

Four Easy Steps to Establishing a Website

By Steven Boaze

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Are you ready to establish a web presence for your organization or business, but overwhelmed by what appears to be a process that is complex and expensive?

Unfortunately, this process does indeed seem confusing, given the variety of companies selling their services and the inconsistency of pricing from vendor to vendor. But establishing a web presence can be simplified if you follow these four steps.

1. Website Name Registration

Choose a name that best represents your business or organization. While a short, concise name is generally preferred, sometimes a longer name may be remembered by potential users and

thus be a better choice. For example, www.mooreselectric.com is not the shortest name possible for the moores electrical construction website, but it clearly describes the site and is easy for the user to remember.

When selecting names, come up with several alternatives because your first choice may not be available. Name availability can be checked quickly at: www.networksolution.com

once at the Network Solutions website, Click on the "WHOIS" link to see if the name you are interested in is available. If your first choice isn't available, a number of similar options will be displayed including those with variety of extensions like .info, .biz, .org, .ws, .cc and .be.

I recommend that you stick with either a .com, .net and .biz extensions as most other extensions will not be remembered by your users.

The Cost to purchase a website (Domain Name) is approximately \$20.00 to \$35.00 per year. Even if you are not quite ready to develop a website, you should purchase the Domain Name you want if it is available

since the cost is low and the name may not be available in the future.

2. Website Design

The cost to develop a webpage is affected by the amount of content, the complexity of the site and the web designer you hire. Because of these wide ranging variables, it is very difficult to estimate what might be considered reasonable design costs.

However, a simple site that is essentially an online flier can be created for as little as \$500, while a more complex e-commerce site can easily cost thousands. Don't be afraid to ask several companies for pricing estimates before making a decision.

In Addition, keep in mind that cost is only one of the many variables that should be considered.

Shop around for a designer with whom you are comfortable. If you are unsure whether a website will help your business, and your budget is limited, start with a simple site consisting of several pages. This will limit your investment while letting you get a feel for how this site will enhance your business. You can always expand your website with additional pages.

Do not allow yourself to be pushed into starting with an elaborate site if you are not comfortable with this. Remember, a website should enhance your business and improve the bottom line like any other investment.

3. Website Hosting

Your website can be hosted on one of many servers throughout the country including several local companies. Keep in mind that the location of your web server is insignificant to the user. Pick a web host that you feel is both affordable and reliable. A simple website that is essentially an online brochure should not cost no more than \$9.00 per month to host.

However, an e-commerce site could cost well over \$80.00 per month.

In addition to cost considerations, choose a host that has a reliable track record. Most hosts will provide data on the "Down Time" and you should beware of using any host that is unable or unwilling to share this information with you.

4. Website Maintenance

Maintenance fees will vary depending on the number and type of changes you make to the site. Before hiring a web designer, be sure the maintenance fees are detailed up front. some designers charge a low cost design fee, but pad their maintenance fees.

Once again a simple online brochure that does not require many changes

and should have limited on-going maintenance. Consider having the designer review Your site quarterly or semi-annually to be sure the site maintains the appearance initially created.

Following these simple steps will allow your business or organization to establish a presence on the World wide Web.

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