

How to Select a Web Services Company

This list is geared toward the small/medium business owner. If you are with a larger organization seeking to outsource web services, and you would like help determining a list of factors to consider, please fill out the form on the [Get More Information](#) page with your request, and we will get back to you within 1 business day.

What should you know before your first meeting with a Web Development Team?

In order to select the best **Web Services Company** for your needs, you must have a clear idea of what those needs are. If you are just starting out you may need a different set of skills from a company who already has marketing materials and content.

To help you assess what you need, we have assembled a checklist of that you may already have. If you don't, you may want to source them from your existing graphic designer or marketing team (if you have one), or you may want to ask the web services company if they provide these items. The second checklist is provided to help you decide what you want out of your web presence (that is your site and how it fits into your marketing strategy).

Inventory

Determine whether or not you have the following items and assemble the answers (and in certain cases the files) into a format you can take with you. You may need to ask other people at your company or your graphic designer.

- ❖ **Do you have a logo?**
- ❖ **Is it in a digital format?**
- ❖ **Do you have colours chosen for your company? Do you know the Pantone or hexadecimal values (for an exact match)**
- ❖ **Do you have a colour scheme in mind for the site?**
- ❖ **What are the key areas/pages of the site?**
- ❖ **Do you have any copy/content already prepared?**
- ❖ **Do you have photos in mind for the site? Do you have the copyright?**
- ❖ **Do you have a domain name?**
- ❖ **Do you have web server, hosting space, or even an existing site?**

Some of the "no" responses becomes another potential question to ask the web development company. For instance:

- ❖ **Do you do logo design, or is there a person you recommend for the job? Will that price be included in the quote?**
- ❖ **Do you provide copywriting services?**
- ❖ **Do you register domain names? Do you provide hosting?**

Website Options

The next step in your inventory is to decide the functionality you would like for your website.

- ❖ **Is your website strictly a brochure for your company?**
- ❖ **Is your goal to have your website help your support staff by letting your customers look up answers to problems they are having?**
- ❖ **Do you have a database of information about products or services that you are making available online in a searchable format?**
- ❖ **Are you planning to sell products online?**
- ❖ **Do you want any community elements for the website, like a discussion forum or live chat?**
- ❖ **Do you need password-protected areas for clients or staff?**
- ❖ **Are there any other dynamic elements like calendars searchable tips?**
- ❖ **Do you need to be able to update the content yourself? Will the content be maintained by non-technical staff?**

Evaluating Other Websites

We recommend that you spend some time surfing the Web and identifying websites you like on the following criteria:

- ❖ **Design**
- ❖ **Functional elements** of the site that you enjoy and would like to see on yours (like discussion areas, feedback forms, etc.).
- ❖ **Content style** (the way the copy is written)
- ❖ **Purpose** - educational, eCommerce, brochure, community, or any combination of the four

Be sure to keep track of the URLs so that you can share them with the web team you choose. You might also want to speak to the website owners or administrators (if they are not your competition) to find out who did the development and/or design, and contact them for a quote.

9 Basic Questions to Ask your Potential Web Services Company:

During your inventory stage, you may have jotted down some preliminary questions about specific items you require. Here we have assembled some core questions for you to ask about the web services company itself – the practices and skills.

When you move onto choosing a web development company, you need to know the skill sets of the people involved, specifically to determine whether you will be able to have all of your needs met by this one firm, or you will have to have other companies complete the extras like copywriting, Search Engine Optimization, or developing a Search Engine Marketing Strategy. You also need to feel comfortable not only with their competence, but their trustworthiness.

Some companies will attempt to lock you into long term arrangements by developing applications that can only be supported by their firm. If you know enough beforehand, you can avoid such a situation.

- 1. What is the full range of web services your company provides?**
- 2. How many years experience do you have in providing these web services?**
- 3. What is the average experience of the personnel you have selected for my services team?**
- 4. Do you or someone in your firm have experience/certification in Project Management?**
- 5. What search engine optimization (SEO) techniques do you employ? Do you have a person who focuses on this area in house, or do you have an SEO company you work with/recommend for this purpose?**
- 6. How much will it cost to update or modify my site at a later date?**
- 7. Who will own the design, work product, database scripts, and source code?**
You may get a split answer on this one, as there may be specific techniques that the company employs that they do not wish to share. This, however, should not include SQL script for recreating the database, nor customized source code. Ask if there will be any additional elements for which you will NOT be receiving the work files.
- 8. Will I receive a copy of all the components I need to be able to run my site elsewhere?**
This is just a follow up question to the previous.
- 9. What manuals do I get with the final product? Will I get a style guide?** (This allows you to know what fonts and colours are used on your site in case you need to have another developer change elements of the site later. This is a clear sign of good faith on behalf of the services company.)

8 Specialized Questions about Web Services and Web Development

There are a few additional questions that may need to ask if you are having custom development done. Depending on the size of your company, and/or the size of the project, not all of the following items may be relevant.

1. **What technologies are you suggesting we use in the deployment?**
2. **What other technology options are you comfortable with deploying and supporting?**
3. **What other projects have you developed using those technologies? Can I see it/them in action?**
4. **Do your developers have certification in the technologies we will be employing?**
5. **What is the support base for the products you will be using for our site?**
6. **What other companies support this technology, or are we getting into a project that only your personnel can support?**
7. **Do you have experience integrating and customizing Open Source components?**
8. **Do you have a network of partners who can provide consultative expertise in related fields like Knowledge Media Design (or a specific area of business acumen that pertains to the functionality of your site)?**

We hope these items have helped you clarify what you need before you can pick a **Web Services Company** that matches the needs of your organization. If you require more help, feel free to contact us through our [Get More Information](#) page at http://pixcode.com/get_more_info.phtml, or call us at 416-596-9533 ext 290.