

The 3 Musts for Running Your Web Design Business Efficiently and Effectively

By Scott Marriott

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There is no shortage of Web sites and books on how to create graphics for Web sites and how to use HTML or programming software. However, in order to run a Web design business efficiently and effectively you need to know a whole lot more than just how to design great looking graphics and Web pages.

I've learned a lot by trial and error in my years as a Web design business owner. I want to share the 3 most important musts for running a Web design business so you can avoid some of the headaches I had to go through. The key to enjoying your business is to provide your clients with wonderful Web sites while keeping your aspirin purchases down. In other words, you need to focus on these 3 key elements to running a Web design business in order to alleviate unnecessary headaches and potential legal problems.

Must Number One: Contracts

You must sign a contract with every single client you do a project for. It doesn't matter how nice someone seems to be when you meet them and it doesn't matter how small their Web design needs are; you need to sign a contract with everyone you do business with or you are setting yourself up for some potentially painful nightmares.

A contract shouldn't be looked at as a negative thing; something that gives the impression you shouldn't be trusted. In fact, most of your clients will have the opposite feeling when you present them with a contract. Telling your clients you sign contracts for every project you do will show that you are a step above those that don't. Most businesses are used to using contracts and will only respect you more if you use one in your own business.

Mentioning that you use contracts will actually make a client feel more secure about your business, rather than scare them away. Any client that is not willing to be bound by a contract usually has a reason, and it isn't because they don't trust you. People that refuse to sign contracts usually have a pattern of not holding up their end of a deal. These people should be avoided at all cost; no matter how much money they offer to pay you.

The whole point of using a contract is to outline what each party's responsibilities will be in the

project and what each can expect at the outcome. Your contract needs to specify what is to be delivered by you and what is expected of the client during the entire project. Everything from how to deliver materials to you and providing timelines needs to be outlined in your contracts.

Must Number Two: Timely delivery of your client's materials.

In order to make the most of your time as a Web design business owner you need to keep all your client projects on a timeline. The last thing you want to have happen is to cross two or more different projects on top of each other. If you have several people working for you, and you can do more than one project at a time, you may be able to handle things. However, if you are only able to do one project at a time, you need to make sure each project is done in its own time frame and not crossing over into the timeline of another project.

When you sign with a new client, one of the most important questions they want answered is: "When can my site be finished?" You'll need to be able to give each client a timeline to make them feel good about their decision to hire you. At the same time, you also need to be able to complete their project within that timeline to a reasonable degree.

The only way to make sure you can stick to your timelines is to get materials from clients delivered within a specified time. You should never allow a client to submit their materials to you at their leisure. Too many business owners think their work is done once they have finally found a Web designer to do their project. At the point of hiring you, they tend to believe they can just pace themselves and get to you when they have the time. This will never work if you want to run a successful Web design business.

You need to set parameters for how and when you want materials delivered to you, in order to do the work you are hired to do effectively. If you complete 75% of a Web site but have to wait an extra two weeks just to get 3 paragraphs of info from a client to finish the last 2 pages; you're not making the most of your time.

When you sign with each client, lay down some specific time periods in which you expect them to deliver all their materials. Instead of sounding like a dictator, explain to clients the importance of getting their materials to you in a timely fashion. Help them understand that it is essential so you can complete their site in the time frame you have given them. Make sure you also tell them how you want materials delivered to you and in what formats so they are able to get it right the first time.

Must Number Three: Get Approval for Everything You Do

Depending on how you run your Web Design business, there should be several steps to each project you do. It is very important that you get approval for each phase of your projects. The last thing you want is to do a lot of work and then have to redo it because someone claims they didn't approve what you did. You will find times when clients change their minds after you've done something and they won't see how hard it will be for you to redo it. Make sure you get approval before moving on to the next step so you can avoid doing extra work or just doing things over.

Although you may find you have a good relationship with a client, it is a good idea to get approval for each phase of your project in writing. You just never know when you may come across a client that decides to change their mind after already having approved something. In order to prevent any problems with a client, getting approvals in writing will help keep everyone in their place. If someone request a change to something they already approved and they want it done for the same charge as you bid on in the beginning, you will have their approval in writing to back you up when you bring it

to their attention.

In Summary:

Implementing these 3 crucial musts into your business practices will not only help you get things done more efficiently; it will make your life much easier. Allowing projects to overlap because clients don't deliver their materials on time or in the proper fashion, is just bad business. Set guidelines for submitting materials, sign contracts with each client and get approval for everything you do and your business will run much smoother and be more enjoyable for you and your clients.

Scott Marriott is the Author of Web Design Riches, a step-by-step, 28 Chapter guide to starting and running a successful Web design business. To learn the most effective methods and techniques to making money with a Web design business, visit <http://www.WebDesignRiches.com> for more information. Join his newsletter "Web Design Tips and Advice" for free info about making money with Web design at: <mailto:newsletter@webdesignriches.com>

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