

Affordable Website Design 1 - What You Need

In the cheap web design group of this prolonged series of articles (I'll give myself enough credit to not call it rambling until I get into the custom/unique dichotomy) I asserted that there was indeed a difference between "affordable website design" and "cheap web design". Enough of one, in fact, to warrant writing a separate set of articles for each. In short, the primary difference I described was that the latter option represented the creation of a site that was quantitatively low in cost. An affordable website design, on the other hand, can range from several hundred to several thousand dollars without losing its title - provided, naturally, that you are actually getting a site with a high value for the price you pay. To quote one of my father's articles, affordable website design "may really be getting what you want at a fair and reasonable price."

To that end, you have to know what it is that you want. This is important for several reasons, not the least of which being that it helps you avoid paying too much if you wind up choosing a "value meal" website design. You know the type, the so-called "packages" that all seem to provide the same services, except you get more pages with each increment. Some of them go even further, offering web hosting packages along with their website designs, which all sounds real nice until you realize that they're probably just buying reseller hosting from the bigger, better hosting companies and providing you with inferior services at a higher price. In fact, perhaps one of the most useful things you can get for an affordable website design is a good, inexpensive hosting company. At least that way you aren't wasting extra money on second-hand hosting.

Ideally, though, you'll have not only a good host, but also a web designer who charges by the actual value of the site. Determining this value is a topic best saved for the "what you get" article, but there is something that you can do in these cases to help keep the costs down. Yep, knowing exactly what it is that you want. Many people go into website design without really having any idea what they want their site to accomplish, even what they want it to look like. That's forgivable; after all, they're hiring these professionals to build the site, right? Professionals who presumably have far more experience in creating websites properly. No doubt, if you say, "I have a restaurant and it needs a website," your designer will be able to immediately draw upon its vast understanding and experience to create an attractive, functional site for your restaurant.

And you will be getting an incredibly unaffordable website. Why? Because you aren't taking advantage of your knowledge of your business. It's no secret that I am staunchly opposed to templates, but really, that's just what you're getting in the above scenario. Templates, let's be clear, aren't bad because they're unattractive or poorly-functional sites. Admittedly, some of the WYSIWYG editors leave a bit to be desired, but that's not a problem once you actually managed (possibly with much banging on the keyboard and hopefully with significantly less inserting your fist into your computer screen) to get your site on-line. Templates are bad because they don't take your business into account. A template, in short, is the product of an experienced website designer with absolutely no input from the business. Given that you can get templates for cheap or even free, paying a designer for what amounts to the same thing is always the worse deal.

You don't want a website for a restaurant; you want a website for your restaurant. Complete with graphics and functions designed to appeal to and improve the experience of your clientele. Only you know if the most useful way to present your menu on the web is in a beautiful graphical format that appears so real that the visitor almost smells the food, or as a system of drop-down menus and JavaScript functions that lets the visitor craft the perfect order before ever setting foot into your building. Those are the sorts of things that a skilled website design team can accomplish - and hundreds more beside them - but they're not likely to use them if all you tell them you want is a restaurant site. You'll get a nice-looking website, probably with some reds and yellows because those colors are supposed to stimulate hunger, with a section for your menu and maybe an area for images of your dishes. Probably a picture of the building on the front page. About us and contact somewhere. Perhaps a site map. Starting to sound formulaic? Almost template-like? Then I suppose I've made my point and we're ready to move on.

A template looks and feels professional, but they remain formulas. They draw upon a web designer's overall learning without bringing its experience to bear on your business. Paying a designer and failing to capitalize on this most advantageous aspect of doing so is like paying for a template, which is not affordable no matter how cheap the design may be. If you want an affordable website design, you have to go to your designer prepared to explain all the cool things you want your website to be able to do. Only with that preparation are you certain to be able to both get a good price and obtain exactly what you need.

About the Author

Dustin Schwerman is the head web designer for Truly Unique Website Design. Truly Unique works on websites of all varieties; their clients may offer information on subjects ranging from [2007 top songs](#) to [zodiac sign descriptions](#).