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## **Top Ten Most Common Miscommunication Problems between Web Developers and Clients**

The most common barrier to effective web development is surprisingly not technology, but rather miscommunication. Speaking to a web developer is not always easy. People have different expectations and people have different backgrounds. Many times it is hard to bridge the 'technical gap' that exists between clients and web developers. This list is very useful and comes from one of Francis' speeches made in 2005.

Before tackling the problems themselves, let's first go back to the basics of communication - in the exchange of ideas. For both parties - the client and the web solutions company - one cannot stress strongly enough the importance of communicating in a CLEAR and SPECIFIC manner. A lot of problems can be avoided so long as everyone knows what is expected from both parties.

Of course, that is not the sole cause of miscommunication. Miscommunication occurs due to different factors. Sometimes, these originate from the client side, sometimes from the web solutions company and of course, sometimes from both.

### **Problem No. 1. Not understanding the limits of technology**

**Many people have far too little understanding on what is possible to do and at what price.** Due to this the expectations can sometimes be a bit too high on the clients side and completely different on the web developers side.. This is also where many clients make a related mistake by referring to Yahoo and saying; "Yahoo, Google or eBay already have this function, why can't you do it for me cheaply?"

Well, you need to consider how much Yahoo spent on R&D costs, how much they invested to develop that functionality **It costs money to develop!! Are you willing to spend that money?**

**SOLUTION:** Study and research to get a better idea of what can be done at what cost. In today's world, we are all busy but it is really in your best interest to take this time to educate yourself.

### **Problem No. 2. Not understanding what things cost**

Let's face it. You can't buy an eBay system for US\$1,000 (*Not even in India or China....*)

**Often clients have a very different idea on how much things should cost when creating web sites.** This is often due to the fact that the internet has only been around for 10-15 years. The technology hasn't been here long enough for people to have had enough time to get a better understanding on how the internet works and the



work that goes into creating good web solutions.

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**SOLUTION:** Same as No. 1. Study and research to get a better idea of the cost of things. Again, it is really in your best interest to take this time to educate yourself. Also remember the old adage: "you get what you pay for..."

### **Problem No. 3. Thinking Web developers are psychics (or that they should be)**

Ok, that was a lame attempt at humor. But I kid you not when I say that. **Clients often think that web developers will immediately understand what their company does. Or that they should, if they are good web developers.**

That is, simply said, flawed logic. One has nothing to do with the other. Web developers don't run your company, **you do**. Oftentimes, web solutions companies aren't even in the same field with the client's. Therefore, Web developers can't even *guess* what your company does or how your company operates. **YOU** know your company better than anyone. **You must try your best** to teach the web developers thoroughly about your company for them to **understand** what your needs are and how to help you.

**SOLUTION:** Assign one of your staff *that really knows your company* to share with the web developers how things work and what the company's goal is. If you choose the right person to communicate with the web developers, you will bring up the likelihood of having a roaring success. If you do a poor job of sharing this information or the web developers aren't listening, chances are, things will **not** come out the way you intended it to.

### **Problem No. 4. Using too much "Techno-babble"**

**Many web developers use too much 'Techno' when they talk - meaning they use language that is very specific to the internet and very technical.** Web developers, without realizing it, sometimes go over the head of the client by using too much technical terminology that leaves the client lost and confused. This is not helpful at all. One should at all times try to speak at the same level as the customer, using language and analogies that the non-technical customer can relate to and easily understand.

**SOLUTION:** If you feel the web developer speaks in too much techno-babble, ask them to find another way to explain it to you. If you have to, switch web developer! **Clear communication** between the web developers and the client, as well as, having the same expectations **is key to any successful web project.**



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### **Problem No. 5. Something I call the "Prepackaged Mentality"**

**Oftentimes, to prevent taking on additional work or having to deal with too many details, web companies try to fit the client's web site into a pre-packaged solution using templates.** This in and of itself isn't bad, but in doing so one bypasses an important detail. That which states that the *most effective way of selling on the internet is to personalize your web site to reach your target audience.*

Many web sites are generalized and try to reach everybody. But the reality is - you can't be everything to everybody. The business owners who are truly successful on the web, normally, have very specific products or services that target a niche market.

**SOLUTION:** Make sure the web company you hire makes your site as **personal as possible**. As you're writing, pretend that you are talking to the customer face-to-face. Present your web site in such a way that the visitor feels like he just walked into a store in his hometown. **Also, stay focused on your target customer (the one who would be interested in "your" product.)**

### **Problem No. 6. Who is correcting the spelling? Who is doing the translations?**

**People misunderstanding responsibilities.** Often, it hasn't been clearly defined who is supposed to take care of details like this. But in all honesty, clients should let the web developers do what they are good at, mainly building the web solution you need. Providing content, checking spelling, doing translations are the tasks of the client unless you *pay extra* to the web developers to do this for you. **Just don't assume it is included in the original price.**

**SOLUTION:** Make sure *everything is clear* from the beginning on what everybody's expectations are

### **Problem No. 7. Will web developers transfer all my content into the web site?**

**Again this is about misunderstanding responsibilities.** Maybe the web developers will agree to transfer your 400 pages of content from your old web site to the new one. From a 'static website' to a 'dynamic website'. From word documents into web page format, or maybe they won't. Don't assume it is included in the original price. There may be extra charges.

**SOLUTION:** **Again,** make sure *everything is clear* from the beginning on what everybody's expectations are



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### **Problem No. 8. When to make the payments....**

**Many times there is confusion on when to pay especially since building a web site or providing a web solution doesn't take one day...** It is important to be a little bit flexible here because building something like a web site takes teamwork - *that between you and the web developers*. E.g. the web developers have built the web site but not added an image you requested on your 'About us' page. You haven't provided the image because the CEO of the company has not approved it. The CEO is on business in Europe and will be back after 3 weeks.....So now the argument begins...*is the web site completed or not?* You'll say no and the web developers will say yes because they have finished building but they can't add the last piece because you haven't provided it.

On the other hand the web developers sometimes request payment when it is obvious that many parts of the web site are not done yet so where does one draw the line? **The answer to is to not assume anything and be ready to be a little bit flexible**

**SOLUTION:** Be clear ahead of time about expected terms and conditions before signing a contract and **be ready to be a little bit flexible**. A good way is to have both parties agree to dates and stages in project time line. E.g. After the web developer has reached stage 1 in building the web site he is entitled to 30% of the full payment. After stage 2 he gets another 20% and so on....

### **Problem No. 9. Who is maintaining the web site?**

**Just because web developers created your new web site doesn't mean they intend to maintain it for you.** Client's need to ask web developers this. Make sure they are willing to do this after the web site is done and also ASK about their charges. Different companies charge differently

**SOLUTION:** Make sure you find out ahead of time what things cost. E.g. you can ask "if you update one image for me - how much will that cost?" or "Do you have a monthly maintenance service at a lower fee that makes this cheaper for me instead of me having to pay each time I want to make a change?"

### **Problem No. 10. Varying Expectations**

**People always have different expectations when speaking to each other.** You may have asked the developer to give you a green background. Do you know how many different kinds of green there are in the spectrum? You have green-green, pine green, dark green, light green, yellow green and so on. The developer gave you a blue-green one instead. The developer says "Blue-green is *still* green...." You may or may not agree. Or worse,



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the developer gave you blue and claims that "Blue is almost like green - they're almost the same." THIS is where patience really is a virtue.

On the other hand the developer may have given you **exactly what you wanted** from start to finish but now your boss says that he feels the design is *almost* what he wanted but not exactly so he wants to change the design even though it is a bit late in the game to do so.

**SOLUTION & SUMMARY:** Communication is a two-way street. You need to: talk, talk talk and talk again. Spend time with each other to make sure everybody (both client and developers) are on the same page. But also understand that time costs money and don't expect the developer to let you waste his time with a thousand changes unless you are willing to pay extra.

If you really want to make changes make sure to guide the developer in the right direction. Be constructive. Don't say "I don't like the design, make a new one" Instead say "This is what I like about the design and this is what I don't like. Please change the following parts...." Again, everything goes back to communicating always CLEARLY and SPECIFICALLY.

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