Digital VENTURE

Giving Effective Feedback

Business owners guide to giving effective feedback on a web design project.

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Giving Effective Feedback

"I'm not a designer; how can I critique design? What if I say something stupid?"

We've come across many people who have this exact worry when working with a design agency. You didn't go to design school, you have no design degree, so how can you pass judgment on typography and color harmony?

Well, the good news is you don't have to. Not really anyway. Your job is knowing your business and, more importantly, knowing your audience. If you can shift your thinking into what people who visit your website will want to see and do, your feedback will be super valuable.

Start with why

Of course, you will have an opinion on certain aspects of the design, but before you say them try asking why it was created in the first place.

For example, say you have a personal vendetta against blue. Instead of saying, "I don't like blue, change it to green," try asking, "Why did you choose to use blue here?". Your designer should be able to justify their decisions, and you can then evaluate whether you're happy with their reasoning or not.

Describe the problem instead of prescribing the solution

Most of the time, telling designers what the problem is, is way more useful than asking them to move something or change something.

Going back to the color example; saying something like "Blue is the color of our main competitor, so I'd rather not use it" is better than saying "Change blue to green" as it gives the designer a better understanding of what's important to you and it allows them to come up with something even better.

Photos by: rawpixel and Roman Kraft

Go back to your goals

Remember those goals we set at the start of your project? Use them as reference for all of your feedback.

Is the project achieving the main goal it's set out to? Or have a bunch of smaller goals been added, diluting your primary task?

If you can use a short, specific goal or value to base your feedback on, you'll find giving feedback is a lot easier.

For example, if you're selling sunglasses for dogs, you'll want to know if the designs are appealing to dog owners or if the progression from informing to selling is clear for your audience.

If you can relate every piece of feedback to your main goal, you'll find the project ends up being way more successful than a ton of subjective feedback.

Settle internal debates

If you're working in a team, it's essential to try to settle any internal debates in-house before communicating them to your designer. By all means, ask us questions to help clarify things but make sure you can come to an agreement before giving final feedback.

If possible, dedicate just one person to providing feedback, so we don't have the awkward situation of actioning another team member's feedback only to have the head of the project say, "Why did you do that? Change it back" — trust us, it happens!

Speak up early if something is wrong

I've saved the most important thing until last. If you get your designs back and they weren't what you were expecting, or there is something fundamentally wrong, speak up as early on as possible.

Don't worry about hurting any feelings. As long as you're referring back to your goal at all times and not getting personal, there's no reason for any tiptoeing.

We have the project's best interests at heart, so if it's not right, we will be happy to work with you to address the issues and get them solved. Remember, the longer a project goes on, the more time consuming those changes can become.

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So there you go! Some ways you can give super cool feedback when you see your designs. Remember, you know your business and your customers, which makes your feedback the most valuable of all.