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Topic: What You Should Know About Websites

If you are new to websites and are not sure what to look out for, here are the important things that you need to consider. On the last page of this document there is a checklist that you can print out and take into a meeting with the website company that you are dealing with.

### Warranty and Quality Assurance Policies

**The Issue:** The website design industry is highly unregulated. Companies therefore are under no obligation to provide written warranties or quality assurance policies. As a result, many people get caught out when technical problems arise. In this situation, because the website company did not provide a written agreement describing how they will react to problems, the client is sometimes stuck with these problems or forced to pay extra for support and help that really should have been covered by the original price.

**What You Should Do:** Before going ahead with any company, make sure that they provide a warranty and quality assurance policy **in writing!** For example, Fireworks provide a unique lifetime warranty on their website development work. This warranty covers fixing any technical faults that may arise during the lifetime of the website. Fireworks also have a quality assurance system that ensures that any claims under warranty are lodged with our technicians and fixed promptly.

## Experience and Qualifications

**The Issue:** There are plenty of people who advertise that they can build websites but have either a lack of experience or lack of qualifications. This often results in projects being half finished and websites not working properly in all internet browsers.

**What You Should Do:** Ask the person that you're dealing with what his or her qualifications are and what experience they have had. Look at their portfolio of work to determine whether your project is similar to other projects that they have completed. For example, the designers and programmers at Fireworks are industry professionals who have achieved a University Degree and a minimum of 5 years industry experience. This combination of technical ability and experience ensures that your project is a success. To see our wide variety of clients and projects visit our website at [www.fireworkswebsites.com.au](http://www.fireworkswebsites.com.au) .

## Intellectual Property

**The Issue:** Unfortunately many people do not discuss intellectual property until after the project is completed and it is too late. Some companies will insist that the intellectual property of the website belongs to the website company until it is purchased by the client at an additional fee on top of the original development costs. This intellectual property fee is usually between \$1000-\$10,000.



**What You Should Do:** Make sure that you discuss this before entering into a contract. If the company charges for the intellectual property, enquire how much the cost would be. At Fireworks however, we believe that any intellectual property created during a project should be the property of the client. We therefore do not charge any additional fees to release source files or intellectual property to the contracting party.

### Captive Marketing

**The Issue:** Many website companies program and build websites so that the website will only work on their hosting platform or with their support. As a result, the client is “held captive” to deal with that company if they want to use the website that has been built. Although this may not be a problem, there have been plenty of cases where the website company has thereafter increased their prices or not provided the necessary support and the client has needed to change to a different company. In this situation, the client must get a new website built as they can not continue to use the original website unless they stick to the original company.

**What You Should Do:** Discuss this with the company before entering into a contract. If the website is built in such a way that you will be captive to using the original company, contact their previous clients to see how the company acts after the “honeymoon” period of the business relationship. However, the company may not build the website in this manner. For example, Fireworks build websites in standard programming languages that other programmers will be able to easily continue in the future if need be. The programming is not locked to work on a particular hosting platform.



## What do they or don't they offer?

**The Issue:** There are a number of services that you may need to build your website. These include Graphic Design, Copywriting, Flash Animation, Development, Databases, Marketing, Hosting, ASP & PHP programming, SEO (search engine optimization) and Domain Registration. Some companies offer only some of these services, which means that if you require the other services you will need to deal with multiple companies. Dealing with multiple companies can often create a conflict of interest between the two companies and getting them to cooperate with each other can be a difficult task.

**What You Should Do:** Discuss your project in depth with the company, from development right through to ongoing marketing and growth. Check that this company can provide all the services that you need or that they have partnering companies who they regularly deal with who can provide the additional services.

Preferably, you want to deal with the one company for ease of communication. For example, Fireworks provide a full package for your website needs. This includes website design, complex programming, website hosting, flash animation, database development, online marketing and other services.

## Disappearing Trick

**The Issue:** Website designers can be mobile, which means that they can disappear as quickly as they can appear. It is very common for the original designer of a website to change jobs, move location or just disappear, leaving the client with no one to contact and no way of updating the website. This poses a problem for the website owner because websites require ongoing maintenance, updating and support.

**What You Should Do:** There is less chance of a medium to large website company becoming unavailable. However if you are dealing with a small company or a freelancer, talk to them about their goals in the near future. This will give you some indication of whether they are committed to their job or whether it is likely they could disappear. You could also talk to their previous clients to find out what their support is like after the website is completed. It would be wise to keep a copy of the access information for your website. This includes the "FTP login details" (to access the website files) and the "Domain Registration login details" (where the domain was registered).

If you have this information, it is easy for you to grant access to another website company to make any necessary changes in the future.

Fireworks began in 2003 and has an established office at 37 Pontiac Cct, Warner Lakes QLD 4500. This gives you the peace of mind of knowing where and how we work.



## Communication

**The Issue:** People working in the IT and website industries are notorious for bad communication. When the designer does not reply to emails or phone messages, it can add extra work and stress to the client who does not know if their messages are being acknowledged.

### What You Should Do:

Before entering into the contract, talk to the people that you'll be working with. Ask them about their work flow and how they communicate with clients. Get an understanding of what the business relationship will be like before being locked into it. For example, at **Fireworks** we pride ourselves on prompt and reliable communication whether by email or phone. We are happy to provide feedback and advice on ideas and projects that you may have.

## "Campaign Promises"

**The Issue:** When a politician is running for office, they make plenty of promises to contend with their competition. It is only once they are in office that the public see which promises they do or don't keep. Website design can be very similar. Designers may promise the world to win the contract but deliver much less after the contract has been won. Be wary of website designers who make promises or provide quotes without first understanding your project and your expectations in depth. The truth is that websites can be extremely intricate to build, consisting of a huge variety of issues such as security, internet browser testing, user validation, online payment, access and usability issues, animation, log in areas, administration, databases, hosting, support, user interaction, warranties, updating.... and this is literally just the tip of the ice berg. No one can provide an accurate price or make promises that they can keep

without first discussing these things in detail with you and understanding what your requirements and expectations are. If they do, either one of two things will happen. Either the designer will quote too much to cover all of the hidden variables of the project that they don't yet know about or they will quote too little not understanding exactly what your requirements are. The latter often results in additional costs or a website being half finished.

**What You Should Do:** Discuss your project, requirements and expectations in depth with the website company. Don't be afraid to spend a few hours doing this. Use drawings, sketches, diagrams and any other visual means to communicate structure, layouts and other requirements. Make sure that you receive a quotation before proceeding with the project.

A report by Internet.com released in 2007 showed that every minute spent discussing the project at the beginning of the process on average saved 37 minutes of time at the end of the process. This will ultimately save you time, money, confusion and frustration.

## Fireworks Provide The Following Services :

- Website Design and Development
- Website Hosting
- Search Engine Optimisation (with a first page google guarantee)
- Online Marketing
- Flash Development and Animation
- PHP and ASP programming
- Database Development
- Graphic Design
- Google Adwords Management
- Website Updates and Extensions
- Website Statistics Recording and Reports
- Email Marketing and Reporting
- Project Consulting

Visit our portfolio at [www.fireworkswebsites.com.au](http://www.fireworkswebsites.com.au)

We look forward to  
making it Spectacular!



## Website Meeting Checklist

- What is their written warranty? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What is their Quality Assurance Policy? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What qualifications do they have? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What experience do they have? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What similar projects have they completed before? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Who will own the intellectual property of the website? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Will the website be locked to using your company? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Are there any required services that you don't provide? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Do you have an office? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- When did the business begin? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What are your goals for the future? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How do you communicate with clients? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What are your work flow and processes? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- Ask the developer to explain your project back to you to check that they have a good understanding of your project and expectations.
- Draw diagrams or sketch layouts to communicate exactly what your expectations are.