

How to Buy a Website

How to choose the right website design firm, and create a successful website that will maximize profits, optimize opportunities, and give your business an unbeatable competitive advantage



Broadfield Communications

Marketing excellence by design

www.broadfieldcommunications.com

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Dear Business Professional,

How do you buy a website? How do you choose a website design company that's right for you and avoid the most common mistakes?

This report will answer these very important questions.

Choosing the right website design company is a monumental task, and can mean the difference between a huge success and a dismal failure.

The information in this report is practical, relevant, and will help you make a high quality decision. In fact there are five main reasons why you should read this report:

1. To ensure your choice of a website design firm is the right one
2. To reduce the risk associated with the decision you have to make
3. To give you the confidence to initiate a strong and lasting relationship
4. To understand the four biggest lies in website design
5. To give you some examples of how website design firms charge for their services

I hope you will use the following information to help make your next website the most profitable ever.

If you have any questions or are interested in discussing a website or e-commerce site design please contact me at 1-800-353-4447 or you can go to:

www.broadfieldcommunications.com/website.htm

Sincerely,

Andrew Shedden
President

P.S. Please forward this report to anyone you think would be interested. I'd appreciate it.

Introduction

As you probably know, the vast majority of buyers are doing their early stage research online. Whether you're in manufacturing, distribution, retailing, or professional services, if your website isn't providing *precisely* what buyers are looking for your company is being disqualified.

For those companies selling through distributors, your website must provide both your distributors *and* end users with the kind of information that will influence purchasing decisions. Furthermore, smart suppliers are providing their distributors with the online resources they need to overcome the threat of losing market share to cheap offshore suppliers.

Effective website design is a critical business issue whether your site is being used for informational purposes, lead generation, or e-commerce. But how do you find a website design company that's right for you?

What makes for a successful relationship between the client and the company?

Before going through the steps to find a website design firm that's right for you it's important to highlight what makes a successful partnership.

There are six key outcomes that will ensure partnership success. In order to maximize the ROI on your new website your website design firm must:

1. Provide you with a high-quality, visually-appealing design that also meets technical requirements;
2. Assist you to create a compelling value proposition that differentiates you from your competition and creates genuine interest in your offerings;
3. Maximize the value in your website by offering persuasive copywriting;
4. Have the online marketing experience to help you get more from your landing pages, online forms, and other key website elements;
5. Understand the key factors that lead to greater conversion rates, whether they be information requests, sales lead generation, or online sales;
6. **Guarantee** you will achieve a measurable and sustainable improvement in your website's effectiveness as a result of adopting their design.

Unfortunately, while most firms will happily provide you with the first outcome, they are reluctant to be held accountable for outcomes two through six.

Note that in order to realize the benefits of a profitable website, all six outcomes must be achieved.

By taking the time to go through the following four steps you'll guarantee yourself a better outcome.

STEP 1: How do you make a short list of website design firms?

Once you decide it's time to get a new website for your company, the first thing to do is to identify five or six website design firms you wish to contact. Contacting any more than five or six firms will make your selection process extremely difficult and time consuming.

There are several ways of finding website design firms including:

1. The Yellow Pages
2. Contacting personal friends or business associates
3. Trade association newsletters or magazines
4. Going online and searching under such terms as website design, marketing communications, or online marketing
5. Advertising, direct mail, telesales, or online marketing you may have noticed from the website design firm in question

I would favour those companies utilizing the methods in # 5 as they are being very proactive in driving traffic to *their* websites. This means they can show you how to harness the power of offline marketing to drive traffic to *your* new website.

Prior to contacting a website design firm spend some time on their website and do some research of your own.

Make sure you have satisfactory answers to the following questions:

- Do they look professional?
- Are they highly specialized in one single area?
- Do they only offer website design services or can they help you in other ways?
- Do they offer articles, white papers, or reports on a variety of marketing topics?
- Do they offer an online portfolio and does it offer a cross section of businesses?

- Do the websites in their portfolio all look similar?
- Are you able to get the answers you need about their company from information available on their site?

If you're unable to get the information you need from their website you'll need to call or email them. Ask them to send information on their company and why you should use their services in particular. The following email is an example of what a manufacturer might want to send to each of the initial five or six website design firms:

Subject: Website Design for Superior Screwdrivers

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are a manufacturing company located in Toronto, Ontario that specializes in the production of screwdrivers.

We count Wal-Mart and Sears among our customers.

We're aware of the fact that according to the Thomas Industrial Network over 91% of buyers are going online first to check companies out prior to contacting them. We know that by improving our website we'll generate more sales leads and ultimately gain market share.

With this in mind we're looking for a suitable website design firm that will help us meet our objectives.

I would appreciate you sending me details about your company, what services you offer, what you charge for your services, and why you think your company is the best choice. You can email it to me if you wish or mail it to:

Superior Screwdrivers
1313 Mockingbird Lane
Toronto, ON
M1J 2H6

One of three things will happen when you make this request:

1. You'll receive a call from the company wanting more information from you and they'll try to strong arm you into a meeting.
2. You'll receive the details you want and the company will make a follow up call to discuss your needs.
3. You'll be ignored and they won't respond.

If you get response 1 you can give the company the information they request but politely refuse a meeting at this stage.

If you get response 2 carefully read the information provided to be sure all of your questions have been answered. Rank the companies using the questions found in Step 2 below.

If you get response 3 don't contact them again.

STEP 2: How do you select the companies that will make the first cut?

If you're thinking of hiring a website design firm to help your company, surely *their* market research will have told them exactly what kind of initial information *their* customers want - right? You may be surprised and enlightened by the information you receive.

The information package you receive will help you make the first cut. By scoring the companies you'll immediately reduce your initial five or six companies to the final three.

Simply rank the companies based on the following criteria:

Give each company 3 points for every a, 2 points for every b, 1 point for every c, and 0 points for every d:

1. How long did it take to receive the information?

- a) I didn't have to request information as complete information was available on their website
- b) The information arrived within three business days
- c) The information arrived within five business days
- d) It's been over seven business days and the information still hasn't arrived

2. Did you receive a covering letter or email?

- a) Yes it came with the information and it was clearly written
- b) Yes it came with the information but wasn't overly helpful
- c) Yes it came with the information but only talked about their company's process
- d) No there was no covering letter

3. Did the information answer you questions?

- a) Yes, virtually all of my initial questions were answered
- b) Most of my questions were answered
- c) A few of my questions were answered
- d) No it was an unending sales pitch that gave me a headache

4. Did the information describe the benefits you'll receive as a result of using their service?

- a) The emphasis was on how I'll benefit from their products or services
- b) It was about 50% benefits and 50% process
- c) It was mostly about their process
- d) Most of the time they are talking about how wonderful they are

5. Did they send you additional information that will help you make a better decision?

- a) Yes I received information to help me through the stages of the buying process
- b) Some of the information will help to a small degree
- c) No I only received basic information
- d) It's been over seven business days and the information still hasn't arrived

6. Did they offer any kind of guarantee?

- a) They offer a clearly understood guarantee
- b) They offer a guarantee with lots of weasel words
- c) You could drive a truck through the exclusions in their guarantee
- d) They don't offer a guarantee

Total the score of each of the companies you contacted and narrow them down to the two or three with the highest score.

You now have your short list to work with. You should never see more than **three** companies as it's a waste of your time and will only make your choice that much more difficult.

The next step is to arrange the initial meetings....

STEP 3: How do you arrange the initial meetings?

Once you've ranked the companies by score the next step is to contact all of the five or six companies you chose initially and inform no more than **three** of them they made the first cut.

If you would like to meet with them

Call or email and ask them to contact you to arrange an appointment at your place of business. Be certain you're meeting with the individual or group who will be working on your website.

If they have been unsuccessful

It's always courteous to contact them and tell them they haven't made your short list. It's very helpful to tell them why they've been unsuccessful so they can sharpen up their own marketing practices.

The next step is to spend some time ensuring your meetings will be productive.

STEP 4: How to make your initial meeting more effective

Once you've arranged your initial meetings you need to spend some preparation time on the following three tasks. Doing so will help you maximize your productivity and get the best possible results from your final selection process. Simply:

- A) Recognize the four biggest lies in website design
- B) Establish your website goals
- C) Create a list of questions to ask each company on your short list

A) Recognize the four biggest lies in website design

Prior to your initial meeting it's best to have a clear understanding of the four biggest lies in website design. This will help you to make a better decision and will prevent you from being

led down the wrong path when you meet the three website design firms that made your shortlist.

So, here are the four biggest lies in website design...

LIE #1: All website firms are about the same – hire the cheapest one

Did you know you can get a ten page website designed for less than \$750? You can, and it will be worth it. You also can get a kitchen in your home for \$1,500 or for \$50,000 both are called kitchens.

Quality work always costs more - whether it's putting in a new kitchen in your home or having a new website designed. Before you jump at the chance of saving some money consider the following:

Over 91% of buyers go online **first**, so why risk diluting your brand or jeopardizing your image, just to save money? What would you save in the long run? Compare the cost of having your website designed with the results guaranteed by your website design firm - what value do you place on a 10% to 25% increase in sales leads or sales?

Any website design firm that designs cheap sites either places no value on their expertise, or fails to understand how little they really offer your company.

LIE #2: A website is nothing more than a glorified brochure

There are many website designers who actually believe this – but you shouldn't. In fact anyone telling you a website is a glorified brochure is – well – wrong. Here's why.

The internet is the greatest direct response mechanism ever created. You can test headlines, offers, order forms, and graphics with blinding speed at a nominal cost. If you find something that works better you can change your site in minutes.

In addition the Internet is the first information source used by over 91% of buyers to research their purchases. It offers your prospects a truly interactive way to access information. They can listen to audio, view video, and download information all of which can also be changed in an instant.

The skills necessary to design a profit building website are **very** different from those used to design an effective brochure.

LIE #3: Cool design trumps everything

Cool design is fun. Cool design is trendy. Cool design is edgy. Cool design trumps everything. Build it and they will come. If you believe this lie you're poised to learn a very expensive lesson.

The purpose of a website isn't to win awards, it's to win customers. If you ask the proud owners of award winning websites how well their websites generate information requests, sales leads, or sales most will tell you, "Not well at all."

Many website designers believe that design is what makes sites sell. Actually it's a combination of many things such as architecture, direct response techniques, motivational copywriting, personae creation, and marketing experience.

Your website is a considerable investment and, as with any other investment, you must get a measurable and reasonable ROI. Pleasing design is important, but substance is what pays the bills. Any website firm you hire should be willing to offer you a strong guarantee that is directly tied to performance.

If a website design firm won't give you a performance guarantee – don't hire them.

LIE #4: The sole purpose of a website is to sell in one single step

As already mentioned the purpose of a website is to win customers. It's important to remember that there are many ways of winning a customer; it depends on what you're trying to sell.

It's crazy to think you'd try to sell a \$100,000 drill press the same way you'd try to sell a \$49 drill. Sadly you see it happen all the time. Many web designers will try to design your site to make a complex sale in one step. It's like going up to someone you've never met at a dance and asking her if she will marry you.

If you're selling complex expensive items your primary focus should always be an advancement in the selling process. This could be as small as an information request or as large as having your prospects contact you to request an initial consultation. Your website needs to provide information for all of your buying influences at *every* stage of their buying processes.

If your primary focus is selling online through an e-commerce site it's important to remember that many of your potential customers may not be ready to buy now or may be hesitant. Hard sell e-commerce sites scare away more prospects than they attract. Offer your e-commerce site visitors useful information or send them a monthly newsletter and watch your sales soar.

Ultimately the best websites are those that are optimized to convert more visitors into prospects who are willing to take your most desired action.

Now that you know the four biggest lies in website design you'll be able to avoid the most common pitfalls. The next task to perform is to clearly outline your website goals.

B) Clearly Establish Your Website Goals

If you spend a little time doing some advance planning you'll get much more from your meeting.

Prior to meeting with the website design firms that made your short list you need to spend some time with all of your company officials who are going to be present and make sure you have a clear understanding of your goals.

A highly competent website design firm will be certain to gather information prior to making any type of recommendations. You'll be asked a series of questions and it will be very helpful if you have considered these questions ahead of time.

Consider how you'll answer the following questions:

- Why do I want to redesign my current website?
- What are the top three outcomes we'd like as a result of this redesign?
- What stages of my online marketing need to be optimized?
- What challenges am I facing with my current website?

C) Create a list of questions to ask each company on your short list

Once you decide what goals you hope to achieve from hiring a website firm you're in a good position to compile a list of questions you can ask for your first meeting. The following **bolded** list will help you get a good start.

1. Do they offer a guarantee?

If not – why not? This is the *only* deal killing question. In order to minimize risk you should hire a website design company that offers you a strong guarantee. The guarantee must include measurable results or provide you with a full refund. **Don't** hire a firm who won't provide one.

2. What sets them apart from their competition?

This is a great question. Listen very carefully to the answer. If you here time worn clichés like “It’s our people.” You better run.

3. Is planning in their process?

Abraham Lincoln said if he had six hours to chop down a tree he’d spend five of them sharpening his axe. It’s very important the company you hire views planning as an essential part of the website design process – because it is.

4. Will they help you integrate your website with your marketing process?

Any website design company worth its salt will provide you with an attractive new website. But that’s not enough. Your new website is of little value if you can’t integrate it into your marketing process.

5. Are their services confidential?

Will they sign a confidentiality agreement? This is especially important if the website design company works with competitors of yours.

6. How did they learn about your business?

Did you find them as a result of responding to an advertisement, direct mail, online promotion, recommendation, or search engine? Were they referred to you? Have they taken the time to learn about *your* company prior to the meeting?

7. What marketing tools are they comfortable using?

There are many low-cost and no-cost online and offline marketing tools you can use to power up your sales. Be certain your website design firm is familiar with them.

8. How involved are you expected to be?

Your commitment to the website design project is critical. Some companies will work with a minimal input from you while others will want you involved every step of the way. Are they flexible? Are you going to be expected to drop everything? Will your business be disrupted?

9. What’s included in their price?

This must be made crystal clear. What do they charge for changes in scope? Are they going to nickel and dime you to death for every small thing? What are their credit terms? No billing surprises will keep everybody happy.

10. Do you have to sign a long term contract?

Some companies may want you to sign a long term contract for hosting, content changes, or design changes. If so, be certain to understand and be agreeable to the terms.

11. How do you end the relationship?

Most business relationships start out strongly, unfortunately some don't finish that way. When this happens you need a way to end the relationship in a dignified manner. What do they suggest?

12. How often and how will you meet?

Do you need to meet daily, weekly, monthly, on an as need basis? Can your meetings be conducted by telephone?

13. Will they give you the tools or show you how to use them?

The majority of solution failures happen during the implementation phase. How will they assist you in maximizing the value in your website design? Will they help you execute?

14. Do they offer packages or different levels of service?

You know how annoying it is when you buy cable services that bundle 12 channels you don't need so you can get the one channel you like? Does the website design firm offer flexibility in their services or are you going to be stuck paying for services you neither want nor need?

15. Can you work with the individual handling your project?

Whether you're working with an individual or a team it's important they mesh with your company. You'll be working closely with this company and need to know if doing so will turn your project into a long term nightmare. During your initial meeting it's important to try to determine the following:

Are they good listeners or do they prescribe without diagnosis? Did they ask *you* questions?

Do you feel their ethics and philosophies closely match yours?

Do they view your website as a component of your marketing mix (good)? Alternately, do they think it's the be all and end all of everything (not good)?

16. How will you be charged?

There are several ways you might be charged for services

- A single fee for the project

- A fixed monthly fee for ongoing services
- A flat hourly rate for ongoing services
- A combination of the above

In addition to the above some companies will have additional charges for expenses.

Usually, you'll be asked to pay a deposit prior to the commencement of work.

You'll find fees will vary widely.

It's important to accept the fact that you can't pay a little and expect a lot. Price should not be the deciding factor, value should be.

Whatever manner you're to be charged be certain it's clearly spelled out with no convoluted legalese, techno Latin mumbo jumbo, or weasel words.

Remember, "The large print giveth, the small print taketh away." Watch for the fine print.

Conclusion

By following the process I've provided you'll be able to choose your website design firm with a high degree of confidence.

If you have any questions or are interested in discussing a website or e-commerce site design please contact me at 1-800-353-4447 or you can go to:

www.broadfieldcommunications.com/website.htm

Good luck in your search for a website design firm.

Sincerely yours,

Andrew Shedden
President

P.S. Please be sure to read the following page to discover how you get more from your next website design.

We Guarantee You'll Benefit With Broadfield Communications

The purpose of a website isn't to win awards - it's to win customers. Our value proposition to you is quite simple:

We'll design a website for you that will get great results. In fact, we guarantee it.

We **guarantee** we'll increase lead generation and revenues from your new website design or you'll get a full refund. We'll negotiate an acceptable and measurable ROI with you and if you don't achieve it within the agreed time frame we'll refund all of your money.

Since 1994 Broadfield Communications has created successful promotional media for over 800 clients. During this time we have produced over 4,000 advertisements, direct mail packages, websites, and multimedia presentations. Our background in all forms of media means you'll your website will be promoted through an effective combination of online and offline methods.

Broadfield Communication's unique website design process offers your company numerous competitive advantages:

1. Increased market share
2. Improved lead generation
3. Improved online sales
4. Increased number of information requests
5. Improved landing page conversions
6. Improved customer relationships and enhanced customer service
7. The ability to accurately measure every advertisement - online and offline
8. A full back end strategy in place to leverage your online customer base
9. The proper tools to market your website
10. A website that's an effective online profit centre for your business

For a more profitable website or e-commerce website design – **guaranteed** - contact Broadfield Communications at 1-800-353-4447 or you can go to:

www.broadfieldcommunications.com/website.htm