

Developing a Website

If you are running a business without a website you might as well close your doors and allow your competitors to take over your clients. In essence this is what thousands of businesses are unconsciously doing by not having Internet presence.

Today's fast paced people want assurance they can access information day or night. Creating a website for your business will insure information is available twenty-four hours a day to customers, potential employees, business partners and investors who would like to learn more about your business and the products or services you offer.

The following should be considered when gathering the data and designing the website:

- The site should be simple and easy to navigate.
- Limit topics to one per page.
- The following pages should be considered:
 - Description of products or services.
 - Company's mission statement.
 - About us / company history / could also include staff biography.
 - Projects and events.
 - Contact information.
 - Downloadable forms and newsletters.
 - Employment opportunities.
 - Forms to gather client information such as name, address and feedback.
- Do not use annoying flashy special affects that will slow down a user's Internet connection. The user simply wants to visit your site for the information you have to offer and not those time consuming intros, dropdown menus or music. The following are examples of well known website that serves there purpose without the special affect hype: www.Google.com, www.msn.com, www.whitehouse.org
- Do not infringe on someone else's copyrighted material by taking information from other websites or printed formats without permission.
- If you are planning to sell products online you should also consider the following additional information:

- Purchase and implement an E-commerce shopping cart. (monthly charges may apply)
- A commerce account from your bank. This will allow you to accept credit card payments. (monthly charges will apply)

In order to create a website which will fit the needs of everyone within the company you first need to create a website concept committee. The committee should consist of staff members from different departments and, budget permitting, a designer, graphic artist, and developers. The committee should break up all the activities into three phases: Phase I (Information gathering), Phase II (Planning), and Phase III (Implementation).

In **phase I** the committee should create a schedule with deadlines for each activity. It should then gather all the necessary documentation. Several domain names should be considered and availability researched. The domain name will be your Internet address i.e. www.yourcompany.com.

In **phase II** the committee should write copy for publication, help the graphic artist understand the company's vision, help the designer with the website layout, and insure that the developers understand the desired end results. A web hosting company should also be acquired which will help you register a unique domain name and provide you with hard drive space on the Internet for your website and email accounts.

In **phase III** the committee should approve the designer's layout and artist's graphics and photos. You should then allow the developers to put the site together and publish it (make it live). Once you have the website online you should consider using a Technical Support Specialist to troubleshoot problems, create new email accounts, and publish new pages.

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Developing a website Template

1. Budget, Rules & Responsibilities

- a. Website Committee: These people will write-up and guide the creation of the website.
- b. Designer: This person will put together the layout of the website.
- c. Graphic Artist: This person will create original artwork and photos.
- d. Developers: These people will code, put together and publish the website.
- e. Recurring expenses:
 - i. Hosting company: (Monthly charges will apply)
 - ii. Technical Support: To troubleshoot problems, create new email accounts, and publish new pages. (Monthly or yearly charges will apply)

2. Phase I (Information gathering)

- a. Create a website committee.
- b. Plan the goals for the website.
- c. Create a schedule with deadlines for each activity related to developing the website.
- d. Gather all the necessary documentation.
- e. Compile a list of several domain names in case first choice is not available.

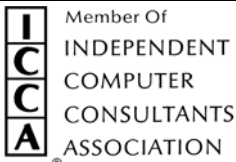
3. Phase II (Planning)

- a. Enter into a contract with a web hosting company.
- b. Write two to three paragraphs for each of the following pages:
 - i. Description of products or services.
 - ii. Company's mission statement.
 - iii. About us / company's history / could also including staff biography.
 - iv. Projects and events.
 - v. Company contact information.
 - vi. Downloadable forms and newsletters.
 - vii. Employment opportunities.
 - viii. E-commerce shopping cart. (Only if selling products on line. Monthly charges will apply)
- c. Insure that the designer, artist, and developers understand your goals.

4. Phase III (Implementation)

- a. Approve designer's layout and graphic artist's work.
- b. Allow the developer to create the site and publish it.

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