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## **Cheap Web Designs Hide Costly Traps For Businesses**

**Businesses discover that low priced template sites can mean more spending in the long run.**

Joining the ranks of business cards and office signs, web sites have quickly become important tools in doing business. Recent statistics show that consumers researching products, services and merchants, rely as heavily on internet searches as they once did on phone books. In addition, information shows that the consumer's all important first impression of a merchant is based greatly on that business's web site or merely the existence of one.

78% of consumers surveyed said that they regularly use the internet when looking for a specific business or product. 91% of those consumers agreed that they have narrowed their choices of merchants or products based strictly on their site. The group gave poor marks to merchants with unprofessional or unattractive sites and even worse marks for merchants with no web presence at all. The merchant sites that received positive marks were easy to read, attractive and the information was easy to find.

With so much importance being put on web sites and the need to have a web presence, more and more businesses and organizations have been investing money towards the development of their sites. That also means that there is a number of non-technologically savvy people who are investing their time and money in a product they don't really understand. In many cases, that can mean trouble and frustration for many individuals.

**“Having a basic knowledge of web sites and web technology can help greatly when shopping for a developer,” says Larry Foltran, owner of Michigan based web development company Absolute Web Site Design.**

**“Web developers should be prepared and willing to educate their clients,” he said.**

Unfortunately, there are many web designers who do not subscribe to the same school of thought. Businesses and organizations continue to be taken advantage of and end up paying for a site that will not serve their specific needs.

**“Most of the complaints I hear, when I meet with a potential client, are related to template type sites,” Foltran said.**

Template sites are a relatively new phenomenon in the web development community. Template designers offer standard, “cookie-cutter” type sites that can be deployed very quickly at a somewhat low initial cost. But, the low cost can be deceiving and many businesses end up with nothing in the end.

**“Designers who sell template sites normally draw customers in with the low initial cost. Sometimes even under \$100, “ Foltran explains. “What people don’t understand is that there is normally a reoccurring hosting fee behind that price and, in many cases, the person will also need to input all of the content themselves. All they are getting is a graphic frame work. That’s where there is another risk. Without that framework, all the customer has is the content they posted. If the customer decides to cancel their account because of rising hosting costs or other factors, they are left with nothing.”**

He also explained that the template designer holds the copyright to the look and layout of the site. If the customer decides to have a custom site designer re-create the site identically, they will be breaching the site’s copyright.

**“Unfortunately, my hands are tied in that type of situation,” Foltran adds. “The only thing we can do is start from scratch which isn’t always a bad thing.”**

He also described how important it is to have a unique and attractive web presence.

**“Template sites are normally very generic and don’t accurately represent the business or organization.”**

With more and more web development companies coming onto the scene simply to make a ‘quick buck’, it becomes quite obvious that customers need to do some homework before investing their money. Simply said, asking questions now can prevent headaches, and save money, later.