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Asking the Right Questions  
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Do you know what your customers want in a website, or do you just plod along creating at will everytime they decide they want something? If you're doing the latter, then you're costing your customer a lot of money and probably yourself a lot of wasted time. Let's not forget that there are a lot of new people out there that don't have a clue what they can have on a website, so it's up to you as a designer to make sure they are informed.

One of the first things you should know is if your customer has a budget to work with. There's not much sense in planning a lot of programming work if they don't want to pay more than \$100 for a site. You should know up front what kind of limits you have. Only then can you help them decide what's best for their site.

Once a budget is stated, you should find out if there is a deadline you need to meet. A lot of people will probably want something done as quick as possible. That's not always the best choice, though. I've seen some pretty sloppy design work done in a hurry. Make sure that their deadline is something you can meet and still provide a quality site. Doing sloppy work, no matter the reasons, can kill your business pretty fast.

Now it's time to get down to the design work. Do they have a logo or will they be needing one? Will they provide the content and/or theme of the site or is this something they will want you to do? What is the purpose of their site? How do they want people to contact them? Where are they going to put their site once it's finished and how should you deliver it? Will they be maintaining it themselves or will you be doing that? Are you going to be handling submission to search engines and directories for them?

Make sure that their responses don't take you beyond their budget. If they do, it's your responsibility to inform them. Never just do what they want if it exceeds their limits. Communication is vital between designer and customer. If they decide they want something that goes beyond their budget or original quote, then make sure you get something in writing before you take time to do it.

If by some chance your customer has issues with your work or pricing, then you should have records to back it up. Get everything down in writing. Don't get caught in a war of who's right and

who's wrong. Protect yourself BEFORE you begin any work by stating your terms up front. If you take care of your business, you'll prosper!

NOTE: The following information must be included if you reprint this article.

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Desktop Dilemma's is a Virtual Assistant Company that specializes in administrative tasks and various computer-type jobs from their home office. For more information about the company, please visit them online at <http://www.desktopdilemmas.com> or email them at [web@desktopdilemmas.com](mailto:web@desktopdilemmas.com) .

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