

Web Site Creation Basics

Introduction

A Web site provides your business with a storefront to support your current customers and attract new clients. Whether you want to create a minimal Web site containing your contact information or a basic Web site that describes your products and services, the creation process contains the same steps. Most Web sites are available to be read by anyone with Internet access that can find the site location. Access to modify your site is secured by the update method provided by your Web host. Creating a secure access or on-line ordering Web site requires additional steps and should be left in the hands of professional developers. Don't forget that once your site is created, you need to keep it current and fresh so your audience will continue to visit.

What you will need to create a Web presence:

Computer

Your computer allows you to create your Web pages and to publish them through your connection to the World Wide Web (WWW).

ISP (Internet Service Provider)

Your ISP furnishes your connection to the Internet and World Wide Web. You will use this connection to publish your pages to your Web host. This facility also allows you to interact with Web pages and to access your e-mail.

Web host

Your Web host provides the space on a server to store your Web pages so that your clients or users can access them through the Internet. The standard addressing scheme of the Internet is a series of four numbers separated by periods. For example, the Oregon State University Web site home page is located at an Internet Protocol (IP) address of 128.193.4.112.

Domain Name or URL (Uniform Resource Locator)

You purchase a domain name (also known as a URL) for your Web site so that it can be identified with characters instead of numbers. For example, the Oregon State University Web site home page is usually reached using the Domain Name of www.oregonstate.edu, which passes through a name server to get translated into the IP address.

Software to create and publish pages

The software you need on your computer to develop your Web site depends on your skill level and your knowledge of a language used to create Web pages.

Steps

Design

Identify your target and establish the type of computer and Internet connection your audience is using.

- World Wide Web (www) sites can be seen by anyone that has access to the Internet. You need to design it to reach and grab the audience you want.
- Identify the purpose of your Web site. Possible choices include:
 - Post pictures and information for your family
 - Post catalogs/prices/services for your company
 - Complete internet sales with on-line payment
 - Provide customer information and support
- Some Internet users have 15-inch monitors (with 256 colors) and slow dial-up connections. Others have fast (T1, DSL or Cable) network connections, 21-inch monitors and True Color (32-bit).
- Design your site to appeal to your target audience. You want your clients and users to come to your site frequently and it needs to reflect your professionalism.

Look at existing Web sites and decide how you want your site to look and feel. While looking at other sites, document each site, how long it took the pages to load and how you felt about the wait time. Lay out your Web site pages as you want them to appear identifying how the pages link together and the content of each page.

Create your Web site yourself

Making your content displayable

Web site creation requires that your content be stored in a format that audience computers will display as you intended. The active browser on the client computer does Web page interpretation. HyperText Markup Language (HTML) is the standard format for most browsers including Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer. For example, HTML provides the coding standard for the font attributes of text giving you the ability to identify size, shape and color. If the audience computer does not have the color you specify, the browser decides what color to use on the display.

There are various products available to help you convert your content to the HTML format.

- The most basic product is to use a text editor. To use this level of product, you will need to write the actual HTML codes around your content. From a cost of product this is the least expensive option but it requires a firm knowledge of the HyperText Markup Language (HTML).
- A primitive level product is to use a word processor application that allows you to format pages and save them as HTML. This saves learning HTML, but may not support the design level of professionalism you require.

- A higher level of product provides wizards and templates to help the beginner create a professional looking and feeling Web site with a minimum of training and knowledge. This level of product is available from most Web host organizations or can be purchased separately.
- Professional developers use a tool kit of products to create Web sites. Information on these products is beyond the scope of this document.

Along with making your content displayable, you will want to make it as “fool proof” as you can within your restrictions on time and money. Historically, ten to thirty percent of a developers time is spent making content available and the rest is spent making sure it always flows correctly so the average person does not end up in the wrong place and get discouraged from using the site again. As an example, if a client is looking at a product and you give them a link to view the details which has a link to another product, make sure they can get back to the original product without starting over. Be careful about the assumptions you make on how the audience will view your site and always test your system including checking every link before you publish it for access. Once it is published, check out all of the external links to make sure they still work as intended.

Web host

From the previous step, you will have an idea of how much space you need to store your Web site. Some of the criteria to consider in choosing where to host your site include:

- Bandwidth (The number and size of the telecommunications connections for clients to get to your site. Are you willing for your audience to get a slow response?)
- Reliability of your host to provide your site to your clients. (100% uptime 7 days a week and 24 hours per day is impossible, what will you accept for your site?).
- Security (How secure your site is from hackers).
- Space to store your Web site on a server.
- Technical support (24 hour-a-day toll-free phone or e-mail support.)
- Number of E-mail addresses using your Domain Name in the form of AnyNameYouChoose@YourDomainName such as help@oregonstate.edu
- Statistics on usage of your site.
- Optional: Tools to create your Web site.

To find a Web host, check out your current Internet Service Provider (ISP), search the Web using your favorite search engine or use your personal network of people.

Domain Name

Choose a domain name that best identifies with your reason for creating a Web site and that will help your audience find your site. Domain names have the format of www.YourDomainName.extension. Popular extensions include .com, .org, .gov, .edu and .net with others available as created by the ICANN Board.

Most Web host sites have a page where you can check the availability of your chosen domain name and to register it. Because your Domain Name points to your Web site home page Internet Protocol (IP) address, you will need your Web host information to register your domain name. The easiest way is to register with your Web host and have them register your domain name as part of the package they provide.

Making your content available

Now you are ready to publish the content to the host. Your Web host will provide the information you need to place your Web site on their server including the URL address. They may provide an application to use to publish your site or give you the information to use with a File Transfer Protocol (FTP) program.

To find an FTP program, check your Web site development program documentation, check out your Web host, search the Web using your favorite search engine or use your personal network of people.

Getting the audience to your site

Some ways to help your audience find your Web site:

- Include your domain name on your business cards.
- Include your domain name in all advertising.
- Request organizations to which you belong to link to your Web site.
- Request your suppliers to link to your Web site.
- Request your URL be added to search engines.
- Pay a search engine company to get special consideration on searches.
- Purchase multiple domain names for your site that the audience might find by chance.

Maintain your site

Keep it current and fresh so your audience will continue to visit.

Hire someone to do all of this for you

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