

How to Choose the Right Web Designer for Your Dental Website

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A good website can attract more patients to your dental practice, while a bad one can have an opposite effect. So if you plan to launch a new website for your practice, selecting a web designer is an important strategic decision. But first, you need to know who's who in the design process:

- The website designer is the project manager for designing your website. He or she helps you ascertain the page layout, text location, graphics, colors, navigation, and cross-linking of pages in your website. The designer also might do the actual programming and artwork.
- The website programmer takes the design and writes the computer code for it. He or she also is responsible for ensuring the website runs properly for visitors.
- The graphic designer or artist helps create the brand's image for the website. He or she selects or creates the graphics, logos, pictures, illustrations, and other visual properties.
- The internet marketing consultant determines how the site fits into your practice's overall digital marketing strategy. He or she helps you get more traffic to your website, expanding your practice's outreach.

Sometimes, one professional may play more than one or even all four of these roles.

Do not count on the web designer for the text content on your website, though. You should do the copywriting by yourself or hire an expert copywriter. Copywriter charges can vary according to the quality and type of content required.

You also can go for a hybrid solution, which means getting advice on copywriting principles from a consultant and then writing the website content yourself. You could then have the consultant edit it to ensure it works well

for your dental practice.

Choosing the Best Web Designer

While hiring a web designer, keep the following things in mind:

- Note whether the prospective designer is interested in learning about you, your dental practice, your goals, and your audience. Designing a website that reflects your practice requires the designer to understand these things intimately.
- Check out the designer's previous work and see whether you like it or not. Look for the variation and uniqueness in the websites he or she has created.
- Ask if the actual layout and graphic designing in the designer's previous work was done by his or her own team.
- If the designer and his or her team have not done the graphic work themselves, ask them if they can suggest a graphic designer.
- See if the designer's website planning process is structured and systematic.
- Make sure the designer knows about search engine optimization and digital marketing. Your website should not only be pretty but also be able to meet your practice's larger goals.
- Ask about the fee and other estimated costs for designing your website. Remember, the designer will be able to provide you with reliable estimates only after you have discussed the features and content that you want on your website. For a small business, a good quality website with neat layout and graphic design is likely to fit within your budget. If you want additional features such as a newsletter, blog, shopping cart, search engine optimization, logo design, and email addresses, the prices will go up.
- Ask the designer how you will be invoiced: monthly, or when some specific milestones are attained? Also ask if you have to make any deposits upfront.
- You, and not the web designers, are responsible for your budget. Therefore, you should watch out if the designer keeps suggesting add-ons, which will increase your costs.
- To get insights into how smooth the process would be, you may talk to the designer's recent clients. Through these conversations, you should inquire about the designer's management skills, communication skills, and punctuality.
- Ask the web designer if he or she would take the responsibility of maintaining the website after it is created. If the answer is yes, ask about the charges involved. You may also hire a virtual assistant (VA) to maintain your website at low cost. You should know about the platform used on your website to find a suitable VA.
- If you want to maintain the website yourself, you must ask the designer to create it in a way that makes maintenance is easy. Ask the designer to use a platform such as WordPress, which allows for easy editing of text and some graphics.
- Your contract must explicitly state that you are the owner of the copyright of the entire website, except for any stock images that are used. All other content, including the text, code, and custom-made graphics, should be in your name.
- Ensure that you own the domain name, even if the designer registered it for you.
- To ensure that you or any other designer would be able to edit your website with ease in the future, you must ask for the original source files, which are editable.
- Ask yourself whether you feel comfortable working with the website designer. If you are able to develop a good rapport, it will translate into better outcomes for your dental website in the end.
- Clarify your deadlines to the website designer and ask whether they can be met. Designers in high demand may be booked for the next few weeks or months. Thus, you might have to patiently wait. If you do not have specific deadlines in mind, you can discuss it with the designer to arrive at a mutually accepted deadline. If you are going to do the job of writing the content yourself, ensure that you stick to the deadlines as well.

Your website is a key element in determining the success of your digital marketing campaign for your dental practice. Therefore, you must keep this checklist in mind while sifting through potential website designers. These points will help you choose a designer who is competent, listens to you attentively, and creates a website within the prescribed budget and time limits while presenting your practice brand effectively through the web design.

Mr. Arulrajah is president and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, a complete Internet marketing company that focuses on SEO, social media, marketing education, and the online reputations of dentists. With a team of more than 180 full-time marketers, ekwa.com helps dentists who know where they want to go get there by dominating their market and growing their business significantly year after year. If you have questions about marketing your practice online, call (855) 598-3320 or email naren@ekwa.com.

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