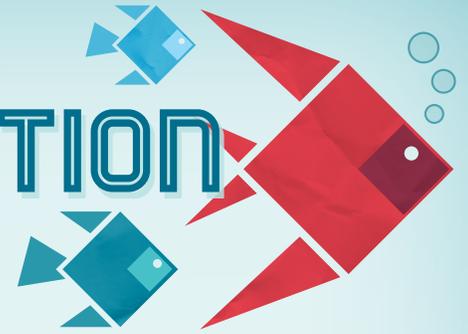# DRIVING PARTICIPATION
with Beth Brodovsky

SESSION 060
GETTING READY FOR WEB DESIGN
WITH LIZ DOBRINSKA

Beth: Hello, this is Beth Brodovsky, and welcome to Driving Participation. I am here today with Liz Dobrinska of Innovative Images. Liz and I have known each other forever. When I first started my business, Liz was my first designer that worked for me in-house, and we were together for about eight years before she went out on her own. We still work together on an ongoing basis to do website work, so I thought this was a perfect time to bring Liz in because over the many projects that she's done and that we've done together, there's a lot of trends that we've seen that really make a difference in a project being successful, and I thought that bringing her in for her insight would be really helpful to you. Thanks for coming, Liz.

**Liz:** Thanks for having me. I appreciate it.

Beth: So today we're going to kind of talk about the prep work you need to do when you're beginning to think about redesigning your website. It's an area that we feel people don't think through and talk about enough so we're going to go over some of the things that we've seen that can really make or break a website project. Not just the website itself because you can look at a website in the end, and it's pretty and it's clean and it works, but whether the project actually works for you on a functional basis can really be dependent on a lot of things that Liz has a lot of great insight on. So, Liz, let's start with what kind of things should someone get prepared before they even think about contacting a web developer to redesign their site?

Liz: I think one of the biggest things is having enough time set aside. You really want to be able to focus on the project and make sure you have enough of a time commitment. The web developer is there to definitely guide you in the process and give suggestions, but they are going to need a lot of content from you, and they're going to need a lot of feedback so you're going to want to make sure you actually have enough time to commit to the project and a website project does usually take several months, so it's not a quick process.

Beth: Right, and one of the things we always say when people ask us "How long is it going to
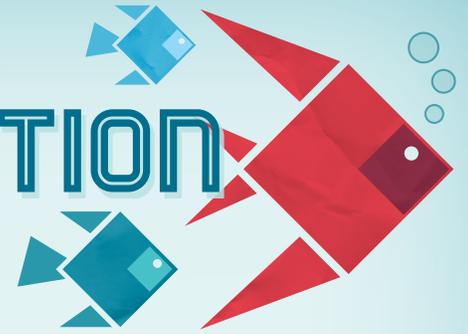
take?" we say "How long is it going to take us or how long is it going to take you?" because we have a pretty regimented process. You know, Liz has done a million of these, and so we know exactly what steps we need to take and how to move through it. You guys, when you're working on your side of the website project, you've got to fit this in with all the other projects that you have, commitments and chances are there's nobody on your staff whose full-time job it is to redesign the website, whereas we do have people on our staffs whose full-time job it is to redesign your website, and when we take on a project, we carve out the time to do it. So where the problems often come up is is everyone on your team carving it out and that means it comes up in approval and copy.

Liz: Yeah, I mean content is definitely one of the huge aspects. I mean no one is going to know better than yourself what you want to say, what your company is about, and so a developer should be asking a lot of questions to help pull that information out and help you organize it, but they still need you to actually give them the content.

Beth: Right, and I can tell you from just having written a big project myself, I was so sure I knew exactly what I was going to write because it was all in my head, and I had it all lined up perfectly in my head, but the minute I sat down at my computer to actually start writing it, oh my gosh! The hours that it took really surprised me, and we find that the number one thing that stops a web project in its tracks and just makes it grind on forever is waiting for you guys to finish your copy.

Liz: Definitely. I have quite a few projects that went on way longer than I expected just because the person got stuck on not having the time dedicated to be able to write the content, and I have people that say "I'll do it on vacation," or "I'll do it at night," or "I'll do it on the weekend," and the weekend goes by and they didn't get it done and they kind of sheepishly tell me they need more time and they know they're holding me up, and so they feel guilty and, you know, I feel bad. I don't want someone to have those feelings. I want it to be a positive process and to feel like it went smoothly, and so I think just setting the expectations up front of what's involved is really important.

Beth: Right. It's always hard for a client to hear at the beginning of a project that it might take three, six, nine months to finish a website, especially if it's the first time you've done it. It feels like "It won't take me that long," but that's the number one thing that makes something
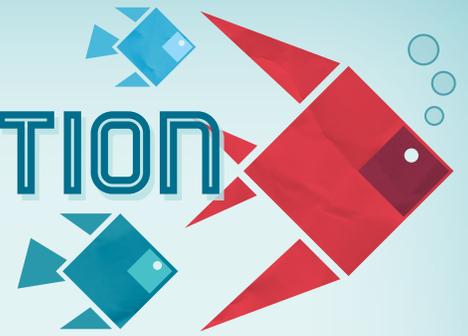
like this take this long. That and technology. If you have a complex project that has a lot of connections into outside, that can also be a big thing.

Liz: Yeah, and another thing to be aware of is knowing what your approval process is going to be.

Beth: That's huge.

Liz: If you're a one-person business obviously it's going to be a lot easier because it's you that has to be satisfied and happy with what's going forward. If you have a manager, you have a board, the organization really has to know what the levels of approval are going to be and how long it's going tio take. Sometimes the board only has annual or monthly meetings and so there's going to be a long delay between approval processes. That kind of thing has to be taken into account, too.

Beth: Yeah, and that's even more huge if you are a volunteer-based organization. Obviously your boards are volunteer members, but how many you actually invite to be at each level of the approval process is a big deal because the more people you have to get to agree, I'm sure this is no surprise to anybody that's listening, the longer it's going to take and so a lot of times one of the things we recommend is creating approval tiers where there's certain people that get to preview it and give feedback, but you don't have this sort of all 24 of your staff or all 12 of your board members that all have to make complete agreement for any step to move forward and have an advisory group, a working group and a decision-making group can be really helpful in moving a large project like this forward.

Liz: I worked on a project once where the owner assigned it to a staff member. She was in her early 20s, and I thought the whole time she was going back to him and sort of saying "Is this OK?" or "These are my ideas; this is what I'm going to tell her to do," and I found out at the end of the project that was the first time he actually saw the website. It wasn't horrible because we had taken a lot of time to go through everything, but there were certain things he had expectations of and I think in the end, I don't want to say he was disappointed, but I think there were some areas he wasn't pleased with and in all honesty I sort of blamed him because he wasn't participating. He didn't want to spend the time and he let her do what she felt was
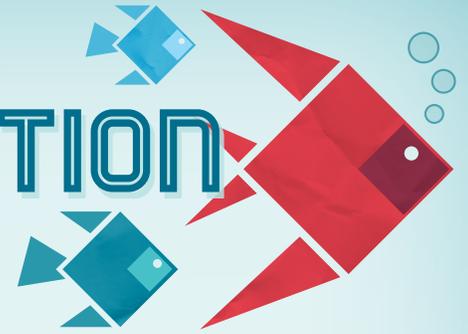
best and …

Beth: And he didn't like it. The thing I always say is you have to recognize that each stage of approval going back and changing it costs more money. So we'll start with learning about what you want, we'll put it together into a site map and then a wire frame, what's next? Then design and …

Liz: I do very much what I refer to as "baby steps" and the goal is to always be building upon that last step and not to ever have to go backwards because that's where you get into trouble with time and budget and also just everyone's frustrations. Nobody wants to redo work and I don't enjoy it, and I'm sure the person who is on the other end doesn't enjoy it either. There's definitely a process that we follow and especially for people if this is their first time building a website or they're not familiar with sort of the process of building a site, I really just walk them through every little step and it builds their confidence and they're comfortable and they understand what's happening and it keeps us from getting in trouble with budget and time and meeting deadlines.

Beth: So let's talk a little bit more about those beginning stages and walking people through things. People come to us all the time wanting to build a new website. New things have happened, things have changed since the last time they did their website and not many clients can come and say "Here's all the pages that I need. Here's all the technology that I need. Here's exactly a road map of what I want for my website," but it's hard for us to know exactly what you want us to build without that road map. So what are some of the things that someone can do in an organization to prepare the information and give a prospective web developer as much as possible so that they can avoid what we would call a discovery phase, and could you talk a little bit about what discovery is, what that process is and what the fee is for and how people can provide as much as possible so they can jump right in and not have to deal with that?

Liz: Sure. So I actually developed what I refer to as an intake form and I have a slew of questions, and it is, it's long. It's about five pages, but it really covers all areas of a website and some questions are going to be pertinent to you and some are not, but I really need to know the answers to all these things because it comes from the design side, your branding,
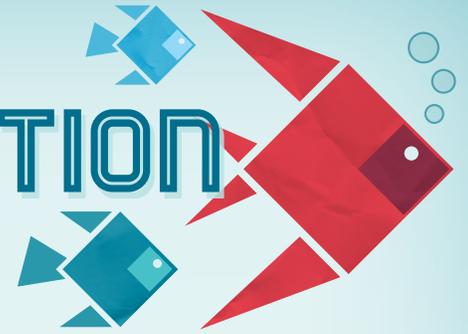
your marketing, all the way through the technical questions, and I have some people who literally, I say "Please give me details, the more the better," and they'll write one word, which is not always that helpful.

Beth: Make it crisp.

Liz: So I think even if you feel like you're rambling or you're giving too much information, for us as developers, there is never too much information. I mean the more you know what you want and whether that be in terms of a design, if you're familiar with some of the technology, you know what type of site you want or certain third parties that you need integrations with, that's the kind of stuff a developer can help you with, but the more information you give them up front, the more accurate a quote they can give you and then it will also help you because it's a little bit tricky where you need someone to invest enough time in your project to understand it fully and help you to scope it out, but a developer is only going to be willing to put so much time up front before they …

Beth: They know they got the job.

Liz: So for me, I have this intake form. It saves me a lot of time because of sort of talking through all these different things, I'm asking the person to please sit down and really think about what you want, and then come back to me and let's talk about specifics, things you don't understand, questions that you have, and then I have a really good idea of where that site needs to go or your project needs to go and then I can give you a really accurate price on what it's going to cost and how long it's going to take. At least from my end and then you'll have to add in whatever time you'll need.

Beth: The challenge of that is that it will take you the listener a lot of time to do something like that, and what we find sometimes is that people don't want to do that. They don't want to put in the time, they're just getting quotes right now. They just want to know what is it going to cost, and you need to understand that we can ballpark that based on things like how many pages and what your site looks like now and the general technology that you're using now, but what comes up a lot of the time, and what Liz is able to flush out with using this form is the stuff that you haven't thought of, the stuff that you hate about your website and

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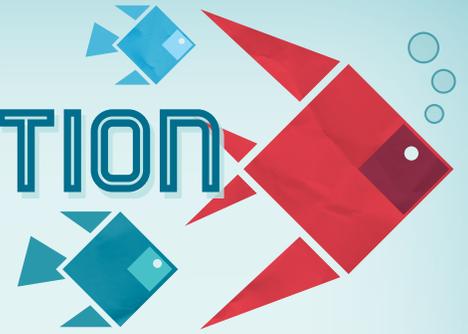
you wish it would do or that your envisioning in your head what it would do. What you won't know as a client is what something you want to add to your site is simple and easy and like no problem and what one tiny little thing that you ask for just threw a wrench into the entire system. We had something that Liz was building somewhere from two or three of the designs, the client said "This piece looks great. I just need you to add that thing where you can take the event and make it show up on someone's calendar," like an automatic add to calendar app or something like that she wanted to add. Of course I told Liz, I told the client that they wanted this and here's what she needs, and Liz said "We're so far past that," and the way that the client had never mentioned that they wanted anything like that, and so Liz made choices about how to build the site. What plug ins to use, what technology, how to build it that took certain things into consideration and when you make some of these decisions, it cancels out other things being easy or simple to add in. It's not always easy to just plug in something new and tack something on at the end.

Liz: When you're building a site, certain things come up and ideas happen and what I try to do in the baby steps that I take is give time for those things to sort of develop before we actually coded something because once you've entered the code stage, that's when it makes it really tough on a developer to have to go back and edit code or change things about the theme that we weren't expecting and tough translates to expensive. I think it's fair to then say to the developer that they realize this is out of scope and it's going to be an add on. I mean in fairness to the designer, I mean you sort of know what the content's going to be, you know you have the branding established and you've laid out the pages, but it's a hundred times easier to change a layout than it is to actually change a code. It's a lot less time intense.

Beth: So what are the kinds of things they should be specifically thinking about to give to a developer to do this accurate quote in advance?
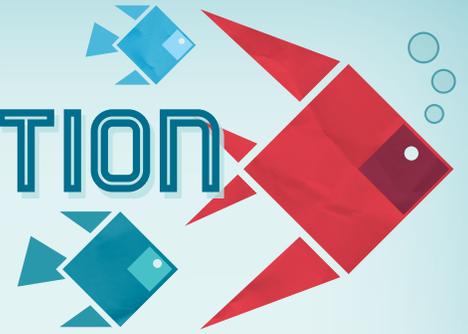
Liz: I think one of the big things is really content. We need to know what type of content is going to be on the site.

Beth: Define content.

Liz: There is a lot …

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Beth: Of definitions of that word.

Liz: That's actually one of the things on my form and we do on the wire frames is content definition so it's talking about types of content. You know, general content is a headline, a subhead and paragraph, which is pretty standard typical stuff, but like Beth was saying, this one client wanted an event calendar and that would be a type of content. Your expectation is that you're going to have an event calendar and then you need to define what is that calendar supposed to do. Are you going to be able to tag it by color? Do you want it organized in a certain way? Team member pages, are you going to have every staff member? Is that staff member going to have a picture? Are they going to have a link to their LinkedIn profile? Are they going to have a direct email link? A direct phone number? Even questions that I'll as is do you want those staff members listed alphabetically A-Z or do certain ones have to be prioritized over others because that's going to affect how we build the back end and what the functionality is. Trying to think of other similar content.

Beth: Video, like video versus photo, photo galleries. It's the different type of content, but also is there a specific way it needs to be organized? Is it grouped together? Is it not grouped together? Do you need to connect to outside technologies? That's huge because integrations, we call that integrations, so for example a lot of associations use Imus as a back-end thing, which really is a particular little animal, and if you're a membership organization, you're going to have different needs of your website than a non-membership organization, so a traditional nonprofit might need a home page, about us, program information, events, donations. Other things maybe, but that's a pretty standard set of things that most traditional nonprofits need. If you were a membership organization, on top of that, you often might want a membership directory or things that a user, somebody that comes to your website is going to be able to access and scroll through and hunt for things and search and reorganize and find information. That level of pulling stuff from your database up on to the front end of your website is a very different project than doing a website that mostly needs to register somebody for an event and take a payment. Even one that doesn't have to do any of that is a lighter load of work and technology and building still. Us understanding what are the inside connections, what are the outside connections, what does the site need to do is a really important thing and what types of different content elements from do you have a blog, are you selling anything on
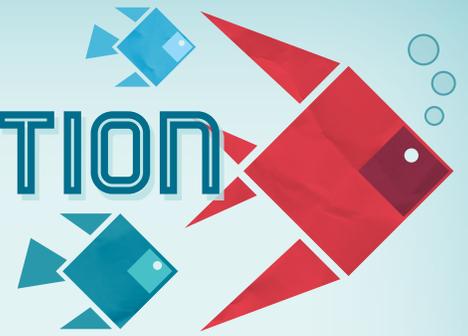
the website. You think organizations don't, but lots of them do. Lots of them sell books and products. If you're a museum, you might be selling tickets, memberships. There's all these different things that can absolutely effect how we build it, but the reason Liz likes to know up front is because it drastically effects the price and how we would go about putting that together.

Liz: Yeah, and even then you can get into what's the best platform to be on. WordPress is one that lots of people use, and that's usually a starting place, but there's a lot of sites where WordPress is not an option and that's the kind of stuff if you tell a developer these are my expectations, then they can recommend the best platform for you to be on and help you weight the pros and cons of each.

Beth: Right, and so what Liz is saying about this discovery phase is that figuring all of this out on your behalf, if you're going "I don't know. What do you guys think?" it's a lot of work. It's kind of like the architect and the builder. If you're saying you're doing a building renovation or you're doing a custom kitchen in your home, you can't just go to a contractor and say "Build me a new kitchen," because the contractor's going to say "Well, where's the design of the kitchen?" and you think, "I thought you were going to do that," and the contractor will say "No. I build it. I go and I hammer the nails and I order the materials and I do it to a set of specifications." It's the architect that designs specifications and tells you how it's going to look, where things are going to go and what kind of space it's going to take up and often you can't even get a price for the contracting for the build of the kitchen until after you have your plans drawn up. This phase of discovery that we're talking about is that phase. So if you come to a web developer knowing exactly what you want, you've already figured it out or you literally want exactly what you have now, then it's easy for any contractor, any developer to say "You want a 20-page site with a Paypal payment gateway and a plug-in to events. No problem. I know exactly what you want. I can price that for you," but if you come to a developer and say "My site's not really working out. I don't like it. How can I make it better?" That's going to take a lot of the developer's time. Depending on how big your site is, how big your organization is, they may do that as part of a proposal process, but they may not so you might need to think about hiring somebody to help you do a web scope project as an initial phase of the project and allocating a little money to work with somebody just for that

one part of it and you may then decide you want to proceed with them or you might tell the person you're working with "We're hiring you to do a web scope and then we're going to bid that out. You can be one of the bidders, but we're going to bid it out after that." We've seen both of those things happen, but it's important for you to know the level of information somebody needs to really do an accurate quote for you. The other thing you can do is go with the basics. Tell a few different developers "We're looking for a 15-page site with this type of technology and features," to get a baseline because another thing people really struggle with is how much should a website cost and should you tell your developers how much money you have available.

Liz: I understand why people hesitate to do that. It feels like a little bit of a risk if you say to a developer "We have $100,000." Their eyes might light up and all of a sudden.

Beth: You'll have a $100,000 project.

Liz: But it's really important to tell a developer about what your budget is or what your expectations are just to make sure you're on the same page. I honestly lead with a question of saying what my minimum is that I'm willing to do a website for and gauge their reaction. If they're completely shocked and say "No way. I just don't have that in my budget."

Beth: Then you saved both of you a lot of time.

Liz: Yeah, we're not a good fit, and if I know someone that I think is in that price range that can be helpful, I'm more than happy to give a recommendation, and then on the flip side, I think it's more the minimum. You don't want to say your maximum.

Beth: But even a range because it's not just about how much money you have to spend, it's about making sure you find a developer and designer or marketing team, whoever you decide to work with that that's their sweet spot, too. You don't want to give a $10,000 web project to a company that typically does $100,000 projects because you're going to be like the tiny little fish that doesn't get any attention. They'll be like "Sure, we can do that." Yeah, that's not their priority. On the flip side, you don't want to give $100,000 web project to someone whose experience is primarily doing $10,000 websites because they probably
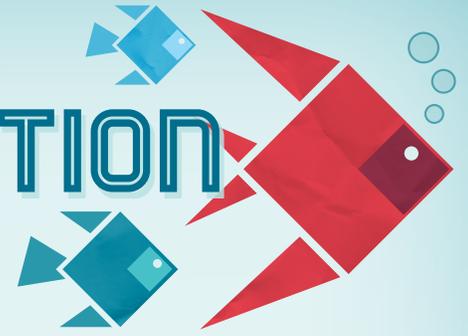
don't have the staff, the structures, the technology level, the time that you need to really implement a project of that complexity effectively so making sure that your budget that you have available is pretty much in line with the sweet spot of the kind of developer you pick is great. One of the things that you can do is start initially by calling up developers who when you looked at their portfolios you liked the work they do and you think that they have the technology capabilities that you need based on looking at some of the sites that they've done, call them up and ask them what size scope projects do you typically work on. What's a great client for you and you can start whittling down with just a couple of quick conversations. I know it seems uncomfortable or rude to talk about money first, but I've found people that are most comfortable talking about money are also the people that are most likely to pay us and the relationship works so much better when you know that you're working with someone that can truly afford to do the work that you need to do to make the site great for them. A good match is really the most important thing.

Liz: I think even when you're looking at a developer's website and say you note three that you really like or there's a certain functionality that you like, ask them how much it costs. Ask what is the budget for this particular website and then you'll have a good idea of what it takes and you can do that for other companies, too. You can look at an organization's website and you can call them and say "I really like your website. The functionality is really great. We're looking for something similar. What developer did you use and what was your budget for the project?" and that will give you a really good sense because you're getting it directly from the developer's client.

Beth: Right, that is probably the biggest tip of anything that we've given you today that I would recommend. Time and time I do these podcast calls with people and people are constantly recommending "Just pick up the phone and call." It's such an under-utilized tool of just asking people. People are much more willing to help than we often give them credit for, especially in our nonprofit space. Even if you're technically competitors, everyone has their own niche. Everyone has their own thing that they're doing and people tend to want to help each other and if you're at all concerned about calling a competitor or somebody that works in your same space, but you really want to compare an apples to apples site, find somebody that does what you do, but in a completely different service area. Maybe on the other side of
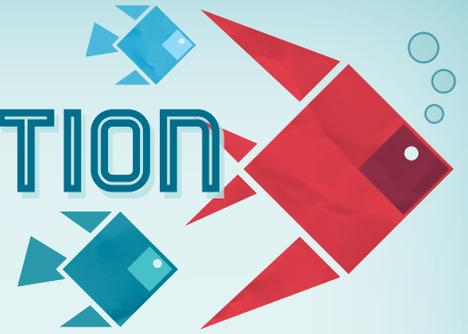
the country. I wouldn't go international, and I also would want to make sure you're comparing metropolitan area to metropolitan area. If you're from a more rural area, you might want to find another organization that's in a similar economic area. If you're from a city, find someone from a different city because if you're hiring someone local, pricing in different regions can be very different so you want to find somebody that's fairly comparable. You know, somebody that got their website built by a firm in Manhattan, the same site might cost very different if they got it done by someone somewhere else in a less higher cost of running a business area of the country.

Liz: Yeah and another thing to be aware of is you have the development costs, the design costs and there's also content. You might need to bring in a copywriter, images, are you going to hire a photographer? Are you going to require any custom illustration or are you going to be looking at stock photos or …

Beth: Is there animation or is there video? There's so many different things. It's not just the cost of the actual build of the website. There's a lot of functionality. Let's talk a little bit about after the website is built, which seems like a crazy thing to talk about when we're talking about preparing for a web design, but this is one of the places that Liz and I see the most, what do you call it, buyer's remorse or the loss of the after glow of the website project is when it's turned back over to the client and there's that moment where someone says "Well I thought I was going to be able to do this with the site," and the developer is like "No. You never asked me for that." Some of it is communication, and some of it is making sure that you are asking questions about the right things and not just about how you want the site to look to the user. We spend so much time focusing on user-centered design and user-centered writing and donor communications and making sure that the people you're communicating to are pleased with the site, but unless you have the budget to have Liz and I completely maintain every single aspect of the site until you're ready to do one, which people often don't have or don't want, and to be honest, we don't really want to do all that either. You need to think about what parts of the site you want to update and how you want to do it. Why don't you talk a little bit about that.

Liz: Yeah, one of the biggest questions I get is "Am I going to be able to do this myself?" and

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it's a very open-ended question and it's challenging. People often say to me "Is it easy?" and I say "Well, it's easy for me, but I don't know if it's going to be easy for you because I don't know what your skill set or your comfort level is." That part can be really tough, and I think it's hard for people to really understand what happens on the back end of a site. The more custom you make a site, the more harder I feel it is to be able to maintain it yourself and as a developer, depending on the budget and the skill set of the person doing the updates, we do our best to make it easy, but that is definitely a challenge. You definitely want to talk to your developer about what your expectations are before updating the site. The other thing, too, is in the WordPress website, there's website updates of the actual software itself and then you get into security issues. There's backups that need to be done so that if something does compromise your site you can restore it. There's a lot of sort of maintenance issues and you really want to talk about those ahead of time and set up a plan on what the expectations are. A lot of times people will hire me to maintain the site, to do the updates, just make sure the site's healthy and continues to stay healthy and a lot of people want to do certain tasks themselves so will specify what those tasks are and I'll train them how to update those themselves. Sometimes it might be a bit more complex and sometimes it's super easy. It just depends on what the content is, what the design looks like and how those two have to marry together. I think it's really important. Just don't expect that just because you have a content management system for your website it means that you'll be able to update anything on it at any point where it's doing anything.

Beth: And by anyone. Those are really huge things. One of my favorite quotes that my dad always says is that "There's only two kinds of people in the world. People that back up and people that wish they did." That's spoken by somebody who had his business burned down by a fire and luckily it was something that they backed up. The things that we get amazed by all the time is that Liz and I will send out email after email saying "How are you going to back up your site? What are you doing?" and people ignore those emails, don't respond to us over and over again until one day when we get an email from them or a panicked call saying "Something went wrong. My site got hacked, got broke," or most of the time, it's "I did something. I was in there updating, and I broke it. Can you fix it?" and we ask them if they ever installed the backup that we recommended to them, and if they haven't done those things, it can be a huge problem. The time to think about that stuff is not after you've built
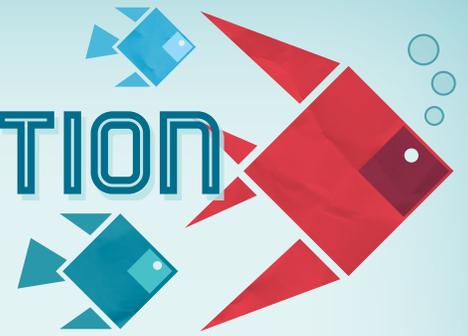
the site. The time to think about how you're going to manage and maintain it is even before you get your quotes because how a developer builds something is vastly different if you're going to have to put your hands on it and on what level. If you have a developer in house, that may not be a problem, but one of the things that we always recommend people do is don't just build a site for the people that are in your organization today. Build your site for the role, for the level of person that is going to be maintaining that site on a regular basis. If Trevor is there today, and he's working in an admin role and he's handling it, but Trevor happens to do some coding on the side or took some classes and he can handle some HTML and a little bit of CMS coding, you might build that site thinking "No problem. Trevor can handle it," but then he might leave. You're then locked into having to hire somebody with his same skill sets, which may not be available for the same price. There's nothing wrong with that if you thought about that in advance and planned for it, but if you haven't, you could end up really in a bind with some costs that you didn't expect.

Liz: I actually worked on a website where we built the site per their expectations. I trained their in-house person on how to use it and actually interfaced with an app so there was dual purpose to it, and she was great. Then she decided to go to a different company. They came back to me and said "We have to find someone new. Can you train her?" and I said sure so we set up a webinar and I went through the whole thing and I said "OK, you just cut and paste," and she said "How do you do that?" and I said "Oh no. We're in trouble here." She didn't have very basic computer skills, and so it was very challenging. I kind of had to really go back to very basic, and she struggled with it. I'm going to be honest. She had a very hard time maintaining the site and updating it, and I didn't want to go to the company and say "You have this person doing this," so we kind of struggled through and then I think they got to the point where they realized that she was not the right fit and they ended up bringing someone else in who is great. She can do more than the average person. As a developer, we never quite know where the skill set is going to be and what we have to prepare to help someone with.

Beth: I think it's helpful for you all to hear. These are the things we think about when we're planning your site. We're not just thinking about "What colors do you want?" and "Do you
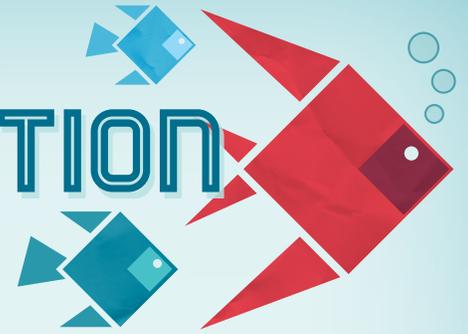
want your navigational on the top or the bottom or the left or the right?" Anybody that you're working with should be thinking about "What's your life going to be like once this is back in your hands?" and "Are you going to be able to do the things you need to do." Liz, why don't you talk a little also about the cost of building maintenance for them to do it and the cost of having their developer work on it if it's not a frequent something that needs to be done.

Liz: I do have a few clients who honestly I still have just a basic HTML site for that and the reason is that they never want to touch it. They don't want to update it. They're not blogging. It's really just a portfolio site, but it's telling them about the company, and there's really no reason for them to invest the extra money that it would take to build a CMS, train someone to update it if it's not something that they're really going to do. One of the things we struggle with is as designers we want something to be user-friendly, we want it to be beautiful, hierarchy is really important and all those little details translating them into an admin that functions for someone with very limited skills becomes a challenge so you really need to talk about and discuss what the expectations are and if you're willing to give up a little bit on the design to make the admin easier or whether you say "I really care about the user interface. I care about our brand and the experience and I'm willing to pay someone who has some basic HTML skills to maintain the site for me, whether it be the developer themselves or the hiring of a lower level coder or something like that." There's definitely options. You can do it yourself. You can hire sort of a lower level HTML coder that can maintain an already built site or you can work with your developer.

Beth: Right, and the right option for you might even depend on what it is exactly that you need updated and changed. If the only thing you change on your site is three events a year and they just need some new details put up and new dates and things like that, it may not be worth the cost of having it developed in a way that a non-coding professional at your office can manage to update it without having to know the code. It might be cheaper to just give it to your web developer three times a year and let them do it. Building out an infrastructure that a non-coder can maintain is very expensive. Liz, why don't you talk a little bit about custom site versus non-custom site? The other thing we hear all the time is "It's just WordPress so it should be easy, right?" You know, I can do anything I want with WordPress. There is very much a feeling out there that WordPress is synonymous with a simple site that
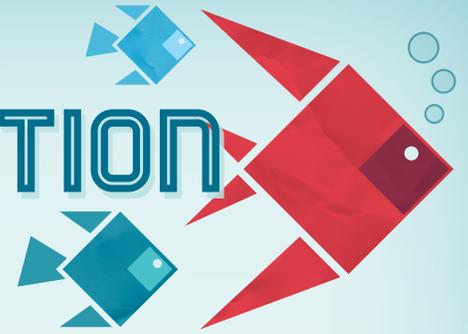
you can update every single thing on this site yourselves and that is absolutely not what WordPress is. Talk a little bit about CMS and what they're good for and where a template site that maybe someone might search for a theme online and install their own WordPress site might be a good option versus what someone gets from a custom site.

Liz: So what we typically do is work in the custom area. What I find is that building a site from the ground up, you can really make all the decisions that support your brand, support the function.

Beth: Support the administration.

Liz: Yes. So you really get to get in there and really build a site that supports your business from square one, whereas with a template what you're purchasing is really someone who took a guess on what they thought a site should have and they put sort of boiler plate areas in so you might have an area for your logo. You'll have maybe one or two menus. If you have a slide show, maybe a couple call to action button style so these things are predefined and then basically what you're doing is replacing content that's there with your content. On your home page there might be a block for an introduction. You'll log into the admin, go to the home page and there will be a little area where you can just cut and paste your text in. For images, it will have one area where you can replace your image. So say on your home page you're like "Well, I really want to show three images." With the template you can't do that. You have to then have someone take that template and customize it to allow for three images.

Beth: Talk about the challenge of that.

Liz: So part of what can be nice about templates if you can live with how the template has been structured is that they've taken the time and the cost to build an admin that does make it "easier" and even with templates themselves it's not always as simple as I think people expect it to be. I know from my own experience, I have clients who call and say "I'm trying to upload this image and it's just not fitting right," and I say "Did you size it first?" and they say "I don't know how to do that," so even something as simple as uploading an image can be a challenge for some. For others, they're used to kind of cropping, maybe they have Photoshop Elements or I know there's some free online tools that help with edit imaging. The other thing

you want to be aware of is that as developers, not only are we focused on the design and the function, but we're also thinking about things like page load, the speed of things, search engines, what steps we can take to have your site come up higher in search engine rankings and those are the kinds of things that if you're uploading content yourselves, you're probably, I could be wrong, you could be aware of it, but most of these clients that I'm working with are not aware of steps that they can take. Even the way you name your image can affect rankings so there's a lot of things sort of behind the scenes that I think a lot of people aren't aware of, which can kind of hinder a website experience for someone.

Beth: Absolutely. It's really important to think about. We have clients that will say "I really don't want something custom because I want to make sure it's easy for me to update myself. I don't want it to be so specialized that nobody else can work with it," but then they'll want to use a template or a theme, something that is standardized and part of the way through the process they'll say "This is perfect. I just need you to …" As you probably heard me say before "just" is the most expensive word in business because when something else is built by another person and locked down to be a certain way, making that one little change, I've tried to do simple things like put my logo above a line as opposed to below a line or when I don't want a picture at the top, I want to take the picture out and put my logo here, something that doesn't seem from a person's perspective who is visually looking at something like it should be a big deal, but in a template it can be a huge big deal and turn something from something that's locked in place and ready to go and when you're dealing with a template, it's like it will take us we're thinking maybe a few hours to change the colors, put your main elements in and then it's ready for you to go put content in. The minute you change one thing, if something is budgeted for a few hours, adding one or two or three hours all of a sudden you've got double the cost, whereas if you're doing something custom and you ask for a change because it's all built from scratch, frequently it can be accommodated depending on how far along in the process and what decisions have been made because almost nothing that you're going to say at the beginning of a process of a custom site that you're going to say you can't do. As we said, like my mom always said "Anything can be done if you throw enough money at it."

Liz: That's the thing, too. Throw out your ideas and as a good developer, we should come back and say "This is why I'm doing that," or "This is why I recommend against doing that,"
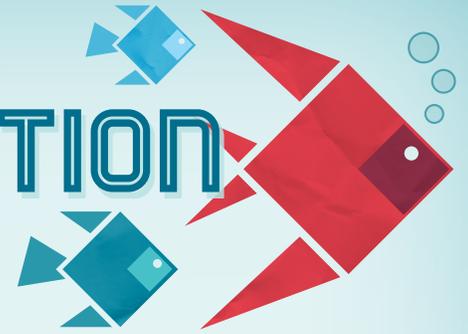
and they should be able to give you reasons why, especially now that responsive sites are on the forefront and definitely I think a necessity in this day and age. That adds a whole other level of complications, and it's very hard for people, I think we're all sort of used to looking at websites on a desktop and we're used to navigating them and now with mobile it's a completely different experience and with responsive sites, now instead of having a mobile site and a desktop site, we've married the two and I've spent a lot of time sort of explaining to people how they work and when they see something on a desktop and want to do it, I always have to remind them how is this going to work on a mobile site. That's a whole other layer that adds complications to website development.

Beth: I promise everyone that I will have Liz back on and maybe we'll do a whole other session on responsive, but I want to wrap this one up and thank Liz for coming here and joining me for this. We've hopefully given you a lot of food for thought to really start thinking about all the different things you should consider before just jumping out and asking web developers for quotes on your site. If you have questions, you can contact me at Beth@IrisCreative.com and Liz and I can definitely fill you in, give you more details and hopefully answer some of your questions about getting ready to do a web design project. Thank you so much and Liz, I appreciate you sharing all of your wonderful knowledge with our nonprofit community. Thanks for joining me today.

Liz: Thanks for having me.