Module 2 - Websites

# Finding the Right Web Developer

## » Questions to Ask When Looking for the Right Professional Partner

At the end of any lectures I give, this question tends to come up time and time again – "How do I know what web company to work with?".  Given this I polled our own web development team to help me compile a set of questions we would ask were we to be searching for a company to build our businesses website.

Web development is a complex process and can be a daunting undertaking for many practices.  You want to do your utmost to be ensure that from start to finish - and beyond - it will be as painless as possible (e.g. you will not have to devote a lot of unexpected time, money and resources to it) and that it is guaranteed to yield very satisfactory results (e.g. that you know pretty much what to expect as an end product).

Increasing the chances that your website development is an all around good experience can be achieved by utilizing these questions in the selection of the right web developer.  If you do systematically ask the following to anyone who you are entrusting your entire outward appearance to – the company that is responsible to building you that 'virtual front door' -  you will hopefully avoid disappointment.  You want to partner with an optimal web company as anything less could end up being not only a major frustration for your organization, but may fail to fulfill your group's vision and / or reflect your practice badly.

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» What to ask a potential web developer...

☐ **First, is the web development company's *own* website beautiful and engaging?**
- o Often a good indicator of quality and integrity
- o Gives a good idea of their overarching navigation and design sensibilities

☐ **What are previous examples of their web design work?**
- o Check out their design portfolio
- o Ask for references to determine their customer service, SEO results, and so on.

☐ **What are previous examples of their design and development work within the veterinary industry?**
- o Important to explore - single best indicator of what you might expect to receive
- o Go to example websites of theirs to see how they look – for example, play around to see how easy they are to navigate and extract important information from.
- o Veterinary websites must convey certain elements and evoke certain emotions – a company that has no experience building one of these may miss the mark

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☐ **Is the company recommended by veterinary consultants?**
- o Veterinary consultants have good objective insights when it comes to veterinary industry service provider
- o Veterinary consultants are likely only to recommend the better companies due to their own reputations being so closely on the line in doing so

☐ **What happens in 3 years when your design is outdated?**
- o It is important to understand how easy it will be to update the design over time – does the company disappear once development of the website is complete?

☐ **How easy is it to change the content and images on your site?**
- o One of the key components of a successful veterinary website is how simple it is to access and edit. It is important to have full control over your website and be able to easily add new content and create your own changes, otherwise updates simply won't happen (if it is hard to access the back-end) and your website will quickly become static and outdated

☐ **How much work will you have to do yourself?**

    o Some providers provide templates or have a "do it yourself" model, so it is important to understand exactly what you can expect to receive from them

    o Remember to calculate the hidden cost to 'DIY' websites; you must factor in (wo)man hours it will require, as it could be 100+ just to set up your own site (and still have it looking just 'ok').

☐ **Do their content providers have experience *writing* in the veterinary industry or with a veterinary voice?**

    o Again, veterinary websites are a species unto themselves and your audience is both discerning and looking for evidence of compassion in your practice. If the written content is not geared to convey this (and errs too much in one direction – too business-like or too flippant) you risk offending

☐ **What is their strategy for generating new clients from your website?**

    o A website is your marketing hub. In what way do their sites fulfill this function (if they do so at all)

☐ **Is there an overall marketing system built into the website?**

    o Is it just a website they provide, or is it part of an overall marketing system?

☐ **Is there a built-in blog?**

    o The blog is the engine of your website and should be built in as standard

    o The blog has a multifactorial role:

        ▪ Establishes you as an authority in a geographic and animal-related area

        ▪ Gives back to your clients and community (e.g. through sharing of information)

        ▪ Most importantly, it generates new content which is key to boosting your search engine rankings (it is what Google algorithms are looking for in the form of regular new content)

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☐ **Is there a program for ongoing customer support?**

- Websites that are not properly supported are certain to fail / become broken / lead to frustration

☐ **What is the turnaround time for support?**

☐ **Are upgrades provided as technology changes?**

☐ **Is the programming of the website search engine optimized?**

☐ **Will the content be easily sharable over social media?**

☐ **Will there be built-in forms?**

☐ **How long does development typically take?**

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☐ **Will the website look impressive or just average?**

☐ **Is there a platform or maintenance fee?**

- If so, what does this fee cover?

I hope this checklist will help in your pursuits. Once a beautiful and engaging website is in place you will have taken a tremendous step ahead and can then focus on additional business growth strategies which will now gain greater traction.

**Questions?**

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