



Website Design

Getting the most from your Host and Developer

Questions to Ask

What is the primary purpose of owning a site? How will you measure the site's success? How often do you want customers to return? How will you get them coming back? How much design & maintenance will be done in-house? Who will follow up on email inquiries, feedback and sales? How will you promote your site?

Choosing a Name

First, register a REAL domain name! It only costs next to nothing and people will remember a name like www.mainstreetmsuic.com. Riding on the coat tails of your host will yield a name like www.internetprovider.com/communities/mystore/index.html. Who's going to remember that? Second, be sure to pick a name that is short, descriptive, memorable, easy to verbalize and includes the company name (if possible). Yahoo, Monster, Snap and Ebay are perfect examples (not to mention household names!) of how a site should be named.

Navigation Tips

Your home page should load within 15 seconds & include all of the essential information. Place a navigation bar in the same place on every page. Further, always provide the means for users to contact you (email links, telephone and fax numbers). Prioritize menus to focus the site on your primary purpose. Break information up into meaningful chunks. Avoid making the user scroll (and avoid frames!). Make sure the users always know where they are and how to get back out. Buttons should look clickable. Stay away from dark backgrounds, italicized or illegible text and multiple fonts. Do not underline text if it isn't a link.

Marketing Advice

Avoid self-proclaimed statements like "We're the best!...Incredible!...and Amazing!" Rather, answer the Five Questions of Advertising: Who? What? Where? When? and Why? Include your pitch or angle that creates the demand or reason why people need what you have to offer.

Things to Ask a Web Developer

Do you charge by the page, by the hour or by the job? What is the cost of consultation and follow-up meetings? Scanning, image enhancement and custom art costs? Cost of updates and maintenance? Referrals and previous clients? Web addresses of projects you've worked on? What are the hosting costs (budget plans start at \$10/month)? Can I move to a different host later?

Do Your Homework

Take the time to surf the web and check out some other sites. Start big (Disney, Amazon, Coke, Apple) and work your way through your competitors. There's no need to reinvent the wheel. Start an idea book using what you've seen and liked (or disliked) about other sites. Pay particular attention to the use of colors and the flow of information. The more you observe, the better prepared you'll be when it comes time to create your first draft (or consult with your developer).