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TECHNOLOGIES**
A Digital Agency

The 8 C's To Consider When Choosing a Website Development Company



Planning a website project can be a daunting task. You simply do not know what you don't know so hiring the right website development team can be intimidating at best. Your website will be the first impression most of your potential customers get of your company so this is definitely not a decision you can take lightly.

Since we all know first impressions are so important you want to choose the right company for your project whether it is a new website or a refresh. There is a lot to consider but we think the 8 C's to consider when choosing a website development company are a great start to a successful project:

1. Chemistry
2. Complete Discovery
3. Collaboration
4. Communication
5. Content
6. Continuing Services
7. Cost
8. Contract

Below we deep dive (in no particular order) into each of the 8 C's to consider when choosing a website development company.

- ***Chemistry***

A website project is a lengthy process and can last 10 weeks or more. Imagine what that ten weeks would be like if you don't enjoy speaking to the people you are working with. You don't have to love them or invite them over for a birthday barbecue but

you do have to get along with them. It makes communication a lot easier and it makes for a much better experience.

In addition to the better experience, good chemistry fosters trust. If you do not like the person you are working with trust will be an issue. It's hard to willingly give up sensitive information about your company, its secrets and its finances – all things that are important to a project - to someone you do not like and therefore do not trust.

Simply put, chemistry between you and your website developer is a critical part of a successful project

- ***Complete Discovery***

Often overlooked the discovery process is probably *the most important* process in a successful website project. The discovery process, if executed correctly, can and will help you avoid costly mistakes you will be paying for for years. This process is a deep dive into you, your company, your products or services, your customer, where your customer hangs out, what your customer's online habits are



and finally how to reach your customer. It is so important to the process and such a huge undertaking that it is usually considered a service that most reputable website development companies will charge a fee for.

The reason for the fee is that once complete you should have the blueprint you need to complete your website project in hand. If you are not satisfied with your chosen developer or find that the chemistry you thought was there is not you now have the playbook you can bring to another developer to complete your project. Most development companies will credit the discovery process fee at the signing of the agreement.

This process should take place before any pricing is given so the website developer understands the project and the functionality needed. After all, giving pricing before

a full discovery process is like buying a house that is to be built without seeing the plans first.

- ***Collaboration***

Your website project should be a collaborative effort with your team working hand in hand with your website development company. You and your team know your products and services best. You need to educate your website developer and he in turn needs to educate you on what is happening with your project and why.

When first talking to the website developer about the project try to gauge how open they are to listening to you and your input. Will they listen to your thoughts? Do they take what you have to say seriously?

The problem is when they say to you “We got this” or “We don’t need to know the details” What they are really saying is “You do not know what you are talking about and we can do a better job without your input”. This is not a good relationship and is a definite indicator that you have chosen incorrectly.

Remember, you are looking for a long term partner to collaborate on your marketing goals moving forward. You are not looking for a company to dictate tasks to you – you already have a boss, you.

- ***Communication***

Open lines of communication are incredibly important to a successful project. However we all know that emails can be lost and phone calls forgotten so what processes does the potential website developer have in place to combat these issues? Is there some type of management software being used? Are they using stone and chisel?

Most reputable website design and development companies will have some type of project management software in place to facilitate clear, transparent and open lines of communication with their customers. The software acts as a central place for communication of all types. Any member on your team or the agency’s team can see in real time what is happening and the threat of lost emails or



forgotten phone calls is dealt with in an orderly fashion.

Of course if there is a problem and you would like to speak with your salesman or project manager offline there should still be that option of communication available.

Don't assume. Check to see if you really can speak to someone in authority before you sign an agreement.

- ***Content***

We all know that content is King on the web. What some people don't know is that content is the website project ***KILLER***. So many projects go really wrong really fast and it does not have to happen this way. The answer to the killer of projects is to figure out up front who is responsible for it and, if the company you are looking at is not upfront about content run the other way quick – we promise this will kill the project and leave it languishing in incompleteness forever.

Content is the most difficult part of any website project. Who is responsible for what? Where are the images coming from? What do we need? These are all questions that inevitably come up during a project. We have found that having a process in place at the beginning of the project is beneficial to the project's outcome and timelines.

Most website development companies concern themselves with design and never bring up content during their sales process. They assume that you the customer will take care of that and all the while you are assuming the website development company is handling it.

The truth is there is a balance. You are responsible for a lot of the content including images, bios, store hours, privacy policies, warranties and more. However, your development team, being experts in content writing and planning, should kick in and write your home page content and help you in writing whatever 'highlight' pages you collaboratively decide would help you return well on search engines and maybe grab some traffic that can be considered low hanging fruit.

DO NOT IGNORE CONTENT!

- ***Continuing Services***

If you build it they will come simply does not work with websites. Once launched there needs to be a plan in place for the marketing of the website. It would be best if the developer, who has hopefully gone through a lengthy discovery process with you, can continue the project.

Since you already have a great working relationship the choice should be easy but if they do not offer these services you will have to go through the entire process again with a different vendor. It definitely benefits you if the company you chose can do it all.

- **Cost**

Your website is one of the most crucial tools you have to drive customers to your business. Yes, price should be a consideration but when deciding on a budget keep in mind the importance of your website.

Remember the old adage “You get what you pay for.” Well that is as true in the website development industry as it is in any other. If you pay for quality work you will get a quality project. If you pay \$1,500 for a website you will more than likely get a Word Press template that has been used by 1,000 other companies – nothing unique and nothing that stands out.

A quality website development agency will charge from three to four thousand dollars for an entry level project and upwards of \$100,000 or more for enterprise level websites. Most “small business” websites fall in the \$4,000 to \$20,000 range



depending on functionality and complexity of the target market.

Remember, this is an investment in the future of your company not a commodity. If you are looking to purchase on price rather than value, nine times out of ten you are going to regret it later. In addition, a qualified and reputable agency will always

offer ways to work with you on the price and payment options. If they are a good fit for you, ask. You may be very surprised at how flexible most companies are.

- **Contract**

This is the part where you feel most insecure – what should be in the agreement. The answer, *EVERYTHING!*

Every detail should be written out in the website development agreement from who is supplying images to how many edits are available for each step of the design process. There should be no questions left.

As an exercise, when looking at the agreement presented to you by your potential vendor, ask yourself if you have any questions about anything. If you don't, great. If you do, go back and ask for written clarification. If you get pushback do not sign the document.

You can pretty much tell right away from looking at a document if the company behind it has the experience, professionalism and attention to detail you are looking for. If it does not show up in the first materials they hand to you why would you think it would change later on down the road.

Finding the right website developer for your project is not an easy job. We hope you have found this article helpful. If there is anything we can do for you please call us at 540-699-3286 and we would be happy to answer any of your questions. You can also visit us at StaffordTechnologies.NET and click on the button to schedule a free strategy call.