

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

# *The 5 questions every small business should ask before hiring a web designer*

Most websites cost more than they should and do less than they could. This guide gives you the exact five questions to ask that will separate the designers worth hiring from the ones to walk away from. No fluff, no jargon. Five questions, five clear reasons each.

## *01. "Will I own the website outright, or am I locked into your platform?"*

This is the single most important question, and it's the one most owners never think to ask. Many "affordable" designers build sites on proprietary platforms or page builders that legally and technically tie you to them. Stop paying and you lose the site. Move designer and you're starting from scratch.

A proper designer hands over the code, the hosting access, and the domain control. Your business owns the asset. They might host it for you as a convenience, but the ownership is clear.

### **WHY THIS MATTERS**

I've seen small businesses pay £80/month for years to host a website they can't move. Over five years that's £4,800, before any updates. A bespoke site you own outright pays for itself inside two.

## 02. *"What happens when I need to change something six months from now?"*

Every business changes. New services, different prices, a new team member, an updated address. The question isn't whether you'll need updates. It's how painful they'll be when you do.

A good designer will give you a clear answer: either a simple system you can update yourself, or a defined retainer with a known turnaround time. A bad one will mumble about "raising a ticket" or quote £150 per change.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Designers go quiet. They get busier, they raise their rates, or they stop replying. When your site needs a single line changed and you can't get hold of the person who built it, you suddenly understand why this question matters.

## 03. *"How fast will it load? Can you show me real numbers?"*

Most websites built with page builders score 30-50 on Google's PageSpeed test. Anything below 70 actively hurts your search ranking and your conversion rate. A site that takes more than 3 seconds to load loses around 40% of visitors before they've seen anything.

A competent designer will run your prospective site through PageSpeed Insights and aim for 90+ on mobile. They'll explain what's slowing it down and what they'd do differently.

### **WHY THIS MATTERS**

Speed is the single biggest factor in whether visitors stay on your site, and one of the biggest in whether Google ranks you. Most small business websites lose serious traffic and enquiries purely to slow loading. Most owners never know.

## 04. *"What's the total cost over three years, not just today?"*

A £500 website that costs £40/month in hosting and £150 per change works out at over £2,000 in three years, before you've made any meaningful updates. A £1,800 bespoke build with £50/month optional support is similar money, but with proper ownership and predictable costs.

Ask for a three-year total cost of ownership. Build it including hosting, expected updates, and any platform fees. Compare like for like, not just the upfront price.

### **WHY THIS MATTERS**

Cheap upfront often means expensive over time. The opposite isn't always true either. The point is to know what you're actually committing to, not just what's on the first invoice.

## 05. *"Will you tell me when I don't need something?"*

This is the gut-feel question. The right answer isn't a confident "yes" — anyone can say that. The right answer is a designer who's already shown they'll do it during the discovery conversation. Someone who pushed back on a request, suggested a simpler approach, or told you that a feature you'd asked for would cost £400 and you'd never use it.

The designers who'll add £2,000 of features you don't need are the same ones who'll struggle to deliver them well. The ones who push back on scope are the ones who care about whether the site works for you.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

The best web designer for your business isn't the most expensive one or the cheapest. It's the one who tells you the truth, and that includes "no, you don't need that". Find that person and the price almost takes care of itself.

## *One last thing*

If you'd like to ask me any of these questions about your own situation, the first conversation is free and takes 30 minutes. No sales pitch, no obligation. Just a practical look at whether what you've got, or what you've been quoted, is right for you.

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