

TALK

BUSINESS

FOR THE ENTREPRENEUR BY THE ENTREPRENEUR

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OLD DOG, NEW TRICKS

Pensioner Bob Fitzjohn reveals his invention aiming to change the travel industry

WIN A TOSHIBA LAPTOP

British Olympic hopeful, Charlotte Roach reveals how she went from a terrible accident to founding a successful business

DEATH DEFYING



Caught in the supplier's web

Getting a professional to produce a slick website for your company is always a smart move, but do you know who owns the rights to your online venture? **Aaron Martin** and **Dan Norris-Jones**, directors at Collective London and Priocept respectively, investigate

In an age where digital is becoming an increasingly important part of the business model, a company's online presence can be business-critical even for those that wouldn't be described as digital businesses. But are you confident you own your online presence? Could you change supplier tomorrow with little consequence? Or are you at risk of being held to ransom by your digital supplier?

Here are five points to bear in mind when selecting, working with, and managing your digital suppliers, all designed to ensure you can develop your digital presence to your own agenda, and not your supplier's.

OWNERSHIP

While it makes sense that you should own everything you pay for, in the world of digital it's rarely straightforward. Unless you have specifically agreed ownership terms, your supplier may try to retain full ownership of everything you have paid them to build.

Make sure that everything that you pay to be created is contractually owned by you. And make sure you have

practical ownership as well as legal ownership, by having unrestricted access to your assets.

CONTROL

If your digital partner disappeared tomorrow, would you have enough control over your digital presence to pick up where they left off? To make sure you're in control, have someone in your business know how everything is being put together, where everything is held, and how everything works.

BEWARE PROPRIETARY SOFTWARE

Many digital suppliers have their own proprietary solutions, which they try to embed into their projects. Try to leave and you might find that nobody else can use that solution and that your only choices are to stay locked in, or to create everything from scratch again.

If your agency tells you that you need a specific solution, ask them to run a vendor selection process to evaluate alternative products and recommend the best option.

And make it clear that any of their own software products are banned from the list.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

Knowledge is power, and unfortunately, all too often knowledgeable suppliers exert this power over ignorant clients. But this can work in reverse too – as a knowledgeable client, you can ensure you get a better service, a better solution, and better value for money.

Make sure you take the time to understand the jargon.

PLAN FOR THE BEST, PREPARE FOR THE WORST

While your supplier may well have your best interests in mind now, that may not always be true. So to remove any doubt, draw up a master services agreement as the contractual basis of the relationship. Cover all the points above, plus project scope, notice periods and payment terms. If your supplier is hesitant to reach an agreement, perhaps it's time to ask yourself why.

Contact:

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