

How To Get a Website that WORKS! On a Budget!

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Could This Be You?

“So how much will a website cost me?,” our potential client asks. “Well, that depends on what you want included in your project package,” our salesman replies. “Our sites range from \$1,000.00 on the low side upwards of 10K,” he adds.

“Tell you what we’ll do,” our salesman offers. “Let’s set an appointment to talk about what you want and what you want your Site to accomplish. Then I can tell you how much it will be.”

“I dunno. I’ll call you. I’m just too busy right now,” our potential client replies.

What may have been the most advantageous advertising chance is gone – shut down by our potential client who knows he needs the Site, but is scared of the unknown and the potential price.

Let’s Be Honest!

In all bluntness and honesty – advertising is what keeps you in business. Regardless of the type of advertising: television, radio, magazines, newspapers, fliers, business cards, even word-of-mouth, advertising costs money. Yes, even word-of-mouth costs money.

To get word-of-mouth advertising, you must overdeliver your first time out. You give and give and hope your client or customer cares enough about all that you did for them to share how they feel about their experience with you. And if they don’t, you move on to the next client or customer – giving and giving and giving – all for the same hoped-for effect. Eventually, your reputation spreads and you get results. But it, too, came with a price – your hard work!

And, in many cases other types of advertising work too. The upshot is that – if you don’t put on an ad, no one will do business with you. They can’t since they don’t know you’re there for them.

And yes, a professional, high-quality Site costs money!

But guess what? All websites costs money – particularly the ones that you don’t have to pay much to get! That wasn’t a typo either, by the way.

Let’s analyze it. You get a website for \$35.00 per month. You can change up your text, change out pictures and all you have to pay is \$35.00 per month. That’s a total of \$420.00 per year.

Now, where’s the user-friendliness? Where’s the newsletter subscription form for your Site Visitors to subscribe to your newsletter? Where’s the capability to send your Site visitors notices about sales you’ve got going on? How can you even know who’s visited your Site? Hmm.

Let’s Do Math!

Now let’s look at the REAL cost! That is, your time and frustration for putting the information on the Site. You had to type the text in – that’s a few hours. You had to take photos and manipulate them into the size and type needed for your website. There’s more hours of frustration and time spent. Now let’s say you put 30 hours – which is reasonable – into developing your new website. What is your hourly earning potential? Let’s say it’s \$20.00 per hour, so you’ve spent an additional \$600.00.

To be effective, you will probably have to spend several hours per month on your Site’s maintenance. So let’s factor in another 10 hours. Now you’re spending \$2,120.00 for the year to have a website. Here’s the math:

\$ 420.00 – Annual fee

\$ 600.00 – Initial setup time and effort

\$ 2,200.00 – Maintenance time and effort (\$200.00 X 11 months)

\$ 3,220.00 – Total annual cost

Umm, how effective is your Site again? How much of that money will your Site return to you?

“Well, I can get a Site from XYZ Company and they’re going to charge me only \$600.00 for the whole thing. That even includes hosting!” you say.

We hear that a lot too. Now look at that developer’s other sites. Do they navigate well? Do they have Visitor-Interactivity capability? Does everything work properly? Call their clients and ask them this: “Do you make money using your Site?” Follow that up with “Why?” or “Why not?” Also, ask them if there are maintenance fees involved. That’s additional cost.

The Bottom Line

There are skills involved in programming a website – yes, programming; a website is like a piece of software – that has the ability to make money. It must build rapport, it must hold interest, it must work hard – just like a salesperson would, only harder since it can’t smile and shake hands.

A really good website is written to W3C specifications. That means that it can be accessible in almost every browser so Site Visitors can interact with it from THEIR favorite browser – as opposed to the one your developer says it’s “best viewed in”.

A really great website is one that’s hand-coded to FIT your business and FEEL like your business. Did you imitate someone else when you built your business? Did you build it to copy someone else? Do you really want to be just like your competitors?

Of course you don’t! You need some uniqueness or potential clients/customers could go to your competitors! Without uniqueness, you have no leverage in the market!

So why would you want your website to look and feel like what your developer says it should? Don’t you think you deserve your Site to look and feel like YOUR business?

Of course you do!

The bottom line here is this: You have to spend some money to get a website that works for you. But, with that said, it doesn’t have to cost as much as you imagine. The chances are good that, if you take the appropriate, needed steps to getting a website that works, you won’t pay as much as you would if you tried to do it yourself.

Here Are the Steps

- 1.) Know your budget. How much are you willing to spend to get your Site developed? Understand that a really good website that has the capability of rendering a return on investment (ROI) – and that’s programmed by a reputable company – will cost upwards of \$1,000.

Comparatively, so will a year of effectively advertising in a magazine or in the newspaper. Television and radio are even more costly.

- 2.) Research the developer. We encourage our potential clients to shop around. We also caution them to beware. Be sure to compare apples to apples. Look for the developer’s portfolio. If their portfolio shows various pictures of sites they’ve built, those pictures should link to the actual sites. Look at those sites. Is there a way for you to contact the Site Owner by form? By phone? Someway other than just email? If not, move on to the next developer. If so, call the Site Owner and ask for a reference. Do that with at least 5 of the developer’s websites. Then go with a percentage. If 3 or more of that developer’s clients were happy – not just satisfied; remember, you deserve the best for your money – then that developer’s worthy to talk with.
- 3.) Get your act together first – before you talk with the developer. Research some Sites. Review your competitors’ sites as well as sites that would not normally be included in your market. Have an idea of which features you like and which ones you hate. All of

this saves you time when talking with your developing company – which also saves you money in redesign should you not like what the developer comes up with while trying to make you happy.

- 4.) Understand your developer's operations. Ask questions like "What steps do you take in building a web project?", "Do you use free code samples or will my code be custom?", "What information will I be required to provide?", "Do you keep a time line?", "Can we build some now, some later as my budget allows?", and so on.
- 5.) Ask about legalities. Your Site will require certain disclaimers and notices for your Site Visitors. These disclaimers are required by the Federal Trade Commission. Additionally, mailing lists, newsletter subscriptions and other features require that you follow anti-spam laws with regard to developing your Site. Do you market childrens' products? How about marketing to children? What about copyright? What does the developer do to accomodate these legalities? How do they help to protect you – their valued client? Or do they include anything at all to protect you? Keep in mind that a web developer is NOT an attorney. Your attorney should be involved in these legalities.
- 6.) Ask for a quote. Be wary of the developer that says, "We require a downpayment of \$XX and then we bill you \$XX per hour after that." A good developer will have a pretty accurate estimate of how long it takes to build each feature of your project. They can then put a price to each feature, giving you a pretty close estimate of the total cost you can expect to pay. Ask for this in writing.
- 7.) Ask about maintenance plans and be wary of what you'll require. For example, a developer that allows you a maintenance plan for \$35.00 per month, may actually cost you more money than is necessary. If your Site, however, requires a lot of monthly maintenance, such as changing out images of products, then you might be better off with an custom application – a program customized for you that will let you change out your own images and product descriptions, prices, etc.
- 8.) Ask about billing increments in regards to maintenance. For example, we bill in 5-minute increments. We don't feel you should have to pay for 15 minutes worth of work when, in actuality, it took us 9 minutes to do what you needed. We have maintenance plans, but in all honesty, most of our clients are better off just letting us do the work on an "as needed" basis. They just don't require a whole lot of maintenance. We also let them know how much time is expected to be involved, prior to performing maintenance tasks so they're not surprised when they get our bill.
- 9.) Ask about payment plans. Will they let you break up the cost of your Site? Can you make monthly payments? Also, what kind of payment types do they accept? Credit cards only? Or do they also accept business checks? How about cash?
- 10.) Finally, what does your developer do to help you with your Site AFTER it's developed? Will they help you with setting up email? Training on your Site project? Do they work with you to help you advertise your Site offline and online? Do they provide information to keep you informed of what's going on in their industry that might affect you?

Don't Be Scared! Instead, Be Aware!

E-Advertising, or electronic advertising on the Internet by means of a website should be a rewarding experience. If you're scared, you'll never get to the point where you're taking advantage of all the exposure and potential growth – not to mention the ability to compete in the *NEW* marketplace; the Internet – that a website can give you.

Instead, be informed and aware. Understand that there are good and bad businesses in every industry. If you follow the steps, do your homework, you'll find a good development company.

Yes, advertising via a website can cost money. Yes, it requires some commitment on your part. But when comparing apples to apples with regards to the different advertising media available, so does every other type of advertising.

So, are you ready to put on an ad?

Resource Information:

Janet L. Warren is the Chief Web Developer for “You And Me Enterprises” !
Learn to choose the right Web Development company for your Web-projects.

To learn more about getting more from your advertising, Visit our Library!

<http://www.youandmeunlimited.com>

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