HIRING & OWNERSHIP

How to choose a web designer

Evaluate the work, compare the scope, and protect your ability to run the site.



FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

PLAN THE WORK

Look for work that solves a problem like yours

Start with the outcome you want, such as more estimate requests or easier appointment booking. Ask candidates to show two relevant live sites and explain the business goal, their part in the project, and what they would change now. Open each site on a phone and attempt the primary customer task.

Ask how the project will run

Find out who writes the copy, who builds the site, who approves changes, and how each milestone is accepted. Ask about revisions, timelines, accessibility checks, and what happens if either side is late. For a redesign, ask how the designer will preserve the important search pages and test redirects.

Look at support after launch

Ask what is covered if a form breaks or a page requires an update. Clarify how support requests are submitted, hours of coverage, response expectations, and when a task becomes billable. Compare what each designer promises in writing.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Make ownership part of the proposal

Keep domain registration in an account your business controls. Confirm who owns or licenses the copy, design, images, and code, who holds admin access, and whether content can be exported. Some platforms and licensed assets have transfer limits. Ask what you receive at handoff and what a move would require.

Compare proposals on the same scope

Give candidates the same goals, page list, and required features. Compare deliverables, dependencies, exclusions, recurring costs, and relevant project evidence. Ask for measures you can revisit after launch, such as successful inquiries, rather than relying on a ranking promise.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Oakdale service business choosing between proposals

One proposal includes five pages and one round of edits. Another includes service copy, redirects, inquiry tracking, and staff training. Ask both providers to price the same launch scope and explain their handoff. The owner can then compare cost and fit based on what the business will actually receive.

PRINTABLE WORKSHEET

Your next steps

Assign each task and check it off when you verify it.

- [ ] **Review relevant live work**
  Test a real customer task on your phone.
  OWNER / DUE _____

- [ ] **Compare written scopes**
  Confirm milestones, revisions, and content responsibilities.
  OWNER / DUE _____

- [ ] **Ask how success is measured**
  Agree on launch and post-launch checks.
  OWNER / DUE _____

- [ ] **Verify business ownership**
  Confirm domain, admin access, licenses, and export options.
  OWNER / DUE _____

- [ ] **Review support and handoff**
  Know what is included and how to change providers.
  OWNER / DUE _____

FIRST ACTION _____