How To Build A Website

To Convert Visitors

Into Customers
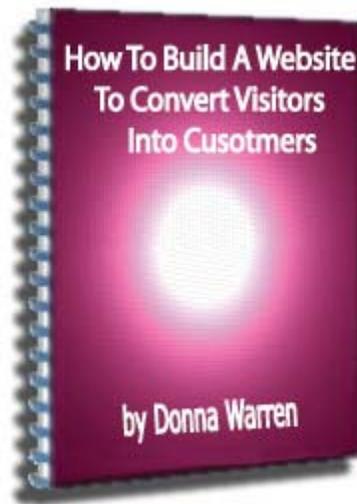
Welcome,

Hi, my name is Donna Warren. I'm the owner of a web design and hosting company, a certified Webmaster and have been teaching web design at a local college part-time for several years.

So, I have a pretty good idea of what makes a site work and what will drive visitors away. I decided to write this report to help all of the people who are struggling to build an online business and find all the conflicting information confusing.

First we'll talk about what you need to know before starting to design the website. Then, we'll discuss website design guidelines, recommended pages, mini-sites, a couple of general suggestions, whether you should design it yourself or hire a professional and finally we'll compare the most popular tools used to create web pages.

I hope you find this information useful. Let me know if I can be of help in any way.

Peace,

Donna Warren
DPW Enterprises
webmaster@dpwenterprises.com
http://www.dpwenterprises.com/

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What Do You Need From Your Website?

Your web site acts as the store front for the products and services you wish to sell online. Your site visitors are, for the most part, window shoppers and browsers. You want to convert these browsers into buyers. Your website should increase business and help generate revenue.

If your site doesn't improve customer service, bring in new customers, or create revenue, it isn't doing its job.

So the first thing you need to do is define the goal of your website. Before you can define your website, you must define your business needs. So, take a few minutes to answer the following questions. This is the information you need to develop an effective website.

Your Business or Organization

- **What kind of business do you have?** – An effective website structure for a service business is very different from the site structure needed by a retailer.
- **What products or services do you sell?** – The look and feel, the level of technology and the professional image needed are very different for a video store, a restaurant and a dentist.
- **Will you be selling product or services online?** – You will need a way to accept money over the internet to sell online.
- **Are the online products tangible or digital products?** – The methods of order fulfillment are very different for tangible and digital products.
- **Who are your competitors?** – While the internet gives you access to millions of potential new customers, you will also have hundreds, if not thousands, of new competitors.
- **How are you different from or better than your competitors?** – Marketers call this your unique selling proposition or USP. You definitely need something to set you apart from the competition such as lower prices, better customer service, etc.

Your Customers

- **Who is your target market?** - Your website needs to be designed with your target market in mind. You want your visitors to think, "these people understand me".
- **How many different kinds of customers do you have?** – If you have several very different kinds of customers, you may want to design a website specifically for each type of customer. For example, a general clothing seller might want to design a website aimed at teenagers, another website designed for the business professional, etc. The websites may sell the exact same products but the presentation would be aimed at the specific audience.
- **What kind of information do your customers want?** – A landscaper may want to provide information about the different kinds of plants that grow well in their

climate or the clothing store may want to provide an online newsletter about the latest fashion trends.

- **What response do you want from your customers?** – Decide what you want your visitors to do and then limit the number of choices they have.

Goals For Your Website

You need to make a list based on the answers to the previous questions on what you want your website to do. Examples of some goals you may want are:

- Create revenue through direct sales
- Communicate with customers and potential customers
- Provide information and answer questions
- Provide online services
- Enhance your business image
- Get increased exposure
- Generate leads
- Gather customer information
- Display your products and services

If you can define one or two very clear goals for your site, it will be much more effective than if it has no goals or if it has dozens of goals. Goals are generally stated in terms of what you want the site to do or what you want your visitors to do.

Sample Website Goal Statement

This sample goal statement was taken from a home improvements client of mine.

I want my website to:

- Collect contact information from visitors
- Showcase my work by providing before and after photos
- Provide online sales copy to convince the visitor to hire us to do their job

These are very clear and concise goals. We designed and built his website to achieve those goals.

Now that you know what you want your website to do, you can start building it.

Remember, your visitors come to your website looking for information. You want to convert these browsers into buyers.

Website Design Guidelines

Logos – It's always a good idea to have a company logo. Logos create brand recognition. The same thing applies to company slogans. The logo doesn't have to be fancy but it should be in line with the image you want for your business.

Look and Feel – The design and color scheme should appear professional. It can be any color and be crisp and sharp or soft and fuzzy depending on the kind of business you have. The design should create the image you want for your business.

Colors – Use any color combination but make sure that the colors don't vibrate (unless you specifically want that effect) because vibrating colors and flashing text hurt most people's eyes. People will just click away, never to return, if anything on the site bothers them.

Grammar and Spelling - Design the site to gently lead the client through the learning and sales process. Your sales text must be grammatically sound and spelled correctly. Conversational grammar and tone are just fine. Poor spelling immediately loses credibility points. Provide sufficient text to tell your visitors what the features of the product are. Better yet, tell them why they need to buy your product.

Paragraph and sentences short be shorter than in printed text to make it easier to read. Unless your target audience is all under 30, use at least a 10-point font (12px) to make it readable by us older folks without a magnifying glass.

Browser Type - Contrary to popular belief (at least at Microsoft) Internet Explorer is not the only web browser. There are at least 100 different web browsers available. The four most commonly used browsers are Internet Explorer, Netscape Navigator and Firefox and Opera. Since these four browsers represent over 85% of all users, design your site to look good and work properly in all of these browsers.

Graphics and Photos - Images are wonderful to assist in the online sale of your products or services. All images used should clearly depict the product or service. Use original photography or scanned images. Studies show that most people will "click away" if a website takes longer than 10 seconds to load. Optimize your images for rapid download. Also, always use the alt HTML tag so that users with devices that have graphic download disabled (such as slow connections or PDAs) know what was supposed to be on the page.

Multimedia - As a webmaster, I don't recommend using multimedia on a business site designed to sell products unless, of course, you sell multimedia products. By multimedia I mean flash presentations, video clips and background sound. If you really want to use multimedia, use streaming multimedia and use that only where it's makes sense.

Also, if possible, the user should have the ability to start and stop all multimedia manually. That way, users with slow connections can ignore it.

Make sure to put the same information contained in the multimedia in text format for those who can't or won't use the multimedia. Also, put a link to the download page for any browser plug-ins your multi-media requires. Always remember the 10-second rule for site loading when deciding to use multimedia.

Site Navigation - Site navigation should be simple and intuitive. All the questions a visitor might ask should be answered along the way. Where possible, adhere to the "three click rule" - that is, a visitor should be able to access any information regarding your product or service within 3 clicks of any other area of your web site. Make sure to check out whatever navigation method you decide to use in all three of the major web browsers for compatibility.

Frames - Avoid using frames, since they make it difficult to bookmark individual pages on your web site.

I can hear some of you already saying…**BORING**. Yes, I am recommending what some people would consider a boring website.

"Cool" sites don't sell products. In fact too much "cool" stuff can actually hurt sales. Studies have proven that surfers are looking for information. You don't want to distract them from what they want to get (information) or from what you want them to do (buy your product).

For example, are you aware that the video telephone was invented at Bell Labs in 1969? They couldn't sell the videophone service because consumers didn't like the idea of someone being able to see inside their home. As a result, video telephones are only starting to be used today. Just because something is possible, doesn't mean it's a good idea to do it.

Recommended Web Site Pages

As a webmaster who has designed and setup several business web sites, I recommend you include all of the following pages on your business web site.

Home Page - The home page should contain your company logo and an introduction to your products or services.

About Us or Company Profile Page - This page provides a summary of the business, your commitments and company goals and is crucial to boosting consumer confidence. An online business is no different than a traditional brick and mortar business. Most people like to put a face to the name. When purchasing goods online from a new web site, I always go to the About Us or Company Profile pages to get a "feel" for the company before parting with my hard earned money.

Contact Page - Your customers need to know how to get in touch with you. They need your legal business name (if different from your web site name), physical address, customer service contact information and an email address for comments and questions.

Sales Pages or Catalogue - These pages will contain the basic information about your products. Catalogue pages frequently link to pages containing more detailed information on a specific product or service. Both kinds of pages link to the shopping cart for online purchases.

Terms of Use or Terms of Service Agreement - This page should be linked to all product pages. Click Here for an example of a Terms of Use Policy.

Payment Page - This contains the payment processing software or shopping cart and a temporary storage area for displaying the products or services the customer has decided to buy and links to the check out page for actually purchasing them. Click Here for more information on shopping carts.

Thank You Page - Good customer service requires that you thank your customers for purchasing from you. Normally a thank you page can be specified in your payment processing software setup to send your customer to after they complete their purchase. It can also be a download page if you are selling digital products.

Privacy Policy Page - "What are you going to do with my information?" is a question asked by many online shoppers. A privacy policy is essential to building consumer trust. Putting together a privacy policy doesn't necessarily require hiring a lawyer. Click Here for an example of a privacy policy.

Refund Policy Page - A refund policy must be placed on your web site to avoid all kinds of unnecessary legal problems. This page should also be liked to all sales pages. On my company site, I have a link to the refund policy in the page footer.

Sign Up Page - You want to keep your visitors long enough for them to become customers. Having visitors sign up for a mailing list, a free offer or a free newsletter is one way to get permission to send them email.

FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions) - Many product questions will be repetitive and you'll want to add their answers to your FAQ page to both promote customer confidence and save you valuable time. Since, an unanswered question may translate into a lost sale, a well-constructed FAQ page can coax a hesitant customer into purchasing. You can link to the FAQ through the main navigation system as well as after every "buy me" type statement. The FAQ should be accessible within one click of any other area of your web site that is dedicated to selling the products or services.

Testimonials page - Customer testimonials are some of the best promotional copy around. Elicit feedback from your current customers and ask their permission to publish their comments on your site. Testimonials can be implemented on a page of their own, or interspersed between your own statements regarding the product. If you do implement a Testimonials page, make sure that it can be reached with one click from any other page on the site.

A Word About Mini-Sites

The purpose of a min-site is to get the visitor to either give you their email address or buy your product. Mini-sites are basically a sales page for a single product or service. They usually combine a signup form with a sales letter that contains a link to buy the product. Customer testimonials are normally interspersed with the sales copy.

There is no FAQ page because they try to answer all questions a visitor may have in the sales copy. Most mini-sites have the contact information at the bottom of the page along with links to the privacy policy, terms of use or service and refund policy.

Mini-sites are very effective online sales tools. Click Here for more information on mini-sites.

Other Site Design Suggestions

Offering excellent customer support is the best way to gain new customers and keep your existing customers. Therefore, you might want to consider offering the following:

Provide Downloadable Product Information Sheets - Your visitor may just still be comparison-shopping. Since I do 85% of all my non-grocery shopping online, I do a lot of comparison-shopping on the Internet. One method that has gotten me to return to a web site for purchasing has been when they provided valuable information about the product or service in a downloadable PDF format with contact information.

Since I had their contact information in the document I downloaded so I could easily find them again, when I was ready to buy, I went back to where I had gotten good customer service in the form of valuable information.

Provide Pre-Sales Email Support - Offering to answer pre-sales questions by email should be encouraged and clearly labeled. Just make sure that the emails are responded to in a timely manner. The ideal window is within 24 hours. Longer response time can be an indication of poor online product support.

When responding to customer enquiries, be sure your messages are well thought out. Address the questions asked thoroughly and offer further support. Keep in mind that poor spelling and grammar can lose sales.

Provide Post-Sales Tips & Tricks and How-to Support – Post information that can enhance your customer's enjoyment of your product or service. Most things today have so many bells and whistles that most people don't use a fraction of the features. Information on how-to get the most out of a product or service keeps people coming back to your site.

Since they consider you a knowledgeable source of information, when they want to buy something you sell, they'll buy it from you or if you don't sell what they want, they'll buy it from merchants you recommend.

Design and Build Your Own Site Or Hire A Professional?

That depends on what skill levels you or your employees have and exactly what image you want to portray for your company. Some of the necessary skills are:

HTML - Good web design software can help but is helps to have some HTML knowledge.

Artistic Ability - Both artistic ability and good taste are necessary to create an attractive web site.

Graphic Software Expertise – Knowledge of how to use graphic software is required to produce attractive, clean photos and site graphics optimized to the smallest possible file size for quick loading.

Navigation Knowledge - Understanding the functionality of website navigation design and implementation is necessary.

CGI Knowledge – CGI, PHP and JavaScript installation and use is needed to add a "contact us" form and other nice little site enhancements. You will also need to know database programming to integrate the site with an online database.

Marketing and Business Experience - A good website design builds web marketing into the site design to make it search engine friendly. All too often companies let the techies build their sites. That is usually a serious mistake.

Copywriting – The purpose of a business website is to sell your product or service. Good copywriting is essential.

If you or one of your employees has the website design knowledge, you may be able to save a lot of money doing it yourself. (Remember, you have to pay your employee and your time is also valuable.) Just be sure the web site has the right look and feel to be representative of the image you want to portray for your business.

If you already have some level of company or product branding, you might want to hire a professional designer to maintain your existing image unless you have the technical expertise to do it yourself.

As a webmaster, I do not recommend that you use any system that has online site building software that requires you to host your site with that specific company or that does not save the web pages you create in the HTML file format. These systems lock you in. If you want to change hosting companies, you can't without having to completely rebuild your entire web site. There are too many reasonably priced hosting solutions out there to fall into this kind of trap.

 Click Here for information on affordable website design.

Visit DPW Enterprises Web Design and Hosting for all of your web design and hosting needs. 11

Web Design Tools

The two design tools that are absolutely necessary to design a web page are an HTML editor and photo-editing software. Most high-end photo-editing programs have built in drawing capabilities. If you choose a less expensive photo editor, you'll need a drawing program as well. We'll discuss the features of several of these programs.

HTML Editors

There are tons of HTML editors out there as well as a whole lot of web and graphic design suites. Some HTML editors are text based only, although some text based HTML editors allow you to preview how the code will actually look in a browser.

Other HTML editors have full WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) editing capabilities. There are also HTML editors that have limited WYSIWYG features. The price range for HTML editors is from free to several hundred dollars.

Macromedia's Dreamweaver

My first choice for HTML editors is Macromedia's Dreamweaver. It has an easy to use, intuitive user interface and state of the art design tools. It allows you to split your screen top and bottom and work in both the Source Code and the WYSIWYG Design View windows simultaneously allowing you absolute control over what your pages look like. With a customizable user interface, you can work the way you need to.

You can design intricate CSS-based layouts and designs easily with tools that allow for quick selection and control of page and site wide style properties. There is a built in graphics editor that uses Macromedia Fireworks technology. Dreamweaver allows you to develop HTML, XHTML, XML, ASP, ASP.NET, JSP, PHP, and Macromedia ColdFusion websites.

It has a cross-browser code validation feature that automatically checks tags and CSS rules for compatibility across all the leading browsers. But, since even if the code will work, the web page can look different in different browsers, Dreamweaver also allows you to configure browser preview for multiple browsers. I have Internet Explorer, Netscape, Firefox and Opera configured for browser preview in Dreamweaver so I can see how every page I create will look in each of the four most popular browsers.

Dreamweaver has a complete site management system with an excellent built in FTP client that allows you to configure either automatic upload to the web server every time you save a modified file or no upload if that's want you need. It provides easy integration with all other Macromedia products such as Flash, Fireworks, and the other design and development tools in the Macromedia Studio MX suite.

One of the nicest features is the Property Inspector that enables quick, comprehensive property editing that makes getting it perfect a no-brainer. Dreamweaver also includes professional-quality, pre-built layouts and code, including site structures, forms,

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accessibility templates, and JavaScript functions for client-side interactivity and the ability to easily integrate databases.

This is the editor I use to create and maintain all of my web sites. I have used many of the other HTML editors and can say that Dreamweaver is absolutely the best HTML editor available. It is also the most expensive.

Click Here for more information about Macromedia's Dreamweaver.

I would also recommend this multimedia tutorial for learning Dreamweaver, *__Learning Macromedia Dreamweaver MX 2004__*. It's not cheap but definitely worth it. It provides 9.5 hrs of movie-based training that walks you through all the essential features and also covers accessibility, CSS, site management, rollovers, forms, frames, how to get your site online, and much more.

Microsoft FrontPage

When I first started building websites I used FrontPage, mostly because it didn't require me to have any knowledge of HTML and, at that time, it was included in my copy of Office Premium. FrontPage includes the professional design, authoring, data, and publishing tools needed to create dynamic and sophisticated Web sites.

FrontPage's user interface provides three tabs in the main window, the Normal tab that is WYSIWYG design view, the HTML tab that shows you the actual code and the Preview tab that shows how the page will actually look. The major disadvantage with this setup is that you can only look at one tab at a time.

Finally, with FrontPage 2003, Microsoft has included the ability to use a split view to see modifications made in the Design View automatically updated in the Code View. In the past if I want to check the code on something I am doing, I'd have to highlight the part of the page I want to check and then switch tabs. I can't work on it simultaneously. Being able to work on both the design and the code simultaneously makes it so much easier to "tweak" the code to get that web page just perfect.

FrontPage 2003 provides most of the capabilities of Dreamweaver but tends to be limited to Microsoft only technologies such as Active Server Pages, JScript and Microsoft VBScript none of which can be used with any web server except Microsoft Internet Information Server. You can manually code JavaScript, but all of the shortcuts and libraries are dedicated to Microsoft technology.

There are also a bunch of cool features such as DHTML and dynamic buttons that are available by clicking on a menu in FrontPage but require the installation of FrontPage Server Extensions on the hosting web server to work.

The good news here is that FrontPage Server Extensions are available for both Apache and Microsoft web servers. (Approximately 65% of all Internet web servers are Apache servers.) Make sure to check if your hosting company will install FrontPage Extensions

before deciding to use FrontPage. FrontPage has excellant XML website database integration tools. But again, they only work with Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services on a Windows Server 2003 server.

Front Page's biggest disadvantage is it's inability to automatically update your website as you modify each page. This is really only an issue for large websites. But, on larger sites, it does become an issue because it is time consuming to have to manually upload everything.

I still use FrontPage for some of my client's sites that were originally developed with it and rely on Microsoft technology. I would not recommend purchasing an earlier version, but FrontPage 2003 is considerably less expensive than dreamweaver and overall is a very good product if you don't mind being locked into Microsoft's technology.

Click Here for more information on FrontPage 2003.

I would also recommend the following hands-on tutorial for learning ***Microsoft Office FrontPage 2003 Step by Step***. This is an inexpensive book.

Netscape Composer

Composer is a part of the free Netscape Web Browser. It has about the same functionality as FrontPage 98 did. That means it has limited capabilities. Composer can be used to setup and maintain a simple website. For a novice, it's a good choice to learn how to create web pages because doesn't require they have any knowledge of HTML. I have my networking students use composer when they have to create a simple website as part of learning how to build and administer web servers.

Composer is fairly easy to learn but you must install the Netscape browser to use Composer. Don't worry, you don't have to actually use the Netscape browser. You can install multiple web browsers on your PC. Just be sure to make your favorite browser the default web browser so it will open automatically when you click on a link. Composer can be opened either from the windows start menu or from the Netscape browser menu.

If you would like help learning Composer, I recommend the following hands-on tutorial that I originally created for my networking students, ***How To Build A Website Using Netscape Composer.***

Click Here to download Composer.

Graphic and Photo-Editing Software

Photo-Editing Software

Adobe Photoshop

Photoshop is the graphics industry standard and my choice of photo editing software. I have to admit I love Photoshop. You can create original images or modify photos using a wide range of painting, drawing, and retouching tools. You can work the way that's best for you by creating personalized workspace and tool settings and customized keyboard shortcuts.

You can achieve sophisticated results by compositing images, text, and effects on hundreds of layers that you control by grouping into sets, color coding, and locking. You can simulate traditional fine-art techniques with dry and wet brush effects, pastel, charcoal, and more and even use brushes to add special effects such as grass and leaves.

Easily experiment and achieve amazing results by accessing more than 95 special effects filters. There are tools to improve the color, contrast, and dynamic range of any image, easily remove dust, scratches, blemishes, wrinkles, and other flaws with the Healing Brush.

Photoshop can give high quality output by working with the complete raw data files from most major digital camera models. It's great all-around imaging software.

So, what's the downside? There are two. Adobe products have fantastic capabilities but are not intuitive and it's hard to learn how to use them effectively. Adobe products are also expensive. Adobe products come in both PC and MAC versions.

Click Here for more information on Photoshop.

I would also recommend this hands-on step-by-step instructional manual with review questions at the end of each chapter, and a companion CD with all of the book's project files written by the Adobe Creative Team, ***Adobe Photoshop CS Classroom In a Book.***

If you plan to buy both Photoshop and Illustrator, you may want to consider getting the Adobe Creative Suite that includes: Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe InDesign, Adobe GoLive and Adobe Acrobat Professional for about the same price and Photoshop and Illustrator bought separately. Click Here for more information on Adobe Creative Suite.

Macromedia Fireworks

Fireworks MX 2004 is Macromedia's answer to Photoshop and both are excellent programs. Fireworks has all the tools a web professional needs to create everything from simple graphical buttons to sophisticated rollover effects. You can import, edit, and

integrate all major graphics formats, including vector and bitmap images and easily export Fireworks images to Flash, Dreamweaver, and third-party applications.

Fireworks is almost as difficult as Photoshop to learn. One thing Fireworks does much better than Photoshop is batch processing. I use Fireworks batch processing all of the time to optimize entire directories of photographs. I can resize and optimize 50 photographs in just a couple of minutes. If I didn't already have Photoshop, I would use Fireworks to do all of my graphics since Fireworks is about half the price of Photoshop. Both are excellent programs.

Click Here for more information on Fireworks.

I recommend this hands-on tutorial for learning Fireworks, Macromedia Fireworks MX 2004.

If you plain to purchase more than one Macromedia product, you might want to look at Macromedia Studio MX 2004. Studio MX includes Dreamweaver MX 2004, Flash MX 2004, Fireworks MX 2004 and FreeHand MX (Macromedia's version of Illustrator) for about the same price as any two of those applications. Click here for more information on Macromedia's Studio MX 2004.

ACDSee Fotocanvas Lite

ACDSee by JASC software is a very good photo manager. It's a great easy to use program for finding, organizing and editing your photos. You can create quality prints or Flash and PDF slideshows with ACDSee. It has a built in photo editor called Fotocanvas Lite.

If you just need to correct red eye, minor blemishes or optimize your photos for the web, this is a good cost-effective program. Fotocanvas Lite doesn't do anywhere near as good a job as Photoshop or Fireworks or have any of the advanced editing features. But, with its approximately $50 price tag, it can't be beat. I use it for organizing the thousands of digital photos I have on my hard drive and to do simple photo repairs.

Click Here for more information on the ACDSee photo suite.

Graphic Drawing Software

Adobe Illustrator

Adobe Illustrator is an essential tool for anyone who needs to express ideas visually in print, on the Web, and in any other medium. When my clients send me a rough pencil drawing of the logo they want for their business, I create the logo in Illustrator then import into Photoshop to get it ready for their web page.

Illustrator has great 3D features, advanced typographical controls, Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) integration and enhanced printing options. Illustrator will help create and efficiently publish your artwork anywhere

One of the nicest features is the ability to apply live effects without affecting the underlying artwork, so you can edit at any time without starting over. There are blending modes and transparency effects similar to those in Photoshop software but, unlike Photoshop, Illustrator has intuitive tools such as the Pencil, Smooth, Erase, and Pen tools. Another nice feature is the ability to export Illustrator graphics in a format optimized to print and display in Microsoft Office products.

Illustrator is easier to learn than Photoshop but still expensive.

[Click Here]() for more information about Adobe Illustrator.

I recommend this hands-on tutorial for learning Illustrator, ***[Adobe Illustrator CS Classroom in a Book.]()***

If you plan to buy both Photoshop and Illustrator, you may want to consider getting the Adobe Creative Suite that includes: Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe InDesign, Adobe GoLive and Adobe Acrobat Professional for about the same price as Photoshop and Illustrator bought separately. [Click Here]() for more information on Adobe Creative Suite.

[Corel-Draw Graphics Suite]()

Corel draw is a graphics suite. It was the first graphics program I learned to use way back in the dark ages of computers (around 1993). While not as sophisticated as the Adobe or Macromedia products, at around $400 (less on sale) for the entire suite, it's a pretty good buy. The programs are much more intuitive than either the Adobe or Macromedia products and have good capabilities. The suite includes: **CorelDRAW** – a drawing program that does illustration and page layout, **Corel PHOTO-PAINT** – a good photo editor, **Corel R.A.V.E.** – creates motion graphics, **CorelTRACE** – A bitmap-to-vector tracing utility (this is a nice feature unique to Corel), **Corel CAPTURE** – a very good screen capture utility and Includes a FREE lynda.com interactive training CD

[Click Here]() for more information about Corel Draw Graphics Suite.

[PaintShop Pro]()

Jasc Paint Shop Pro has most of the commonly used features of Photoshop. It has an excellent red-eye removal tool and good background manipulation features and allows the user to work with multiple layers of the photo. I personally use it to remove red eye from photos because it is easier to use and works better then Photoshop for that particular repair. At around $100, I highly recommend it to the more casual user who still wants advanced editing features.

[Click Here]() for more information on Paint Shop Pro.

Other Useful Software

Snagit

Screen capture is the process of copying what you see on your screen. SnagIt captures various types of data in dozens of different ways, enabling you to capture, edit and share anything on your screen. Snagit is a full-fledged graphics editor that allows you to add annotations, callouts, drawings, effects and more to your screen captures. I use it to create training materials for my students.

WS_FTP Professional

Ipswitch WS FTP Professional is hands-down the best FTP client on the market. WS FTP introduced the two-pane format for simplifying file transfer operations that has become standard in file transfer clients.

The professional version has excellent security features, based on Open PGP (Pretty Good Privacy) standards that enable users to encrypt individual files and have greater control over how files are shared and viewed using: Blowfish, 3DES, CAST5 and IDEA. Businesses use it to securely transfer business data and documents in real time. I use this version because I have it. But, the free version of this program is sufficient for uploading web pages to the web server.

You can download the free version of WS_FTP that from my website by Clicking Here.

If you would like help using WS_FTP, I recommend the following hands-on tutorial that I originally created for my networking students providing step-by-step instructions, complete with screen captures, ***How To Upload Your Web Pages Using The WS_FTP Client.*** The free FTP client is included in the self-executable zip file.

WinZip 9.0

WinZip is the original and most popular of all Windows ZIP file utilities. With WinZip you can quickly and easily compress and decompress files, folders, and entire folder trees to save storage space and reduce e-mail-transmission time. The paid version also allows you to encrypt and decrypt your sensitive documents.

Other handy features include a user-friendly zipping wizard, a split archive function that converts even very large ZIP files into manageable sizes for easier e-mailing, span-disk capability for complete backups, integration with virus-protection software, and the ability to drop whole programs into one self-extracting archive.

I find WinZip to be an indispensable tool.

Web Hosting

In order for visitors to connect to your website, the web pages have to exist on a web server connected to the internet. The server should be connected directly to the internet by a high-speed line. The web server needs to be up and running 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, provide data security and be backed-up daily.

For all but the largest companies, it's usually more cost effective to rent space from a web hosting company than to operate the web servers at your place of business. Even if you have your own servers, you still need to connect to the internet (usually through an internet service provider or ISP).

Autoresponders

There are two types of autoresponders: email and form based. Email autoresponders require a visitor to click on a link that sends an email to the autoresponder's email address. Then the autoresponder will send your prepared messages back to the visitor. Most website hosting services only include email autoresponders as part of their hosting service. (When they advertise "unlimited autoresponders", they're talking about email autoresponders.)

Form based autoresponders are what I call "real" autoresponders. They are software programs that run on a website. There are two kinds of programs available, internet services that charge a monthly fee to use them and software that you purchase and install on your website.

Form-based autoresponders work like this…a visitor fills out a form on your website then their name and email address is stored in an address database on the website and a email message or series of messages are sent to the visitor at intervals determined by you.

With a form-based autoresponder, you can offer a free gift and after the user signs up, they will be redirected to the download page so they can claim their free gift immediately. (The way this ebook is being distributed.) After redirecting the visitor, the autoresponder will send out your messages at the pre-determined intervals.

The purpose of collecting a visitor's name and email address is so you can send them a series of follow up emails at intervals you choose to try and convince them to buy from you.

Perl, CGI, PHP and Java Scripts

Perl, CGI, PHP and Java Scripts are all programming languages. Perl, CGI and PHP scripts run on a website and Java Scripts run in a web browser. All of them are used to provide extra functionality to websites.

Most autoresponders are written in Perl or PHP. Java Script is used to make an image or a link change appearance if your pass your mouse over it in your web browser.

Visit DPW Enterprises Web Design and Hosting for all of your web design and hosting needs. 19

A Shameless Plug

Although I've included some links to my own company throughout this document, most of the links are to other information sources. Now, it's time for a shameless plug.

My web design company will create a customized special purpose website for your business for less than the cost of running a 2x7 inch ad one time in the local newspaper. Click Here and then select any of the specialized websites to see what I'm talking about.

My hosting company offers a standard hosting package that includes a form-based autoresponder already configured for your domain as part of the basic service. I purchased master resale rights to an autoresponder program so I could offer this service to my customers. I also have a library of other scripts that my clients can use.

We also offer mini-site and online newsletter hosting services. If you are interested in what my hosting company offers, Click Here.

In Conclusion

The most important thing to remember is that the purpose of a business website is to increase business and generate revenue. You can do that in many different ways, such as:

- Providing good customer service online to your off-line customers by posting helpful information that's available to them 24/7
- Using your website to collect sales leads.
- Using your website to convince people that they want to hire you by providing examples of your work.
- Actually selling your products and services online.
- Using your website to sell products for another company and earn commissions.

For these goals to work, your visitor has to do what you want them to do. That's why you need a well designed, easy to navigate website that doesn't give the visitor too many choices and specifically asks them to do something.

Good Luck designing and building your website.

Donna Warren

PS (Don't forget, I am a web designer, so if you need help contact me. I usually respond within 24 hours unless I'm out of town.)