



## Meeting Your Online Needs

Because the Web is an expressive system involving numerous choices for information development, creating effective communications truly relies on the skills of developers. Selecting and creating information that has meaning and value for users within the dynamic environment of the Web is no small task. For Web developers, this information environment demands excellent, effective content development in order to rise above the information clutter. With so much information on the Web, only that which truly meets a user's needs can survive and flourish.

RJTaylor's experienced professionals can help with all aspects of Web Design and Site Building, including the analysis of your goals and marketplace, media and graphic design, content authoring, maintenance, and updates. We can integrate database capability into your site and incorporate all the latest Web technologies including Shockwave, Java Applications, Scripts, Online Chat, Audio, Video and much more.

Using your company's existing source materials, such as product brochures, data sheets, and annual reports, our Web authoring staff can create a Web site bringing together the Key Requirements for Success with:

- Effective communication of your message
- Sophisticated well-designed site layouts
- Eye-catching look & feel
- Memorable impact
- Intuitive navigation
- Consistent presentation on different browsers
- Solid underlying technology

Bear in mind, deciding that you need an online presence is one thing, however, creating the site, promoting it, and maintaining it as a vibrant and meaningful facet of your overall business is an entirely different proposition.

The following pages contain comments, suggestions, and tips to help you develop a better understanding of how to start a web design project.

Please use this information as a guideline to assist you in working more effectively with whichever web designer you choose to hire.

After reviewing this information, I'm sure you will discover many hidden costs and fees that many web designers don't normally mention until after you have hired their services. My information is designed to help you reduce cost, up-front !

## Web Design Tips

### *Before we Begin...*

Let's clarify some of the reasons I think you might not want to consider creating a web site yourself. The greatest reason is the same one that causes you to use a mechanic to fix the ping in your car engine. Experts do a better job than amateurs. The reality of life is that people who focus on a specific area can learn more about it, gain more experience, and produce better end-results.

Professional web page designers spend their days creating web sites, building pages, tuning graphics for fast delivery, thinking about navigation of online-information, and keeping up on the bewildering array of new products, services, and design styles that appear on the Web. Most of them spend their nights and weekends doing this too. In fact, don't hire a web development company whose members don't have way-cool home pages. If they're not living and breathing this stuff, they're probably not the experts you seek.

We will cover all areas beginning with Site Purpose, then onto Identifying your Audience, Sketching Ideas, Price Planning and Timeline Execution.

### **Site Purpose**

The purpose of a web site is to present content efficiently and in an attractive manner.

The first critical step in the process is for you to have already thought about various aspects of the site that you'd like to create. Keep in mind that the best and most useful web sites are information-centered and not centralized on technology or wow-wow features. You not only want people to come to your site, you want them to come back a second time, finding the site a valuable part of their daily or weekly web travels.

Just like an excellent marketing brochure, an informational web site answers all possible questions and concerns about your product or service.

Make it fun and interactive. Creating an interactive site can reap significant benefits. Inter-activity can be as simple as a search system so people can type in a keyword about the product they seek and have relevant pages on your site displayed, or even interactive games and entertainment to keep people amused. However, you will not be successful if you design a site where people are coming to play your games and have fun, rather than to find out and possibly buy your products or services. You'll be without any tangible benefits and most importantly, without meeting the original business goals of your site.

Use lots of useful up-to-date news and information. If you're in an industry where there's lots going on and important news each week, you might decide that having a news area on your site will prove invaluable to your customers and potential clients. It can certainly demonstrate that you're plugged into your industry.

## **Identifying Audience**

Identify whom your audience will be and what kind of information you will need to include in your site. Choose these two ingredients correctly, communicate them to your designer and you're on your way towards getting the site of your dreams.

You also need to spend some time identifying the target audience for the site. An answer of "everyone" is not going to help your designer create the best possible site. So here are some choices to consider. Your best bet would be to number them 1 to 10 in order of most-important to least-important.

*Existing customers* - this can be a great way to retain brand loyalty among your current customers. Help them out and give them a site that continues the good will you've already created through your professional services.

*Prospective clients* - people who come across your site due to a magazine article, a newspaper ad, a referral or an online listing and are in the market for your particular product or service. A good web site can help establish your credibility in the same way that a well-designed brochure can.

*Customers of your competitors* - well that's life! Business isn't always friendly, and one way that you can grow your own is by steering people from your competitor to your business. Your web site designer can design a site that directly compares your own service or product to your competitors in a way that's quite favorable.

## **Sketching Ideas**

Sketch out your ideas on paper with the items that you want to see. Decide on what type of content and how it should interact with your company.

Another task that can greatly aid your designer in creating your web site is for you to sketch on paper the kinds of things you want, with as many specifics as you can think about. If you know of a designer, ask him or her for ideas. They have a lot of imagination and ingenuity in this area.

Some of the content areas to consider when sketching out a site design include the number of pages with specific types of information, such as; your products and services, jobs, solutions, what's new, cool links, specification of any interactive areas such as; database lookup, content searching, email feedback forms, online registration, download areas, games and amusements.

One of the best things that you can do for your web designer to ensure you're all on the same track, is to spend time exploring other sites on the Web to get ideas for your own. Write down their URL and a note about what you did or didn't like about the specific site. The designer can then visit the same places and start to understand whether you like open designs with lots of blank areas, flashy animation, complex background graphics, lots of short pages versus a small number of long pages, etc.

## **Price Planning**

Providing any logos, artwork creations you may already have on hand and any typing of material as needed, will help keep pricing down.

Now that you've identified the sites that you think are inspirational, do you already have artwork that the designer can use, or will they have to create new material? Is the text portion of the proposed site already in electronic formats that's easy to convert to HTML (like MS Word), or does it just exist on paper, requiring a typist? The two areas that most affect pricing are the overall size of the site and the level of complexity of the interactive sections, which can by itself cost you anywhere from \$5000 on up for the custom programming time.

Another factor that influences pricing is the level of bureaucracy in the company. I have worked on site designs for firms that require each and every variation of the design approved by ten people and four committees. That will eat up a ton of time, and I have learned to increase my pricing commensurately because I've learned the job will drag on and take longer than the same site design would take without that level of bureaucracy.

The range of prices, as I said, can vary widely. You should expect no less than \$75 per page for a simple static site with no interactivity, and up to \$500 - \$1000 per page for a full design firm able to create custom interactive sections, implement search engines, add new artwork, etc..

Our client project list ranges from simple static websites \$1,500.00, to fully data driven websites costing well over \$200,000.00 and two years to complete. Today, RJTaylor Enterprises continues to grow by providing a comprehensive family of World-Class Internet Solutions.

## Timeline Scenario

Set a timeline for your site project. Work with your designer as a team to create a fabulous addition to the Web.

A general timeline might look something like this:

- 01 June: sign contract to start project.
- 15 June: first prototype of home page online for examination.
- 31 June: static pages online, domain registered and active.
- 15 July: interactive areas are functional.
- 31 July: site goes live, everything approved and complete.

Most web design firms and individuals like to get paid in pieces also. Often it's 50% on signing, 50% when the site is live, or split into even thirds, with the first upon signing, the second when the first major steps are achieved and the third payment when the site is done. You can negotiate that too, but if you're leery about paying a lot up front before the site is started, you probably should listen to your inner voice and find a different designer. This is where professionalism counts for more than saving a few bucks.

Another thing, check out the site of your web designer. If it's not an amazing, way cool, visually attractive site, you have to wonder about their skills and ability to deliver the quality of product you seek.

Let's come back to price again, since that's an important part of picking the right firm. There's no hard-and-fast rule for how to price out a site implementation, but it's guaranteed that the more interactivity that you have, the higher your site cost will be.

In closing, you will soon have a site that will be a credit to your company and bring you new customers and more sales.

**For more information or to schedule an appointment, contact:**

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