

Five questions to ask before you pay anyone for a website.

Written for business owners, not designers. Ask these out loud, in order, before money moves.

Every one has a right answer, and none of the right answers require you to know anything about websites.

1 What will this cost, as a number, before we start?

The right answer is a flat figure, quoted up front, in writing. **"It depends" is fine in the first conversation and a warning after it.** Hourly with no cap is how a \$2,000 site becomes an \$8,000 site.

2 Who owns it when it's done?

The domain, the hosting account, and the files should live in accounts **in your name**. The test is simple: if you fired them tomorrow, does the site stay up and stay yours? If the answer involves a monthly fee to keep what you paid for, keep walking.

3 What happens when somebody searches my trade plus my town?

A website nobody finds is a brochure in a drawer. Ask what they will do about the map results, the business profile, and the pages that answer what your customers actually type. **If search is "extra," the quote is missing half the job.**

4 What number is this site supposed to move?

Calls, bookings, direction requests, quote requests. Pick one before the work starts and ask how it will be measured. **A site without a job is decoration**, and decoration is the most expensive thing you can buy per dollar of return.

5 Who actually does the work?

The person selling it and the person building it are often different people, and sometimes different continents. Ask to meet the builder. **If the answer is vague, the accountability will be too.**
