

5 Tips for Finding the Right Web Development Professional

Many business owners are frustrated with the search for the “right” web professional to work with on a project. Someone who will:

- ✓ Complete work on time
- ✓ Stick to the budget
- ✓ Answer the phone and return your calls

The 5 critical judgments to make when considering engaging a web professional to work with are communication, their skill set, the structure of the business, their experience and what ongoing support is offered.

1. Communication

Understanding and communication are key to the success of your project. You are looking for someone who is enthusiastic about your plans, understands your vision and will share their ideas with you as well as communicate effectively.

2. The right skill set

Match your needs to the professional. Find out what skills the web professional specialises in and how they will compensate for expertise they don't have in-house. There is no point engaging a programmer to write your web copy. Web development is a mix of skills namely:

- ✓ Technical
 - Programming
 - Database development
 - HTML & CSS skills
 - Email
 - Hosting
 - Domain name management
- ✓ Marketing
 - Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)
 - Market research
 - Social media
 - Content writing (web copy)
- ✓ Design
 - Graphic design
 - Web design
 - Email template design
 - Image processing
 - Photography
- ✓ Functionality
 - Usability
 - Accessibility
 - Standards

Some of the bigger companies will have all the expertise under one roof, others may specialise and bring in outside partners to work on a project or you can source your own “posse” of professionals.

3. Business structure

Assess the structure of the web professional you are considering working with – is it a good “fit” for you and your needs. If you are a small business, choosing to work with a large agency could mean your project is marginalized in favour of bigger organisations. You may get better service working with an agile mid-size company or a franchise operation. Some common business structures are:

- ✓ Solo operator. Probably home based. May be a new player in the field or an experienced professional making a lifestyle choice.

- ✓ Mid-sized established business. With 3-10 employees and over 100 projects completed to date. This size business may work collaboratively with like minded individuals to bring you the benefits of working with a larger agency.
- ✓ Large agency. With 15+ employees and a number of large accounts. You could be a very small fish in a big pond
- ✓ Franchise operation. A central development operation that co-ordinates a diaspora of sales people, marketing and business consultants.

Also ask where the work will be done – is it an issue for you if the work is done off-shore or do you want to use NZ talent?

4. Experience

Check the web professional's portfolio and look for them completing projects of a similar nature to yours. You need to have confidence in their ability to complete your project to your standards. Some of the aspects or topics you may want to consider are:

- ✓ Graphic design
- ✓ Programming (databases, shopping carts or custom development)
- ✓ Web content writing
- ✓ Marketing
- ✓ Social media
- ✓ Search Engine Optimisation
- ✓ Rich media (video, audio, Flash, animation)
- ✓ Ecommerce

5. Support

What support does the web professional offer? Ask about contract periods and support plans. If you are commissioning graphic design, photographs or web copy you need to know what happens to the original files used to prepare your material – in particular are they archived on your behalf or supplied to you?

For your website, ecommerce and software projects ask about the server, how you action updates or maintenance and what training is offered. You want your project to be hosted on a dependable server with reliable backup procedures in place to protect your data. Ask about what happens if something goes wrong, how do you make contact and what are the expected timeframes for problem resolution.

*All the best for your project,
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