

# When Good Designers Go Bad

## How to Protect Yourself When Choosing a Designer

By Rebecca Bertoldi, Modern Media Design

Many businesses owners are trying to attract new business through means of advertising to compensate for our suffering economy. The one form of advertising that is becoming more and more popular is having a web presence. This concept has brought many business owners my way inquiring about what they can do to be online or update what they currently have.

Recently, a restaurant owner was referred to me because he needed his site updated and the company that designed the site was not returning his calls or e-mails. After poking around a bit, I discovered that his domain name was registered under the other designer's name and not the restaurant, as he had been told. I found this to be very strange. That's not the way to ensure job security. Unfortunately, with out the rights to the domain name, I couldn't really do anything with his current site. But together, we convinced the other designer to agree to transfer the site to us.

Well, after about a month of e-mailing back and forth with him, the other designer decides that he no longer agrees to transfer the domain, takes the site down and disables the e-mail account, leaving the restaurant owner with absolutely nothing.

Unbelievable, right? Well, believe it. Many print and web designers going out of business and being forced to get other jobs. So where does that leave their clients?

This incident made me want make business owners aware of what to ask for and their rights. Here's how you can protect yourself when hiring a designer to do your marketing materials:

- **Check References** – Any good designer has no problem handing over some phone numbers that you can call to see how others felt about them. You should always do your homework before hiring any professional and that includes designers.
- **Ask About Usage** – Many people believe that when they hire a designer, that once the project is completed, they can do whatever they want with it. That is not always the case. The designer should specify whether the client assumes all rights to the marketing piece or just one-time rights.
- **Get it in Writing** – Once you have made your decision on which designer/firm you will use for you materials, be sure that you get all the details in writing. Such things should be used on every project, but often are not. But those written details will protect both of you. And if your needs change, be sure to amend the contract.
- **Register Everything in Your Name** – If you are paying for the name, hosting and artwork, it's yours! Make sure you have access to all of it.
- **File it Away** – Upon completion of the project, make sure you receive a copy of it on disk. Do not rely on anyone else to hold your files for you. You never know what's going to happen.

In this case of the designer gone bad, my client now has to start over and market a new domain name. Let his experience be a lesson to you. Shop wisely and don't let any designer take what is rightfully yours.

*About the author: Rebecca Bertoldi is the owner of Modern Media Design and has been catering to small business owners for ten years. If you have marketing questions that you want answered in this paper, e-mail her at [rebecca@modernmediany.com](mailto:rebecca@modernmediany.com). Get a free copy "The Freebie List: 10 Marketing Ideas That Won't Break the Bank" when you join her mailing list at [www.modernmediany.com](http://www.modernmediany.com).*