
3 Things You Should Know That Your Website Developer Will Never Tell You

On February 26, 2009 it was reported that scientists in the U.S. and Sweden had created a new alloy using aluminum, cerium, a little theoretical math, and a whole lot of pushing.

What is fascinating about this is that normally, aluminum and cerium don't play well together for a whole slew of subatomic reasons and this particular discovery represents significant opportunities for creating unique alloys with new and useful mechanical, electronic and magnetic properties.

Like an alloy, a successful website contains a seemingly incongruous blend of business(sales, marketing and customers) and technology(computers, software and databases). Without both, it is next to useless, and I'd go so far as to say that without these two elements, in the right proportions and appropriate treatment, a successful website cannot exist.
Online Business Alchemy

More importantly however, is the fact that an online commercial business, like an alloy, involves the blending of ingredients to the extent that they have become something altogether new. Consider the big online success stories (Google, eBay, Amazon, YouTube, Facebook, Flickr, Twitter) who have taken the humble website and made it something incredibly popular, much bigger and more useful than a few pages 'About Us'. The separation of business and technology is virtually non-existent and by bringing them together seamlessly, opens you up to something that is far stronger and far more valuable than each of its components independently.

The overall strength of the online business is determined by the strength of its ingredients, just like an alloy. If there's an impurity in the mix, or one of the elements is of a lesser standard, it will result in a final product quality that is considerably less.

So when it comes to online business, attention needs to be paid to getting the balance between business and technology right to get the strength and flexibility needed for a successful online business.

The challenge for most people new to online business, is the technology side of the balance equation. The problem with technology is that, until we're able to create software that can understand exactly what we want to achieve, it's down to us to understand how to work with zeros and ones. Which means that to get technology to work the way we want it needs Technologists, or at least someone who understands the language of computers.

But how do you tell if someone is up to the mark as a Technologist?

How can you be sure that the trust (and dollars!) you're investing in your Web Developer, for example, gets translated into a website business that is really going to work for you.

How Much of an Expert Should Your Web Developer Be?

Recently we were asked by a client to make some changes to a website that was built by a leading Web Design

company.

The changes seemed straightforward, a change to a description here, a price change to the shopping cart there. That is... until we looked behind the scenes (You know how there are some people who fix things by placing Band-Aid® upon Band-Aid®? Like putting tape over a leaking pipe. That's what the website was like). On the outside, it looked great, however inside, it had been built in a way that even the smallest changes had the potential to burst open the flood gates; and putting another Band-Aid® on would only make things worse in the long run.

This begs the question though... "So how do you know if you're making the right choice when it comes to checking if your Web Developer is the right one for you?"

Questions to Ask Your Web Developer

Increasingly, we're getting a lot more work done by others through outsourcing, so we need to be sure we're getting the best person for the job, no matter what the job.

When it comes to building websites and working with Technologists (Website Designers, Website Developers, Traffic & Lead Generation Consultants, Web Hosts, Database Designers, Email Marketers, SEO & SEM Consultants, Online Marketers, Social Media Strategists etc) there can be a pretty big gap between what they know and what you know, that can make it difficult to work out if they're the best person for you.

So here are three key qualities you can use for assessing if you're speaking to the right Technologist for your online business.

1.

Are they qualified to do the work?

It's pretty simple really. If you had a sore tooth, would you expect to get the same results from your doctor as you would get from your dentist? It would make sense to be visiting the more specialised one wouldn't it. Whilst they both know about anatomy, you're more likely to get a quicker remedy to your sore tooth from a dentist than a doctor.

The fact of the matter is that there's more to a successful income generating website than just a pretty design; and there's a big difference between what makes it look good and what makes it work well. Don't settle for a Dreamweaver & Photoshop junkie if you want to be trying to make money and run a fast growing online business. If you want specialised work done, then you need qualified specialists to help you get it done.

2.

Do they understand what it takes to make real sales and money through a website?

When you talk to your Technologists, do they ask questions about your business model, your sales funnel or traffic and lead generation strategies? Or are they selling you a great looking picture with a shopping cart? You want to be sure you work with people who appreciate that your website is more than a brochure. For your website to be a successful online

business it must be a sales and money making tool as well as a customer service bureau, so listen to the questions they ask.

You'll want to ask them questions too. In fact, you'll want to take note of the answer to what is perhaps the SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION FOR YOUR WEB DEVELOPER.

The Single Most Important Question For Your Web Developer

Your aim is to find out how helpful your potential Web Developer (or any other Technologist) will likely be for you. To do that, you take the single most important feature of your proposed website and ask...

"Tell me about a project you worked on when you had to develop something similar to [your single most important feature] and things didn't go so smoothly?"

Any Website Developer who tries to convince you that there's something else more important, or is unable to recount a similar project, probably doesn't have the experience you need.

On the other hand, anyone who can relate to the significance of your single most important feature by describing similar scenarios and presenting their experience in terms you relate to, has what we like to call "web wisdom". These people realise that there's something more important than just the technology - there's the balance of business needed too. These are the people you'll want to work with, and from their knowledge and experience you'll get guidance and help through many of the tough decisions you'll be faced with along the way.

3.

How will they respond in difficult times?

The Single Most Important Question For Your Web Developer comes pre-loaded. It will cause the Web Developer to recall a really difficult situation that they were once in. What you are interested in is how they resolved that situation and what the outcome was.

The way they resolved situations in the past is a great indication of how they behave at any time under pressure. You'll want to be aware of this because there may be situations that don't unfold the way the Web Developer predicts and how they respond is vitally important to getting your online business up, running and making money.

As a business that is constantly working with Web Developers, Web Designers, Copywriters, Traffic & Lead Generation Consultants, Web Hosts, Database Designers, Email Marketers, SEO & SEM Consultants, Online Marketers and Social Media Strategists, we've experienced first hand the problem of realising too late that what we asked for isn't what we've gotten.

The lesson - communication is the key. Be confident in your strengths as a business owner, when someone says something you don't understand ask them to explain rather than go along with the jargon, ask to be kept in the loop so that you know as early as possible if there's going to be a problem and get agreement from the people you choose to work with that they'll ask you questions if they're uncertain about anything rather than just do what they think might be right.

The last question we ask ourselves - whilst a simple question, we think its vital to ask; especially for new businesses looking to go online and get the fast growth benefits that can arrive with it.

That question is "How does this particular Web Developer add to the value of my business?". What else do they bring that you could possibly benefit from? If they have something else, consider a deal that gets you more of what they offer on more favourable terms. Maybe even something as simple as a 4-hour turnaround on any changes.

Remember, the more business you bring their way (ie. the more you buy from them), the more likely they'll bend over backwards when you really need something done urgently. If having access to resell rights on what they offer could add value to your business then create an affiliate or JV relationship with them. They'll love you for it and you'll even be able to ask for the most absurd things - and they'll bend over backwards to help you.

We've seen first-hand the worthless work some people have paid lots of money for only to find they've lost time, earnings and credibility. If there's anything you should take from this article, it's that you consider asking The Single Most Important Question For Your Web Developer the next time you're making changes to your website. If you're not entirely comfortable with the answers you get from your current Web Developer or any other type of Technologist, or just aren't sure about the answers you've been given, then get in touch, we'll listen and show you what working with specialist who understand the balance between technology and business is all about. Or call us directly on (03) 9016 3140.