

Web Developer Warning Signs

By Chris Bachman | January 8, 2014

As an entrepreneur for most of my life I have come in contact with numerous web developers and Internet “Experts” over the years. I learned a lot from all of them. Many I truly appreciated, some made me shake my head in disbelief, and still others left me speed dialing my attorney. All in all, most of the mistakes I made in regards to selecting web developers came with clear warning signs that could have been avoided if I had simply gotten out of my own way and taken a calm look before leaping. I expect many of you have had similar experiences.

Whether you are looking at your first relationship with a web developer or have many experiences under your belt and still hope for that great partnership to find you, hopefully these tips will help you avoid the less savory experiences.



If You Hear This, Take A Deep Breath.

- **“We will get you on the first page of the search results, guaranteed.”** BS...nobody can guarantee that, at least not for keywords that are meaningful.
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- **“We need to have you give us access to your domain name.” Big Warning Sign...**once they have control of your domain they can hold it hostage and you are totally at their mercy. *Never* give a web developer access to your domain name. Would you put them on as a signer on your bank account?!
 - If you see your domain name being moved without your prior approval...why is it being moved? Jump on that right away. You have a limited time to complain and intervene.
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- **“None of the old rules about search engines apply anymore; only we know what works now.”** Oh please, this is someone who wants to convince you that you know nothing, they know everything, and you should trust them implicitly. Start down this road and it’s like a really bad marriage.
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- **“We can build you as many pages as you want and they won’t cost anything.”** They are going to install a CMS that will allow you to create pages willy-nilly. That means your navigation is going to deteriorate, your pages will not be optimized and your website will begin to lose any ranking it may have had. That will cost you plenty. The kicker comes when you go back to this same person begging

for help to save your website that is mysteriously dropping in the SERPs. They will be happy to help you out; for a fee, of course.

If You See This, Take A Step Back.

- If the web developer's own website looks a bit tacky, you can bet yours will too. Their website should be a shining example of their best work. If you wouldn't be proud to call their site your own...move on.
- When they copy another website and just change the name to yours. There is likely to be a significant lack of attention to detail in your future dealings with them. This could be a Jump & Dump company: they give you a deal that makes you Jump, then they hand you some garbage and Dump your file.
- When you search Google using their name and the word "complaints" and the hair stands up on the back of your neck.
- When you search the BBB and they come back with a large number of complaints, especially unresolved complaints, and especially if their ranking is below a B.



If They Do This, Just Walk Away.

- They don't return calls or emails in a timely fashion. It won't get better once you are a client. Trust me.
- You ask to see the Work Agreement; i.e., Contract, and they insist a handshake is good enough. Or, their paperwork is so loose as to be meaningless; i.e., nobody is held to anything.
- If you ask them specific questions and their answers are vague or they become impatient; not good. You need someone who will take the time to work with you on the project. It is a team effort. There is no room for condescension or arrogance.
- If they use multiple domain names, possibly very similar, but only have one business. These are often burner names. When one gets too many bad reviews they simply re-launch under another name.
- If their example websites are full of typos and spelling errors, you can bet that behind the scenes it is a mess too.



- If you ask for references and: A) they can't give you any to speak to; B) when you call the references nobody answers; and/or C) the person who answers gives glowing reports that seem out of character and a bit hard to believe. BTW – don't pay much heed to the ones on their website unless you can call and talk to those same people in person.
 - Visit the websites of the clients they say they have built a site for.
 - Call the people who have those same websites, especially those a year old or more.



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