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# Preparing for Your New Website

January 1

# 2011

Concepts and Ideas for Developing a Web Site

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Customer Guidelines Series

## Table of Contents

<b>Types of Websites</b> .....	4
What is the purpose of your site?.....	6
Your Objectives.....	6
Common Website Objectives.....	6
Measuring Your Objectives.....	6
Know Your Visitors.....	7
Who will be visiting your site?.....	7
Visitor Questions.....	7
Know Your Competitors.....	7
<b>Register a Domain Name</b> .....	9
You need to register a domain name of your own.....	9
Domain Names Matter.....	9
<b>Website Design</b> .....	10
Design Examples.....	10
What do you like or hate about your competitors' or clients' websites?.....	10
Colour Scheme.....	10
Site Layout.....	11
<b>Promote Your Website</b> .....	12
How will people find your site?.....	12
Search Engine Optimization.....	13
<b>Website Content</b> .....	14
Less is more!.....	14
Updating Content.....	14
<b>Hosting</b> .....	15
<b>Email</b> .....	15
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	16
You Will Be Involved in the Building of Your Site.....	16

# Introduction

***For businesses, having a web presence is no longer just a luxury; it is now a requirement!***

*I've heard many small-business owners say they think they "should" get a Web site. They're not quite sure what they will do with it, but they've been told they should have one. In most cases, they're right. A Web site can be an important marketing tool for almost every small business, but there are a few exceptions*

*There's no question that a Web site is more mission-critical for some businesses than others. Companies trying to reach customers in different locations (think hotels or tourist attractions) or who have products that can be shipped to customers far away (think flowers, handmade dolls, telephones, etc.) obviously need to have an online presence.*

*But local businesses (dry cleaners or shoe repair shops, for example) also can benefit from a Web site that shows their location, lists their services or offers special promotions. And woe to those who think they don't need a compelling Web site because they serve other businesses rather than retail consumers. Many businesses search for new suppliers online, then order from them that way, too*

*In short, if you want more customers, you should be online, regardless of your industry.*

*Nearly 60% of consumers use the internet to investigate their purchases. Consumers expect a reputable business to have a website for promotional purposes. It is important to provide up to date information to prospective and existing customers, and a professionally designed website permits you to communicate your important selling features in a cost-effective manner.*

*You know you need a website so what comes next? Well, you need to get ready for the project and take an active role in the design and development. I can help you answer a lot of these questions, but you should do some preliminary consideration yourself to identify what it is you want in a website.*

*Developing a productive website requires time and the best results are gained when you are involved and ready to participate in the process. The following outlines the things you should think about and plan for when designing your new website!*

## Types of Websites

There are many varieties of websites, each specializing in a particular type of content or use, and they may be arbitrarily classified in any number of ways. A few such classifications might include:

Type of Website	Description	Examples
<b>Blog (web log)</b>	Sites generally used to post online diaries which may include discussion forums (e.g., blogger, Xanga). Many bloggers use blogs like an editorial section of a newspaper to express their ideas on anything ranging from politics to religion to video games to parenting, along with anything in between. Some bloggers are professional bloggers and they are paid to blog about a certain subject, and they are usually found on news sites.	<a href="http://coppinwebs.net/knfht">http://coppinwebs.net/knfht</a>
<b>Brand building site</b>	A site with the purpose of creating an experience of a brand online. These sites usually do not sell anything, but focus on building the brand. Brand building sites are most common for low-value, high-volume fast moving consumer goods (FMCG).	<a href="http://www.onescrubproducts.com">http://www.onescrubproducts.com</a>
<b>Community site</b>	A site where persons with similar interests communicate with each other, usually by chat or message boards.	<a href="http://www.facebook.com">http://www.facebook.com</a>
<b>Corporate website</b>	Used to provide background information about a business, organization, or service.	<a href="http://www.sphericcleaningservices.com">http://www.sphericcleaningservices.com</a>
<b>Forum website</b>	A site where people discuss various topics.	<a href="http://policeblotter.ca">http://policeblotter.ca</a>
<b>Information site</b>	Most websites could fit in this type of website to some extent many of them are not necessarily for commercial purposes	<a href="http://www.kawarthacyclingclub.com">http://www.kawarthacyclingclub.com</a>
<b>Personal website</b>	Websites about an individual or a small group (such as a family) that contains information or any content that the individual wishes to include. Many personal homepages are rare, thanks to the modern era of social networking sites such as MySpace,	<a href="http://www.coppinrail.com">http://www.coppinrail.com</a>

	but some are still used for at home businesses. This website is different from a a Celebrity website, which can be very expensive and run by a publicist or agency.	
<b>Search engine site</b>	A website that indexes material on the internet or an intranet (and lately on traditional media such as books and newspapers)and provides links to information as a response to a query.	<a href="http://www.google.ca">http://www.google.ca</a>
<b>Social networking site</b>	A site where users could communicate with one another and share media, such as pictures, videos, music, blogs, etc. with other users. These may include games and web applications.	<a href="http://news.youngtownmuseum.com">http://news.youngtownmuseum.com</a>
<b>Web portal</b>	A site that provides a starting point or a gateway to other resources on the Internet or an intranet.	<a href="http://www.trent-severnwaterway.com">http://www.trent-severnwaterway.com</a>

# Planning Your Site

## What is the purpose of your site?

If it is to inform and educate, make sales, offer services, or perhaps to position your company as experts in your field, your site will be different in each case. The more information you can give to me, the better your site will be in the first draft and may not need any revisions at all.

### *A simple site helps customers find you*

The simplest possible Web presence is a one-page site that tells people how to find your business in the "real" world. It should include:

- A good Web Address that relates to your company name and business.
- Your business address, complete with directions and a good map.
- Your business phone number, along with fax numbers if relevant.
- Your hours of operation.
- A clear and enticing description of what your business offers to customers.

This simple Web presence is most appropriate for businesses that serve local customers (a dry cleaner, doctor's office or plumber, for example) and that aren't actively looking to expand their customer base (as with a fully booked dental practice).

## Your Objectives

Many people consider a website is a necessary expense that must be absorbed, and rarely calculate the return on investment a website can deliver. The website must have clear objectives to be met.

### Common Website Objectives

- To raise awareness of the products and services of your company;
- To sell product
- To supplement a sales and marketing campaign
- To disseminate information
- To provide a service

You need to identify your individual objectives, but keep in mind when setting your targets be sure to make them attainable.

### Measuring Your Objectives

On an ongoing basis you should actually measure the success of your website. Some good ideas for measuring the success of the site are:

- **Client Referral Information** - Capture where your new client heard about you. E.g. the website, a referral etc;
- **Web Statistics** - View your usage statistics and look for page visits, unique visitors etc
- **Survey** - Ask your clients what they liked about your website or didn't like

## Know Your Visitors

### Who will be visiting your site?

Identify who your users are and what kind of content they truly want. It is not just about what the companies the users will come from but what the demographics of the visitors are.

Things like:

- Age Group
- Gender
- Education level
- Technical knowledge
- Level of expertise with the Internet
- Familiarity with your products or services.

If you gear everything from the visitor's perspective, your site will succeed.

## Visitor Questions

What questions will your users have when they visit your site and how will you answer them?

To design a site that actually meets visitor needs you have to understand who your visitors will be. It is important to recognize that you may use common industry terminology while you may need to speak in layman's terms. A Frequently Asked Question's (FAQ) page is a valuable tool. Nobody knows better than you what questions your customers ask. You should take the time to prepare this Q&A for me to publish.

## Know Your Competitors

Another very important aspect of setting up a new website is to review on a high level what your competitor's websites look like and do. When undertaking some competitive analysis ask yourself:

- What does this site do well?
- What does this site do badly?
- Are there any things that all your competitors do on their websites that you will need to do on your website?

The objective of this is to ensure initially your site matches the offerings of your competitors, but also so your site can exceed what they do.

### **Set a plan for updating the site**

The best way to get the most out of your site is to make yourself a plan of content changes, and if you have staff to assign them tasks. Things like:

- Monthly new news items
- Quarterly new article on XYZ
- Half yearly update the main marketing image (if you have one of your website)
- As required press releases, awards won, new clients etc.

## Register a Domain Name

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You need a home for your website on the World Wide Web so you will need to register a domain name if you haven't already. Under the Domain Name System (DNS), domain names are composed of four elements; a server prefix, a domain name, a domain suffix (or extension), and a country code (the only optional element). For instance, `www.yourname.com` is an example of a domain name where "www" is the server prefix, "yourname" is the domain name and "com" is the domain suffix. "Dot-com" is an example of a Top Level Domain. There are both generic top level domains (gTLDs) and country code top level domains (ccTLDs). Currently there are 239 country code top level domains. Canada's ccTLD is dot-ca.

*You need to register a domain name of your own.*

Many ISPs (Internet Service Providers) and Web Hosts offer free or cut-rate domain services that essentially make your domain name an extension of theirs. For instance, if my ISP is the fictitious "yourname", my resulting domain name could be `www.sympatico.ca/yourname/`

As a business, you need to register your own domain name. An extension name such as the one in my example makes you look like an amateur and will lose you business. Also, with an extension domain name, every time you change your ISP or Web Host, you will have to redo all your business cards and promotion materials.

### Domain Names Matter

Names on the Web matter just as when you originally named your business. You need a domain name that not only identifies your business but is easy to remember, as so many people type names or partial names into search engines to find the site they're looking for.

#### *Dot-com or Dot-ca*

Should you register a generic top level domain (gTLD) or a country code top level domain (ccTLD) for your online business? In my opinion, that depends on the market for your product or service. If you are selling strictly to Canadians, or if being known as Canadian is an important feature of your product or service, then you are better off with a dot-ca domain.

Many people who remember a business's name try to access the business's site on the Web by typing a name directly into their browser, and dot.com is most people's first "guess" as to what a domain name might be.

You might want to register the dot-com and dot-ca versions of your domain name, as well as any other alternatives (such as dot-biz) to protect your domain name. Otherwise, someone could register and use one of them, negatively affecting your online business.

Once you've found a domain name that's available you have the choice of registering the domain name for one year or for periods up to five years. Registering the domain name for a longer period usually gets a higher ranking in search engines.

I will be happy to discuss domain registration with you and register your chosen domain name for you.

# Website Design

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## Design Examples

When we start the design process of a new website I often ask you what websites you like, and then why you like them. This is a good way for me to get an understanding of the sort of site you want, whether the site is graphic intensive or minimal and understated. I don't copy another site's design, but it is a great way for me to focus on your visual requirements.

## What do you like or hate about your competitors' or clients' websites?

Spend some time looking around at what else is out there. It will become crystal clear what constitutes good or bad design. Try navigating 4 or 5 sites as if you were a prospective client considering using that company. If the website leaves you cold or you continually see the same, overused mission statements or terminology, chances are you won't make the same mistakes on your firm's site. You need to decide on your colour scheme as well. Usually this has been predetermined by your existing logo or company stationery.

So at the very least identify five websites you like the look of and write down some of the reasons why you like the site!

## Colour Scheme

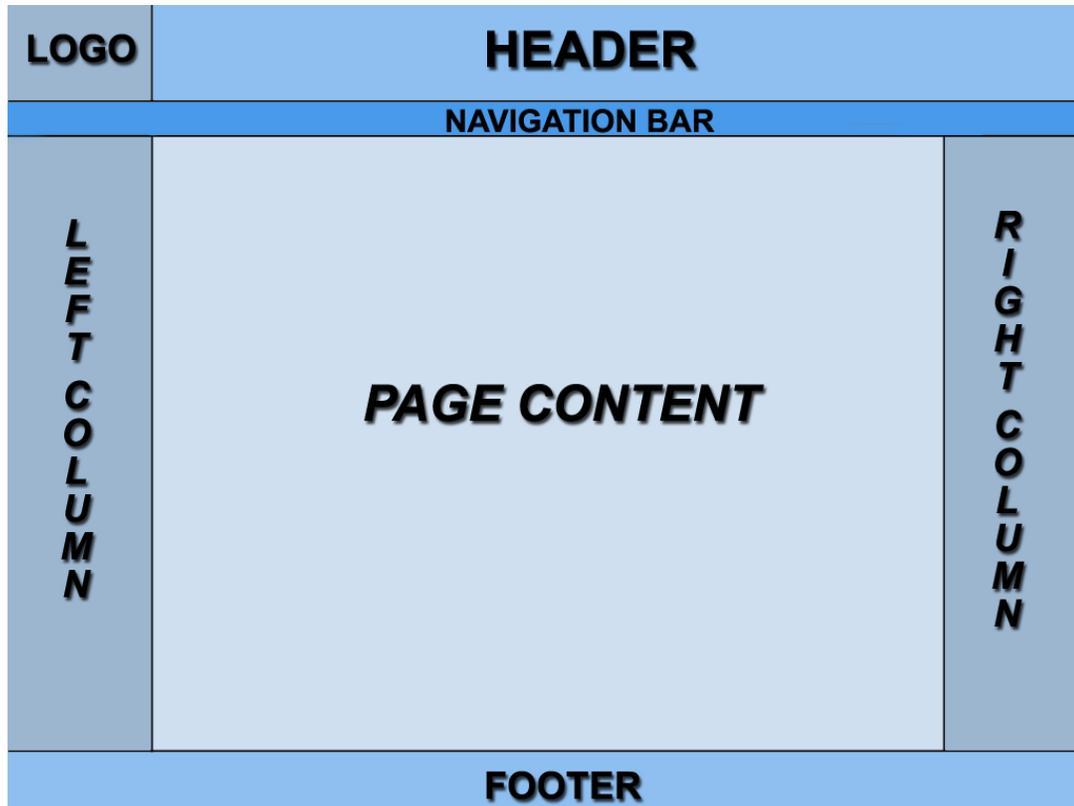
In colour theory, a colour scheme is the choice of colours used in design for a range of media. For example, the use of a white background with black text is an example of a basic and commonly default colour scheme in web design.

Colour schemes are used to create style and appeal. Colours that create an aesthetic feeling when used together will commonly accompany each other in colour schemes. A basic colour scheme will use two colours that look appealing together. More advanced colour schemes involve several colours in combination, usually based around a single colour; for example, text with such colours as red, yellow, orange and light blue arranged together on a black background in a magazine article. Colour schemes can also contain different shades of a single colour; for example, a colour scheme that mixes different shades of green, ranging from very light (almost white) to very dark.

If you already have a colour scheme, there are other considerations to take into account, such as accessibility and which colours to use on which parts of the site. I can help with those decisions, too.

## Site Layout

There are an infinite number of layout styles. Most websites utilize some or all of these sections



- **Logo**  
your company logo (static\*)
- **Header**  
the main title that appears at the top of every page (static\*)
- **Top Navigation Bar**  
Your main navigation menu area e.g. Home - About Us – FAQ - Contact Us (static\*)
- **Left Column (optional)**  
usually has a vertical secondary navigation bar or images (usually static but can be dynamic<sup>†</sup>)
- **Page Content**  
this is the area for page specific text images and multimedia. (dynamic<sup>†</sup> different on every page)
- **Right Column (optional)**  
can contain additional vertical navigation menu or images etc. (usually static but can be dynamic<sup>†</sup>)
- **Footer**  
Usually contains copyright and webmaster information (usually static\*)

Remember that there is no hard and fast rule for website layout.

\* Static suggests that the section remains the same on every page

<sup>†</sup> Dynamic sections are unique to every page

# Promote Your Website

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## How will people find your site?

There are a couple of ways that users will find your website and this will very much depend on what types of promotion of your products, services and website that you employ.

The most common ways that people will find you are:

- Search Engine Listings (Google)
- Referrals by current or past clients
- Links from other sites (websites, Face book, YouTube, Twitter etc.)
- Through your telling them about the site (business cards, company forms and stationery)
- Advertising in print, multimedia TV radio etc.
- Your attendance at events, exhibitions, trade shows etc.

You should think of your website as a twenty four hour, seven day a week electronic extension of your office. There are a couple of easy ways to promote your website and these include:

- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
  - Google
  - Yahoo
  - Alta Vista
- Have your email connected to your domain name (you@yourdomainname.com ) This makes you look professional and drives people to your Website.
- Create your own letterhead with your stylish new business name and contact info.  
Then just add it to your documents in Microsoft Word and print as needed. And don't pay for expensive envelope printing. Grab a pack of blank return address labels and print them out at home as needed. Most Avery label templates are already in Microsoft Word or can be downloaded from the Web.
- Putting your website address on all of your marketing material
  - Brochures
  - Business cards
  - Stationery
  - PowerPoint Presentations
- Direct Marketing via post or email

- Advertising
  - Print media
  - TV & Radio
  - Press releases
  - New website kickoff event
  - Trade shows, exhibitions etc.

Another great way of promoting your website is to share content with other websites. Articles, case studies and other value added content is a great way of driving traffic to your site as well.

### Search Engine Optimization

At the risk of angering SEO vendors, a great place to start with SEO is to simply keep your site updated. The more updates you do, and the more valuable the information your site has on it, the higher your site will rise in search engine rankings. Additionally, encouraging your clients or community partners to link to your site will help increase your rank too.

- I will ensure your site complies with standards set by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).
- I will submit your site for indexing by Google and listing on Google Maps and in Google Places.
- If desired, I will set up automatic reporting of your website activity

# Website Content

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One often overlooked task in launching a new website is the content. It is the most time consuming and this stage can take weeks to complete and can be quite difficult.

If you are part of a larger business or organization, you may have many people writing content for the site. This can be both a time saving and time consuming exercise.

If you are a sole proprietor then you can either write the content yourself or I can assist to prepare the content.

## Less is more!

Make no mistake about it. It doesn't matter if you have a powerful arsenal of promotional techniques, if you fail to impress and engage your visitors in 10 seconds or less, you're most likely to lose them to your competitors. The point is that masses of traffic are meaningless if you fail to convert them into subscribers, leads or sales.

Most users on the web do not read word for word, instead they tend to scan the page for headings, bulleted points and images that interest them or answer their questions. You don't need to be totally exhaustive in what your website says, just give the user the gist of the message and a way for them to find out more information; downloadable PDFs for example.

I have worked for a large number of business owners who want to tell the entire world everything they know. The web is not the place for that; a dissertation is. Use discretion with your words and pretend that each word costs money to use.

## Updating Content

A good website should be updated with new fresh content on a regular basis. For many organizations this can be difficult to achieve, especially since you are in business to make money and not to manage a website.

As a general rule you should try and update at least a couple of things on your website every couple of weeks. But this does not have to be a huge process. You could update information in a news section of your site such as:

- A new client has signed up with you;
- You have completed a major project;
- A project milestone has been completed; etc.

Even small amounts of new content make the site appear vibrant, but don't forget to include the date of the update so people can actually see that the site has been updated!

## Hosting

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Hosting your website with Coppinwebs.com is affordable and reliable. From a basic Web site to an online store, I have the perfect full-service hosting solution for every need and every budget.

My hosting comes with a 99.9% uptime commitment, dedicated support. My data centers feature integrated monitoring and fire systems, cutting-edge security technology. You can be sure any website hosted by me is monitored 24-hours-a-day by experts.

Hosting Includes:

- My hosting offers 99.9% guaranteed uptime
- Your online presence is secure, reliable and lightning-fast.
- Accounts are set up within one business day.
- Technical support by Coppinwebs.com
- Up to 5 email accounts more are available at extra cost

## Email

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Create a unique, memorable, personalized address based on your domain.

With Coppinwebs' Email, you also get powerful protection against viruses and spam, easy-to-use organizational tools like Calendar and Online File Folder and much more. Choose the plan that's right for you and find out why not all email is created equal. Additional addresses can be added to your account. Your email will feature an online Calendar, Webmail and Mobile access, including iPhone and BlackBerry

### Corporate Email Signatures

This is often overlooked. Company-wide uniformity with email signatures creates branding unity. Don't let employees create their own. Keep your naming system consistent for example [FirtsNameLastname@yourdomain.com](mailto:FirtsNameLastname@yourdomain.com) or [FirstInitilaLastname@yourdomain.com](mailto:FirstInitilaLastname@yourdomain.com).

## Conclusion

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Designing a website that gets results can take time to complete and the best results are gained when you are prepared for the process. In your free consultation, I will talk about many of these subjects with you and help determine a mission, your objectives, your strategies and tactics for us to develop a productive website.

### You Will Be Involved in the Building of Your Site

My website design process will start with the purchase of your domain name. From that point I will create a layout of your website and determine what your hosting needs are.

I build your website with your objectives in mind;

- layout
- color schemes
- organization
- content

Once the logistics are in place I will develop your first web page. You will approve the design. Then remaining portions of the site will be built.

The site will be designed around information that you provide. Logos, text, and photographs are the primary elements that will be required from you.

I ensure that your website reflects your unique needs and preferences throughout the Web design process.

I keep you informed about your project(s) at all times.

You can review all the steps of your project and follow the status of your project, provide feedback, and then submit approval.

I have helped businesses raise public awareness, stimulate sales and more.

Call me today and let's begin to design your website!