



## Your Website Coach



### ***Getting the Help You Need – 8/14/08***

As more business owners are taking on the task of building/maintaining their own website, they find themselves interacting with technical support and web developers, more and more. Typically the nature of these calls is that the website owner needs help solving a problem, whether it's technical or design-based. And in many cases, the owner finishes the call in frustration because they aren't getting the answers they need. The biggest reason for this is a breakdown in communication – owners don't know how to ask the right questions and therefore don't get the answers they are seeking. Allow me to give you some pointers in presenting information to customer support a.k.a. "techie". These are basic steps to follow whether you are asking for help with a layout, trying to use a feature in your design tool or reporting a technical bug.

1. Know the environment in which you're working. You need to know what operating system you are running, what browser(s) you use and what development tools you are using.
2. Be clear about the details. If you are trying to improve some feature in your site, you must be clear on what you are trying to accomplish. That means you must have an understanding what has been done with your site up to the point where you are prompted to make a change. Not only must you know what you want to do, but you must understand the tool you are using. It's difficult (if not impossible) to explain how to use a component of a software package when the owner doesn't even understand the basic framework.
3. Be able to describe the behavior that is causing your problem. This means you must be able to give a detailed step-by-step account of what leads up to your problem. This is **especially true** for reporting bugs. Simply saying "I don't know – I pressed this key and something weird happened" is not at all helpful. Techies are not mind-readers and every detail you give them will help paint a picture in their minds of what may have gone wrong.
4. Be prepared with your account information: username, password, PIN, customer number, registration keys, etc. The techie will most likely ask you if you have an account with their service and you'll have to confirm your information before they'll even begin to help you.

It'd be wise for you to be at your computer while making the call because many times you will be lead through the solution and experiencing it is far better than writing it down. Also, don't discount the Live Chat support channels. It's a great way to get short questions answered promptly.

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