Website Designer

Interrogation Sheet

Choosing a website design company can be difficult and confusing. You'll get a very wide range of quotes for what appear to be same end product. But is each web designer really quoting you for *exactly* the same site? And what do you need from a design company to make sure your company succeeds on the web?

This ***Interrogation Cheat Sheet*** will help you ask all the relevant questions. If you work through it with each designer you're considering, you'll build up a really good picture of what they are actually offering you.

The Cheat Sheet is broken down into a number of areas. Each area covers an aspect of building and running a website. You may not need everything right now but please don't disregard the extra bits. Perhaps you don't want to take online payment today, but that might change in the future. If these extra functions can't easily be added to the website you're purchasing *now* you need to know this from the outset, as it could ultimately limit the usefulness and lifespan of your site.

If you need more information visit my website at get.uk.com where you'll find loads more useful hints and tips on making the web work for you.

Have fun!!

Bob Grant

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Design and Coding

Your website needs to look good and display your information in a clear, understandable way. There may also be an amount of program code built into your site that you need to be aware of.

- Is the graphic design for my website included in the cost?
- Will you produce a range of different designs for me to choose from?
- Will you create the design from scratch or do you use a set of templates which are basically the same but modified for each client?
- When we are refining the design is there a limit to the number of revisions we can go through?
- How many page layout variations will I be allowed in the final website? (Certain sections of your website may need to be laid out differently e.g. pages listing a number of products, individual product pages, blog pages, news pages, etc)
- Will the design work equally well on desktop computers, tablets and mobile phones?
- Who owns the graphic design? (Can you take the design away and use it elsewhere, on business cards for example?)
- What software is the website built around? (Do they use bespoke software or one of the standard website packages e.g. WordPress)
- Does the website use any third-party software packages and what are the licensing arrangements for these? (Sometimes web designers use other pieces of software to help make your website work. If you were to move your website in the future you may need to buy this software to keep it working)
- Who owns the software copyright? (Can you take the software away and use it and develop it with another website design company)

Updating the Website

Websites need to be current. You need to be able to update existing pages and add new pages in order to react to changes and opportunities in your marketplace.

- Can I update the website myself?
- What parts of the website can I not update myself?
- Can I add new pages myself?
- Can I edit the navigation menus myself?
- Can I edit and add new products myself?
- How easy is it to make changes? (You should ask for a demonstration of the editing system so you can get a feel for how complicated it is)
- Can I allow other people to edit my website? E.g. you may want different members of your company to take charge of their own area of the site.
- Can I control what these other people are able to do? (For example you might not want them to be able to publish content until you've authorised it.)

If you're not able to edit the website yourself:

How long will it take to update or add:
- A product?
- A page?
- A whole section?
- Product prices?

How much will it cost to edit:
- A product?
- A page?
- A section?
- Product prices?

Ongoing Costs

- Am I expected to take out a website maintenance contract?
- How much does this cost?
- What maintenance work does this cover?
- How do you charge for modifications to the website? (An hourly development cost or do you quote per update?)
- What are the website hosting costs?
- What are the domain name registration costs?
- Are there any other ongoing costs?

Hosting and E-Mail

The computer files that make up your website need to live on a web server computer so that people can access them from anywhere in the world 24 hours per day. This service is called website hosting.

- Are you going to host my website for me?
- How much will this cost?
- What company is actually managing the server? (The web server must be with a specialised hosting company. The web designer will rent the server from them)
- What are the limits on the website hosting? (The web designer will quote you a web space value, how much data you can store, and a bandwidth value, in effect how many visitors you can have per month. They should explain what these values mean in real life)
- Will my domain name be under your control? (Will you update it, renew it etc.)
- Will you provide e-mail for my domain name? (This will allow you to use your domain name as your e-mail address e.g. stan@stanswidgets etc.)
- Will I be able to synchronise my e-mail on my computer, my tablet and my phone?
- Will I be able to access my e-mail through a secure website? (Called webmail)
- What are the biggest files I can send and receive?

Search Engine Optimisation

- Will my website be fully indexed by the search engines?
- Are all my navigation menus able to be seen by the search engines? (Some Flash and JavaScript menus cannot be read by the search engines)
- Is search engine optimisation included in my monthly contract?
- What exactly does your SEO work include? (It should involve keyword analysis, writing content for your website and building links from other websites to yours)

Social Media Integration (Facebook, Twitter etc).

- Will my website display my latest Twitter and Facebook updates?
- Will there be buttons to make it easy for people to follow me on Twitter and Facebook?

Compatibility with Mobile Devices

- Will all parts of my website display correctly on mobile devices?
- Will the website be fully usable on mobile devices?
- Will users have to zoom in and zoom out to see my pages or will the pages resize to fit the available screen?

E-Commerce and Online Payments

- Will customers be able to order directly through my website?
- Will my website allow me to take online payments?
- Which payment systems (payment providers) can my website use?
- If I don't take online payment now can it be added later?

Member Only Areas

Sometimes you'll want special parts of your website that only members or customers can see.

- Will customers be able to login to a secure area where they can see their activities and orders?
- Will I be able to use member areas to restrict some content to specific people?
- If I don't have member areas now I can they be added later?

Customised Functions

Sometimes you'll want to have a specialised function on your website. Perhaps it may be a page that lets people calculate mortgage payments or calculate the number of radiators they need to heat a room, etc.

- Can you build customised pages that will allow people to work out answers for aspects of my marketplace directly on the website?
- Can these pages be added at a later date?

Future Expansion

- Is there a limit the number of pages I can have?
- Is there a limit to the number of products I can have?
- If I start to get thousands of visitors to my website will the web server be able to cope without slowing down?

There You Have It!

I know there are a lot of things to take into consideration here but spending some time really talking things through with a few web designers should mean that you end up with a product which will be better suited to your needs, and it could also save you from making a potentially very expensive mistake.

If you've got any questions or you need any more information just visit my website at get.uk.com or give me a call.

Good luck!!