different state and only accepts payments via PayPal or some other sort of electronic payment processing service. Make sure your freelancer is someone who resides close by so that you can monitor their progress and visit them if you do not like the initial design they produce. For almost all web design projects, it is best to hire a professional. Even though it costs more, it is generally only a one-time cost. A website is typically only designed once with major revisions only done once every few years; you may make changes here or there in the short run, but a web site usually stays the same for up to a few years or more. So, you might as well go with the most talented yet reasonably priced designer you can find. Also, it is very important to hire a designer who has a contract that you can sign that stipulates certain terms and conditions. You should be able to pay the designer a down payment of 25% - 50% of the total quoted price for the job, with the balance due upon completion. This is critically important, because it can be very frustrating to flush money down the toilet on a design you hate without any way to recoup any of your funds afterwards. Also, the designer should be able to quickly produce some sample layouts after they have been assigned the job so that you can at least pick a particular design that you like the most, and then the designer can begin working on that design rather than using their artistic license to create a design from scratch. Follow all of these recommendations and be careful when hiring a web designer. Always work with a professional if your project requires a certain level of expertise and skill, and make sure you request a portfolio containing samples of their work so you can see what they have already done. Make sure their prior designs meet your standards.

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