Designers to Developers-What should I know?

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This is a broad question, so let me narrow it a bit. I am a graphic designer entering the world of web design. I'm not totally green in this field, but I know enough to know that I have a lot to learn. From friends and from posts on this site I realize there is often a harmful disconnect between design and development.

I'm getting ready to place a client log-in/password "portal" on my website. Nothing fancy, just enough to provide some sound mind for my clients and a space for secure download of imagery. I am only handling the look and feel of this one, nothing more. What potential pitfalls should I know about, on my end, to avoid making the development end hairy?

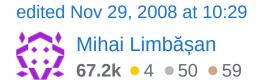And of course any other nuggets of wisdom are appreciated too. Thanks!

`client`   `protocols`

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edited Nov 29, 2008 at 10:29

Mihai Limbășan
67.2k ● 4 ● 50 ● 59

Thanks for the suggestions guys! Based on them I asked my Dev what would work best for the login stuff on my side, and it turns out is was a HUGE time saver on both ends to let him put it together; I'm merely skinning with CSS! Thanks again. – rashneon Dec 2, 2008 at 1:04

One more note, in Greg Beech's thread it was stated that designers often assume developers aren't creative. 1st off, I'm sorry to anyone who has had that experience. Nothing is harder on an artist then to not be appreciated. Second, you guys/gals are totally creative! I'm so impressed by what you do – rashneon Dec 2, 2008 at 1:07

3 Answers

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Perhaps the worst mistake that many designers make when working with developers is to assume that developers aren't creative, and that we couldn't possibly have any good ideas or inputs into the design. The fallacy of this is obvious because what we do all day, every day, is create things. It's taken for granted that designers can raise bugs against developers when our code doesn't represent the design exactly, yet many designers get very touchy when we raise suggestions about how their design could be improved even in minor ways. Sometimes the suggestions may not be suitable, but occasionally you might be able to improve your design.

In addition, I have frequently found that designers under-estimate the capabilities of developers to achieve what they want, so will sometimes suggest a simpler alternative. By opening up the dialog and giving a couple of options like a minimum one and an ideal one, you might be surprised that you can have elements of the ideal one, or all of it, or even something better as you discuss what actually can be achieved (sometimes what seems hard to achieve to a designer seems easy to the dev, and vice versa, because they are different disciplines). Of course the converse is true and you might be aiming too high, so you need to find that out as well.

In summary - you're absolutely right that any disconnect between design and dev is detrimental both to morale and the final product. So talk to the devs as soon as you have initial designs, and keep a good two-way dialog open.

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answered Nov 27, 2008 at 9:51

Greg Beech
136k ● 45 ● 209 ● 250

I am a web developer, so I'm answering this from my viewpoint. There is really no serious pitfall as long as developer and designer understand each other. One tries to make websites look as attractive as possible, while the other tries to make the look of the website as close to the design as possible.

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So when I'm asked to do the impossible, (like replacing the browser's default scrollbar with an animated image of a cat) I'll just tell the designer that it can't be done, the reasons for that, and suggest possible alternatives (Flash ?). After that being said, I expect the designer to understand and cooperate with me to choose the best alternative, not suddenly turning into grumpy mode or something.

A little basic knowledge of the developer's work would help, too.

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answered Nov 27, 2008 at 9:44

andyk
10k ● 10 ● 38 ● 42

Some ideas that may smooth the process :

Talk to the developers directly and ask if they have any specific requirements. Different platforms have different needs and requirements. Communication is important.
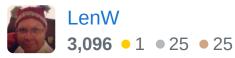
Get the basics of good HTML and CSS down. There are many references but you can try A List Apart as a starting point.

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answered Nov 27, 2008 at 9:36

LenW
3,096 ● 1 ● 25 ● 25

For instance, because I'm on a linux server, the login had to be done in PHP, and thus way easier for my Dev to build it!

– rashneon Dec 2, 2008 at 1:09