

# Price Isn't Everything!

## By Jennifer Kyrnin, About.com Guide

### How Much Do They Cost?

It is very tempting to automatically exclude anyone who won't work for peanuts. But if you do that, you're not going to have a good looking site. You should come up with a price you think is reasonable, but if every designer quotes you something much higher than that, you probably are expecting too much for too little. On the other hand, it doesn't help to just go with the most expensive quote. Just because someone quotes you a rate that's extremely high doesn't mean that you will get an extremely good site. The law of diminishing returns applies. Some rules of thumb for pricing:

- Free means you'll get a very bad site or very very little. At best you'll get a good site, and then when you ask them to make one change they'll never answer your calls.
- Volunteering and barter is different than free. If you run a non-profit, you might be able to find a Web designer to volunteer time for your website. But don't expect it.
- An estimate of \$5-10 per page is extremely cheap. You should expect to pay around \$50-150 per page for a standard HTML/CSS website. More if there is a lot of programming, content writing, or graphics creation involved.
- An estimate of \$500 or more per page is extremely expensive for a straight HTML/CSS website. If you get an estimate in that range from a designer you otherwise like, explore with them why they are charging so much. You may find that you're asking for programming even though you didn't know it.

Don't be surprised if the designer asks for some money up-front. This is good faith money that you will pay them. It also allows them to pay for things like rent and food while they're working on your site. But **Take Note:** if they ask for more than 50% of the total fee up-front, be very wary. You need to know that they will do the work and not just take the money and run.

### Ask for a Contract

If the designer you're considering doesn't usually use a contract, then find another designer. Contracts are protection for both parties, and you both are at risk if you don't have a contract. It should include:

- Dates, times, and deadlines for the project
- The total estimated cost, payment due dates, and how work done over the estimate will be handled
- Boilerplate language for how the contract would be adjudicated

**Take Note:** your designer should be willing to work out the contract with you. If they have a standard contract that they are not willing to modify for any reason, then you should consider someone more reasonable.

### Can You Contact Them?

A good designer will work with you to get your business. That should include things like a free consultation, discussion of how the project should go and status reports as it's going along. Plus, you

should have a phone number and mailing address for the designer in case you need to contact them during the project.

## **Don't Forget to Ask for References**

Ask for references of people who they have done similar jobs for in the past. And then **call the references**. Ask questions like:

- Are you satisfied with the work you had done?
- Was the work done on time?
- Was the work done on or under budget?
- Was it easy to work with this designer?
- Would you hire them again? Why or why not?

## **Do You Like Them?**

Finally, you shouldn't hire someone that you don't like or don't think you can get along with. You'll need to work with this person, and if you don't like them or their manner is offputting, you won't get the best website you can get. Even if their price is perfect and everything else seems great, if you don't like them, it won't work out.