

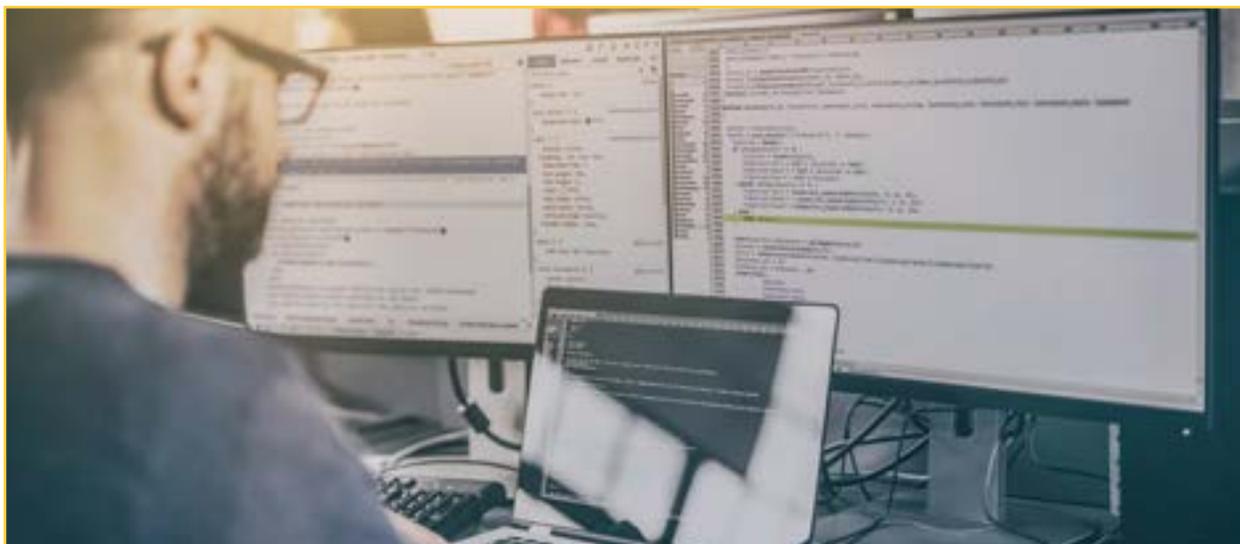
# WEB PROJECT MISTAKES that Cost Time and Money

*and How to Avoid Them*



A Digital Marketing Agency

“Our team has launched more than a thousand websites, and we’ve seen numerous ways a launch can go wrong; from lost domain names, to struggles with content, to mid-project shifts in business models. But no matter the obstacle, we’ve found ways to overcome them and complete successful projects. We’d like to share the most common pitfalls we see, and how you can avoid them in your own web design project.”



## PITFALL: I DON'T KNOW WHO HAS CONTROL OF MY WEBSITE

We often hear stories about people who thought they had control of their website, their domain name or their website content, only to discover they did not. In some cases, their developer owns the site and all its content, or the developer has registered the domain in their own name and won't provide logins.

### THE PRO SOLUTION

Before signing the contract, read the terms carefully, and ask the developer who will own the website and content if you want to move. The only correct answer in this situation is "You own everything."

There's nothing wrong with a developer listing themselves as the administrative and technical contact for a domain name. However, you should request you remain listed as the registrant contact, and make sure you have the username and password for the registration account in case you change developers. Ask the developer how they will handle domain name registration before you hire them.

The only foolproof way to avoid problems is to retain complete control of the domain and ask the hosting company to make the needed changes to point the domain name to the new website space instead of giving the developer the username and password to the domain registration.

## PITFALL: I CAN'T MAKE CHANGES TO MY WEBSITE

One of the biggest factors driving people to approach us about a new website is that they are either stuck with a site that's either difficult to use, or that has no content management system.

## THE PRO SOLUTION

Ask the developer, "Do you use an open-source content management system (CMS) or a proprietary CMS?"

That's a key distinction. An open-source CMS lets you move from one developer to another, while a proprietary platform essentially forces you to retain the developer's services unless you want to build a whole new website.





### PITFALL: I THOUGHT I WAS GETTING A GOOD DEAL

We've heard from people who've told us they thought they were getting a good deal from their developer, only to be nicked and dimed at every step of the design project.

### THE PRO SOLUTION

Demand price transparency. Find out what is included in the quoted project cost. It's fair for a developer to charge extra if you request changes after you have signed off on the design.

However, most other costs should be pre-defined. The only exception is a custom programming project, where there type of effort needed to deliver the features you need might vary.

## PITFALL: MY WEBSITE LOOKS LIKE EVERY OTHER WEBSITE

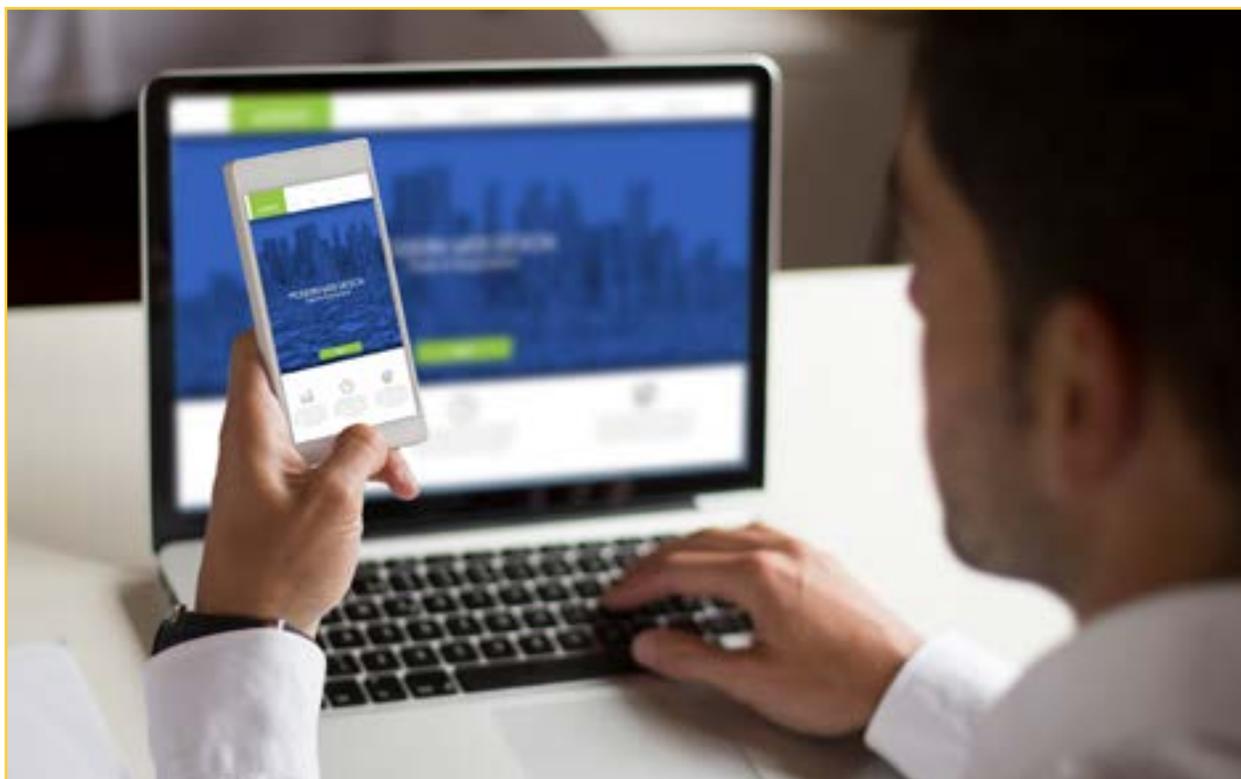
Every business wants to stand out in a crowded field, but we'll often meet with prospective clients whose existing website looks just like every other site in their industry.

### THE PRO SOLUTION

Ask the developer this question: "Do you do custom designs, or do you use a template?"

Developers often push WordPress websites, because their template allows them to create a website quickly and inexpensively. However, WordPress this isn't the easiest platform for users, and some WordPress plugins don't render well on all devices.

There's nothing wrong with using a WordPress template, if the developer's pricing reflects the lesser effort needed to create the website, and as long as you are satisfied with the likelihood that the site will have a generic look and feel.



## PITFALL: MY WEBSITE ISNT WORKING PROPERLY, AND IT TAKES A LONG TIME TO GET ANSWER FROM MY DEVELOPER

It can be tough to tell if website development was outsourced, but there are some clues to look for: long lead times to get answers – due to time differences in cases where programming was done overseas – or functionality that doesn't work well, or work at all.



### THE PRO SOLUTION

Ask up front if the development work will be outsourced. Don't immediately assume "outsourced" means "inferior."

There are great developers everywhere. Still, we'd recommend that you vet the developer's work more closely and be willing to accept the fact that quick answers and changes may not always be possible.

If the work is outsourced it may help to ask if there are specific programmers assigned to the developer's company.

In other words, "Are the same people working on the websites most of the time or is there a random assignment of a large pool of programmers?" A large pool of random programmers indicates a large volume shop.

Outsourcing a project means giving up some control. It happens when a firm doesn't have the on-site staff to do the work. Again, keep in mind that it might take a long time to get a question answered when the work is outsourced and decide if that's worth the cost savings.

You'll want to identify where the outsourced staff is located. Some foreign developers are very qualified, and others can create problems that may not be apparent until the site goes live or when you try to optimize the website for search engines.

## OTHER QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DEVELOPER

### Can you market my site after you build it?

If the company only does website design, you will need to find a second company to handle search engine optimization, content marketing, social media marketing and other digital strategies.

### Will my site come up for certain keywords in Google?

A design company cannot afford to include extensive SEO and be cost competitive with a good, custom-made design. Therefore, most developers offer SEO as a separate service. Just adding some keywords and title tags is only a small part of what it takes to get your website to the top of the search results.

### What is your design process?

Find out if you will have input before the designs are complete, or will you only get to see a finished product? Does the process allow for feedback from you and are there costs associated with revisions?





## OTHER QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DEVELOPER *(continued)*

### How long will the project take?

On one hand, you don't want to rush this critical element of building your business. Still, this project shouldn't take a long time, unless it requires complex custom programming. A typical website project should take between six to 10 weeks, provided you are supplying your developers with approvals and materials they need.

### What happens if the programmer/designer leaves the company before my project is completed?

You may save money with a small development company, but what happens to your project if someone leaves unexpectedly? Staff changes are typically easier to manage in companies that are large enough to have some redundancy. Make sure there is a plan for taking over your project in the event of personnel changes.

### What is my time commitment for the project?

Ask how much time you will need to commit to the design project. There's no right or wrong answer. Just be comfortable with the commitment so the project goes smoothly.

### Is the website scalable so that when my business grows it can grow with me?

As your business grows and changes you'll need a website that can evolve and expand with it.



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