



Web Developer Comparison Checklist

Selecting the best solution for website design and development is one of the most complex tasks a business must undertake. There are literally thousands of options from freelance designers to large national ad-agencies and IT consultancies. Development processes range from a few hours putting together sites of amateur quality to projects by an organization with a proven and refined process for crafting a world-class web presence. Costs range from virtually free, to millions of dollars - and every web developer is marketing their offering as a complete "results driven" solution.

So how can you determine who should create your next online brand or application?

This checklist will help you cut through the marketing smoke and mirrors that some companies use to overcharge and hide deficiencies. It will arm you with the questions that will separate the real result getters from the rest. In the end it will provide a true apples-to-apples comparison so you can make the right choice the first time.

The Business

1. Question - How long have you been in business?

Our Answer - Since April of 2002.

2. Question - Are you financially stable and debt free?

Our Answer – We have survived the post dot-com recession with no debt and have shown high, continued growth for the past five years. We attribute our resiliency to our efficient process-driven operation that minimizes waste yet delivers world-class results. Our extraordinary growth comes from a balance of existing loyal customers that want to build on their success and new clients who are committed to "doing things right."

3. Question - How large is your company?

Our answer – As of July 2007, E-SolBiz™ is a team of 15-20 web consultants, creative designers, developers, programmers, and internet marketing experts. Our close-knit team provides a high level of responsiveness and client attention not found in large agencies, and still provides superior diversity of experience over smaller firms and freelancers.

We also have several strategic partnerships with various specialized creative agencies and IT consultancies that expand our internal skill sets and offer expanded production, when needed.

4. Question - Are you local or national?

Our answer – About 65% of our clients are in the Pakistan. The other half is national and international. Most of our clients like to meet face to face but we also work with many clients virtually (all telephone and digital communications). We are available to travel when the project requires it.

Experience

5. Question - How many years have you building websites?

Our Answer – E-SolBiz™ was founded in 2002 specifically to research web best practices and build best-of-breed websites. The Chief executive of the agency created his first website in 1999. Our project managers, senior creative designers and programmers average 5+ years of experience building websites.

6. Question - How many online solutions have you developed?

Our Answer – The E-SolBiz™ team has built over 100 websites in its history. We have also completed over 75+ graphic design projects (logos, brochures, catalogs, flyers, posters, stationary, etc.) We currently average completing 10 projects including print and web media a month.

7. Question – Who are the largest companies you have done work for?

Our Answer – E-SolBiz™ has worked with market leaders and their names are listed below:

- Cincinnati Incorporated, U.S.A
- Diamond Group of Industries, Pakistan
- Syed Bhais, Pakistan
- Super Asia, Pakistan
- Basecom , Holland
- Nicca Sports, Belgium
- 350 Evo, U.S.A
- Micro Tech Industries, Pakistan
- Pakistan Foundry Association
- Alberta Sports, Pakistan
- Shibro Industries, Pakistan
- Rapid Enterprises, U.S.A

8. Question - What are your core competencies?

Our Answer - Our core expertise is website designing/development and print media designing. E-SolBiz™ is a firm committed to researching and implementing web best practices.

9. Question - Where can I see samples of your previous work?

Our Answer - You can view our projects through our online portfolio at:

<http://www.esolbiz.com/portfolio.php>

10. Question - For what industries have you created web solutions?

Our Answer - E-SolBiz™ does not specialize by industry. We have experience with a broad range of industries and class of businesses.

We have experience with numerous business sectors including:

- Manufacturers
- Medical
- Fashion
- Telecommunication
- Whole Sellers
- Sports
- Textile
- Real Estate/Architecture etc.

11. Question – How do you measure the success of your websites?

Our Answer – Our philosophy is different; we want you to be satisfied with a site that is in the 6% minority that produces positive returns. To this end, we have developed the mechanisms to measure success.

12. Question – What are some examples of your successes?

Our greatest pride at E-SolBiz™ is our ability to create results for our clients. The E-SolBiz™ approach has produced an extraordinary set of success stories. An up to date list can be found on our website:

Development Philosophy

13. Question – Do you have a formal process that all projects go through?

Our answer – Yes, we do. Our process has evolved through years of experience with dozens of diverse web projects. Our process borrows principles from project management for web development. Each project at its inception has phases, deliverables, tasks and timelines defined.

14. Question – What is the client role in the development process?

Our answer – We strive to work with our clients as a seamless team. As such our process is flexible enough to let you determine what level of involvement you want. Some clients want heavy, daily involvement in particular aspects of development, others want to let us handle everything.

15. Question – How will you provide constant communication to me on the status of my project throughout development?

Our answer – E-SolBiz™ knows that client-vendor communication is critical to a long-term successful relationship. As such we go above and beyond in our communications efforts with clients. All clients have a dedicated client services team consisting of a project manager and project coordinator that acts as redundant points of contact for project needs. Your client services team will facilitate communications via primary mechanisms.

16. Question - Do I own the code used to create my website?

Our Answer - After we have received final payment for your project, you will own all the end files used to create your site. We normally protect proprietary source files that may contain trade secrets such as Flash “.fla” files, Photoshop “.psd” files. Clients generally don't need these files; if you do, we can negotiate special terms for you to license the rights to the source files.

17. Question – Will I be able to make changes to my site myself?

Our Answer – Yes – E-SolBiz™ has developed a state-of-the-art content management system (CMS) that enables you to easily modify any content on your site or we can do that on your behalf.

18. Question - After I decide I want you to build my website what happens next?

Our Answer – We will wait for complete project details and on that bases we will send you quote and terms and conditions and after accepting the quote and terms and conditions we will start working on the project.

19. Question - Who will be assigned to my project team and what are their skill sets?

Our Answer - World-class web development is very complex and demands more skill sets than any one person can practically have. Each E-SolBiz™ web development team incorporates multiple specialists to assure your project will produce maximum results.

For a typical web site the following experts are used:

- Web Strategist (Account/Project Manager)
- Multiple Creative designers (Graphics and Multimedia Designers) - To assure you a diverse selection of creative designs we assign a different creative designer to develop each comp (theme/look and feel design).
- Web Page Coder (HTML/XML, CSS, JavaScript Expert)
- Technical Lead (Hosting setup, e-commerce, site programming, etc.)
- Online Marketing Expert

If the project has significant application development, an application development lead, programmers and testers will also be assigned to your project.

20. Question – What background does your project management/sales staff have and how can I be assure they can deliver as promised?

Our Answer - E-SolBiz™ does not use traditional agency sales people who have little experience actually building websites themselves. Every E-SolBiz™ project manager has years of experience in multiple phases of web development. Each was promoted to the position because of their expertise for web strategy, ability to manage projects and ability to work with clients.

21. Question - What are a project manager's primary duties during development?

Our Answer - To assure the project stays within budget and on schedule, facilitates communication, and achieves complete client satisfaction.

22. Question – How long will it take to develop my site?

Our Answer - Site development, of course, depends on the type of site. We typically recommend allowing 4-8 weeks for standard custom sites. Advanced sites, particularly those with extensive programming, can take 4-8 months or more.

23. Question - Will I be required to provide materials based on a schedule you provide for me?

Our Answer - Yes. In order to meet the required finish date, we will need any materials you are providing for the site by a certain date. If a client does miss a client deliverable deadline, the website delivery date will be delayed. Note: if a client deliverable is missed you will not be charged for developer down time. We will re-task personnel to other projects and we will put them back on your project as soon as they are available again after the client deliverable is provided to us.

24. Question - Will I have a single point-of-contact for any questions or issues I might have during the project?

Our Answer – Yes. You will be assigned an project manager who will be happy to assist you every step of the way. You will also be assigned a project coordinator that will act as a backup contact.

The Cost

25. Question - How much can I expect to pay for a complete website?

Our Answer –E-SolBiz™ level of solutions are ideal for companies that can realize hundreds of dollars or more in added profitability from their website a year. Sites that produce tens of thousands or more per year need to be highly professional and strategically implemented to achieve their maximum potential.. For those who do not need the strategic expertise of E-SolBiz™ and just want a simple professional looking site, E-SolBiz™ does have a sister company, Maxobiz, that specializes in small-range designer websites starting at 200US\$..

26. Question - Are there any other support costs associated with a website?

Our Answer – Maintenance costs for typical websites are minimal. Generally the only cost is hosting and any changes you may need us to make. Hosting typically runs approx \$100 per year. Opposed to the industry trends, we enable you to maintain your own website if you wish. This can prove to be a significant cost reduction. Of course if you prefer, we will be available to make changes on an hourly or project basis. Our fees are \$7/hr for graphics, text changes and programming modifications. E-SolBiz™ also sign a maintenance contract according to client demands and its vary from 100US\$ to 1000US\$ per month or quarter.

27. Question - What payment structure is offered for websites?

Our Answer – For sites under \$700 will usually require a 30% retainer at start of project, 30% at delivery of theme comps, and 40% on completion. Larger projects are typically billed on a monthly basis with an up front retainer. We have made custom arrangements with several clients to fit internal accounting needs when needed.

28. Question – How can I be assured I won't be hit with hidden charges?

Our Answer - We have a proven contract system to assure you always know exactly what you are getting and how much it will be, no surprises ever.

We create Work Orders for each significant project that itemizes our deliverables, how much it will cost and how long it will take. If more time is required to complete the Work Order deliverables, we will eat the cost ourselves.

Creative & Web Page (Font-End) Development

29. Question – What creative and web page development software do you use?

Our Answer – We use Adobe Photoshop CS, Illustrator CS, Acrobat Pro CS, InDesign CS (print), Adobe/Macromedia Dreamweaver MX, Flash MX Pro, and more.

30. Question – Is your code optimized using open standards?

Our Answer – Yes, we adhere to the W3C standards for XHTML, CSS Standards and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. Our CMS runs as an n-tier web service model using compliant XML as a middle layer and standards based XSLT for templates.

31. Question – In what browsers do you design and test your sites to view correctly?

Our Answer – We have a test lab with multiple operating systems and browsers. Your site will be tested to work properly on the most widely used browsers:

- Windows IE 6
- Windows IE 7
- Windows Netscape 7.2/Firefox 1.0, 1.5
- Macintosh Safari
- Macintosh Netscape/Fire Fox
- Lynx (to assure compliance with screen readers)

The above browsers represent 99% of all browsers currently used. If you have special needs, we can develop for additional browsers at your request.

32. Question - Do you build your websites to be search engine friendly?

Our Answer - Yes. E-SolBiz™ has unique page coder training and standards assure your website will maximize its search engine ranking potential. We train our coders to avoid the common mistakes that destroy search engine rankings:

Note: While building a search engine friendly site is a critical requirement, other factors must be implemented to achieve top organic search engine rankings. Link popularity, age of site, level of competition and dozens of other factors also play an important role.

33. Question - Are you able to provide Flash animation?

Our Answer – Yes, we have experienced Flash developers on staff that can create basically any kind of animation and Flash functionality you desire.

34. Question - Are you able to integrate streaming audio and video into your websites?

Our Answer - Yes.

35. Question – Are you able to develop advanced Rich Media Applications in Flash?

Our Answer – Yes, We are one of the early adopters of using Flash for advanced,.

36. Question - What other digital mediums are you proficient in?

Our Answer - We are highly proficient in multimedia CD-ROM production, pay per click ad campaigns, email marketing campaigns, banner ad creation and management, search engine optimization, and technology consulting.

37. Question - Are you able to create interactive CD-ROM presentations?

Our Answer – Yes, we have created several interactive CD-ROM presentations, which are especially effective as product demos and instructional applications.

Application/Technical (Back-End) Development

38. Are you capable of adding custom back-end functions to my site?

Our Answer - Yes. We have a custom programming department that has experience developing for virtually any type of web functionality.

Dynamic site elements are features added to informational/marketing websites to make them more interactive such as:

- Dynamic content rotation (e.g. images, banners, testimonials, news, etc)
- Online forms
- E-Mail to friend/recommend site
- Audience based content
- Site search

39. Do you work with existing 3rd party ("off-the-self") back-end applications?

Our Answer – Yes. For many common online application needs there are often some very good existing applications such as forums, content management systems, blogs, online polls and so on. Most applications can be licensed for under \$500. Many are even free, developed under open source or similar licenses. Considering some of these applications would cost tens of thousands of dollars to custom build, off-the-self applications can be a great way to save considerable cost.

Our primary goal is to produce the best return for the lowest cost. While off-the-self apps have preferable licensing costs, they have limitations that may limit your revenue potential and increase long-term costs.

40. Do you customize existing 3rd party applications?

Our Answer - Yes. We have customized several off-the-self applications. Typical customizations include adding features, making app pages search engine friendly and enabling custom skins.

We even offer several enhanced versions of customized 3rd party apps for free, including:

- E-Commerce (os Commerce) - We have added over 50 features, made it search engine friendly and enabled custom skins
- Blog (Word Press) – We have multiple plug-in to aid in corporate blogging and blog marketing
- Forum (phpBB) - Customized to make it search engine friendly.
- Groupware (php Collab) - Added timesheet tracking

41. Do you have any pre-built (off-the-self) scripts you provide to clients or offer to other webmasters?

Our Answer - Yes. We have a suite of top-rated scripts we install on all client sites.

42. Question – What web application development environment and servers do you use?

Our Answer – Over the years our developers have worked with all major web enabled languages (Perl/CGI, C++/CGI, PHP, Java/J2EE, ASP/.net), most popular databases (MySQL, MS SQL Server, Access,) and even several legacy systems (IBM mainframes, AS400, Lotus Notes/Domino and HPUnix). We have developed on Windows and Unix/Linux platforms. Our internal staff primarily develops using the open source platforms of PHP, MySQL and Apache. We have partners that are experienced in .NET and PHP.

43. How do you assure my application will meet all my requirements while remaining on budget and on time?

Our Answer – We will work with you to define all high-level requirements before the project begins. For all significant custom programming projects we also do full detailed functional specifications (specs). From these documents we will provide a fixed price and timeline quote.

44. How do you assure my application is bug free?

Our Answer – We have a proven, formalized testing process that uses three types of testing to assure your app is bug free.

- Unit Testing
- Functional Testing
- User Acceptance

45. Question - What sets your application development apart from other development companies?

Our Answer – There are many items but the two most important is efficiency and ability to handle enterprise class applications. We have built an advanced framework to streamline development of most web applications. While most developers have to start from scratch, we have a large system of pre-programmed, pre-tested modules that gives us a significant head start.

Hosting

46. Question - Do you provide hosting? Is it in-house or do you outsource to another company and if so why them?

Our answer – We provide dedicated and shared hosting on both Linux and Windows platforms. We own servers that are managed 24x7 in a world-class hosting facility in U.S.A and for that you can view www.esol servers.net for detailed hosting and domain name registration packages.

47. Question – Do I have to host with you?

Our answer – No. Typically, over 50% of our clients do host with us. Some clients chose to keep their existing hosting companies and some host on-site. We can work with any scenario.

48. Does your hosting offer a control panel to allow me to manage all my web services.

Our answer – All our shared hosting plans come with cPanel. cPanel is a browser based system that integrates web hosting services. It will allow you to manage e-mail configuration, databases, several popular web applications, server statistics and much more.

49. Question - How much space and/or bandwidth do I get with my hosting account?

Our answer – Our standard business plan comes with 100MB of space and 1GB of monthly transfer, more than enough for most business websites. You can increase these for a nominal charge. To learn more about our web hosting: <http://www.esol servers.net>

50. Question - Do you handle my domain name registration or transfer? Do you charge extra for this?

Our answer – Yes, we take care of your domain name registration at no extra cost.

51. Question - Do I own the domain name used for my site?

Our Answer - If we acquire the domain name for you, ownership will be transferred to you upon final payment for your website.

52. Question – What steps do you take to prevent loss of my site due to server failure?

Our Answer - All of our servers are in a state-of-the-art hosting facility where they are continuously monitored for problems. If there is ever a problem with a server, techs are available 24 hours a day to respond and correct the problem.

Our shared servers all come equipped with RAID1 mirrored hard drives. This means that there are two hard drives that provide real-time backup of each other's data.

53. Question - What is the guaranteed uptime for your hosting service?

Our Answer – 99.9% guaranteed uptime for shared hosting. We can custom engineer dedicated hosting solutions for more demanding needs.

E-Commerce

54. Question – In what types of e-commerce are you proficient?

Our Answer – We have provided solutions for all levels of e-commerce including:

- Simple one-click purchases through Pay-Pal and other credit card gateways
- Economical off-the-shelf shopping cart software
- Advanced custom e-commerce solutions

55. Question – If my needs can be fulfilled with a standard off-the-shelf shopping cart which ones do you recommend/have experience with?

Our Answer – We have worked with many of the webs most popular shopping carts such as OSCommerce and others. We also have developed our own e-Commerce solution that integrates with our CMS. If you have an existing shopping cart or have a strong preference for one, we will most likely be able to support it.

56. Question - Do you provide seamless credit card processing with SSL security?

Our Answer – Yes.

57. Question - Does your merchant account service provide direct deposit of funds into my bank account?

Our Answer – Yes, it does.

58. Question - How secure is the transaction process provided?

Our Answer - The entire transaction process is secured with 128-bit SSL (Secure Socket Layer), the strongest commercially available encryption.

59. Question - Does the card processing system provide address and CCV2 verification?

Our Answer – Yes. Address verification and CCV2 reduces the chance of fraud and charge-backs.

60. Question - Does your shopping cart provide a secure administration system where I can change prices, add, and delete products?

Our Answer – Yes, it does.

61. Question - Is your shopping cart search engine friendly?

Our Answer – Yes. We are working on it.

Marketing

62. Question - Do you have a proven history of success with search engine marketing (SEM)?

Our Answer - Yes, we have done this for our own firms and for few of our clients

63. Question - How many websites have you done SEM for?

Our Answer – Virtually all the website we have built since 2003 have had some level of SEM. We have also done campaigns for sites we did not create.

64. Question - In what kind of search engine marketing do you have expertise?

Our Answer – We have expertise with all phases of both organic search and sponsored PPC listings including:

- Keyword Analysis
- On Page Optimization
- Link Building

- Directory Registrations
- Sponsored link copy writing
- PPC bid management
- ROI analysis

The search engines offer a diverse mix of tools to help market your site.

65. Question - Are you able to guarantee a high ranking in the search engines with your search engine optimization strategy?

Our Answer – We do not offer a guarantee for placement. Often, “Money Back Guaranteed Placement” is a sign of a scam. The search engine marketing industry is full of scams and false promises, we recommend everybody read Google’s guide whenever you are selecting a search engine optimizer. Read Google’s Guide: <http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?answer=35291&topic=8524> We do offer our clients traffic guarantees, which are superior to placement guarantees, for selected types of campaigns. Inquire with an project manager about traffic guarantees.

66. Question – Will you explain to how you are optimizing our site and what our money is paying for?

Our Answer – We are always open about our techniques and whether we are using organic (free) optimization or if we are paying for sponsored links.

Many consultants want to keep their clients in the dark how they do SEM either to maintain the client’s reliance on them or to hide the fact they don’t really know what they are doing. Our approach is very different, we want educated clients because the more you know about SEM the more successful our projects will be together.

67. Question – Do you strictly adhere to each search engine guidelines to assure my site does not get penalized for spamming?

Our Answer – Yes. We always follow established search engine guidelines to assure we do not damage the value our clients have built into their domain names.

Many other firms like to push the ethical limits of SEO or even blazingly break them. These techniques can work in the short term, but will eventually result in your domain being penalized or removed completely from the search engines. Make sure you

know how your site is being optimized. Read Google’s Ethical SEO Guidelines:

<http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?answer=35769&topic=8456#quality>

68. Question – Will your website search engine optimization harm the usability or professionalism of our site?

Our Answer – E-SolBiz™ prides itself on being one of only a few optimization companies that can achieve quality results without diminishing the integrity of the site.

Many optimization firms are all too willing to sacrifice the professionalism (human factors) of your site for the sake of making machine (search engine) readable pages. We do not resort to over used optimization tactics such as keyword stuffing that leads to grammatically incorrect and unnatural sounding page copy or redesigning pages for the sake of keyword placement that often compromises the sites creative design.

69. Question – What other ways can you help me market my website?

Our Answer – We have experience with an array of alternative online marketing channels such as banners ads, affiliate programs, online press releases, community building, newsletters, sweepstakes, and more.

E-SolBiz™ also has the ability to manage traditional ad agency offerings. We have experienced logo/corporate identity, print (brochures, mailers, presentation materials, and print ads), large graphics (banners, tradeshow booths & displays) designers in house.

Maintenance

70. Question – How will my site be maintained?

Our Answer – We plan site maintenance around your needs. Contrary to industry trends, we will enable you to maintain your own website if you wish. Often we co-manage sites with our clients. The client typically does their own copy changes and request we do more advance changes. Of course if you prefer, we will be available to make changes on an hourly or project basis. Our fees are \$7/hr for graphics, text

changes and programming modifications. E-SolBiz™ also sign a maintenance contract according to client demands and it's vary from 100US\$ to 1000US\$ per month or quarter.

71. Question - Do you provide Phone and email support?

Our Answer – Yes we are providing phone and email support by number ++ 92 – 321 - 4400461 and haroon@esolbiz.com.