



## Picking a Web Designer

So, you need to redesign or create Web site. With the abundance of Web designers—from advertising agencies and Web firms, to freelancers—how do you choose the right Web designer? Careful consideration of the following will help you decide.

### Step 1: Be Aware of...

**Your Needs.** What do you need—in terms of content, design, function, and project management? Who is your audience, and what tasks will they perform on your site?

**Your Wants.** What do you want—in terms of content, design, function, and project management? Is it feasible for the budget? Does it make sense for the audience? Prioritize the wants; consider placing them secondary to your needs and brand.

**Your Brand.** What image must your brand convey—small, medium, or large company? Who's your competition, what are they doing well and poorly? Do you want to be equal to or stand above the competition?

### Step 2: Identify the Cost of...

**The Design Agency.** While firms typically have higher operating costs, which are passed onto their clients, they also employ specialists in multiple areas—from information design and project management, to Web, multimedia, and database programming. Contrary, freelancers often offer lower costs, yet may be limited to just a few areas of expertise. If using a freelancer, do they have a cooperative arrangement with other freelance agents that specialize in other areas that you require?

**Realizing the Schedule.** Rushed timelines can equal higher costs. If necessary, identify elements that can be released on a phased schedule.

### Step 3: Look at...

**The Designer's Qualifications.** Are multiple persons working on your project? Who are they? What are their qualifications? What sites have they worked on—and what tasks did they perform on each? Are there qualitative and quantitative results that show the success of those sites? Do they keep up with changing technology? Who are their references?

**Your Audience.** What is your audience using—browser, screen size, operating system, and Internet connection? Avoid employing functionality beyond the reach of your audience.

**Your Choices.** Carefully weigh your needs, wants, and brand considerations against each Web designer's qualifications, costs, and ability to realize the schedule. Are there any clear incentives to choose one over the other?