DESIGN: the importance of asking the right questions to your clients by Diah Abida

Article published on January 13th 2012 | Visual Arts

In design, clients hire you for one reason: to be the instrument in achieving their objectives. It sounds fairly easy for all you need to do is find out what they need, execute this, get your check, and move on to your next client. Well, itâ€™s not exactly that easy.

While design questionnaires exist to answer a designer and developerâ€™s need for information as to how they will go about the project, it shouldnâ€™t be put on a pedestal. Questionnaires work by giving designers a small look into the vision of the client; but a truly great designer knows that written answers are not enough to comprehensively capture a clientâ€™s vision.

Questionnaires versus Face-to-Face Encounter

A questionnaire is a good way for your clients to plan their website and for you, as a designer, to grasp what theyâ€™re trying to say. Some of the questions that are almost always asked include the nature of the company, their competitors, products and services, target audience, site references, and their reason for creating a website in the first place. Through these questions, designers are able to loosely grasp the idea of a clientâ€”though not as solid and clear as you wish them to be.

Questionnaires are not enough to sustain a designerâ€™s progress. There are certain issues and aspects about designing a website that are not clearly understood by the clients and this can only be effectively addressed when the designer and the client take the time to invest an hour or two of their time discussing the ins and outs of the project.

Get the questions right by listening right

Listening is also relevant if you want to end up asking the crucial questions to your client. Sometimes, clients donâ€™t understand what they want until they hear it from a designerâ€™s mouth. Typically, a client asked on how they would like their website to look like would mentioned adjectives such as â€œuniqueâ€•, â€œextraordinaryâ€•, â€œattention-grabbingâ€•, and â€œinterestingâ would immediately scribble these words down on their notepad while great designers know better than to take their clientâ€™s jumble of adjectives as is.

Instead of nodding and agreeing to the clientâ€™s every remark, great designers do it right by following up their answer with another question. â€œBy â€˜uniqueâ€™ do you mean you want the website to feature unconventional layouts and imagery?â€• By simply listening to what the client has said, designers are able to trim down the general picture into something more precise, workable, and achievable.

Briefly, here are some of the areas that you shouldnâ€™t miss when youâ€™re meeting with a client:

â€¢ Target audience

â€¢ Budget

â€¢ Deadline/Timeline

What you get out of it

Society is hay-wired to ask a sundry of questionsâ€”from the mundane to the most out of this worldâ€”and it doesnâ€™t really matter. But when itâ€™s all about business, the questions you ask matter. Simply put,

ask the right questions if you want to get the right answers.

Designers who understand that understanding what the client wants enjoy a smoother-sailing progress compared to amateur designers who prod on without having a clear idea of the vision their client failed to communicate on paper.

Article Source:
http://www.articleside.com/visual-arts-articles/design-the-importance-of-asking-the-right-questions-to-your-clients.htm - Article Side

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Article Keywords:
design, web design, website design

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