

## 4 Web Development Practices to Save Time and Money

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It has never been more important than now to save time and money when building or maintaining a website. Here are some practices that we recommend.

### 1. Create website mock-ups.

Believe it or not, most clients will not know exactly what they want. Or perhaps, you want to show off your new concept and get feedback before investing time. As a result, it is never a good idea to start developing a website before pinning down the actual design.

To develop and finalize the design, we suggest working with a graphics program such as Adobe Photoshop or Fireworks and then exporting PDF's or JPEG's of the design to show to clients. Then, when the client realizes that the color scheme is not to their liking or that the graphics don't fit their image, changes can easily be made to the design before you've invested costly hours building a website that won't work.

### 2. Don't reinvent the wheel.

When many people approach the task of building a website or adding advanced functionality to an existing website, they often decide to build it from scratch. And while building custom code may offer greater flexibility than a preexisting solution, there are benefits that can be gained by using what's already out there.

For example, there are lots of free open source applications that you can use instead of building a custom content management system. Additionally, there are code libraries in all languages such as PHP, ASP, JavaScript, and Ruby which contain tried and true code blocks ideal for building scalable applications. And finally, there are a lot of free-to-use code snippets and widgets floating around the internet that can easily be customized to work with whatever you are planning on building.

So, instead of trying to reinvent the wheel, consider using or extending something that it already out there.

### 3. Write flexible, scalable code.

More often than not, websites will need to be redesigned or upgraded in the future. As a result, it is a good idea to build all websites with future growth in mind. This means that everything, from the CSS and HTML to the underlying dynamic coded should be able to be easily modified. So, for CSS and HTML, code should be standards compliant and CSS should be neatly organized in external files. And you should also limit any use of tables. (See our article [6 Reasons To Avoid Using Tables In Website Layouts](#).) For any dynamic code, it might be a good idea to employ object-oriented programming techniques as opposed to a purely function-based approach.

### 4. Choose the right web host.

Sometimes, clients may often already have a domain name and a web host. However, before doing any development, it is important to make sure that the web host is adequate. This includes verifying the platform (usually Windows or Linux), looking over the resources allotments, as well as support for scripts and any advanced configuration options. This will enable you to get a good idea of what your working with and save any time and heartache that might be cause later when you realize that the host is not compatible with what you've built.

The best case scenario, however, would be to choose a web host that you feel comfortable working with. This will eliminate any future surprises and costly modifications. Additionally, it is also a good idea to develop any dynamic or database-driven websites directly on the server on which it will reside.

Have some other tips that you'd like to share? Let us know.

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