

Octopi's Top 10 Tips for... hiring a web agency

1. **What do you want?** It's a big pond out there and plenty of fish willing to help you out – you need to make sure you have the right fish for your project so check out their specialist skillsets, or design style and try to match it to your project requirements. Most agencies will have a portfolio of previous work completed on their website, but also take a look at their own website.
2. **Know your budget!** Make sure that you've set a realistic budget and ensure that your chosen web agency agrees to it – no one likes to have unexpected invoices sneaking up on them!
3. **Write a comprehensive brief.** Most agencies will insist on a brief before being able to give a final quote, most will also ask questions outside of your brief to try and get the bigger picture – this is a good sign and should be welcomed, it shows they are capable of taking everything on board and making allowances where needed.
4. **Deadlines.** No one wants a project to go on forever – set realistic deadlines and stick to them. Where possible, your selected agency should provide a project plan detailing key dates and milestones for project delivery.
5. **Guarantees.** If you can find an agency (like us!) who shouts from the rooftops that they will guarantee that you will be 100% happy with the finished product, you'll have found an agency with masses of confidence to complete the job to the standard you're expecting and more!
6. **References.** Speak to their existing clients and see what they think about them – this is the best way of finding out what the agency is really like and should be right up there on the 'things I must do today' list!
7. **Main point of contact.** You will most likely be spending quite some time with this new agency, be it in meetings, on the phone or any of the other ways we can now keep in touch. It is important that you can feel comfortable enough to make that call to your contact without dreading them picking up the phone – you need to trust and like this company, after all, they are building an online presence for you which is extremely important to get right. Make sure the working relationship feels good and works for you.
8. **Get ready to do some work.** When you have appointed the web agency, you will need to give them the required information in order that they can deliver. This is often one area where the delays could occur so be prepared to get stuck in – everyone has a work schedule and it helps to be aware of keeping to deadlines – even if you are the paying client! You will also need to be clear with the information you give – remember – designers are not mind readers, well, not until there is an app for that anyway!
9. **Keep to the brief.** Changes to the brief once the project has started can cause delays, affect costs and cause strain on the relationship between client and agency. Wherever possible, the initial brief should be detailed enough that changes aren't required. However, sometimes changes are unavoidable, and this is where a great working relationship between agency and client is vital.
10. **Enjoy!** Designing and developing your new website should be a fun and rewarding experience for both client and agency. If the process is a painful one, more time should be spent in future focussed on choosing an agency based on relationship than on shaving off a few pennies. Cheapest doesn't always mean best value for money.



...and finally, if you ever get the chance to hire us as your super creative agency, make sure that we bring along some tasty cupcakes!

