

**Consumer Guide**



**Introduction to  
PSD-to-XHTML  
Services**

2009



## Introduction to PSD-to-XHTML Services: Consumer Guide

This e-book is a collection of articles written by our (HTMLcot.com) web masters in April-June 2009. HTMLcut.com a PSD to HTML slicing and XHTML/CSS coding company.

PSD-to-HTML providers turn designs (digital images in .psd, .png, .jpeg and other graphic formats) into XHTML/CSS templates for websites and content management platforms (such as WordPress, Joomla, Drupal). PSD-to-HTML conversion emerged as a stand-alone service about around 2004-2005 years. Its appearance was the market response to the increasingly growing demand. Key customers of PSD-to-HTML companies are web development companies, designers, bloggers, and website owners.

The e-book answers some basic questions about PSD-to-XHTML services:

- Their role and place in the web development process;
- Main terms and promises;
- Available alternatives;
- What they give to customers;
- Recommendations which help to get the most and avoid unnecessary troubles.

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## 1 PSD-to-HTML Conversion Services - A New Fad or a New Market Need?

"Which of the PSD-to-HTML providers do you work with?" A few years ago this question had no sense because... there were no such companies. But now PSD-to-HTML/XHTML/CSS conversion services are sought-after and growing fast. Is it a new fad or a real market need?

The idea of a PSD-to-HTML service is quite simple. Using Adobe Photoshop or other software packages, graphic and web designers



create digital images – files with extensions such as \*.PSD. To convert them into a webpage template or blog theme, you need to develop HTML code. PSD-to-HTML companies are those who provide such a transformation.

The emergence of PSD-to-HTML services is not just chance.

A while ago we all celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Web. Media actively discussed achievements and outlook of the Internet. The appearance of design-to-HTML coding as a separate service also illustrates that the Web is becoming more mature. Really, specialization of labor and tendency to standards compliance are features of established industries only.

## The own niche in the web development process

Each of the web development jobs – design, HTML/CSS coding, and programming – plays its own important role and requires its own specific skills and aptitude.

I like the analogy with composing music: composers (in case of Web – designers) express their ideas in images. Then the music (websites) is written down by means of musical notation (HTML and CSS), arranged for different types of orchestras (browsers), and complied with recommendations of musicians' associations (WWW Consortium) and music critics (search engines). Of course, quality instruments, sound equipment, and stage effects are a must (databases, chats, widgets).

If each job is done properly, the website may get its "Grammy Award", that is, a lot of traffic and place #1 in SERPs (search engine results pages).

## Web standards, compatibility, and accessibility

PSD-to-HTML providers' advertisements often say that a resulting HTML/XHTML/CSS markup will be "*cross-browser compatible, W3C valid, SEO semantic, and hand-coded.*" Why is it emphasized?

### 1. Cross-browser compatibility

Users are free to choose which of the PC or mobile devices, operating systems or browsers to utilize. Browser producers are also free to decide in which way to treat a webpage. To ensure correct website appearance in different environments and make it accessible to wider audience, browser-specific code is added to a website HTML/CSS markup.

## 2. W3C compliance

W3C is World Wide Web Consortium which develops and approves the main Web guidelines, specifications, and tools, including HTML and CSS. When a site meets W3C standards, it is like a Web Quality Certificate. As a first step in evaluating website validity, you can use W3C sites [validator.w3.org](http://validator.w3.org) and [jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator/](http://jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator/).

## 3. Semantic coding

HTML and CSS allow getting the same webpage appearance in different ways. Semantic coding implies that you mark up your website taking into account content meaning and HTML tag semantics. For example, you use h1 tag for main headlines and so forth. Typically a semantic-coded site is more search engine friendly; search engines "understand" it better and rank it higher.

The role of semantic coding has been increasingly growing. Experts state that the coming Web will be completely semantic and provide more correct retrieving and processing data both by computers and human beings.

## 4. Hand- or automatically coded markup?

In many cases handcrafted HTML/CSS markups are better than those produced by specialized software. One of the reasons is a lot of semantic niceties which are difficult to code automatically. It is like software packages for design or programming – they help very much and quicken the process essentially but they don't substitute designers or programmers completely.

## What is the difference between PSD-to-HTML and PSD-to-XHTML services?

XHTML (eXtensible HTML) is the successor and modern extension of HTML and is recommended by W3C as a main markup language for today's Web. XHTML/CSS makes a webpage markup more compact and flexible, table-less, and with clear content and design separation. But there is a sound marketing/SEO aspect too: "PSD to HTML" and "PSD to XHTML" are often used as synonyms in providers' marketing materials. Here are some other key-phrases typical for PSD-to-HTML service advertisements: "Design to XHTML/CSS", "HTML coding service", "PSD to markup", just to name a few. In fact, PSD-to-HTML companies usually offer a wide range of services, including conversion of designs (\*.psd, \*.ai, \*.png) into XHTML/CSS/AJAX markups, blog themes, templates for shopping carts or content management systems (CMS).

The competition forces PSD-to-HTML service providers to develop XHTML/CSS code in line with the latest Web trends. PSD-to-HTML services help to make web development faster and easier, allowing designers and back-end programmers to concentrate on their specific tasks. Who benefit from that? I think the whole Web community.

## 2 How to Convert PSD into HTML - The Best Option

"I speak HTML, CSS, and Javascript." Resumes containing such phrases are not rare in the Internet. But what to do if your "native" language is colors and lines? In other words, if you are a designer and need to translate your works (for example \*.psd designs) into HTML/CSS code?



There are three main ways to solve this problem:

- Code it yourself,
- Use automated tools, or
- Hire a provider of PSD-to-HTML/CSS conversion services.

And here comes another question: Which option is the best?

In fact, there is no all-purpose choice to suit every situation. Really, people and circumstances are different.

### To convert PSD to HTML yourself or not yourself – Is that a question?

Some of my designer friends agree with marketing guru Tom Peters: nowadays design is one of the most essential competitive differences that can set products (and websites) apart from other commoditized rivals. A designer is becoming a central figure in website success. And she/he should be completely concentrated on design because very few people can be a universal genius like Leonardo da Vinci.



Others say that web designers should know not only the color theory or graphic techniques but also PSD slicing, HTML coding, content writing, SEO, and marketing. Only in this case designers will create something really effective in the present-day Internet.



For me every website element should be well-designed: website concept, its structure, graphics, layout, HTML/CSS markup, and content. The deeper designers know respective phases and website development operations the better, because she/he can see and control the process in whole. But this doesn't mean that designers should do all the work themselves.

## Which of PSD-to-HTML options is the best when...

... HTML/CSS is too simple for you or when it looks like mumbo-jumbo? When there is a long line of customers or only few orders? When you design an experimental site for yourself or an important custom work? When there is a large budget or tough times?

These situations obviously require different solutions.

## So what is the recipe?

To be effective, we should be flexible. It is difficult to be a universal genius but it is possible to have a universal (or almost universal) knowledge base and manage the process.

**1. Collect information:** Design-to-XHTML/CSS tutorials, reviews of automated conversion tools, and lists of PSD-to-HTML services providers.

To keep track of new developments, Google Alert can be of very useful assistance or just regularly visit such sites as *designfloat.com*, *designm.ag*, *noupe.com*, *tripwiremagazine.com*, *csstea.com*, just to name a few.

Speaking of tutorials, gather not only the newest techniques and CSS tricks but older materials too, because they may contain gold nuggets of information.

**2. Try them and make your own lists.** Select tutorials, automated tools, and providers that are the most useful, efficient, and comfortable just for YOU. It takes time but it pays off. Moreover, one day you can publish your own lists named "Practical Collection of PSD-to-XHTML Tutorials" or "My Favorite Design-to-HTML Services".

Select several (2 or 3) providers because:

- This reduces your risks: if you urgently need to convert your design and the primary provider is overloaded, you will have a reserve option.



- Providers can have strengths in different fields, for example, one is more proficient in PSD to WordPress themes conversion, others – in design-to-Drupal or Joomla templates development and implementation.
- Services and your requirements to them (as well as functionality of automated tools or perceived importance of tutorials) change with time.

Check out selected providers yourself. It is not out of place because what was the best for someone may be not so good for you.

**3. Evaluate project circumstances:** volume of works, urgency, project requirements (including W3C standards compliance, browser compatibility, semantic coding), project importance, budget, your level of HTML/CSS knowledge, and so on. Then take your lists and choose an option or their combination that is the most effective for you in this concrete situation.

Each of these options – Do it yourself, Use automated tools or Service providers – can be a good solution to convert PSD into HTML. But no less important is that there are different alternatives available for choice. Really, to be flexible and succeed – that is the best option.

## 3 20+ Benefits of PSD-to-XHTML/CSS Services

Nowadays PSD-to-HTML conversion services are very popular and are used extensively. But no one would ever exploit them if they were not able to give any benefits. So what do you get when you hire an external company to convert your designs (that is digital images in Adobe Photoshop \*.psd, \*.ai and other graphic formats) into XHTML/CSS code?

### Who uses PSD-to-HTML conversion services

Before starting discussing benefits themselves it is reasonable to consider in brief who PSD-to-XHTML/CSS conversion companies' customers are.

Here are some of them:

- 1) Web design and Web development companies, graphic design studios, creative agencies – often they are regular customers and build a long-term cooperation with PSD-to-HTML providers;



- 2) Companies which need to develop a piece of custom software – such customers usually need to convert graphic designs into templates for content management systems (Drupal, Joomla), e-Commerce systems and shopping carts (osCommerce, X-Cart), corporate blogs (WordPress) and so forth;
- 3) Independent graphic designers, web freelancers – division of labor could be mutually beneficial in this case;
- 4) Bloggers, networkers, owners of small websites – as a rule, their orders are one-off.

Benefits of using PSD-to-XHTML/CSS services are somewhat different for each of those groups.

## Benefits for companies

Cost and organizational benefits are usually the most essential for companies . They embrace:

- Cost saving — is achieved due to a number of reasons, including economies of scale typical for special-purpose, highly tailored companies like PSD-to-HTML providers;
- Access to the best-of-breed specialists and best XHTML/CSS coding practices — Design-to-HTML conversion requires specific skills and knowledge. It is especially true when it comes to W3C standards compliance, cross-browser compatibility, semantic coding, and other modern requirements to website markups;
- Better markup quality — as a result of the above;
- Decrease in design-to-XHTML/CSS conversion time;
- Total project turnaround improvement;
- Easy and fast assistance in the periods of overload;
- No need to rent additional office space;
- Better customer satisfaction;
- More efficiency and flexibility in core revenue-producing activities;
- Better honed company's business focus.

## Benefits for Web and design professionals

Needless to say that to know the basics of HTML or CSS and to have hands-on experience and to keep abreast of the latest tendencies is like apples and oranges. So if XHTML/CSS coding isn't your main focus in web design then hiring a PSD-to-HTML provider, you get rid of in-depth study of XHTML, coding and debugging markups, finding and collecting CSS tricks and tutorials.



Therefore, our list of benefits is continued with:

- No need to learn in detail HTML / CSS / XHTML / AJAX / W3C standards / 508 Standards / WCAG / and so on, and so forth;
- No need to bother how to solve different markup problems (for example overcome peculiarities of IE) — that in itself can definitely save some nerves;
- More time and energy for design, customer care, promotion, after all, for recreation;
- More design orders completed;
- As a result, an opportunity to gain more money — not out of place in these uncertain times.

## Benefits for individuals

- Professional look and feel of your website or blog;
- Speed optimized markup — users and search engines prefer quick websites;
- Cross-browser website — they won't say it looks bad in their favorite browser;
- W3C validity — your website is WWW Consortium standards compliant, it is like a prestigious seal of approval;
- Semantic coding — it helps search engines to understand and rank your web pages better;
- Authority — XHTML/CSS table-less templates and themes are trendy now.

Of course, the list is not completely comprehensive. But even in that form it evidently shows that there are enough weighty reasons to use PSD-to-HTML conversion companies.

## 4 How to Get the Most from PSD-to-HTML Services

*In web development projects when it comes to turn .psd, .ai and other designs into XHTML/CSS code, a common option will be to use PSD-to-HTML slicing services.*

*And a natural question raising here is: How to get the most out of them?*

PSD-to-HTML services are quite easy to deal with: you send or upload image files on a provider website, select conversion and layout options,



pay through an online payment system (PayPal, Google Checkout, etc), and get a resulting markup coded.

But in order to make the most of it and avoid unnecessary troubles it is better to follow some simple rules.

## Preparation for designs uploading

- If you have several files to convert, archive them and name it intelligibly, for example, "AnnSmith23July2009.zip" (i.e. "NameDate.zip"). It can be convenient for you as well, especially in case you need to check your previous orders.
- If there are files additional to your main .psd image (for example, custom fonts), don't forget to send or upload them too.
- Make sure you send or upload right files. PSD-to-HTML services are very fast, and by the moment you notice the problem with your files your markup may be ready. As a result, it could cost you some money to correct a mistake.

## Design slicing, XHTML/CSS conversion requirements

- Try to explain as accurate as possible what you want to get. Usually an order form on PSD-to-HTML websites has special subsections and items to help you with this task.
- Nevertheless, if your requirements cannot be described in this way or you don't have time to use it, don't hesitate to write down your requirements in a field named like "Notes" or use other communication channels convenient for you: live chat or email.
- If you are confused with something ("Is that option included? What is the delivery time?" and so on), ASK! Sometimes even friends and relatives see things differently. So it is better to ask and to be sure that you and your provider get everything right and in the same manner.

## Communication

- **DOUBLE CHECK** your email address that you state in the order form of the PSD-to-HTML service.
- Make sure that your anti-spam filters and email servers are not too overzealous and allow the provider's emails reach you.
- It depends on the PSD-to-HTML company but usually they send you an order confirmation (as well as your login and password to access a customer zone on their website). If you don't receive such an email during several minutes, contact them through the order form or live chat – the reason may be a misprint in your email address.



- Just in case give the provider's team an alternative communication channel (for example a mobile telephone number or an instant messenger ID).
- If time is crucial for you, specify your time zone.

## If there are any doubts

- If it is your first PSD-to-HTML project or you select a company for long-term cooperation, start from a relatively small pilot project to test the waters.
- Check the provider's Returns Policy, for example, whether they offer a money-back guarantee.
- If it is important for you, don't hesitate to ask for a NDA (non-disclosure agreement).
- Specify whether the provider offers after-sale support and what it means. If the provider is confident of their work, the technical support is usually free.

## Change management

- A small addition to .psd designs may lead to large modifications in XHTML/CSS code. If the process of PSD-to-HTML conversion is in progress or finished and you change your design, be objective while estimating changes to be made in the markup.
- Small changes are usually free.
- But if changes are large then it is like an additional page in your order and should be paid accordingly (note: usually prices on secondary pages are up to 50% discounted).
- If you are not sure, talk to the provider – together you will find a reasonable and mutually beneficial solution faster.

## Project completion

- Check how the finished XHTML/CSS markup corresponds to your design and conversion requirements. If there are any defects, ask to fix them.
- Change access rights to your servers (passwords, logins) if you gave them to the provider's team.
- If you think the provider has deserved your testimonial, give it. You will support a qualified and diligent PSD-to-XHTML/CSS company in the market and help other users to get to know them.

PSD-to-HTML services are just a tool to slice and convert designs into website markups, Wordpress themes or Joomla templates. The better you know how to work with them the more you get.



## Final Comments

Of course, one e-book cannot cover all aspects of PSD-to-XHTML services. So if you have any questions or comments, please contact the author by email [info@htmlcut.com](mailto:info@htmlcut.com) or visit the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page on the HTMLcut site.



## About The Author

HTMLcut is a proficient web development team. HTMLcut provides a full range of **PSD to XHTML** coding services: converts PSD to XHTML/CSS website templates, slices PSD to Joomla, Drupal or WordPress themes.

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