



BASIC WEBSITE COMPONENTS AND COSTS

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When trying to budget web design costs there are a number of factors to consider:

- Is this a brand new site or a redesign?
- How prepared are you – do you have a detailed requirements document?
- Do you need a blog or content management functionality (CMS)?
- Do you have graphics already created for the site?
- Do you want the site to automatically resize for mobile and tablets?
- Do you need multimedia (flash, video, etc) on the site?
- How much content do you have and how much do you need created?
- Do you need other special features like social media channels, SEO, e-commerce, etc?
- Who is going to maintain the site after it has been launched?

New Sites Often Cost More Than Redesigns

When you're starting from scratch, so is the web designer. They have nothing to work from, they can't look at your existing site and get an idea of your online brand or features and functionality requirements. All new sites really should require a "discovery and documentation" process. This process will help define the online brand, website structure and functionality. This process is critical because it helps set expectations on all sides and reduces potential frustrations. Simple business websites, where the client has a solid idea of what they want, can get by on a minimal amount of discovery and documentation, perhaps one day's worth of effort. BUT...more complex websites may require days of meetings and the creation of many detailed documents to fully define the project.

Interface Design

Interface design is also referred to as the look-and-feel or visual design. The interface design will incorporate your branding, all your photos and images, even your page layouts. Don't assume that if you've already got a pre-made template you won't need any images or layouts re-done. Interface design is usually an iterative process, this means that the designer will show you several options and then modify those based on your feedback to arrive at an approved design. Don't skimp on the interface design or visitors won't give your website a second glance.

Images and Graphics

Website graphics are tricky because you can get cheap stock images or custom highend images. Compelling and appropriate graphics can make a huge difference in the effectiveness of your website. At times a good designer can make a cheap image look like a custom one. But that's not all. You will probably also need stock icons and buttons to compliment your design. Be sure to appropriately budget for additional items as well.

Mobile and Responsive Design Cost

Mobile devices are swiftly becoming critical to online success and your design should at least be Mobile-friendly. The best designs are "responsive", designed to automatically adjust their layout to look good on multiple devices: smartphones, tablets, and desktop computers. Creating a responsive design can cost 15%-30% more than a site for a desktop web browser (the price of progress). This cost is because the interface designer needs to design how the site will look on the various devices, the programmer will need to program the designs and more testing will need to be done before the site is ready to launch. Almost all our projects these days include responsive programming.

Cost for Content Creation and Insertion

The least expensive way to go is to create all the content yourself and insert it into the site yourself. Most designers have no problem delivering a blank design template that you populate with text and images. But if you want the design firm to add your content and adjust the layout of the text, you should budget appropriately per page.

Programming Special Features Often Cost Extra

There are a ton of extra features that web developers can integrate that will improve your business but can also up the price. Sometimes these features are "included" in the website framework – but beware, just because they are "included" doesn't mean that they look or work the way you want. Below are a few add-ons which definitely will cause the price to fluctuate.

Custom Content Management Systems – for clients who want to manage their own content we integrate and customize content management systems (CMS). We work with PHP-based open-source CMS solutions like Drupal and WordPress. Costs for integrating and customizing a CMS can range tremendously.

Training and Documentation – You will probably need some instructions and documentation on how to maintain and edit site content. Depending on how extensive it is, be sure to properly budget for it.

Blog - Many clients want a WordPress or similar blog within their website, customized to their websites branding and design.

E-commerce - shopping carts, catalogs, and payment processing

Email Marketing Campaigns – Clients that want to gather emails and send out branded email blasts for announcements or newsletters require an email management tool. We integrate third party tools (mailchimp, icontact, constant contact, aweber, etc.) and create an email blast template design, we can even manage your email blasts.

Branding/Identity Development – Logo design is something we are often asked to do. On the low-end, we start with an eight-hour process that generates about six rough logo concepts. If one of these is chosen we go through several rounds of edits to arrive at a final version.

Style Guides – An online style guide is important because it establishes brand consistency and provides a guide for all your print collateral and online marketing.

Targeted Landing Pages – Landing pages are pages that promote a specific product or service. They are usually part of an email, social media, or banner ad campaign. We can design and create these pages.

News feeds of both your content (outgoing) and adding content to the site (incoming).

Contact forms and surveys

Newsletters

Advertising integration (Google AdWords)

Photo gallery

Metrics: Google analytics, custom reports, etc.

SEO: on page optimization, off page optimization submission to search engines, etc.

Social Media: Create and manage social media network profile such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Pinterst, Google+, LinkedIn etc.

So How Much Does a Small Business Website Cost?

The majority of small business websites we design, develop and launch range from \$1,000 - \$15,000. Depending upon everything explained above you can see how quickly things could possibly add up.

Another way to break the budget down is to assume:

- 15% Planning
- 25% Interface Design
- 40% Programming
- 20% Project Management

And Don't Forget the Maintenance Cost

Websites don't just maintain themselves, and the best are changing all the time. Maintenance is something that most businesses forget to budget or think that they can do it themselves. Maintenance contracts vary greatly depending upon what you expect from the firm. You should budget a minimum of \$150 per month to have a designer/developer on call if you have a problem that you can't fix. And if you expect them to do additional work such as creating new images, adding new content, maintaining social media or newsletters, etc., expect the price will go up.

Here's why a one-off website quote is nearly impossible:

1. Website design and development should be viewed as a service, not a product. It's hard to shake the idea that websites aren't a commodity. Websites are something that someone, often multiple people, have to put together. Viewing it as service-based will help you to better understand why a one-off price isn't simple to give – building a website takes continued time and effort.

2. Building a website involves a complex level of planning. Detail is an integral part of Web development – and this greatly affects pricing. Case in point: you may want a feature on your website for users to upload an image. There are 50 questions I could ask you, and based on your answers, I can either build the feature in one hour or 40 hours.

For example, I may ask you: What's the size limit of the images you're uploading? What file formats does it support? Do you need the ability to crop the image? The list goes on.

So, if I asked you all of these questions in order to figure out how long it would take to develop one feature, are you willing to answer 1,000+ questions for the potentially 100+ other features that your website will have? Also, are you willing to pay for the time it takes to go through this process, essentially making the quote no longer free? Or is it better to simply find a trusted team that works for a fair rate, and you set the budget and objectives, and they do the best possible approach to get there? Buy trust, not line items.

3. Quotes are far too subjective. Building a website can be accomplished hundreds of different ways. Don't believe me? Go out for a quote and I guarantee by asking just a few companies for a price, you'll get responses all over the map. I've had clients tell me over and over that they received quotes ranging from \$2,000 to \$40,000 for the same set of requirements. How can that be possible?

4. The definition of success for your website may vary from person to person. The web development industry is full of opinions, and no one is right or wrong. For example, a designer may think a great website should look like a piece of art, while a developer may think its best if the site has been created using the greatest and latest code built from scratch. A marketer may pride the site on being simple, direct, and SEO optimized, while your perception may be a site with a lot of great features. The real success of your website comes down to the business goals you want to accomplish with it, Not what's in it or how it's made.

5. There's more than one way to price a website. There are two ways you can end up with a price for your website: fixed bid or hourly. For fixed bid, you will receive a figure like \$5,000. With an hourly price tag, you will pay someone \$100 an hour for as long as it takes to complete the project.

6. The Web development industry has very few standards. Since web development is fairly new industry, there really aren't many standards. How one person or company goes about building a website may be completely different than another. For example, there are dozens of languages used to program a website, as well as many platforms and systems. This is made even more intricate when you factor in that each solution can be reached in 1000 different ways. As the industry grows, more standards are likely to emerge, but until then the lack of uniformity causes an issue when determining price.

There's truly no good answer to the question, "How much does a website cost?" But understanding the subjective nature of this service will help you in the future.