

# Defining Web Development

## The Fine Points

- **A bit of development history**
- **What is (and isn't) Web development**
- **Keeping specialists on appropriate tracks**

In the early days of the Internet (specifically the World Wide Web), development was primarily focused on HTML (HyperText Markup Language) "markup" which provided very basic functionality including formatting, hyperlinks, and forms. Today, sites rely on a host of technologies and languages that continue to move HTML in to the background. It isn't that HTML doesn't provide a valuable and stable platform for a Web site. Rather, the reason that other languages are coming to the forefront is their ability to provide added functionality, and their more stringent code standards makes most of these languages more stable (more standardized) for e-Business environments. One of the most prolific examples of this is ASP (Active Server Pages). Web sites coded in ASP use HTML, VBscript, Javascript and more to interact with databases (SQL ("Sequel"), Access, Oracle, other...) to provide dynamically generated content. This is the way that Amazon.com can remember purchase histories or provide suggestions for similar offerings to those that have purchased from them before.

So, with all this in mind, what is "Web Development?" Well, it is the process whereby a developer/programmer integrates graphics and content (often text) into a framework of code that provides the required functionality. A number of other disciplines are often inappropriately lumped in with Web Development. Unfortunately, although development is the place that everything comes together, there are a few things that it is not. It is not graphic design, although a good developer should have a good idea of what will work on the Web (both aesthetically and from a "usability" standpoint). It is not Web marketing, although a good developer should understand the basics of Web marketing so that the site can be built to maximize its marketing potential. It is not (typically) content development, but again, a good developer should have a sense of what works best on the Web.

Unfortunately, in today's market, we see graphic designers building beautiful sites -- that use too much bandwidth (the information pipeline) to be worth the time it took to build them since users on many older machines can't get the page(s) to load fast enough to please them. The same thing applies to many marketers who have been thrust (willingly or not) into the development role. We also see brilliant developers (not necessarily Web developers) building cutting edge sites that end up performing poorly in the visual appeal and marketing categories.

In a nutshell, the moral of this "story" is this...If you need a developer, look for a developer. If you need a marketer, look for a marketer. And, if you need a graphic artist look for a graphic artist. If you are planning a major Web project, and can find all of these skills in either a person or a team of people, they will likely be better suited to provide you with results you are looking for, but don't expect that every specialist will be good at every component needed for your Web project.