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Does Your Business Need a Web Site?

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What is a web site?

Web site: A set of interconnected *web pages*, usually including a homepage, generally located on the same server, and prepared and maintained as a collection of information by a person, group, or organization.

www.dictionary.com

Web page: A document on the World Wide Web, consisting of an HTML file and any related files for scripts and graphics, and often hyperlinked to other documents on the Web.

www.dictionary.com

Your web site will contain information about your business that you believe your current and more importantly, potential customers will want to see. This may be information about your products or services, your current specials, your business hours, or your contact information.

Do you need a web site?

Here are nine questions that you will need to answer when making the decision on whether a web site is a good decision for your business.

1. Who is your audience/customer?
2. Are your customers on the web?
3. Do your competitors have a web site?
4. Do you have information packets that you send out?
5. Do you have information that changes daily/weekly/monthly?
6. Do you want to educate your visitors about your product and service?
7. Is your product unique?
8. Do you do a lot of mail order business?
9. Do you have an advertising budget?

If you answered yes to any of these questions you need a web site.

What should you expect?

A common misconception is that once you put your business on the web all you have to do is sit back and watch the money roll in. This is not any more likely to happen than if you putting a billboard advertisement on a country road. You have to remember that there are there are billions of pages on the internet. Google, one of the most popular search engines says that it is searching 4,285,199,774 web pages. That's right, 4 billion! The odds of doing nothing and having someone find your web site are pretty slim. So you have to realize that your web site is just another branch of your regular advertising, it is not a "silver bullet."

What makes a good web site?

1. Clean - crisp - fast
2. Fresh content
3. Cross browser compatibility (works in all browsers)
4. Meta tag keywords (keywords for search engines)
5. Privacy policy

How do I find someone to do my web site?

There are several places to find someone to do your web site. You can look:

- in the business directory (yellow) pages
- search on the web
- word of mouth

If you want to deal with someone that is local, you will want to use the yellow pages. Look under Internet Web Developers or a similar listing. You will want to do a little investigation. For example, see if the URL or address to their web site is listed and go have a look at their site. What you are looking for is a "portfolio" or "samples" or "pages we have done" link. Go to this and have a look at some of the examples of the company's work. You can also look to see if there is a page that lists the prices of the company's services.

Since the internet really shrinks the world, you don't have to think of only dealing with someone that is local. You can go out to the your favorite search engine, like Google, and search for web site developers or web developers, you can narrow your web search by

adding your city and state to the search.

Lastly, check with friends and associates that may have web sites and see who did theirs.

Now that I have it where does it live?

Now that you have invested time, energy and money into your web site where does it go? There are three main options:

1. Free web site hosting services.
2. Commercial hosting services (could include your web design firm.)
3. In-house hosting servers.

Free Hosting Servers

The problem with free (or some nearly free) hosting services is that you get what you pay for. Some of them require your web site to be displayed within a frame-set that shows their content and possibly advertisements along with your web site.

Commercial Hosting Services

There are many, many commercial hosting services out there. The cost range from \$3.95 to \$150.00 per month depending on the services that are offered.

In-House

The last and least desirable option for a small business is to buy a server and host your web site yourself. There is a very steep learning curve to host successfully.

Like to know more?

Captain Spider Web Designs has put together a booklet based on the seminar that we have done for Community Education and for SCORE. This booklet covers the questions in this brochure more in depth. For more information on this booklet go to:

www.CaptainSpider.com/books/

Or call us at (507) 356-2700