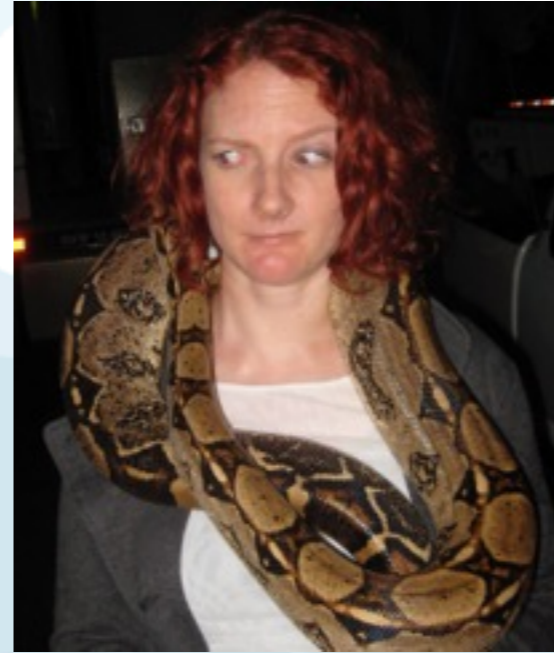# Designers & Developers

Cats & Dogs Living in Harmony

Kirsten Starcher • outsideinthesun.com

Who is this person?

- Comp Sci & English background
- Bridge between creative & technical
- Friend to animals

Been working on the web since there was a web. Did some CS degrees, worked at a few companies in NY doing sites for Bravo, IFC, LifeSavers, other corporate promotions and sites. Came to Vancouver in 2002, worked at UBC for a while, freelancing full-time for several years. Have worked in all aspects, design, dev, content, often occupying weird little space between design & dev. These days, main focus on Wordpress front-end development.

YouTube user: vijayakumarsk

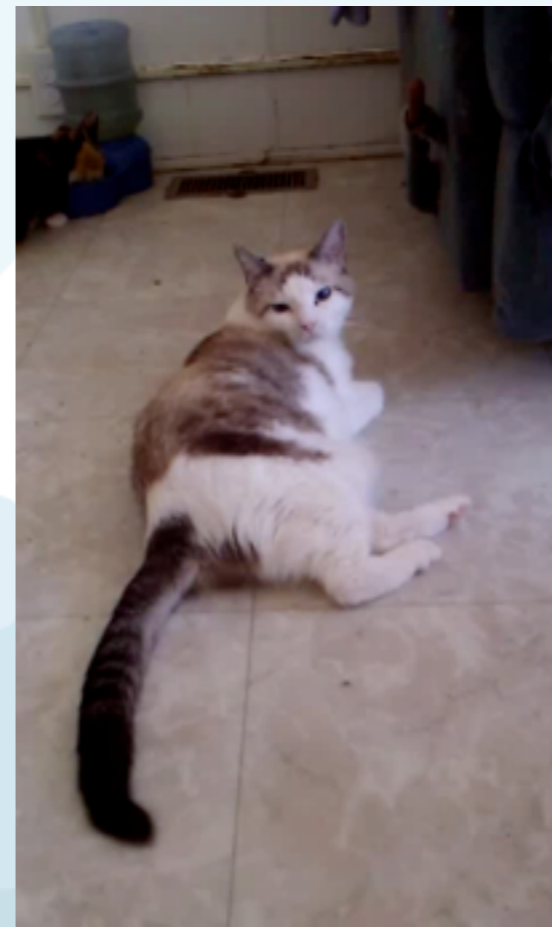# Tail Wagging

Dog
Hi! I'm friendly.

Cat
I am displeased.

YouTube user: Lindsay Rupert

Belly Up

Dog: I surrender. Please love me.

YouTube user: ChilledMonkeyBrainz

Sometimes we forget someone else may have a different perspective.

Flickr user: Peretz Partensky

What are our assumptions about what we're receiving from others?

get the big picture

May make a few sweeping generalizations here about designers & developers. Either can do both, but assuming isolated. Assuming you're a freelancer or small team, w or w/o PM. Assuming you care about what you do.
What expectations do we have? What are our goals?

A Designer's Dream

Pixel perfection without micromanaging

Respect

Designers: want the finished product to look exactly like what was designed, and for the site to function intuitively. Pixel perfection, without having to micromanage.

A Developer's Dream

Reasonable goals and a hassle-free process

Appreciation

Developers: want all the information up front to make the process smooth without having to backtrack and redo work. Being given space to work.
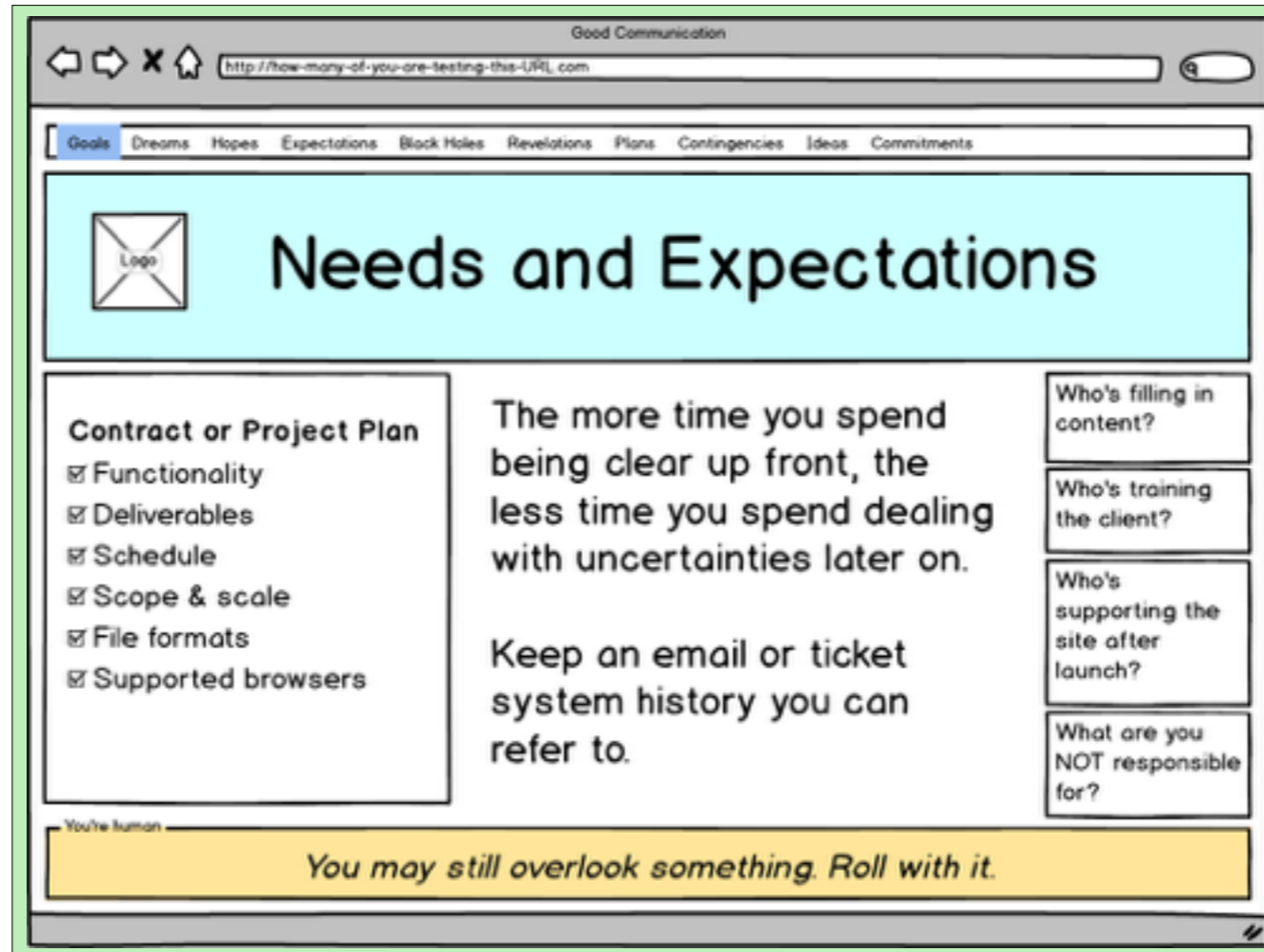
Good Communication

Flickr user: myhelmu

http://how-many-of-you-are-testing-this-URL.com

Goals Dreams Hopes Expectations Black Holes Revelations Plans Contingencies Ideas Commitments

Needs and Expectations

Logo

Contract or Project Plan

☑ Functionality
☑ Deliverables
☑ Schedule
☑ Scope & scale
☑ File formats
☑ Supported browsers

The more time you spend being clear up front, the less time you spend dealing with uncertainties later on.

Keep an email or ticket system history you can refer to.

Who's filling in content?

Who's training the client?

Who's supporting the site after launch?

What are you NOT responsible for?

You're human

You may still overlook something. Roll with it.

Getting all the dry details nailed down as clearly as possible up front, and having those details available for handy reference.

Trust

- Some behaviours we complain about come from a lack of trust

- Trust is built incrementally

Lack of trust that you're going to deliver what's needed

Trust built incrementally and is an ongoing process, affected by every choice you make along the way.

Every design is full of careful choices

A designer wants to feel that their work is respected. It's a lot of effort and planning, and the choices have been made for a particular reason based on their knowledge of user experience. They expect the developer to stick to the specs and functionalities as given. Micromanaging happens when the designer doesn't trust the developer to respect their work.

Every build takes heavy lifting

Flickr user mv

A developer wants to feel that their work is appreciated. The further along in the process they are, the more difficult the changes can be. Replacing windows is hard work! Stonewalling happens when the developer doesn't trust the designer to appreciate their work.

Honesty & Fear

- Being honest about knowledge and expertise

- Vulnerability builds trust

- What are you afraid of?

Be honest about your knowledge and expertise. If something is new to you, admit you're willing to learn but you're not sure how long it may take.
Allowing yourself to be vulnerable helps the other person trust you, since they can see you're not bluffing your way through the project, and will be able to speak up if there's a problem.
Often when people aren't honest, it's out of fear. Being judged, getting something wrong, looking stupid, losing a job? You don't have to admit these fears to your colleagues, but at least be able to admit them to yourself, and ask yourself if this is getting in the way of your relationship with the designer or client.

Expectations & Reality

- Find out if expectations are realistic…

- …for yourself as well

- Don't put off the hard conversations

If you see a problem, point it out. They may not be aware, or they may know a solution already. At least one of you is going to learn something.

Be realistic about timelines. Don't make promises you can't deliver.

Sometimes hard conversations need to be had. I've had clients whose previous designer/developer bailed without explanation, leaving the client lost and confused. If you're midway through a project when you realize you're in too deep, or there's something you don't understand, speak up. The sooner you raise an issue, the sooner it can be resolved or accommodated.

get ready
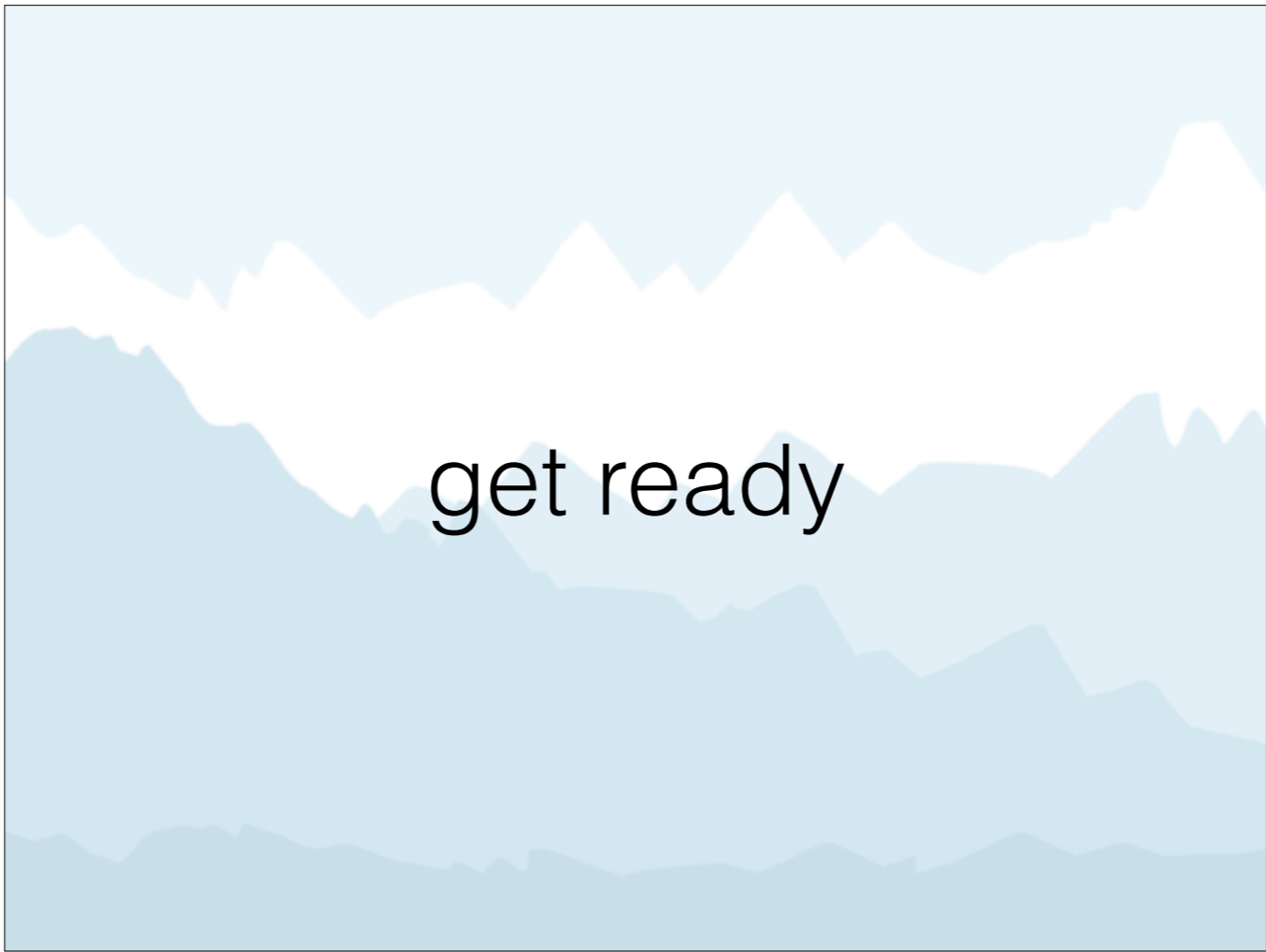
What do we need to know up front?

Designers

- Ideally, involve the developer before the design goes to the client

Developer can also check that what you've built is viable. There's nothing like having promised to build something that turns out to be a logistical nightmare. They may also be able to suggest approaches and features you wouldn't have thought of.

Designers

- General sense of technology & possible limitations

- Play & experiment: <u>CSS3Please</u>, sandbox sites

It's not your job to know everything, but just the broad strokes are helpful, especially if you're coming from a print background. Things like what IS possible with CSS, or breakpoints for responsive design. Helps you make better decisions in your designs.

Designers

- If you want pixel-precision, be precise

H1: Regular 32px

H2: Light 28px #ffffff; line-height:1.3em;

H3: Bold 30px #ffffff; line-height:1em;

H4: Bold 18px #ffffff; line-height:1em;

Body1: Regular 16px #ffffff; line-height:1.4em;

Body2: Regular 16px #4e4f4f;6; line-height:1.4em;

H5:Bold 30px #f57721; line-height:1em;

H6: Regular 22px #4d4843; line-height:1em;

H7:Bold 45px #4d4843

Body3 Light 16px #4d4843 line-height:1.4em;

Body4 Light 16px #4d4843 line-height:1em;

Navigation: Regular 13px #4d4843; Hover & Highlight: #f57721;

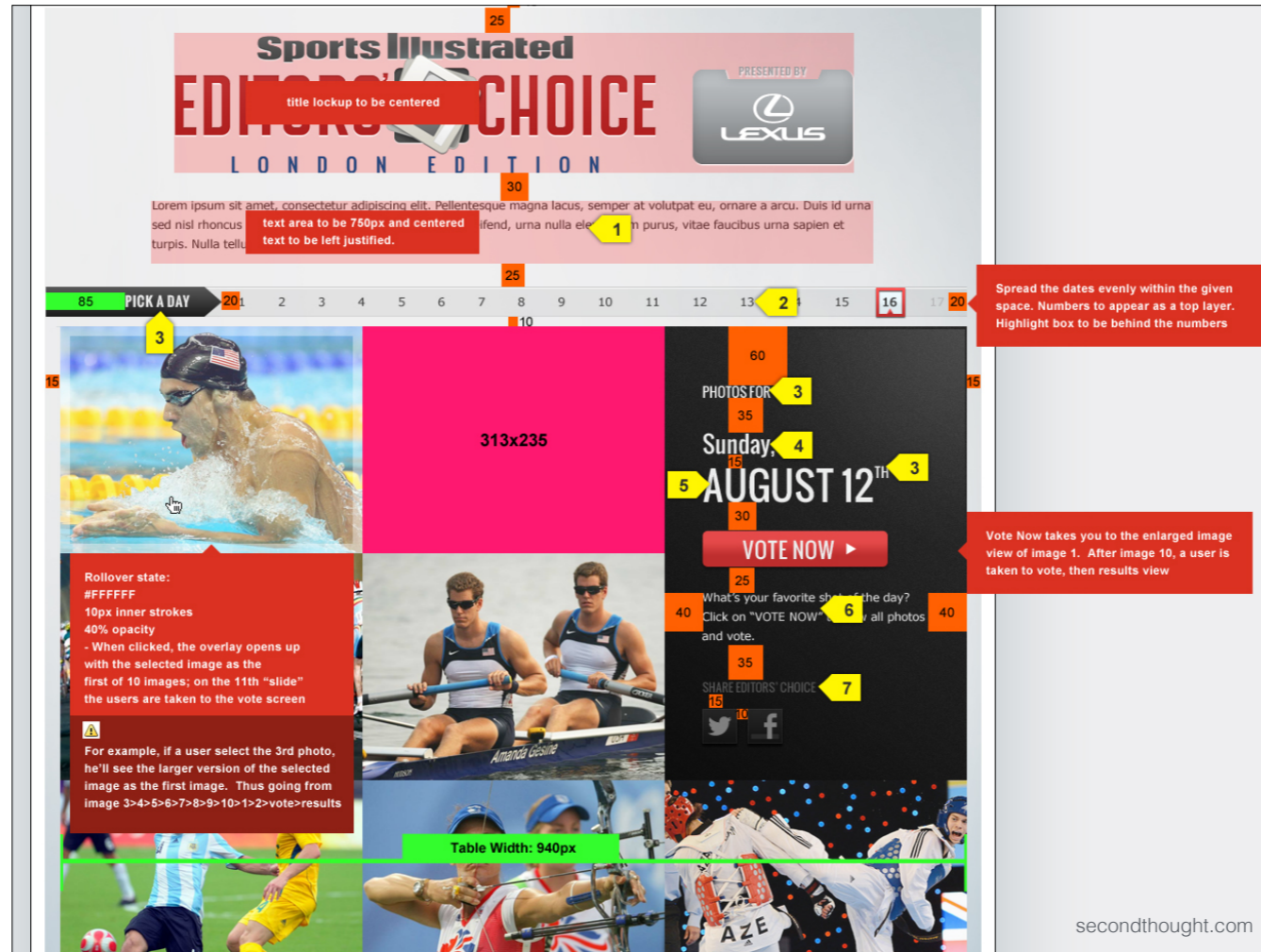Top Bar: "Sign Up for Alerts" Regular 13px #4d4843;

secondthought.com

Font Style Guide

Project Title SI.com Lexus Editor's Choice: Phase 1   **Prepared by** Kana Harding

Oswald Normal from google webfonts : <link href='http://fonts.googleapis.com/css?family=Oswald' rel='stylesheet' type='text/css'>

Label	Font	Style	Font Transform	Size (px)	Color(#)	Letter Space (em)	Line Height (em)	Hover(#)	Link Style	Select Font Type	Notes
1	Verdana			12	3e3e3e	-0.02	1.66			Web Safe	Default font against light bg
2	Verdana			12	3e3e3e			b12121	No <U>, Just change color	Web Safe	active:bold; inactive:#b5b5b6
3	Oswald		UPPERCASE	14	ffffff					Embed	
4	Oswald		Capitalize	24	ffffff					Embed	
5	Oswald		UPPERCASE	40	ffffff					Embed	
6	Verdana			12	ffffff	-0.02	1.66			Web Safe	Default font against dark bg
7	Oswald		UPPERCASE	12	808080					Embed	Share Module Header
8	Oswald		Capitalize	24	ffffff		1.58			Embed	
9	Verdana			12	636363	-0.02	1.66			Web Safe	Photo credit
10	Oswald			30	ffffff					Embed	
11											
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secondthought.com

Designers may be groaning about the extra work. Not saying you have to do this, but if you want more certainty of getting the results you want

Simple grid helps, and a few little notes to point out things I might have missed otherwise

Designers

- Existing theme, or starting from scratch?

- Ask your dev for specs - and use them

- Tidy up source files, include "flat" reference file

• Ask your developer what format they need your design to be in, and stick to it. Have asked for slideshow images as 72 dpi JPGs and gotten a 9-MB EPS file I couldn't open
• Clean up unused PSD layers
• Give design as PDF or JPG as well as source files

Developers

- What is the future of this site? Who will be using it, and are they tech-savvy?

- Know when to use a pre-built theme, a child theme, or a completely custom theme

. It'll be up to you to determine what's appropriate for this site; this decision will affect how you and the designer work together, and keep it on time and budget.

Developers

- You're expanding on the design. What's missing?

- You're bringing it to life. What does that mean?

- Be thorough, but pick your battles
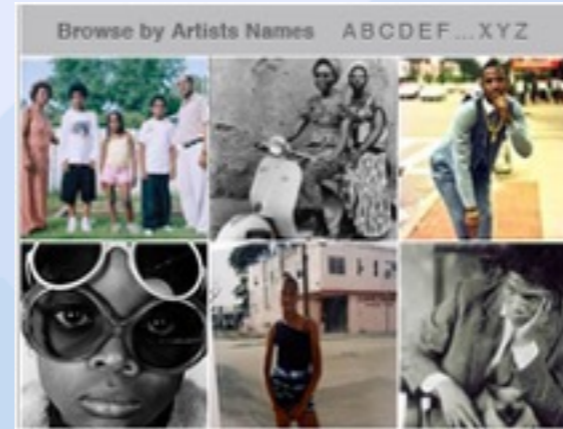
- Anticipate beyond what you've been given. Ask for what you need to know. Will the navigation work on mobile? Can the client add one more page and break it?
- You can think beyond the design and enhance the designer's vision, as long as you're still respecting the design intentions.
- You may not need to spend two hours fighting some CSS hiccup if the designer is fine with it the way it is.

get perspective

How do you work with the other person's viewpoint in mind?

Designers

How do you show a developer
you appreciate their time?

- Wind them up and let them go

- Organize & prioritize requests

- Understand that your requests have a time cost

Flickr user: brickdisplaycase.com

• Let a developer focus while they work. Don't look at the work in progress if you can't resist sending fixes. Be like a good waiter, there if needed, but not imposing yourself.

• You may not know whether that tiny adjustment you want to make will take 15 seconds or a few hours, but don't assume that something is easy because it's easy in Photoshop. Rebuilding something can be hard and soul-sucking work.

Developers

How do you show a designer
you respect their design?

- Make an honest attempt to implement it as-is

- Give reasons for changes (but don't over-explain)

- Propose alternatives instead of just saying "no"

Flickr user: brickdisplaycase.com

- If you have to correct the designer's work for technical reasons, do it respectfully. You may be teaching them something they need to know for future work. Some surgeons have better bedside manners than others.

Everybody

- A bit about listening

- Repeat what you heard. "My understanding is…"

• Listening means letting go of your agenda. Don't decide what you're going to say until the other person has finished their piece. Letting yourself be affected and influenced. Trust comes when you know the other person will hear you. Are you willing to hear them?

Everybody

- Don't shoot the messenger

- Put yourself in their shoes

- Are you trying to solve problems, or save face?

Flickr user: Cathelion

• Designer's request may come from client/PM, and they may be as unhappy about it as you are

• Developer's refusal may come from hours of research and testing and frustration

In conflict, do you have the site's needs at heart? Can you admit it if your way is not the best way? If you're right, can you make it easy for them to accept?

Obligatory Cute Pic of
a Cat and a Dog
Getting On Just Fine

Flickr User: Je

Investing in the relationship early on – the fruition of the relationship is at the end, and more potential projects
In a perfect world, we want not just responsive websites, but responsive designers and developers.

Kirsten Starcher

outside in the sun

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