Web Design Profits
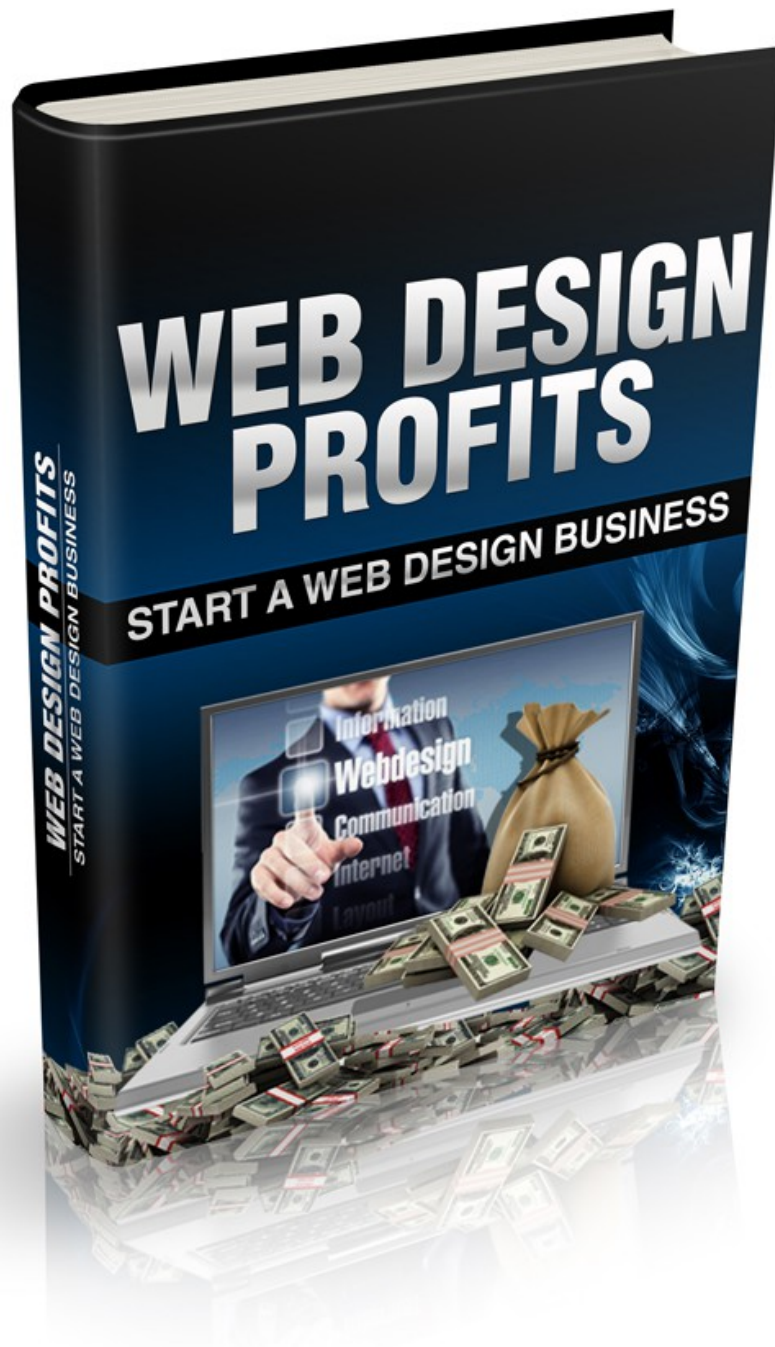
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Introduction

It's no secret that running a web design business can be extremely profitable and lucrative. It can also be a very interesting business to be involved with because the work is so varied and you'll have opportunities to work on websites for a wide variety of different clients. As such, no two projects will ever be the same.

So - a web design business can be fun AND very profitable.

Chances are that if you're reading this eBook right now then you're already interested in starting a web design business, so I probably don't need to convince you too much on why it could be a good idea...

Perhaps you've messed around quite a bit designing websites for you and your buddies and want to turn it into a money-earning business?

Perhaps at the moment you haven't charged anybody for anything; it's all been for fun - but you can see an opportunity to make it into a real business?

On the other hand you might have no real experience but can see the profit opportunities that exist in this area. If that's you then that's absolutely fine but obviously you WILL need to learn how to actually design websites because - erm - that's what a web designer does :)

In this report I'm going to assume that you already know how to design a website. We're going to concentrate on how to turn your skill into a business, market yourself and overcome any problems you may face.

A common issue you might have right now is a lack of confidence.

"I can design websites but am I really any good?" you might say.

"Can I really charge money for what I'm capable of?"

If this sounds like you then the first thing you need to do is remind yourself that if you can design a website then you ARE a web designer. Believe me, most people don't have a clue how to make and upload even one simple webpage, let alone a whole website.

and if you want to get better and grow your design skills then the only way to do it is dive right in!

You could also consider taking a web design class or two, and/or get certification.

If you're still not convinced that you cut the mustard then ask anyone you've designed a website for in the past (even if you didn't charge any money) for a testimonial. Chances are they'll be happy to do that and if they say nice things it'll boost your confidence, as well as giving you something to show to potential future clients. A good testimonial can go a long way to helping you win new business.

So - without further ado let's get into the bulk of the report and show you how to profit from being a web designer...

Preparing for Success

Before you do anything else you firstly need to make some important decisions, as well as putting a couple of basic but key things into place.

Decide What Services You Are Going To Offer

So - you're starting a web design business - but what exactly are you going to offer?

- HTML websites? Wordpress websites? eCommerce websites?
- Perhaps you'll specialise in designing websites for a particular type of business, sector, industry or niche?
- Will you offer just design and build? or will you also offer maintenance?
- Will you expect your clients to provide the text content - or could you also offer an additional copywriting service?
- What about additional services, such as providing mobile versions or smartphone apps?

The best thing to do first is make a list of all the skills and experience you currently have and decide what capabilities you have.

In addition, you should think about whether you can partner with other people and fill in the gaps of skills you lack. For example you might find that there's a strong demand for a copywriting service to go with the web design, but you might not have the time or skills to offer a copywriting service. Joining forces with a copywriter could boost business for both of you.

At this early stage it's also important to do you research and find out what other web designers are offering and what people in the market actually want. You might find for example that there is a great demand for web design in a particular niche and that by specializing in that niche you could make more money.

I would highly recommend spending several days just doing research!

Pricing

You'll also need to decide exactly how much you are going to charge for your services and how.

Will you charge an hourly rate? or will you charge a flat rate - for example per page?

Again it's worth thoroughly researching the market and finding out what your competitors are charging.

Put Together a Portfolio

One of the most important things you can have as a web designer is a portfolio that you can show to potential clients. After all, when people approach you - or you approach them - you want to be able to show them exactly what you can do and really impress them with your capabilities.

A portfolio needs to do two things:

1. Show off strong visual images of websites you have designed in the past, together with a description of what each project involved and a live web link.

2. Comments from clients (testimonials)

When people are looking for a web designer they want to be able to see exactly what you're capable of - and a strong portfolio of examples will go a long way towards winning clients.

In addition, potential clients will want to check that other people have been happy with your work. Testimonials are so powerful because people tend to believe what other people say about you far more than what you say yourself!

Don't have any previous clients?

If you're looking to start a web design business then chances are you've designed websites for people in the past, even if you didn't charge any money.

A portfolio doesn't need to contain paying clients - it could just contain examples of websites you've designed for family and friends, together with their comments. After all, potential clients won't know they were friends or family!

Another option is to contact people you know who might need a website and offer to work for free. Just explain to them that you're building up a portfolio and that the only thing you want in return is their testimonial to put into your portfolio.

Yes I know it's not good to be working for free. You're not entering into this venture just for the fun of it - you want to make money - BUT working for free is a great way to start and build up your experience.

The bottom line is you need at least 3 or 4 examples of websites you have designed which you can show to potential clients.

Once you've got that then you're in a much stronger position to move forward.

Website

Obviously you are setting yourself up as a web designer - so you're going to need... you guessed it... a website!

Your website needs to do a number of things:

- Tell people about yourself, your background, skills, qualifications etc.
- Show people examples of websites you have designed
- Provide testimonials
- List and explain the different services you offer
- Provide people with a way to contact you (make it obvious!)

Not only does your website provide a way to find potential clients - for example people finding you through Google - it also provides you with somewhere you can send people to when they approach you in other ways and they want to get more information on your services.

Remember this is your chance to impress - so make sure your website has a strong visual impact.

Brochure/Portfolio

In addition to your website it's a good idea to have a document version of your brochure and portfolio. You might want to have a printed version that you can hand or post to people, plus a PDF version you can easily email to people or have them download from your website.

Getting Clients

It's a dream to have clients waiting around, ready to throw money at you for what you do so well - web design. But the reality is it's not so easy to get the traffic, the clients, until you become established.

Along with learning the technical aspects of your chosen profession, you also need to learn how to get clients.

Someday word of mouth will take off and that alone may be enough for you to sustain a thriving business. But you've got to start your successful business with your attention firmly tuned into learning how to get clients.

Freelance Sites

An extremely popular way of finding clients for your web design business is by advertising yourself and bidding for jobs through one of the many freelancing websites.

In essence, these website provide a way for freelancers and clients to find each other. They generally work in two ways:

Clients advertise what they are looking for and then freelancers bid/apply to undertake the project.

These websites also give you the opportunity to have a profile page where clients can find you. Often people won't bother posting up their projects to the website. If they are looking for a freelancer to undertake a project they will simply contact people directly and then select somebody based on the response they get back.

Let's take a look at some of the more popular websites you can join…

Freelancer (*freelancer.com*)

Freelancer.com is a pretty well known and popular freelance website.

The site covers a wide range of different job categories - not just web design. Examples include Writing and Content, Data Entry and Admin, Sales and Marketing, Translation. etc

For the full list go to http://www.freelancer.com/job/

To browse through the latest web design jobs go to http://www.freelancer.com/jobs/Website-Design/1/

At any given time you'll see a huge variety of different projects that individuals and businesses need freelancers to work on.

Other Freelancing sites

Most freelancing sites work in a similar way.

Whilst not definitive, here are some more sites where you could obtain work as a web designer.

http://www.odesk.com
http://www.elance.com
http://www.paypeopleperhour.com
www.ifreelance.com
www.fiverr.com
http://www.freelancercareers.com
http://www.guru.com

Most freelancing sites will not charge you to join. They earn their money by charging a fee to their client and by retaining a percentage of your rates/bid price and the Clients fee price.

Be wary of any site that asks you for a membership fee to join, or insists that you purchase their products.

Forums

Internet forums can be an excellent place to find potential clients.

Some forums have a special section where you can directly advertise your services - for example the Warrior Forum which is a community of internet marketers and online business owners.

There is the Warriors For Hire section where you can advertise your services:

http://www.warriorforum.com/warriors-hire/

and there is also the Wanted – Members Looking To Hire You section:

http://www.warriorforum.com/wanted-members-looking-hire-you/

Here you can find people looking to hire web designers and then send them a message to register your interest in undertaking the project.

Aside from using forums to advertise your services and look for jobs, just being a member and active part of the community can also be of great help in finding potential clients...

The key is to join in the conversations and demonstrate your knowledge of web design.

Let's say you are a member of a forum for small business owners. One day somebody posts a message saying they are after some advice from forum members in regards to what platform is best to develop their website on. You could post a reply talking about the advantages and disadvantages of Wordpress V HTML and make a recommendation based on their needs.

Just joining in conversations can really help in finding potential clients. If people can see from reading your posts that you're knowledgeable about web design you might find that people start to private message you and ask about your web design service.

Some forums also allow you to have a signature link at the bottom of your posts where you can advertise your web design service and link to your website. Again, people browsing through the forum will see your posts and some of them may decide to click onto your website to find out more about you and your services.

Remember - show off your knowledge. Join in the conversations and make people see you as an "expert" in web design.

and if you don't think you're an expert then just remember that an "expert" is simply somebody who knows more about the subject than the other person :)

Your Website

Many people looking for a web designer will head straight to Google and find freelance web designers that way.

If you can make your website rank well in the search engines then that's definitely a good way to find clients, although that can be very hard for the most competitive keywords.

Social Media

Social media can provide an excellent avenue for finding potential clients. Quite honestly we could devote an entire book to marketing through social media - but at least make sure you're active on Twitter and have a Facebook Fan page for your web design business.

Approach Web Design Agencies

Many web design agencies work with freelancers, so it can definitely be worth approaching some of them and telling them about your services. If you've prepared your portfolio in the way we discussed earlier then you've got something to show them straight away.

Word of Mouth

Once you have established yourself then you should start to find that you begin to build up a positive reputation.

Don't underestimate the power of a good word about a freelancer.

The fact is that if people are happy with your service then they will tell others. News of a good freelancer can soon start to spread.

Agreeing and Managing the Project

So somebody has approached you and there's a potential project on the table...

That's great - but before you begin work for somebody there are several things that you need to agree, consider and arrange. This will ensure that the project goes smoothly for both parties and that expectations are realistic and managed.

Time and cost

One of the first thing's to think about is roughly how long it is going to take you to complete the work - and how much you are charging accordingly.

Before you do anything you need to give your client an idea of how you are charging (e.g. $30 an hour), approximately how much work time it will take (e.g. 30 hours), a rough idea of the cost (e.g. 30 hours @ $30 per hour = $900), and when you will have it completed by (a date).

You need to thoroughly asses and weigh up the project. This will take into account things such as the complexity and nature of the project and how much work you have to do for other clients. After all, a particular website might take you 3 full days to complete, however if you've got four other similar projects on the go too then it's probably unrealistic to tell your client that you can have it done by the end of the week.

Remember also that the actual time it takes you to complete the project can change quite considerably from what you first expect. It's therefore a good idea to give estimates, rather than figures that are set in stone. You don't want to agree with a client that you're going to charge for 2 days work and then find when you begin that it involves a lot more than you expect and will actually take 7 days of work. If you've agreed that you're only charging for 16 hours (2 days) of work then things could be problematic.

Give as good an estimate as you can and agree it with your client - but it can be a good idea to make it clear that things can change.

Non Disclosure Agreements

In some cases your client might ask you to sign a None Disclosure Agreement for the project. This simply means that you agree not to disclose details of the project or its contents to anybody else – and it is usually used when something is confidential and where disclosure could lead to a loss of business for the client.

Taking payment

Before you begin work, it is often standard practice to take some of the payment upfront. This protects yourself because obviously you don't want to be in a situation where you've spent several days developing a website for a particular client and then they don't pay you for it.

By taking an initial payment upfront (typically 50% of the total cost of the project) then you are at least guaranteeing yourself some of the money. The rest of the money is then paid to you when you have completed all of the work and the client is happy with it.

Be clear about what your client wants

Talk to the client in detail and find out exactly what they are looking for. If you can, agree a rough design before you begin work and use the information you've uncovered to influence your design - example particular existing websites that the client particularly likes, color preferences, layout preferences etc.

Keep in close contact

Remember that the key to a successful project is good communication, so it can be extremely important to stay in close contact with your client at all times.

Are You Planning For Success?

Of course you dream of success with your web design business, but do you plan for it?

If you're not ready for it, success can trip you up and affect you regarding your quality of work, customer expectations, time crunch, etc.

Plan ahead:

- Take time to work *on* your business rather than *in* it
- Have subcontractors ready to go when you have overload
- Have systems in place for - training, ordering supplies, etc.
- Make sure you have the latest and greatest equipment
- Assemble your supporting cast - tech experts, proofreaders, marketing/social media people, accountant, etc.

Set aside time every day to work on your business

It can be easy to get a job and just get rolling, and then quickly move onto the next thing to get it off of your to do list. If you don't set aside time every day to handle marketing and promotional tasks to keep the work coming in and the clients happy, then you're constantly going to be working in the business to get work done—and then one day, not have any work left to do.

Plus, without taking the time to work on your business, you'll be caught stagnated, moving from one project to the next, with no clear vision of where you want to go, and how you're going to get there.

Even if it's just 30 minutes to an hour a day, work on your marketing, meet with your contractors, etc. Take care of what needs to be taken care of in your business outside of the projects you are working on to keep it alive.

Network

You never know when you're going to be too busy to handle an onslaught of work. You may go from twiddling your thumbs drumming up your own work to so busy you can't breathe in two seconds flat.

Rather than turning work away, network with other designers and experts you trust, who can be there to support you when you're too busy to do all the work yourself.

Sure, you could subcontract to just anyone, but you have to remember your business and your reputation are on the line. Your clients don't need to know you're not the one doing the work, but that means you must know who is doing the work.

Create small projects on the freelance bidding sites to help you get your own business marketing/design/promotion handled. This way, you can meet with and interview several people before you decide who you would trust to handle your overflow. Since these platforms allow for hourly and fixed jobs, you have a great deal of flexibility built in.

Systems Make Things Simple

Create systems to keep things as simple as possible. Whether it's a filing system, a system that automatically labels and archives emails by client, automates your billing, etc. these systems can save you valuable time that you can reinvest back into your business in other ways.

- Create training videos with a screen casting software and upload them to a private server, where you can share the link with any new contractors you bring on board.
- Use a service like Shoeboxed to store all your receipts to make filing your taxes at the end of the year easier
- Use a service like Podio to simplify your project management among teams of two or more people working on a project

- Use Google Drive to create and share a variety of documents with multiple people.

In order for a system to save you time, however, it needs to simple. Regularly analyze your systems to see if there is anything you can do simplify them and make them easier for everyone involved.

Keep your equipment up to date

Computers and software are constantly improving, and for you to stay on the cutting edge of your field, you need to be up to date as often as possible. While you don't necessarily have to buy a new computer every six months, make sure you keep all your core programs up to date, even if it means upgrading them more often than you'd like. Keeping things up to date will save you the hassle of file incompatibility, and ensure that your system is running at its best at all times.

Your supporting cast

As a small business owner, you're going to wear a lot of hats throughout the day—marketing, design, social media, search engine optimization, bookkeeper/accountant, etc. The simple fact is that when you are just starting out, you may need to play all of these roles until you can get the ball rolling. After you've established yourself in the business however, it may be time to pass those reigns to others. Some people to have alongside you in your supporting cast include:

- **Copywriter & Editor**: Hire a professional writer and editor to ensure the copy on client websites is flawless and will convert.
- **Accountant**: Hire a money expert to ensure you're making good use of your money and will keep the IRS happy.
- **Social Media Marketer:** Hire someone else to focus on your social media efforts to draw in new customers.
- **Coders:** Your focus is on design, not development. The two go hand in hand, so you'll want some coders on standby, should you need them.

Plan ahead for success to make it possible and wonderful rather than a nightmare. This normally means having systems in place and getting the necessary support.

Continuing Education

So you've set yourself up as a web designer because you've perhaps taken some design classes and you've learned on the job(s). Should you be concerned with continuing education?

Yes. Always. In these areas:

1. Keep up with the newest trends in your field.
2. Check out the newest software available to you and learn how to thoroughly use it.
3. Watch what others are doing that seem to be doing it better than you and learn from them.
4. Branch out to other areas that are related.
5. Take physical classes or learn online - formal education.
6. Teach others (you'll learn a lot that way)

Stay up to date with the trends in your field

The field of web design is always changing. As technology improves so we can load our web pages even faster, as users become even savvier, and as features become even more robust, the scope of web design continues to change. Gone are the days of looping MIDI files, and people sitting on your site for more than a few seconds to wait for it to load.

Follow the industry blogs online. Subscribe to industry related magazines. Strive to constantly stay informed of what's going on in your industry. If there's something you don't understand, commit to taking the time to learn more about it. At the very least, you need to know how these changes impact your business and its practices. If something in particular will affect your clients, make sure you understand it well enough to inform them of it.

Check out the newest software available and learn how to use it

Think outside your normal software box. If you've gotten used to using a particular version of a program, check and see if there is a new version available. It may mean taking some time to learn how to use the new one, but most of the time, the additional features offer flexibility and time savings compared to the previous versions.

Don't limit yourself to one software provider. Adobe® is the industry "standard" for most web design projects, but they are not the only one in the game. Though Adobe may work for one project, it may not be the best suited for another. Staying up to date with software options and learning them will allow you to be able to choose what works best for you and your client on a project-by-project basis.

Watch what others are doing and learn from them

Just like you should be following the top industry blogs, look for the top web designers in the industries. Whether freelance or agency, watch what the most successful people are doing, and emulate them. You don't have to copy them (in fact, don't because that opens up a world of copyright infringement legal trouble among other things) but you can watch what they're doing and adapt it to your business to improve yours.

Reach out to them. Ask questions. See if you can buy a little of their time for a consult. Always, always, strive to know more and to do better.

Extend your services into other related areas

Web design can branch into many other related things, including, but not limited to:

- WordPress, Drupal, Joomla and other content management system (CMS) work. Delving into these CMSs can lead to work not only as a web designer with these platforms, but also as a theme designer.
- Coding: Learn to code things like PHP and JavaScript to develop themes and plugins for these CMSs and custom functions for your clients' websites.
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO) writing: The content on a website matters as much as the code used to create it. As everyone races to try to rank at the top of Google for their particular niche, understanding how this works can help you develop "turn key" website packages for clients.
- Graphic Design: Use those design skills for more than web, and design graphics for print work, too.

Take classes

Whether in person at your local small business center or community college, or online, adding formal education is never a bad idea. These classes have to change pace quickly as the industry changes, so make it a habit to look at course offerings at least once or twice a year. If there's a skill you want to strengthen, jump in and do it!

Teach other people

You will learn a lot through teaching someone else, but I'm not saying you have to go in and teach a classroom full of people who will eventually become your competition.

As a web designer, you may have clients who want to have you do everything on their website for them. But, you may also have someone who knows what they want to do after you're finished with building their website. In those cases, they may ask you to teach them how to do a few critical tasks, so they can maintain the website after you're done with it, and you can move on to other clients and projects.

Continuing education is a smart idea in any field, especially one that is constantly changing. Lest you fall behind, keep up to speed by learning the new and the better.

Making More Money With Extra Services

Perhaps you love to design websites and you've made it your business. That's cool. Now let's look at ways you can supplement the income you get from one-off web design orders.

- Offer hosting, either through your reseller account or as an affiliate for Hostgator or Bluehost. You'll earn monthly income either way.
- Offer set up - getting the site you designed up and live on the hosting account.
- Offer webmaster services - tweaking, changing, adding to the website.
- Offer graphics packages they can purchase for upcoming content they want to post.
- Offer banner ads you design for them.
- Offer to create sales pages or squeeze pages.
- Offer a discount coupon for their next web site design to stimulate repeat business.
- Make use of affiliate programs for web designers
- Offer content packages to keep their website up to date with fresh content

Hosting Services

If you don't want the hassle of creating and maintain a reseller account to host your clients' websites on, become an affiliate with a few different hosts, and recommend the one that will work best for your client's needs.

Maintenance Services

Offer to have the client pay you a retainer to keep you on board in case something needs to be changed or updated later. You can set this as a flat monthly rate for X amount of work, or a flat rate per update… whatever works best for you, or whatever you think the client would be most okay with.

Graphics Packages

You can do this in a number of ways. You can either offer to create X number of custom graphics at a discounted price, as a bundle with their website, or you can work on a number of generic "stock" graphic type graphics in your spare time and then put these together to offer for sale all the time, to anyone. Then, for your website clients, you can offer those at a discounted price compared to what people who are not your website customers would pay. For exclusivity, you can limit the number of times each package is sold, or you can sell them an unlimited number of times. A key trick is to offer these stock graphics in a number of color schemes so your customers can choose the one that works best for them. If you want, you can also include the source files so that clients can edit them to their liking, or you can offer to edit them for a small additional fee.

Banner Ad Design

Banner Ads are still everywhere. If your client plans on advertising his products or services on other people's websites, offer to design a banner ad package that includes a number of designs in various sizes. This way, the graphics are ready for the advertisers to choose from.

You can offer this as a service to people who are not already your web design clients, and then offer it as a discounted "add on" service for people who are interested in your web design service.

This is an excellent add on for anyone who will be running an affiliate program for their products and services, because they will want to be sure their affiliates have the marketing materials they need to be able to make the sale.

Sales Pages

Offer to build sales pages to help your clients' products and services convert. These can be pages with or without content.

Discount Coupon

If you think your client will be in the market for another web design later, and you want to increase the chance of the client coming back to you instead of going to another provider, offer a discount coupon. This way, they'll save money on the next website you build for them, and you will get repeat business.

Referral Program

As an extension of the discount program, this is an alternative for someone who will not need more than one website. You can develop a referral program that will encourage them to provide you as a recommendation to friends and family who may also need web design.

For example, "For every customer you refer to me, I'll give you X% discount on future website updates, X% discounts on content for your website, X% discount for graphics, etc. and your referral will get X% off or X bonus for free."

Feel free to adjust the terms and conditions of your referral program to what will work best for you, in terms of money and in time. You want to make sure you are still getting paid appropriately, or else you could be working yourself into the ground for pennies on the dollar.

Make use of affiliate programs for web designers

We've already talked about how to make hosting work, either as an affiliate or a reseller, but there are plenty of other affiliate programs out there for web designers, too. If you specialize in WordPress, you can become an affiliate for the major theme frameworks, such as Thesis, Genesis, and Headway. You can recommend these your clients as a framework on which you build their site— particularly if they want something that will be easy for them to manage after you have setup the initial structure. Then, every time a client agrees and purchases the theme, you make a bit of money from the sale.

Offer content packages

If you enjoy writing and understand how SEO works, you can offer a number of content packages. The best way to do this is say X articles of X length on the topic of your choice for $X. This way, your customers get custom, unique content, as much or as little as they need, whenever they need it. Definitely use discounts to encourage repeat business here.

You can write the content yourself, outsource it to a trusted writer, or manipulate any number of PLR content packages to suit the needs of your client.

Sure you can design a one-and-done website and go hunting for your next client, but it makes more sense to set up residual streams of income and sell further to your current customers.

Conclusion

As you have seen, running a web design business can be extremely profitable and lucrative. It can also be a very interesting business to be involved with because the work is so varied and you'll have opportunities to work on websites for a wide variety of different clients. As such, no two projects will ever be the same.

So - a web design business can be fun AND very profitable.

Some of the main keys of a successful web design business are:

1. Producing great work that impresses your clients. If you can do that you'll soon start to build a good reputation for yourself.

2. Spending time actively promoting yourself and winning new clients. Don't expect clients to find you - you've got to go out and find them yourself.

3. Offering extra services and/or partnering with others can do a lot to enhance your success.

Remember to that it's important to continually learn and develop. The web design business is constantly changing and it'll be important to keep ahead of these changes.

If you get things right then a web design business can be extremely fun and profitable.

I wish you the very best of luck with your business and I hope that this report will help you along the way.