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Planning a Winning Website

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Planning a Winning Web Site!

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Today's Objectives

GETTING STARTED

Learn what is involved in having a web site

PLANNING YOUR WEB SITE

How to plan for success on the web!

E-COMMERCE

Planning for a prosperous web store

MARKETING YOUR WEB SITE

Getting the word out Can anyone find your web site?

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Getting Started

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Getting Started

What Will I need to have a successful business web site?

1. A Domain Name(yourcompany.com)
2. Either hire a Web designer/developer **OR** buy and learn software to build your own **OR** find an on-line template web site company.
3. Web Hosting services (it comes with the on-line template website)
4. You will have to plan yoursite – look & feel; goals; features
5. Then Market your site – On & Off line marketing
6. Site Maintenance - Keep it fresh and updated!

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Getting Started

Domain Names

A domain name is also your web address or URL (example: www.yourcompany.com). This is how your customers can find you on the Internet.

As long as you continue to register your domain name NOONE can have that same name – anywhere!

You can register your domain name yourself. **Make sure you keep your information on record with the Domain Registrar up to date.** If they try to contact you regarding your renewal and cannot reach you, **you could lose your domain name.**

Registrars to try: www.register.com www.GoPaddy.com

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What to look for in a Web Developer . . .

Experience & Training – how many years have they been in business? Are they a trained certified webmaster?

Do they use public templates or Professional and Original Graphic Design?

How do they price their work – by the hour or project?

Do they offer full services? – Hosting? Maintenance? E-commerce? SEO?

Do they have a comprehensive contract? Does it cover ownership of the site and copyright issues? Time lines, payment, etc. **Will you own your web site?**

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Want to try creating your own web site?

The easiest web programming software for a non-webmaster to learn is Expression Web (Front Page). Most web developers use HTML editing software such as Dreamweaver, Homesite or they hand code.

There are many on-line training programs. Local in-classroom classes for a 2 day DW class can cost up to \$800. But you can find much less expensive on-line training. This will require a higher level of basic computer knowledge.

Budget for the cost of the software and training.

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Tiny Budget?

Maybe a 3rd party Template site is the way to go.

Companies like GoDaddy.com offer inexpensive pre-packed sites you can edit your self through their on-line site building tools.

- Pros - it's inexpensive
- Cons - your limited by the on-line software

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Getting Started

What is Web Hosting?

Web hosts allow their customers to place web documents onto a special type of computer called a **web server**.

These web servers maintain constant, high speed connections to the backbone of the Internet. As a result, once on these servers, your html pages and other web documents can be viewed by anyone, anywhere in the world who has a connection to the Internet.

Web Hosting Costs vary from \$10 - \$100 + per month depending on your needs.

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Getting Started

What to look for in a Web Host

First check with your web developer to see what their needs will be. There are different web programming languages that require certain web hosting servers.

Do they have **phone tech support** available?

How many email accounts? And do they have web-based e-mail? And / or POP3 email to use in Outlook?

What kind of web servers to they have, Unix or Windows?
(**your web developer will need this information**)

Do they provide detailed **web traffic statistics**?

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Planning Your Web Site

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Planning Your Web Site

Market Research - Define your web marketing strategy. Your site must target your market.

Budget Planning - What is your budget to build, host and maintain the site?

Needs/Functionality - What do you want your site to do?

Design - Get a professional look that targets your market and make it easy to read and navigate

Content - Create relevant, vital content that is keyword laden.

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Planning Your Web Site Market Research

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Planning Your Web Site Market Research

Who is your target audience?

The key to any successful marketing is knowing who your customers are? Who are you building this site for?

You should know what age group your target audience is, are they new to the Internet? Or Web Savvy?

Are they housewives, professionals, a target group of businesses?

Upper income, lower income?

Highly educated, students, bargain hunters?

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Planning Your Web Site Market Research

What is the site's Call to Action?

Do you want visitors to buy something? Contact you? Come into your business or store?

How should your visitors perceive your site?

Should it be: prestigious, friendly, corporate, fun, forward thinking, innovative, or cutting edge? Is this *different* than the current perception customers have of your business?

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Planning Your Web Site

Market Research

Competitive Positioning

How you are different from your competition and the factors that will make you a success. Your USP. Your **"Unique Selling Position"**

Have you performed a competitive analysis?

How is your company or your web presence different from your competition?

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Planning Your Web Site

Budget Planning

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Planning Your Web Site

Budget Planning

OK what is it going to cost me to have a web site built?

It all depends on what you're looking for. A small "brochure" type site. Just 5 - 8 pages, simple design?

Or a web store? Maybe a larger business site that you or an employee can maintain through an on-line control panel? Do you need a high end design? Maybe a Flash (animated) banner?

It's sort of like buying a car - are you looking for a Ford Focus? Or a BMW 750i? Or something in between?

How much of your advertising \$\$ can you a lot for your web development and maintenance?

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Planning Your Web Site Budget Planning

What other costs to should I expect?

- **Registering a Domain Name(s)**
- **Web Hosting**
- **Web developer** - Will you hire a designer to create your site? If so they will need to know what your budget is so they can work within that.
- If you plan on creating your own site, budget for software, lessons and lots of time.

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Planning Your Web Site Budget Planning

Other Costs to consider

- **Copywriting** - Will you create the content (text, verbiage) for the site, or hire a professional copywriter? Most web developers expect the client to provide the content.
- **Photography** - Will you need to hire a photographer for product or staff photos?
- **Advice** - You will need to consult your CPA regarding sales tax if you plan on having an ecommerce site. You may also need to consult an attorney regarding a privacy statement, trademarks, etc.
- **Support from your Web Designer/Developer**

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Privacy statement = Get Content.

Planning Your Web Site Budget Planning

Web Store Costs to consider

- Shopping Cart Software License (some are free such as Zencart)
- Security certificate to ensure your customers credit card information is safe
- Merchant Account
- Payment Gateway Account or a 3rd party service such as PayPal
- Software security updates and upgrades
- Photography

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Zen Cart.

Planning Your Web Site Needs / Functionality

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Planning Your Web Site Needs / Functionality

First, what do you want your web site to do?

Search the web for sites you like and start making your lists to give as examples of features and appearance you're looking for.

- Simply provide some basic info about your company?
- Let you manage **content & documents**?
- Be a portal with online **personalization**?
- Track Web site visitors with **site analytics**?
- Notify visitors with **subscriptions & Web alerts**?
- Build online communities with **blogs, forums, & memberships**?
- Sell products or services?

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Planning Your Web Site Needs / Functionality

What other features will you want?

- Content Management System
- Custom programming
- Photo Gallery
- Searchable data base
- Calendar
- Event registration
- Polls or surveys
- Membership directories

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Planning Your Web Site Needs / Functionality

How big of a site do you need?

Create an outline of pages you want, such as:

Home
About us
Team
Corporate info
Services
Service 1
Service 2
Contact Us (form and map)

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Planning Your Web Site Needs / Functionality

Content Management Software – what is it?

Content management software (CMS) is a software that resides on the web server and creates a database driven web site. It enables a web site owner to manage their site with no programming experience. They log onto a control panel and can edit content on existing pages, add or delete pages, etc. Depending on the software there are add-on features such as calendars, photo galleries, forums, blogs, shopping carts, etc.

There are commercial (paid for), custom that is proprietary to the web developer, and Open Source or FREE software.

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o Joomla

Planning Your Web Site Needs / Functionality

Content Management Software . . . continued

Some of the most popular Open Source CMS to look at are:

- Wordpress – for small and larger sites (focused on blogs, but also works as a stand alone CMS)
- Joomla – complex, better for larger sites
- Drupal – complex, better for larger sites
- CMS Made Simple – perfect for smaller sites and for users that may not be too tech savvy.

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Planning Your Web Site Needs / Functionality

CMS - Do I need it? Probably if . . .

- you need to make constant updates to your site.
- you need a larger site. You can have as many pages as you like and can create them on the fly.
- you will want add features now or in the future.
- If you simply want control over the content of your site.

Having a CMS web site is more expensive upfront. Even if you are using an open source software that is free, installing, configuring and designing for it is complex and time consuming.

Note: this is software and since it runs on a web server there will be security updates and upgrades that will be important to install periodically. So budget for this as well.

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Planning Your Web Site Needs / Functionality

Content Management System - Free vs. Commercial

If you decide to use an **Open Source CMS** software you don't have to worry about licensing issues. They even allow for custom programming too. You can do anything you want, except re-brand it.

If you decide to go with a web shop that has **developed their own CMS software**, you will be getting a license to use it from them and no other developer can modify it.

You can also purchase a license to a CMS Software and install it yourself, or pay a web developer to and create a design for it as well. Check on pricing for upgrades with the company.

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Planning Your Web Site Design

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Planning Your Web Site Design

A web site is a very effective marketing tool – if it's done well! It's one of the most cost effective forms of advertising. Your web site should be a part of your over all marketing plan and should tie in with the rest of your marketing efforts.

Consistent use of logos, company colors, and fonts is important to how your business is recognized and perceived.

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Planning Your Web Site Design

Designing for the Web is very different from designing for Print.

People have different monitor sizes and resolutions, different browsers, operating systems etc. That's why its important to know your audience.

If you want to see how your web site looks in different browsers go to www.browsershots.org and test your site.

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Planning Your Web Site Design

User profile – Who's going to visit your site? Is it the public at large? Then make sure your site can be viewed on a smaller screen and load quickly on computers with dial up connections.

- What browsers do you need your site to work best in?
- Will you want to build your web site for the vision impaired? If so, your site must be CSS compliant and not laid out in tables
- Do you want your visitors to be able to "print your pages"?
- Knowing your **target audience** is vital in designing a site that will appeal to them and keep them coming back!

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Design for your audience!

A site target towards Seniors will be vastly different than a site targeted towards children.

These two markets have different attention spans and needs, therefore requiring different approaches; for example, the official site for Harry Potter is crammed full of animations. Sites targeted to senior citizens, on the other hand, may be based on multimedia content and large text sizes.

When designing your site, you cannot simply design without concentrating on the **purpose of your site**.

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Remember - All good web sites have these basic components:

- It's easy to read.
- It's easy to navigate.
- It provides good information and is easy to look at.
- It's search engine friendly
- It's kept fresh and up to date.

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Planning Your Web Site Design

Web page design tips

- Less can be more, so don't overcrowd a Web page.
- If you are selling items, make sure your product photos are large enough to see clearly. Try to illustrate the key features.
- Title each page so that they are easily located by the user and by search engines.
- Try to be concise with text. You can always have readers click to get more information.

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Web page design tips

- Make the home page the center of activity. Make sure it is always easy to return to. Clearly define the purpose of the site and create an image on your home page.
- Provide customer service, phone numbers, and contact information that clearly illustrates an accessible business behind the site.
- Make sure the color of your text is easy to read against the background you've selected.

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Web page design tips . . . Continued

- Double-check all links often to make sure they work.
- Don't get caught up in "bells and whistles." Just because the software, Web designer, or Web-hosting service allows you to include a myriad of features doesn't mean you need them.
- Make sure the site loads quickly. Don't let graphics slow it down.

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Planning Your Web Site Design

Web page design tips . . . Continued

- Be diligent about copyright usage and make sure you have the rights to all information you are posting.
- Provide customer service, phone numbers, and contact information that clearly illustrates an accessible business behind the site.
- Make sure the color of your text is easy to read against the background you've selected.

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Planning Your Web Site Design

"Make it clear and simple for me to get where I need to go and don't confuse me or cause me to think too hard about it."

Poor navigation and site structure can lead to frustration and an early **exit**. Keep to the 3 click rule. They should find what they are looking for in 3 clicks or less.

If your main navigation is in a graphic format you'll want to include a **secondary text navigation at the bottom of the page**. This is key in making your site search engine friendly, for blind reading software and for general ease of use.

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Planning Your Web Site Design

Pitfalls that may irritate and loose visitors

- Long Flash (animated) intros - limit them to 30 seconds if at all.
- Have a Splash page that simply reads "click here to enter our site". (A recent "How" magazine article reported a 25% abandonment rate for sites with splash pages)
- Pop up boxes - all which can serve to annoy your guests - causing them to reach for the exit button.
- Music - can be an irritant (unless you're selling music!)
- Pages that scroll sideways or endlessly long.

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Planning Your Web Site Design

Do you want your site to scream amateur?

- **Have a hit counter.** Do you want someone to see they are #3 to visit your site? It's unnecessary if you have detailed traffic statistics from your web hosting company.
- Put your **mission statement** on the home page
- Have **flashing, blinking text** and animations everywhere

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Planning Your Web Site Content

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Planning Your Web Site Content

Content is the KING of a good web site.
Good content will . . .

- Help your company establish credibility
- providing useful information to your visitors
- encouraging repeat visits and build your business
- Make your site **search engine friendly** and attract a constant flow of new visitors.

Who is going to write the content for YOUR site?

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Planning Your Web Site Content

Your Home Page - Tell them who you are and what you do!

If they can't determine in less than 10 seconds what you are and offer, they're off to the next site!

Remember to incorporate your "keywords" and phrases throughout your content.

Look at your site from a visitors point of view. Web site visitors tend to be very directed. They land on your site after searching for something they need and don't care about anything else. If you want your visitors to stay, you need to tell them right away that they've come to the right place.

REMEMBER - they may not arrive at your home page first!

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TagLines = "Bakers"

eCommerce

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eCommerce

E-commerce simply means electronic commerce.

Different examples of ecommerce are:

- A web store – purchase products, download software
- Accept payments or donations on-line

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eCommerce

Planning your web store

A successful web store is fun and easy to buy from! Just like a good brick and mortar store.

If you are planning an ecommerce site, think of a site you like to purchase from and even a favorite store. What makes your experience there enjoyable?

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What is a Shopping Cart?

A shopping cart is a piece of software that acts as an online store's catalog and ordering process.

The "shopping cart" acts as a virtual shopping cart, keeping track of the items visitors have ordered and allowing them to add or remove items. When a visitor decides to "check out" (purchase the items online) the software sends all order information to the merchant and the payment information to the "payment gateway".

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The 3 Steps to Accepting Credit Cards

Regardless of the companies or services you enlist, there are 3 basic steps to accepting credit cards:

- 1) Getting the customer's credit card number from the user's browser to you securely,
- 2) Processing the credit card information and authorizing the transfer of funds to a merchant bank
- 3) A merchant account with a bank that underwrites the risk involved in your transaction processing.

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Accepting Credit Cards On-Line

Taking Credit Card Information.

The most popular way to transmit credit card data securely over the Net is the secure sockets layer (SSL) protocol.

Whether you gather customer credit card information from a form or a shopping cart, you will want it to happen on a secure server. In order to make a server secure using SSL, a digital certificate is required. The digital certificate identifies you as a legitimate business and allows all information to be encrypted for travel over the web.

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Accepting Credit Cards On-Line

Getting a Merchant Account

You'll need a special bank account in order to accept credit card orders. Most banks offer merchant accounts — the problem is figuring out which one offers the best price, usually as a percentage of each credit card order that you submit.

Most banks charge higher fees for what they consider risky accounts, such as those with large numbers of charge-backs or fraudulent charges. Usually a U.S. business checking account and good credit are required to get approved for a merchant account.

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Accepting Credit Cards On-Line

Processing Credit Cards

Dozens of companies offer transaction processing software (Payment Gateways) that sends the right information to everyone involved in the sale — your bank, the customer's bank, the bank issuing the credit card and so on. But most banks work with a handful of the biggest companies, including Authorize.net.

Some processors lease their services to you for a monthly fee, while others take a percentage of your sales. Some processors will help you get a merchant account if you need one, and many have deals with ISPs that provide everything you need to build an online store. Be sure before you make any commitments that your processor is compatible with your merchant bank and your shopping cart software if you plan to do real-time processing.

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Accepting Credit Cards On-Line

The following payment gateways will work with virtually any shopping cart software:

Authorize.Net <http://authorize.net>

This company works with virtually any shopping cart system and is the best.

PayPal <http://paypal.com/>

(works with virtually any shopping cart system as well)

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eCommerce

Things to consider for your web store

What are your policies for:

- Returns
- Shipping and Handling
- Pricing
- Sale items
- Larger items in terms of shipping
- Privacy - create a privacy statement regarding how you will handle client information. You may need to consult an attorney.

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Things to consider for your web store

Will you will need to:

- Have photos products? Will you have to edit them for your site?
- Do you have item numbers and item descriptions for every item? A good description will sell your item!
- Who is going to input every item into your shopping cart? This takes time.
- Decide on shipping charges and methods.
- Decide on sales tax.

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Shopping Cart Software - Commercial, Open Source?

Most web developers use "off the shelf" shopping cart packages for their clients. Most can be adapted to meet the clients needs.

Many will use software that is "open source", meaning it's free and can be customized and the "source code" is fully available. This is a good thing if you ever want to switch web companies.

Some web developers use private label or proprietary shopping cart software. If they do, no other web developer will be able to work on making changes to your shopping cart.

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What features will you need and want from your shopping cart software?

Start reviewing shopping carts and learn about all the features that are available. Be aware that they are based on different programming languages. Not all web developers can work in all programs, usually just one or two.

Here are just a few to check out:

- Zen Cart – open source
- Cube Cart – commercial, but inexpensive
- Magneto – open source

There are MANY more and many that are hosted solutions where you pay a monthly fee.

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eCommerce

What features will you need and want from your shopping cart software?

- Unlimited products
- Coupons
- Quantity discounts
- Multiple product images
- Related items
- Featured items
- Real time shipping integration
- Export to Quickbooks

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3rd Party On-line shopping cart services

If you can't afford your own shopping cart solution there are on-line shopping cart services that you can either tie into or create your e-commerce site on-line and host it for a **monthly fee**.

Downside: cannot take it with you if you decide to have a custom site created at some point.

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