

A wooden mannequin is positioned in front of a computer monitor. The mannequin's right arm is extended, holding a green cloth that partially covers the screen. The screen displays the Microsoft Visual Studio code editor with a C# file named 'ContentView.cs'. The code includes XML comments and a method 'MoveElement'. The mannequin's left arm is raised, and its legs are visible at the bottom. The overall scene suggests a professional or creative workspace.

# How to hire a Web Professional



How do you know who's  
mediocre & who's amazing?





## SMALL BUSINESS + WEB STANDARDS



### Interview Guide

Ask the right thing when you hire!

### Glossary

Reference for terminology

### Further Reading

Other useful resources

## Interview Guide

We've written this guide to help small businesses make well-informed decisions when hiring web professionals to build a website. The guide centers around 10 simple questions designed to test the knowledge of web standards and general industry best practices. We've included examples of good and bad responses to these questions in addition to a glossary to help explain potentially unfamiliar terms. Our intention is to arm small businesses with the information they need to hire qualified web professionals to create good well-built websites.

We recommend you make yourself familiar with the different questions before interviewing potential web suppliers. You'll get the best sense of a web professional or agency by conducting this interview face-to-face.

Before any meetings you should always write a brief, detailing what you're looking for from your website. During the interview you can use the questions we have provided as you feel is appropriate. Don't be afraid of technical terms, if you don't understand anything just ask.

If you have any questions on how to use this guide, please do get in touch. We aim to improve this guide over time, so all feedback is valuable.

1. Can you walk me through your development process and our role in that process?
2. How will you ensure my website meets my customers' needs & that they get the best experience when they visit my website?
3. How will you ensure my website is easy to find?
4. How will you ensure my website is easy to find my website?
5. How will you ensure my website is easy to find my website?
6. How will you ensure my website is easy to find my website?
7. How will you ensure my website is easy to find my website?
8. How will you ensure my website is easy to find my website?
9. How will you ensure my website is easy to find my website?
10. How will you ensure my website is easy to find my website?

## GUIDE STRUCTURE

Each question is structured in a common format, starting with why the question is important to ask.

We've included examples of good and bad responses to these questions to highlight what you're looking for from a quality supplier. There are links to the glossary to help explain any unfamiliar terms.

We've also added an expert tip, exploring some aspect of the question in greater depth. Where appropriate we've included links to resources where you can find out more about the given topic.

WaSP wants to  
make it easier

# Before you sit down

- What is the purpose of your website?
- Who is your audience and what should they be able to do on your site?
- What is your budget?
- Do you have a deadline?





Question 1:

Can you walk me  
through your process?

# Process

## ✓ Professional

Is organized

Has a process

Can explain it &  
it makes sense

Has a place for you in it



## Wannabe

Is disorganized

Promises immediate  
results

Doesn't ask for  
your input





Question 2:

How will you ensure my users have a great experience?

# User Experience



## Professional

Will discuss user goals  
in relation to your  
business goals

May propose  
interviewing your users

Will discuss research  
informing design

May propose testing  
the site with real users  
throughout the project



## Wannabe

Will want to start  
designing right away

Is confident the design  
they come up with will  
work

Doesn't discuss user  
goals or key tasks



Question 3:

How will users  
find my site?



# Findability



## Professional

Will discuss the importance of well-written content

Will explain how proper coding makes a site easier to index

May want to talk about URL structure and link text



## Wannabe

Promises you a #1 Google ranking

Will focus on “meta” tags and keywords

May suggest multiple landing pages with duplicate content



Question 4:

Who will write  
the content for  
my site?



# Content

## Professional

Will recommend authoring new content for your website

May offer to write copy, recommend a copywriter, or simply provide guidance

May recommend a Content Management System



## Wannabe

Will be happy to take content directly from your brochures

Will offer to update the site for you if you give them a call



A photograph of a cluttered desk with multiple computer monitors. The central monitor displays a code editor with syntax-highlighted code. To its right is a larger monitor showing a document or website layout. To the left, another monitor shows a landscape image. A laptop is also visible on the left. The desk is covered with various items like papers, a keyboard, and a mouse. A text overlay is present in the lower-left quadrant.

Question 5:

Will my site look the same on every computer?

# Browsers

## Professional

Will discuss the fluidity of the web as a medium and explain why sites will look different on different computers

Will focus on design consistency over pixel-perfection

May bring up progressive enhancement



## Wannabe

May promise an identical design in every browser

May try to talk you into only supporting a handful of browsers or screen sizes



Question 6:

How will you  
make my site  
accessible to  
all users?



# Accessibility

## Professional

Will discuss the importance of well-written copy

Will explain how markup enriches your copy

May bring up color contrast, font sizing, video captioning & transcripts, and/or WAI-ARIA



## Wannabe

May seem confused

May try to brush off the question

May simply declare that everyone will be able to use your site without explaining how they will achieve that





Question 7:

How will my site  
work on mobile?



# Mobile

## Professional

Will discuss creating adaptive layouts that flex to the dimensions of different browsers and devices

Will talk of prioritizing key tasks

Will explain how they test your site on a variety of devices



## Wannabe

May dismiss mobile browser usage

May suggest building a separate mobile site

May discuss hiding content on mobile

May try to sell you on developing an app



Question 8:  
What tech  
will you use?

Ruby Programming

Ruby  
1.8



# Technologies

## ✓ Professional

Will refer you to their developers if they don't know or they will wax philosophical about HTML, CSS, and JavaScript

May mention progressive enhancement

May mention that they hand-code every site



## Wannabe

Won't know

Won't mention CSS

Won't be able to tell you which version of HTML will be used and why

Will say they design in Photoshop and then generate the code automatically





Question 9:

What will this cost?



# Cost

## Professional

Will be able to give you a ballpark cost estimate and rough timeline based on similar projects

May not commit to a price until the scope is fully understood

Will require a deposit and establish a payment schedule



## Wannabe

Will be non-committal when it comes to price

May quote you a figure that seems incredibly low (e.g. \$1,000)

May not require payment until the project is complete



Question 10:  
Who owns  
the code?



# Ownership

## Professional

Will be able to discuss issues of copyright, ownership, and licensing

Will assign copyright (or a license) to you upon receiving final payment

Will be willing to provide source files as appropriate



## Wannabe

May be unwilling to assign copyright to you

May be unwilling to hand over source files





Feeling a tad  
overwhelmed?



Don't be nervous,  
it's gonna be fun!







[biz.webstandards.org](http://biz.webstandards.org)

# How to Hire a Web Professional

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Slides available at  
<http://slideshare.net/AaronGustafson>

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