

Your Own Web Site

By Bob Osgoodby

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So you are about to make the plunge and set up your very own web site. Now the very first concern you might have is how to do it. Well, you can either "do it yourself" or hire someone to do it for you.

The "do it yourself", assuming no prior knowledge, faces a fairly large learning curve. While there are a number of packages such as "Netscape Page Composer" which can make your job easier, most really don't go beyond basic page construction. Don't get me wrong - I use this package myself at times. But, since all Browsers are NOT created equal, coding which looks great on one might be a disaster on another.

The two most popular Browsers are Netscape and Microsoft Internet Explorer. AOL, the largest Internet Service Provider (ISP), is compatible with Internet Explorer. If your page looks good on both of these, the odds are it will look good on almost any Browser.

So, it is apparent that you must have at least the capability to check your work on both browsers. I know, I know, there are templates available with some services that build the page for you. But honestly, you want to have a page that gets beyond the basics if you want to attract people back to your site?

Do you have scanning capabilities available to you? If not forget about using your own images or logo on your web page. Also forget about "lifting" an attractive image you find on someone else's web site. There are however many images you can freely copy, but you should make sure you are on firm ground here.

Are you going to rely on your ISP for their "Personal" Web Pages that many provide? What if they go "belly up" or the service deteriorates? While you can re-create your pages someplace else, how do you let your current customers know about your new web address (URL)? How about those thousands of business cards that are already in the hands of your customers and potential clients, not to mention copies of your letters in their files which now have the wrong URL? Many people look at personal web pages as "tacky" for use in a business environment. And, some search engines will not accept submissions from them.

So what are the alternatives? The first is to secure your own domain name. The cost to register

your URL varies, but is minimal. But that is however, just the beginning - you can't use your own domain name on an ISP such as AOL, Compuserve, etc., so you must either go with an ISP that allows the use of your own domain, or contract with a company that provides web space. You can purchase web space at bargain basement rates today. A good example can be found at <http://bitshack.com> .

The biggest advantage of contracting for web space is that you can place your web pages anyplace that you wish, and still maintain your existing URL. Since the pages are not ISP dependant, you can use any service you wish. Your E-mail address stays the same, and you can "redirect" your E-mail to the mailbox of your current ISP.

Any E-mail sent to me at bob@adv-marketing.com is automatically "redirected" to my current mailbox. If I change to another ISP, it would be a simple matter to "redirect" the mail to the new address.

The second alternative is to get a sub-domain name. An example is Advanced Marketing which is <http://www.adv-marketing.com> with the sub-domain of "business" - <http://www.adv-marketing.com/business> . This sub-domain really doesn't have to have any content in it at all. What that URL can do is to "redirect" you to another web page automatically. Now if your real URL was on a personal web page, visitors to your Web Site would not have to be aware of this. The best part is that if you change ISP's, while you would have to move your web pages, the home page URL would be the same.

Today, the cost of web space is not expensive. If you are trying to do business on the Internet, your own web site is a must.

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