

## Guide to approaching website designers

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1. Look to approach at least 2-3 web design companies so that you get a feel for market prices. Check out work that they've done previously, and see if anyone you know can recommend their services.
2. Put together as much of a 'brief' as you can incorporating why you want a website and who your customer base will be. Specify in as much detail as possible as to what and/or how many pages the site will have, what type of functionality or customer interaction you want/need, whether you need to be able to edit the site yourself, whether you're looking for shopping facilities or such like, and perhaps even if you have any future plans for the site.
3. Initially sound out each in terms of cost and availability, then submit your more detailed 'brief' in order to receive a quote. It might help at this stage to email the brief to each designer, then perhaps arrange a face-to-face or telephone meeting to discuss any questions that either party might have.
4. It might sound a little corny but consider the rapport between yourself and each designer. Seeing as your website is an important business investment, you need to feel comfortable with your designer so that any concerns, queries or ideas that you have are fully considered.
5. Mention from the outset that you want the site to be fully optimised in terms of meta-tags and such like. Find out if there are additional costs for this.
6. Ask about timelines, and highlight any deadlines you might have.
7. If you're unsure about domain names, web hosting or ongoing maintenance to the website, make sure you can ask freely for advice.
8. Find out if you get any design choices and what happens if you don't like the initial design.
9. Make sure you uncover all the costs at the outset, ie. What are the ongoing charges for domain names, hosting, maintenance, changes to the website? Are these hourly, fixed cost or annual charges? Are there additional charges for providing any graphic design or image manipulation if required? At what stages are you required to make payment?
10. Ask other businesses you might know if these costs sound reasonable though bearing in mind the least expensive may not always be the best option.
11. At the end of the day, look for a designer who not only suits your budget but who you feel you can work with to build a website that suits your business, but most importantly is completely relevant and appropriate to your online customers.