

Topic | The basics

Tutorial 5

Finding A Good Web Professional

This tutorial will give you tips to find a great web professional. It will help put a brief together and will review the different costs associated with an online strategy.

Reading time: 25 minutes

Prerequisite: None



This tutorial is part of the complete online education program, the Tourism e-kit.



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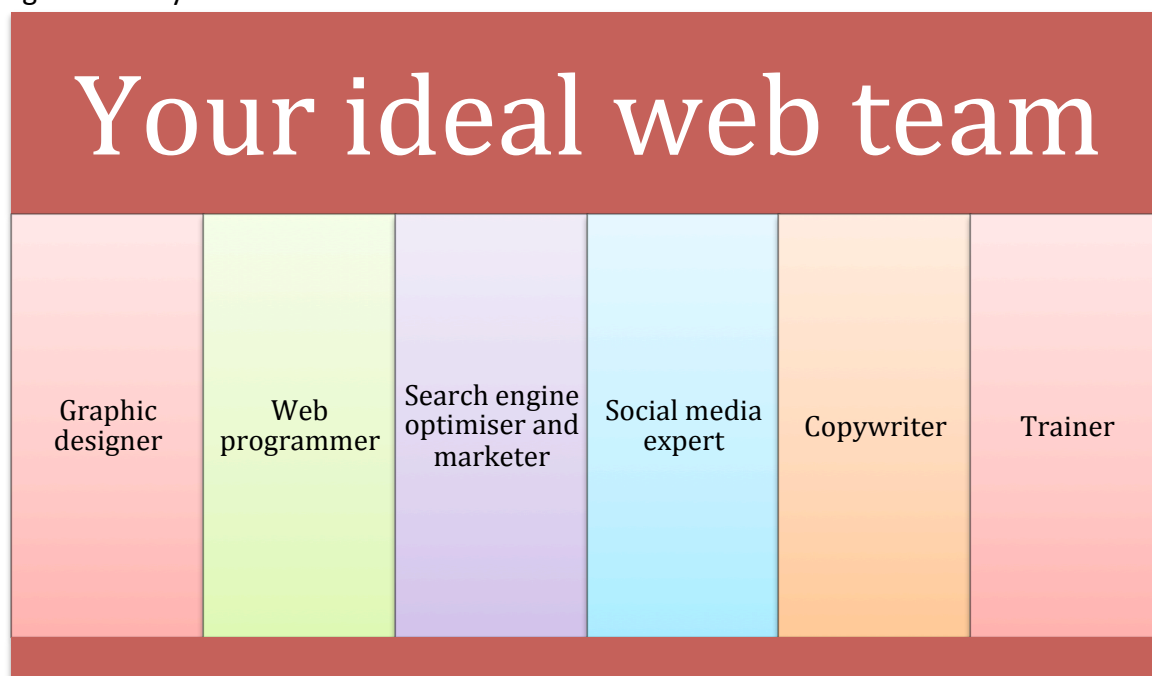
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1. What are the different job roles in the web industry?

The Internet has evolved dramatically over the past decade and forced web professionals to specialise in key web disciplines.

As a small or medium tourism business owner, you cannot solely rely on working with either a graphic designer or a web developer if you want to give your online strategy all the chances to succeed.

You need to partner with a “football team” of web experts. Choose a company that specialises in web design, programming and search engine optimisation and ensure that the project manager you will be dealing with is familiar with all key areas. Alternatively, if you work with just a web designer that isn't au fait with the best search engine optimisation techniques make sure you also consult a search engine optimiser to ensure your web developer's work will be search engine friendly.



a) How will an online marketer work with me?

The online marketing consultant (or company) will be your first point of contact. They will:

1. Assess your existing online strategy and website as a whole
2. Recommend and work with you to outline your future online strategy
3. Work with you to achieve a design that a) meets the expectations and needs of your target market b) will be easily programmable by the web developer c) is aesthetically pleasing d) is search engine friendly e) is within your budget.
4. Work with the web designer and the web developer to smoothly integrate the design into HTML and CSS and ensure your site is designed to integrate any future marketing needs.
5. Provide you with tips that will help you write your website's copy.

6. Work with you to implement the future online strategy so that you website is not only visible but also attracts bookings.

ONLINE MARKETERS SPECIALISED IN TOURISM WILL IMPLEMENT KEY SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION FACTORS BUT ALSO LIVE AND BREATHE THE ONLINE TOURISM WORLD EVERY DAY. THEY WILL KNOW HOW THE ONLINE TRAVELLER THINKS AND UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGES THAT YOU FACE AS A SMALL BUSINESS OPERATOR. THEY WILL HAVE TESTED BEST PRACTICES, BE PROFICIENT AT HELPING YOU GET LINKS FROM RELEVANT TRAVEL WEBSITES, BE ABLE TO SET UP SUCCESSFUL TRAVEL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS SUCH AS HELPING YOU INTEGRATE YOUR TRIPADVISOR COMMENTS ON YOUR WEBSITE FOR INSTANCE. THEY WILL KNOW WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW YOU DON'T KNOW.

b) Why can't I just work with a designer or a programmer?

If you work with a web graphic designer only, your website's design is going to hopefully look spectacular. However, there is a reasonable chance that no new consumer will come across it while searching for your product!

The graphic designer will probably have a basic knowledge of coding (programming) in HTML but they might end up using a technique that is 5 years old and not know how to install a content management on your site.

If you solely work with a web developer, the design might not meet the requirements of your target market. Even if your website's code is up to today's requirements, you will still need to work with a search engine/online marketing specialist to ensure your website's copy is written in a search engine friendly manner. This is crucial for when someone searches for what you offer your web address comes up on the first pages of the search engine rankings.

2. How to select a knowledgeable web professional or company

a) How do I find web professionals?

It is always best to first contact your regional tourism organisation or association and ask to talk to the person in charge of the e-marketing department (also called digital) for advice. They will be able to put you in contact with people who are not only tourism web specialists but who are aware of the latest developments and practices.

You can also get on the Internet and search for "tourism website design", "websites for tourism", "tourism search engine optimisation", "web developer for tourism", "online marketing for tourism" and other similar keywords. Don't be put off if the company is not local, as everything will be done via email or the web!

If you come across websites that you like, look for a link to the company that designed and programmed it. It is usually located at the bottom of the homepage. Then don't be shy to pick up the phone and call the owner of the website for feedback about their experience!

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But remember; design is not everything! The below paragraph is going to assist you sort the good from the bad.

b) First step: how to differentiate amateur from professional

Before even writing a brief, there are a few questions you can ask to separate the web amateur from the web professional. You don't even need to understand the meaning of the question!



- **What version of HTML do you use?**
Should be XHTML 1.0 or 1.1 – HTML 5 will be the next one.
- **Do you use tables or table-less CSS?**
Should be table-less CSS (using tables is an old practice)
- **Do you use Flash?**
If they are very positive about Flash technology and don't warn you of its many search engine restrictions, stay away. Flash is not search engine friendly.
- **Do you use HTML "Frames"?**
If YES or even the slightest hesitation, stay away as Frames is not a search engine friendly way of programming a website. Frames is a technique used ten years ago.
- **How do you make a website SEO friendly?** (Use the acronym on purpose instead of Search Engine Optimisation as you are testing to see if they know its meaning)
They should mention keywords, developing inbound links to your website, optimising the content, using a search engine friendly content management system and setting up a monthly strategy. More importantly, they should push that search engine optimisation is an integral part of a successful website and that it should be given great consideration at the very initial stage of the project.
- **How will you redirect my old pages to my new pages?**
This is a very important question as it is very usual for web developers not to redirect your old pages to your new pages. The consequence of this is a sudden drop in visitation which can be critical for many businesses. Your web developer should reassure you that they will redirect **every single page of the website to the new one** using a 301 redirect (not a 302 or other method). They should of course do the same for the domain name.

c) Second step: the brief

A quality brief will provide the web professional with a greater understanding of not only your requirements but also of the outcome you are after. The brief should be done in writing and answer the following questions:

- **What:**
Do you require a website from scratch? Only a search engine strategy? A content management system? Integration with YouTube? Photo gallery?
Ask the company you are approaching for testimonials or similar past projects that they have done.



- **How:**
How are you planning on working with the web professional, how is your website going to integrate with your traditional marketing strategy, how do you plan on updating your website? How can they help you?
How is the company you are approaching planning on working with you? Are there going to be weekly briefings and updates?
- **Where:**
Where is your website going to be hosted? If you already have a domain name, let them know what it is.
Where does the company recommend your website be hosted and how much is it going to cost you?
- **Who:**
Who is your target market and who is going to be the point of contact at your end? Ask the company you are approaching for contacts or references that you can call. Ask who you will be your direct point of contact at the company; will it be an account manager or an online marketer?
- **When:**
When is your deadline?
When will the company you are approaching be able to start on your project?
- **How much:**
Specifying a ballpark figure of how much you are prepared to spend on your project will enable your web strategists to provide you with a well-suited and realistic plan.

If you do not feel confident to write a brief, simply ask your web specialist to send you a blank brief to fill out.

d) Third step: sending the brief out

Aim to send at least 3 briefs via email and expect a 2-week minimum turnaround.

e) Final step: deciding

Review the proposals you would have received. Consider them as if they were job applications.

A personalised, creative, proposal addressing the points discussed in your brief demonstrates the interest and expertise of the company. If you receive a templated, dull proposal outlining what the company does and not responding to your questions you should source other proposals.

Why don't you also Google the name of the people who will be involved on your project? If they are well known in their industry they should come up in search engine results which in turn demonstrates they practice what they preach.

3. How much should I expect to pay?

Working with an online marketing strategist is not any dearer than working with a web designer and a web developer separately. It will not only save you time as you will not be the organiser between them both but it will also ensure your site and strategy meet the requirement

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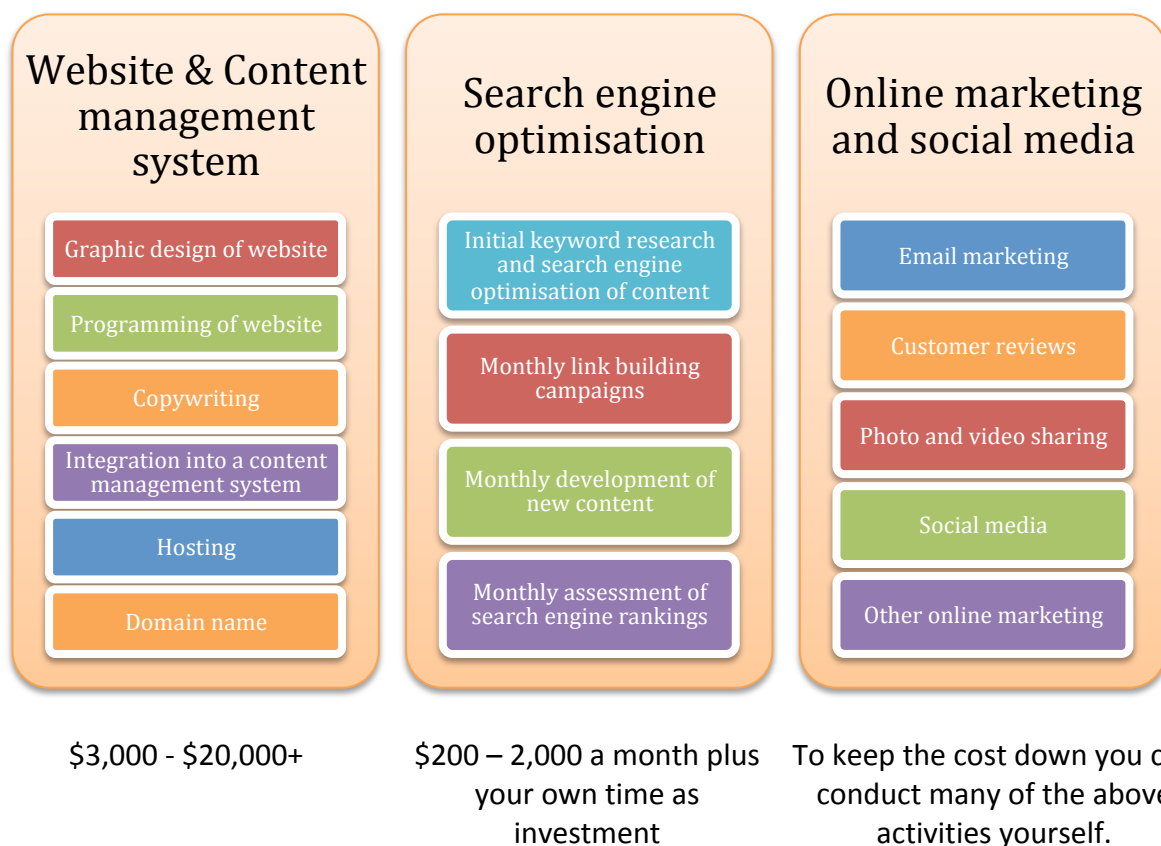
of today's traveller.

The chart below breaks down the different aspects of an online strategy which includes: website design and content management system, search engine optimisation and online marketing.

You will find an indication of price below:

- Lower bracket: AUD3,000 initial (simple website) + AUD300 per month
This corresponds to an investment of AUD132 per week over 12 months.
- Higher bracket: AUD6,000 initial + AUD500 per month
This corresponds to an investment of AUD240 per week over 12 months.

Carefully review each offer you receive based on the brief you sent before making any decision.



4. Why shouldn't I do my website myself?

Designing a website yourself might seem like a good idea at the time, and perceived as one that will cut down the expenses.

You will certainly know some operators who have tackled it themselves. Ask them how long it took them. Was it a good return on investment or should have they focused on the content and let a professional look after the development? Can they accurately measure the business they

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are getting from their homemade site?

Professionals know the tricks of the trade. A web strategy is an integral part of a successful business and not something that stands alone on the side.

THE CREATION OF A SUCCESSFUL WEBSITE AND STRATEGY DEMANDS GREAT KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE. LEAVE THE SURGERY TO THE SURGEONS BUT WORK WITH THEM TO GIVE THEM AN ACCURATE DIAGNOSIS. LASTLY, FOCUS YOUR EFFORTS ON WRITING COMPELLING CONTENT, AS NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO DO IT AS WELL AS YOU DO!

a) *I am still convinced I can do it*

- **Is it as simple as it looks?** “Microsoft Word allows me to save a page as a webpage even!” Creating a website for it to bring the results it is supposed to bring is complex and demanding. MS Word and other programs such as FrontPage let you build basic websites but are not web programming tools.
- **Design:** are you a professional graphic designer specialising in web?
- **Usability:** are you aware of all its implications?
- **Marketing:** are you able to build your website to meet future marketing needs?
- **Technologies:** do you know about all the technological requirements (HTML, CSS, and PHP)?
- **Search engine optimisation:** are you familiar with the best practices?
- **Content management system:** will you be able to add it to your site?

If after reading all the above you are still very keen to develop your website yourself then you may want to try setting up a WordPress site from WordPress.org and apply a free theme to style your WordPress website.

5. My friend/neighbour/friend’s friend is good with computers; shall I trust them to do my website?

Being good with computers doesn’t necessarily mean that the person has got the skill set required to design a website and web strategy that will result in successfully marketing your business. As a rule of thumb, any good online marketer, graphic designer or web developer has at least 5 years industry experience. Is this something your friend can provide you with?

It is your business you are talking about, not a personal website. Your website should soon bring you at least one third of your bookings. A well-planned and executed site will pay for itself in the first year.

Moreover, a web professional will be more objective than a friend who might not want to point out flaws or challenge your opinion.

6. Key learning outcomes

- Arm yourself with a “football team” of web professionals to ensure your web strategy is geared for success
- Avoid designing your website yourself but work with qualified professionals.

7. Related material

a) *Related tutorials*

- Organising hosting for my site
- Registering a domain name 101