

This text was taken from an article written by Kim O'Rourke of Merrie Marketing.

"Kim O'Rourke specialises in helping professional business owners and entrepreneurs find their niche and then get the right kind of clients for them. You can download a free audio programme "How to Get More Clients, More Money and More Time for Yourself" and find out more at <http://www.MerrieMarketing.com>"

How and Why to Choose a Graphic or Website Designer

Using a website designer will give your business the 'professional edge'. Briefed properly, a designer will be able to give your business a strong brand identity and will be able to communicate the benefits of working with you to your target market.

Before you go rushing ahead leaping on the first designer you come across, you need to make sure that you have the right designer for you and your business, and understand what different designers do.

A graphic designer will have probably come up through art school and have learned their 'trade' and developed their skills in a marketing agency. They will be used to taking a brief and creating a corporate logo and identity, and then translate that into any marketing collateral that you may choose to utilise (for instance, website, brochure, compliment slip, letterheads, adverts, direct mail piece, newsletters, signage and so on).

A website designer will generally have 'just' learned to create websites, and will be skilled at communicating your brand via your website. They will understand website structure, search engine optimisation and how to add e-commerce (eg. PayPal) capabilities and so on.

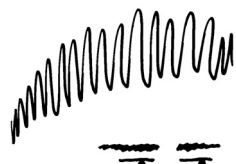
A website programmer will more than likely work alongside a graphic designer: They take the design and then do the actual creation of the website with all the clever techie bits. So, make sure that you're briefing a designer, not a programmer. Some designers can do the programming, but programmers (on their own) generally can't design.

Before deciding which route to go, you need to think about the following:

- Why you need a website (you may not);
- What you need it to do for you;
- What will be on it;
- What other marketing collateral you are likely to need over time.

If you need a website and nothing else, I would be tempted to go with a website designer. If you need the whole 'shebang' - ie. corporate identity, letterhead, compliment slips etc, then go with a graphic designer who either does websites themselves, or works with a programmer alongside them.

If you need a logo created and then a website, but nothing else, then a good website designer should be able to do that for you. However you need to brief in the logo first and get that right before you move on to briefing the website.



Steve Pitt
GRAPHIC DESIGN

95 WAVERLEY CRESCENT
ROMSLEY
HALESOWEN
WEST MIDLANDS
B62 0NY
telephone 01562 710 218
mobile 0771 737 8155
e-mail stevepitt@stevepitt.com
web www.stevepitt.com

How to get the best out of your Website Designer

Well, saying "I need a website" and leaving it at that won't get you very far! And saying to them "I'll know when I see it..." also won't help them at all.

If I asked you to go shopping for me, you'd want to know what kind of shopping – grocery, clothes, a birthday present, and so on. And let's say I told you "groceries". So then you'd like to know what I wanted from the shop, in as much detail as possible.

And it's the same with designers: You need to give them a "shopping list"...or in other words, a brief.

With any designer, the better the brief that you give them, the better the job they can do for you.

So it'll pay you to do a lot of the thinking up front about what you want from your website (after all, it'll be there to help promote your business, so the responsibility lays with you to make sure it's right), and give your designer as much detail as possible.

A good way to start planning a website is to actually look at other people's websites and how they're structured. Note down what you like about them and what you don't. Note also what you like about the colours or imagery that they use. Most designers will like you to share this information with them.

I always think that anything technical should start off with pen and paper... and in this case, use post-it notes. What I'm suggesting is to write the kind of pages you want on your website on post-it notes, so you end up with one page name per post-it. Then stick them on a wall or on your desk and play around with the structure until you think it works.

By doing this you'll see if you need additional pages on your site, or if you need to take some away. You can see how it flows and how a visitor would find their way around your site.

When you're happy with it, copy down the final structure and give that to your website designer. They may well make other suggestions, but that's good... use their expertise and skills to make your ideas work a whole lot better for you. Better that way than asking them to start with a blank bit of paper – and it'll cost you more if they spend more time on it!

So, you've got an idea about how you want it to look and feel, and you know what the structure is... but what else is there. Well, your designer will also need to know:

- The background to your business and the goals for your business;
- The ethos and values of your business;
- What you sell and how (and if they need to integrate a payment system, like PayPal, they need to know; does your product require postage?);
- If you sell products, who is going to supply the product shots;
- Your USP (unique selling proposition... ie: what makes you so different from others in your field)
- Who your target market is (clue, it's not everybody!!), what they like, other websites that they probably go to (if you don't know that, you should!!);
- The kind of imagery to use;
- Who's supplying the copy and by when;
- Do they need to include coding from an auto-responder for your data capture page;

When they need to supply a first concept to you and when you need the final site completed by (tip: websites always seem to take far longer than you think to create, and it can often be the final tying up of systems that takes the time).

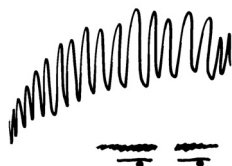
You also need to send them:

- Your logo (if they're not designing it as well)
- Your professional photo
- Your contact details
- Your Privacy Policy and Site Terms (a legal requirement)
- A copyright notice
- And the copy if you're writing it, or you have a copywriter write it. And if it's the latter, the copywriter can be writing copy whilst your designer designs the site concepts. Then the two will be ready to merge at the same time.

As you can see, there's more to briefing a designer than saying "I want one of those please!" The more effort you put in to the planning of it, and thinking about what you need and who it's for, the happier your designer will be and the better your website will be! Oh – and it'll be cheaper for you in the long run.

Written by Kim O'Rourke

P.S. by Steve Pitt – An excellent few words of advice, most of which can be applied to all forms of 'marketing collateral' that feature your visual identity. I really couldn't have put it better, so that is why I asked Kim if I could use to form part of my advice sheets, if you have found this or any other of my advice sheets useful, tell me (or everyone else! - twitter about them!) but most of all please use this valuable info.



*I cannot take the credit for this article.

It came from a very informative Newsletter by Kim O'Rourke of Merrie Marketing. To get your own copy of this newsletter, subscribe at <http://www.MerrieMarketing.com/>