

# Before Seeking Out a Web Developer, Do This

by Brenda Taulbee | Nov 4, 2020 | 0 comments



Developing a new website is like renovating your house. It's easy to get excited and jump ahead to the fun parts. But for your website to be successful, you need to start with the foundation. In other words, *why* are you developing this website? What's the plan? Without a clear goal, your website will end up feeling like the **Winchester Mystery House**: beautiful on the outside but meandering and dysfunctional on the inside.

So, at what point do you hire a web developer to bring your plans to fruition? For a successful collaboration, there are a few steps to take beforehand. But first, let's straighten out precisely what a web developer does.

## A Web Developer is Not a Web Designer

Drag and drop website builders like Wix and Squarespace have gained popularity, claiming that "anyone—yes, even YOU—can build a website." Such advertising has given rise to some confusion about what differentiates a web developer from a web designer. To be clear, they are not the same.

A quick Google search for a web designer in any given city will yield a confusing mix of designers and developers. While anyone with an eye for graphic design can create a beautiful website using the platforms mentioned above, only a web developer with coding experience can build and optimize a custom website.

To sum it up, there are three different specialists you should hire to work on your website—and a web developer is typically the last one in the lineup.

### A website copywriter

A copywriter writes content with the goal of closing sales. A copywriter who specializes in websites creates content that establishes the layout and user-experience of your site, focusing on conversions. Because copy informs design, which in turn informs development, a copywriter is typically the first person you'll encounter on your web development journey.

### A website designer

A **web designer** creates the visual concept and static layout of your website, including color palettes, images, graphics, and text. They work closely with the website copywriter or content team to determine which pages the site needs, ensure the written and visual content co-exist, and make it easy for visitors to navigate towards the point of sale.

### A website developer

The **web developer** writes the code that brings the design concepts to life. Essentially, they translate visual designs made using a program like Photoshop or Illustrator into a language that a computer can read and replicate, such as HTML or JavaScript. The result is a website you can easily comprehend (like the one you're reading right now).

Technically speaking, there's some overlap between design and development—but they are different disciplines. A designer doesn't need to know code, and a developer doesn't need to know graphic design to be successful. However, you and your design team should communicate with your web developer early in the process to scope out the size of the website and ensure the design is developable as intended.

## You Know It's Time to Hire a Web Developer When...

Before you go all-in with a web developer, audit your current website (or hire an agency like Savy to take a look under the hood). Look for the following signs that point to a new website:

### Your business has outgrown your website

Does your website look like a dinosaur from the prehistoric ages of technology? Does it have pixelated animations and blinking pop-ups akin to the old Las Vegas strip? Is it totally *not* pulling its weight when it comes to making sales? If your answer to any of the above is "yes," "kinda," or "maybe?"—it's time for an upgrade. And a web developer can make that happen.

### Your website is bloated and sluggish

If your website takes longer to load than your AOL dial-up internet from the 90s, you need to find a web developer to bring your site up to speed. HubSpot reports that the first five seconds of **page-load time is imperative to your website conversion rate**. Each additional second of load time drags your conversion rate down by an average of 4.42 percent, which is not great in internet time. A skilled developer will create a site that loads in the blink of an eye, raking in more revenue.

### You don't have a business website

2020 called. It wanted you to know that your business is *begging* for a website. To say 2020 is the year the world went virtual would be an understatement, making it that much more imperative to have a prominent online presence. In light of COVID-19, schools, medical offices, grocery stores, and even sports teams are reimagining "business as usual" online—and you should, too. According to Deloitte, convenience is more critical now than ever before, with more than **50 percent of consumers spending more on convenience**. Additionally, digital sales grew by a staggering 130 percent by mid-April this year. Where do convenient digital sales happen? Your website.

## What to Do Before You Sign Your Site Away

Without the right preparation and support, creating a new website can be an arduous journey. After all, your developer isn't a mind reader who can single-handedly whip up a unicorn website overnight. It takes planning, participation, and teamwork to create your dream website. Your website developer is going to need your input, among other things.

### Determine what functionality you need

Before you hand over the keys to your website, make sure your web developer is well-versed in the required technology. Communicate with them early on about your website needs and goals. An experienced developer will know what upgrades, apps, and databases are necessary to make a site function—and an honest one will tell you if they can make it happen and how much it will cost.

### Choose a platform

Once you determine what functionality is needed, it's time to pick a platform. Because a website is a vital business investment, you want a platform capable of supporting your needs now—and in the future. For example, suppose you plan to add e-commerce functionality, online booking integrations, or member portals down the road. In that case, you'll want to make sure your web developer has a scalable platform to build on. One of **the most popular and customizable website platforms is WordPress**. If you can imagine it, WordPress can most likely support it.

### Set realistic timeline expectations

If you enter a website development project expecting to launch within a few weeks, you'll be sorely disappointed. Good things take time. High-quality web developers typically have a transparent process for building a website and can walk you through roughly how long it will take. Because no two websites are created equal, the timeline can vary from a month to several months. And while you might find someone who claims they can get the work done faster, engaging an expert from the get-go **will save you time and money in the long run**.

### Get your content in order

The final step before development is up to you (or your digital marketing agency, if you choose to go that route). After all, your website developer needs *something* to develop.

#### SEO keyword strategy

Your copywriter or **SEO company** will conduct research and create a keyword strategy for relevant terms and phrases your target audience uses to search online. What does this have to do with web development? A lot, actually. Your website developer will use your target keywords to create alt-text and meta-descriptions on your website's back-end. When Google and other search engines crawl your site, they'll recognize those keywords and place your site higher in search results.

#### Website copy

Next, your copywriter will work with you and the design team to map out your website pages and write keyword-rich website copy. Your website developer should also be part of the conversation at this point to discuss any particular functionality or integrations needed. From there, your copywriter will translate the functionality into words that walk users through your website.

#### Website design

Next, your website designer will integrate the copy into a visual concept. At this point, your designer will work closely with the developer to articulate how the site will function and translate that functionality into user-friendly visuals. Once you sign off on the design, your developer will begin writing code to bring the design to life online.

TL;DR do your research, define your goals, and get organized. A web developer is not a one-stop-shop for all your website needs. Realistically, they are the final stop before you launch.

## A Web Development Agency Can Do It All

Developing a new website is a noteworthy undertaking for any business. Not to mention it's only one piece of the larger marketing picture. Hiring a digital marketing agency specializing in web design and development makes the process a lot easier.

At Savy, we do it all. With an in-house team of industry veterans, we can tackle every element of your website—from strategy and design to development and post-launch marketing. Let's create something beautifully effective. **Get in touch**.

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