



# Providing effective feedback

Your input is important and totally necessary to guide my work. I may not always get everything right on the first try. That's not just okay; it's part of the process. Our work together will probably be iterative.

**Here's how you can give me with useful feedback:**

## GOOD FEEDBACK

- Be honest. If you don't like something, I need to know - now, not three weeks down the road.
- Be specific. Point out what, exactly, is not working for you, and why it's not working.
- Ask why. If you aren't sure what I was thinking, I'd love to explain the reasoning. Everything I've done for the project has a purpose.
- Refer to your goals. Relate every piece of criticism back to your business goals.
- Relate to your audience. Your audience should be top of mind for every decision or critique that you provide. What do they need? What will they love?

*"I'm afraid that site visitors won't know what this page is all about"*

*"the word [...] doesn't feel like the right tone for my photography business"*

*"that shade of blue doesn't feel vibrant enough for the visual impact I'm looking for"*

## NOT-SO-GOOD FEEDBACK

- Involve everyone you know in the creative process. I work best when you alone serve as the expert on your target audience. "Art by committee" is rarely successful.
- Take things too personally. If I missed the mark, we need to figure out why and move closer to our mutual target. If we disagree, it's because I'm thinking about your goals and your audience. It's not personal, it's business.
- Do my work for me. Please give me written or verbal instructions about what isn't working; don't redo my work to illustrate your point.
- Prescribe fixes. You're paying me to provide solutions. Explain the problem and I'll pitch potential fixes, based on my research & skills.

*"make the headline bigger"*

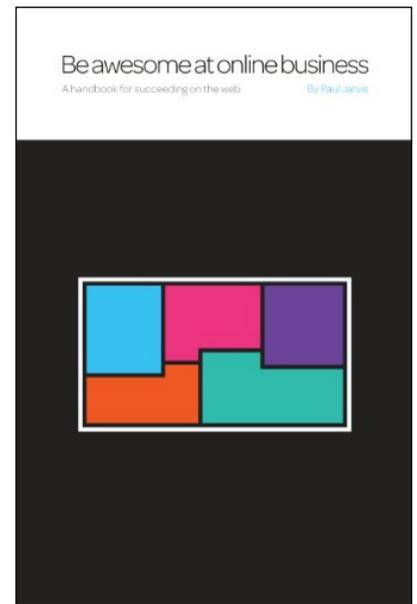
*"change this menu item to [...]"*

*"change the color from #00A8FF to #01A8F"*



# Be an awesome client to work with

Snippet from the [\*“Be Awesome at Online Business”\*](#) book by Paul Jarvis



No client assumes they know anything about web design until they're looking at a mockup they've paid for, which was designed by a professional. At that point they have a very strong opinion about what works online and what doesn't, what shade of blue is the best, how to correctly make something 'pop' or how to cram more information 'above the fold.' While your input as a client is completely valuable and even necessary, it needs to be framed and focused in the right ways.

Design is iterative and your web designer might not present you with a perfect mockup on the first try. This is good, because it can lead to a discussion about what problems still need solving, what's actually important as it relates to your goals, or something you might not have even considered. It's one thing to talk about your website in abstract terms and a very different thing to see it mocked up in front of you.

When giving your feedback, the most important thing to consider is that your site needs to serve your audience and goals, and not necessarily your own tastes. Your audience will be seeing, using and hopefully buying from your site. Put your personal views second.

Every design project is a beautiful balance between visual problem solving knowledge (from the designer) and knowledge of the audience and the business (from you). This is what makes every project different and keeps things interesting. So, rely on your web designer to propose the best visual solution. Before you start asking for changes, ask your designer some questions (and see the worksheet at the end of this chapter for all the questions you should ask yourself first).

Questions you might ask include: Why was the information designed in this way? Why was it placed where it is? Their answers & knowledge might convince you to keep something as-is.

If you aren't convinced by their pitch or the mockup, that's okay. You won't hurt their feelings if it's off the mark. This is a process. Be clear and specific about what you think isn't working, and frame it in a non-personal, non-insulting way. Web designers are used to change requests, but they can get defensive if you question their creative abilities (who wouldn't?).

Your change requests should also be actionable. Saying things like “punch that up a touch” or “dial the red back a hair” means absolutely nothing. Instead, say why something isn't working, such as, “that blue matches our direct competition so I'd rather use the orange from our logo instead,” or “our style guide and logo have circular elements and everything in the mockup uses squares and hard lines, which doesn't match.” Focus on what's not right or what problems still exist, instead of telling a web designer specifically how to fix things. They're professional problem solvers, so give them something to solve instead of a solution that might not be accurate.

If you ask for feedback from other parties (your spouse, your marketing department, your 'web designer' cousin) —know that they might not completely understand your online goals or the problems the design is solving (or at least not as much as the web designer). Take this feedback into consideration, but don't necessarily get your web designer to make all of the changes suggested.

Your web designer isn't your yes-person, either, so they might disagree with your change requests. This is actually a great thing, since it'll force you to evaluate what you've asked for and make a stronger case for the change. Disagreements happen, mostly because a good web designer is as passionate as you are about creating an awesome final product. You both want the same thing (a kick-ass finished product), so don't get personal, upset or offended. Your goals are the same—you're just working out the details.

Oh, and also always ask your web designer to make the logo bigger—we love that. Just think about how many times you used someone else's website and thought “I'd buy something here, but only if the logo was 10% larger.”

## Eleven questions to ask yourself **before you make a change request:**

1. Does this help to accomplish my goals?
2. What's memorable about this, and could anything make it more memorable?
3. Who needs to see or know this information?
4. Why is this worth clicking?
5. Can this be simplified and still make sense?
6. Is this necessary?
7. What's the obvious next step?
8. Would it matter if a specific element was removed?
9. What problem does this solve for my audience?
10. Does this change someone's mind?
11. Is this exactly what I want to say, in the voice and tone I want to say it in?