# THE
# ULTIMATE GUIDE
## FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT WEB DESIGN COMPANY

neongoldfish

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# Introduction

So you've figured out that one of the best ways to increase your business' visibility and accessibility to potential clients is to have a killer website that attracts visitors and allows you to showcase all you have to offer to the public. Whether or not you already have a website up and running, you've found yourself searching for web designers online to see where to start. Your search has provided you with thousands of results, and each promises to offer you top-notch results for your business.

So, do you just go with the first name on the list?

**Which web design company has the coolest name?**

Is there a local company that could help you design your site?

**How do you decide which web design company is right for you?!**

The truth is, hiring someone to design and develop your website doesn't have to be a daunting task.

The following guide can help you when choosing the best website professional for you and your business.

# 1. Process

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One of the first things to find out when looking for a web designer is what kinds of processes they have in place for working with their clients. If you decide to work with a particular company, what steps will be involved before, during, and after the construction of your website? If a company is not very organized with their business practices from the start, then you can probably get a reasonable idea of what your experience will look like along the way, too. You can get a good feel for the professionalism and quality of a web design company by the strategies they have in place from the beginning.

## You may ask:

**1** **Do they have set business practices already established right from the start that will make your website construction a seamless construction?**



**2** **Do they create established timelines with deadlines along the way? This lays the foundation for accountability throughout the entire process.**

**3** **Who will be responsible for each portion of your website, from design and development, to ongoing maintenance?**

You need to have the utmost confidence that the web design company you choose will be completely dedicated to creating a high quality, effective site that attracts potential clients and keeps them coming back for more. This starts with choosing a company that has an established execution plan with a track record of success.

# 2. Skill Set

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Creating a highly effective website requires more than just adding bright colors with a few bells and whistles to some text on a webpage. Each website project that a company takes on requires numerous skills in order to achieve the visual appeal and functionality that will engage site visitors and allow them to interact with your website. It's important that the company you decide to hire has a staff of team members with the depth of knowledge and experience needed to execute the construction of a great website.



Be sure that the company you choose has the experienced web designers and developers necessary to meet you website goals. These individuals will need to track site analytics, provide site maintenance and technical support for troubleshooting, offer vision-casting where needed, and a host of other responsibilities in order keep your site fresh, up-to-date, and useful for any and all potential clients.

**A high quality web design company will have staff members well versed in:**

HTML

JavaScript

CSS

PHP

SEO

MySQL

Content Writing

Graphics Creation

You want each and every one of your site's visitors to navigate through your website with ease as they learn more about your business, and what you can do for them. The right team of designers and developers can help make each visitor's search experience a memorable one.

# 3. Portfolio Set

One of the best ways to choose a web design company is to look at their past clients. Nothing beats seeing actual work that has been performed to get an idea of what a particular company will do for you and your website. Asking to see a portfolio of projects allows you to see what jobs they're most proud of and the depth of their past work. You can use this portfolio as an opportunity to learn whether or not you connect with this company and with their style of work.
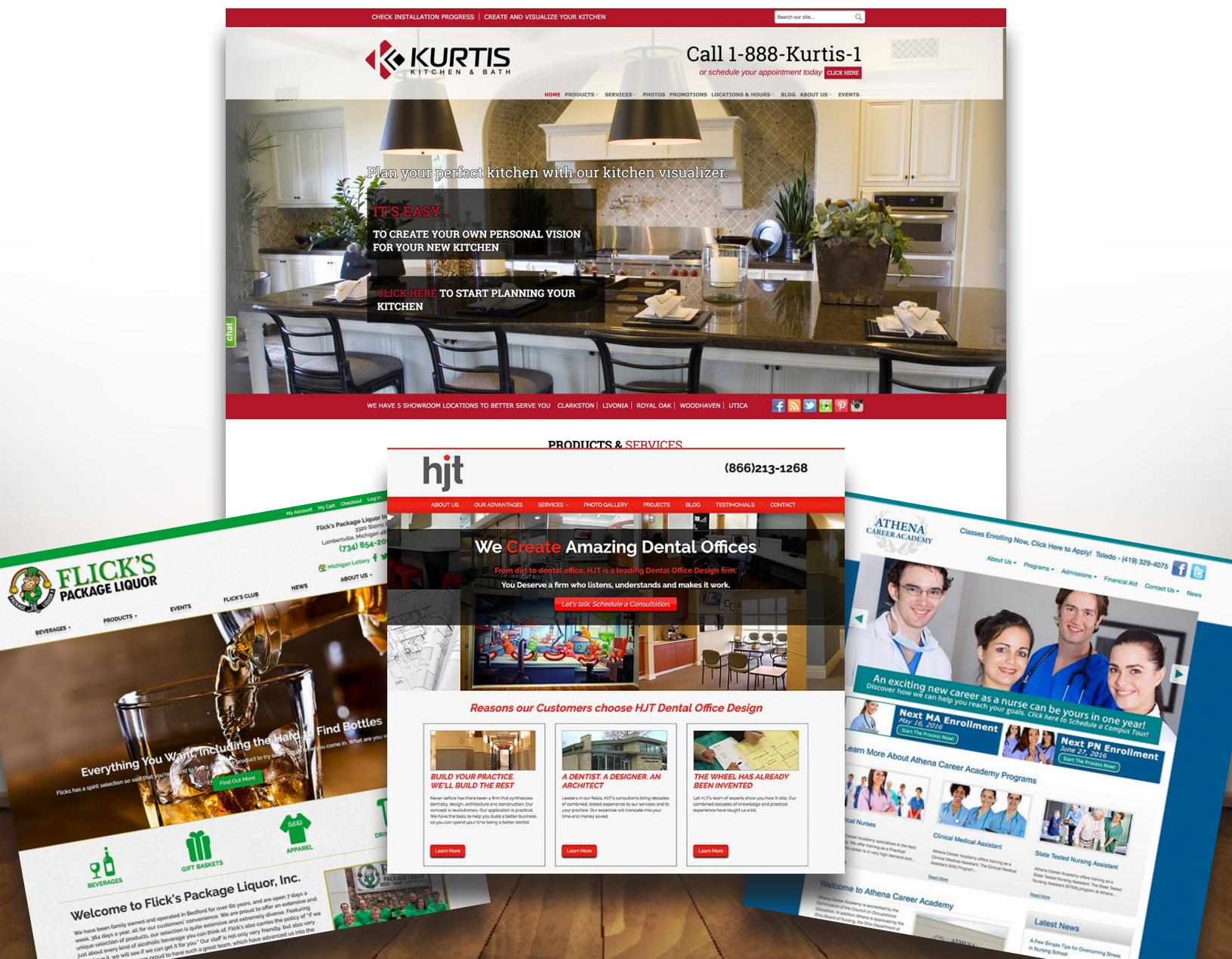
**1** **What do you like and dislike about any other clients' websites?**

If you aren't drawn to a particular company's style, you're not going to want to have a site that doesn't appeal to you, to end up as the visual connection that the entire world will have with your business. If you hate it, others will too.

**2** **Do they have experience with clients similar to you?**

Are you ready and prepared to be the "guinea pig" company that is helping a particular web design company expand its' capabilities?

SKILLED

AVERAGE

SPECIALIST

BEGINNER

EXPERT

SKILL

**3** **Do they do all of the web development and design in-house, or does the company hire outside sources, like subcontractors, to do the majority of the work?**

There's nothing wrong with subcontracting portions of a project out to others, but beware that overuse of subcontractors can lead to missed deadlines and timelines for development, and difficulties with maintenance down the road.

If you look to hire a company with diverse skill sets within their team of workers, you can rest assured knowing that if and when there's a problem with your website, it will get fixed right away.
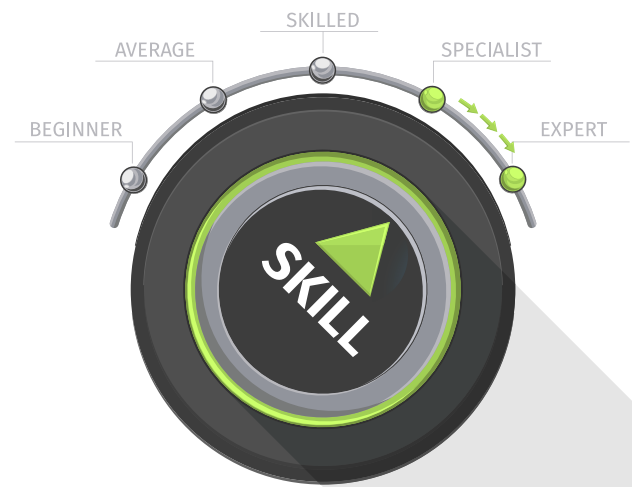
# 4. References

Along with requesting to see a portfolio of a company's work, be sure to ask for references from past clients as well. Ask for permission to contact those clients for feedback. A web design company that thrives on customer satisfaction and a high standard of work should welcome this type of request. Check out their websites for client testimonials, too. Of course, the ones posting will be raving reviews, but if they don't have any on their site, it could be an indicator about the quality and depth of their work.

If you do get a chance to speak directly with any past or current clients, feel free to ask them a variety of questions about their experience. This is a great way to find out whether or not your company and this web design business will work well together throughout each stage of the process.

**1** Did the design company communicate well with you throughout all stages of the process?

**2** What did you like best about your experience working with this company? Least?

**3** How has your company benefitted most through your completed website?

**4** Do you have an ongoing working relationship with this web designer, or did you utilize them for one single project and then move on? Why?

In the end, word-of-mouth promotions can go much farther than a flashy banner promoting a great bargain on a company's website. When you're website is done, you may even want to consider sharing your experiences with other potential clients.

# 5. Cost

When it comes down to it, the total cost of designing, developing, and maintaining your website is a very big deal. You may really want the biggest and the best, but when you look at the numbers, you know you can't afford to hire that "dream company." You know you want to have a website that looks great and draws visitors to your company, but you always hear...

# "You get what you pay for."

So, it's important to try to understand exactly what it is you're paying for when you hire a web designer. Quality service and limited budgets don't necessarily have to be exclusive of each other. You need to have confidence knowing that you've invested your money wisely, and that the end product will be something that you're proud of, regardless of how many bells and whistles your site features.

PRICE        VALUE

## 1

### Hassle-free work

Does this company take initiative, communicate well, and meet their deadlines as promised?

## 2

### Convenience

These experts know what they're doing. By allowing them to focus their energy on a skill set that will benefit you and your company, this frees up time for you to concentrate on what you do best...**Run Your Company!**

## 3

### Time

Does this company actually put the proper amount of time into developing your website to be successful, or do they consistently have errors that need fixed?

If you are able to contact past clients for references, ask them about these different aspects of the work. If they speak favorably of that particular web design company, then it might be worth it to spend a little more on the company. In the end, saving a few bucks might not be worth it if you have constant headaches and a website littered with problems.

# 6. Communication

Communication is one key component to having a successful working relationship with your web design company. When you have questions, you need to know that you'll get answers back in a reasonable amount of time. What's worse than making attempt after attempt to speak with someone, only to not have emails replied to or phone calls returned? You don't want to be filled with anxiety and confusion about what's happening with your website. And, you shouldn't be, either.

# Communication is a two-way street.

You should have the freedom to be involved in the design and development of your site, if you so wish. Even through they are the experts being put to work, your opinion counts. Are they willing to include you in the decision-making process? Are their hours of availability such that you can meet when necessary to discuss the progress and needs of your website?

## Here are a few other things to consider:

- Who will be involved in your project?

- What are the best forms of communication with these individuals (in-person meetings, phone calls, emails, project management software)?

- How frequently will you plan standard check-ins?

If a web design company doesn't have standard business practices in place for communication with their clients, then it may be a sign of potential difficulties throughout the project. Knowing the answers to these questions from the start will set you at ease throughout the entire process.

YOUR IDEA IS IMPORTANT
*Brainstorming*

# 7. Timelines

How does this design company feel about timelines and schedules? Maintaining timelines and schedules reflects one style of project management that can impact your business relationship with the company. Is punctuality and organization a must with this company, or do they take a more fluid approach to your web design process? Although flexibility can be a very important factor during the process of designing and maintaining your web site, having some timelines established can help make your experience go more smoothly. When these timelines are properly communicated between each party, stress and anxiety can be reduced in the event that any complications or hiccups develop.

## Why are timelines important in web design and development?

### Timelines allow for accountability

By knowing exactly what's supposed to be done, and the date in which it's supposed to be completed, an established calendar can help to ensure that every aspect of your website's design process happens when it should. This accountability can also help to ensure that you design company is fully committed to working with you through every step of the process. You can hold them accountable to the work they've promised, and they can hold their team of staff members accountable for their individual roles.

### Timelines allow for client involvement. Are there particular requirements that the design company needs from you, the client? When it comes to client feedback or important data and information about your company, these timelines can help to keep everybody on track.

**Timelines can allow for an organized flexibility.** As you reach milestones or completion dates, you can always re-evaluate where you're at in the process. What's working so far and what isn't? Do changes need to be made with page content? Is your website coming together ahead of schedule or are there delays that need to be addressed? Are your goals being met in regards to your website and how it's functioning for your company?

In the end, it's important to know that you've put the management of your website in the hands of a capable, organized, professional company. Clear and detailed timelines and calendars will take the guesswork out of the status and progress of your project.

# TO DO LiST

1. Design
2. Code
3. Test

# 8. Guarantee

Guarantees are everywhere. You can find them printed on receipts, shopping bags, and billboards. In fact, most companies proudly display their guarantees right within their slogans...

## "Expect More; Pay Less."

## "Service You'll Love; Prices That Can't Be Beat."

These days, almost everybody offers some sort of guarantee. Why? Because trust matters. You want to know that when you invest your money, time, and efforts into something, it will pay off in the end. There are too many people out there looking to make easy money without putting in the hard work to earn it. You aren't one of those people, and you don't want your web design company to reflect that belief, either.

But, talk can be cheap. You should get more than a slogan to guarantee your peace-of-mind. Your website is an integral part of your business' success. It is one of the first places that potential clients may go to learn more about your company, goods, and services, long before they step foot in the door.

**1**

**Ask them if they offer any specific guarantees for meeting deadlines, long-term timelines, performance, or customer satisfaction. An experienced web designer will be able to establish realistic expectations that they will stand behind.**

**Ask them if they've ever had to put their guarantees into practice in the past, and what were the circumstances involved?**

**2**

Establishing the specifics of any guarantees right from the start can give you a pretty reasonable idea about the quality of work a company will provide for you.

# In Conclusion...

In the end, choosing the right web designer to create or manage your business' website doesn't have to be a complicated, stressful event. Many of these suggestions can be addressed in just one simple meeting. Others may involve a few more steps, but when it's all over, you should feel confident that your website is in the hands of the best company to meet your needs.

# Hiring a Web Designer
## Worksheet

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## General Information

Company: _____ Website: _____ Phone: _____

Home Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Office Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Contact Name: _____ Contact E-mail: _____

## Initial Contact

☐ Phone Call
  ○ Spoke to someone
  ○ Had to leave message for callback    Response Time: _____ DAYS _____ HOURS _____ MINUTES
  ○ Voicemail left                       Response Time: _____ DAYS _____ HOURS _____ MINUTES

☐ Completed Website Form                 Response Time: _____ DAYS _____ HOURS _____ MINUTES

## Experience

How long have you been in business? _____    What are your core services?  ☐ Website Design         ☐ Content Marketing

What other services do you provide? _____    ☐ Website Development     ☐ E-mail Marketing

_____    ☐ Search Engine Marketing  ☐ Social Media Marketing
                            ○ SEO  ○ PPC              ☐ Graphic Design

How many full-time / part-time employees do you have? _____ / _____

What percentage of your work is performed by subcontractors? _____

What is being performed in-house and what is outsourced to subcontractors? _____

What coding languages does your team use?    ☐ HTML / CSS      ☐ ASP        ☐ C
                                             ☐ JavaScript      ☐ Python     ☐ XML
                                             ☐ PHP             ☐ Ruby       ☐ AJAX

## Process

What is your process for your typical project? _____

_____

What is required of me during this process? _____

_____

How much of my time is involved during this process? _____

How many projects do you handle at once?  How many are you working on right now? _____

## Timelines

How long does the typical project take to complete from start to finish? _____
_____

What do you do to make sure projects stay on track? _____
_____

## Communication

Who will manage my project? _____

How many different people will I interact with during the process? _____

How will we communicate about the project and monitor its progress? _____

## Cost

How much does your typical project cost? _____

What is included in your fees?

☐ Custom website design
☐ Use of free or purchased website template
☐ Stock photos; how many? _____
☐ Professional photographer
☐ Website maintenance
   How many updates are included? _____  How long do I have to use these updates? _____
☐ Search Engine Optimization
   What do you include for SEO? _____  How long do you do this? _____

☐ Website copy creation
   How many pages / word count per page? _____ / _____
☐ Website hosting; how long? _____
☐ Website training
   How many sessions? _____  How long for each session? _____

## Guarantee

Do you offer a guarantee on your work?  If so, what are the details of your guarantee? _____
_____

Do you offer a warranty on your work?  If so, how long does your warranty last? _____
_____

## Portfolio

Do you have examples of projects you've completed that are similar in scope to the work I would like to have done? _____
When were they completed? _____
How are these different than my project? _____
How much of each of these projects were done in-house? How much was outsourced? _____
_____

## References

Can you provide 3 references for projects similar to mine?

_____   _____   _____
_____   _____   _____
_____   _____   _____
_____   _____   _____