



7 Questions to Ask When Interviewing a New Webmaster/Developer/Designer/WebGuy

**You know your website isn't quite what you want.
Or maybe you don't have one at all.
You talk to people you know about their experiences.
It's so confusing.
Maybe you've talked to some of the people they mentioned.
But each new conversation confuses you a little bit more.
And it's beginning to sound like a noise
you just can't get out of your head.**

Webwork seems to be something that just about anyone and their sister thinks they can do. Each person has an opinion and often they position themselves as expert even when they really aren't.

How do you know who you're even talking to?

1. There are **DESIGNERS** who will make beautiful pictures of how your site should look but don't write code. (Some do write code. Just know which one you're talking to or you may get a beautiful picture of a website that doesn't really do anything.)
2. There are **DEVELOPERS** who write code and can make your website jump thru hoops but don't necessarily know good design from crap. (OK, that's not all Developers either!)
3. There are the people who I call – by this very technical term – **WEBGUYS** who are someplace in the middle. They could be crappy at everything or pretty good at enough of the process to get you what you want or need at a more reasonable price!

Good WebGuys—who are often women—have enough experience in design to know what works and what doesn't.

They know the code that will make your site work.

They can advise you about SEO (Search Engine Optimization – helping Google find you)

They know Developers and Designers who can help when they're stuck and they DO ask those people for help as needed.

The hard part starts when you have to figure out if a WebGuy really knows his/her stuff or do they just imagine that they do.

Can they give you what you need at a price you want to pay?

Whether we're talking the kid next door or somebody who wants your first born, you need to know their strengths and weaknesses before hiring them.

Here are 7 questions to start with:

1. How long is the WebGuy's longest continuing relationship with a client? How big is the biggest site he/she worked on?

There is no right answer here. If a WebGuy works on fairly small sites, it could be a set-up-and-be-done kind of relationship. But if at least one relationship was long, what was special about it?

2. How many clients does the WebGuy handle at a time?

If the number is big, does he do it all himself? Does she have other people he calls on regularly to help with the work? Is that person, more or less, local? Does that matter to you? Will you always talk to the same WebGuy or will you talk to someone different every time?

3. What publishing platforms does the WebGuy use?

If you want your site is to be a WordPress site (which in my opinion is the best answer), then it doesn't really matter how much the WebGuy knows Drupal or Joomla or any other programs. But he should know about them.

4. What programming languages is this WebGuy confident in?

You want someone who knows more than how to use a template. At the very least they should be confident in HTML, CSS, and PHP. If you don't know what any of those letters mean, it doesn't matter. What you want to hear is confidence in their ability. That means you should NOT hear, "I have learned how to take out this bit of information and substitute something else to make it work."

5. Ask the WebGuy about his worst client ever. What made that person difficult to work with?

Sometimes it's the client that is the problem and the WebGuy has to know when to cut loses. You can also learn some useful information about how to work with this WebGuy . Did he hate repeated phone calls, or too many emails, or didn't respond to requests for information?

6. Ask the WebGuy for references including site address, phone numbers and email addresses. Ask about designers s/he's worked with.

Then check them! Ask the references about the web person's responsiveness and whether that WebGuy explained things in ways that you could understand. Ask if the WebGuy sliced up the designer's work to make it work on the web. (That's a good thing.)

7. Will the WebGuy give you a written proposal?

That will protect both you and the WebGuy. You'll know what was promised and can accurately judge when it's complete. And you won't get snookered into paying for time you didn't want to.

Talk to a couple of people.

After your initial evaluation, spend the time on specifics of what you want changed or what you want the new site to do.

The best WebGuys will know questions to ask you to be sure they are doing what you want.

Want to ask me some questions? Call Kerch: (410)233-3274 If it's daylight on the east coast US, and I'm here, I'll answer the phone.