Caught up with the Web revolution? Only yesterday, it seems, Web sites were the domain of big companies, or those who had years of computer training. Now? For about the same money as printing a good brochure, you can have a Web site that offers both new and long-time customers a way to know who you are, where you are and what you offer.

In this section, we’ve talked to a number of experts so that we can bring you the information you need to create and maintain the Web site of your choice. So look no further. The main articles in this section are shown at right.
If You Build It, Will They Come?

Yes, if you build a Web site with these simple pointers in mind.

In addition, he says, many relatives of the snowbirds who live around him—the retired folk who migrate south for the winter, or for their entire retirement—often call for gift ideas for loved ones after seeing his Web site. “The people who need what I offer, and who are comfortable with who I am, find me. Without the Web it would be difficult,” he says.

Henriques is just one of many massage therapists—and many small business owners—who have taken the Cyberspace plunge. For therapists such as Henriques, creating a Web site can be an integral part of a marketing campaign that also includes brochures, signage and business cards. The only difference is that you can change it at will, it reaches the far corners of the world, and you don’t have to pay more for the more people you reach. Also, there’s the new credibility factor: “Rightly or wrongly, people have come to associate a Web presence with some measure of credibility, or being up-to-date,” says Peter Pappas, a massage therapist and Web designer. Henriques added a newsletter through the Web site that often contained spa coupons. “They’re starting to see added value to my presence online,” he says.

Business Practices

MTA member Tim Henriques lives and works near Orlando, Florida, home of Disney World and lots of tourists. Sometimes, these tourists want a little TLC after carting Johnny, Susie and Grandma around for several days among singing dwarves and Snow White parades. So Henriques, a practitioner of Swedish, reiki, and Myofascial Release®, decided to create a Web site for his business, Integrity Massage, about five years ago.

“It was a way to let people know I was here,” he says. He bartered the design of the site with a client of his—giving her free body work sessions for her expertise. This client had a programmer friend who created the actual site. Henriques wrote the copy himself, and named the site after his business: [www.integritymassage.com]. (For more information on Henriques’ site, see page 110.)

And, viola! Henriques had a brochure that was “sent” around the world. “It’s paid for itself many times over,” he says. “I get calls from people all around the world.” Henriques has added a series of links to his site. “It’s paid for itself many, many times over,” he says. “I get calls from people all over the country who are going to be visiting Disney World and need a massage.”

This cost efficiency is part of the reason for today’s Web site boom. You can hire someone to do a simple Web site for a one-time fee from $300 to $500. If you build it, this one-time fee is a very good deal.

Our Top 10 List: What Every Good Massage Therapy Web Site Needs

1. A Biography. This is your chance to brag about yourself. Where are you from? What work do you do? Throw in a picture, if you like. (But, remember, too many pictures makes for a slow-loading Web site.)

2. Frequently Asked Questions. Do you have any questions that when you’re asked, you think, “Boy, if I had a dollar for every time I was asked that!” Then write them down. Many massage clients are bursting with questions; they’re just too shy to ask. So do it for them. Make a list of the questions you are most frequently asked, and put them on your Web site, with clear, reassuring answers. Examples? What should I expect when I come to a session? Do I have to take off my clothing? How much does it cost? Will it hurt? What happens if I have an injury?

3. Your Specialties, And The Services You Offer. Go on, tell them all your specialties, and do them a favor: Explain what Hawaiian lomi lomi massage or craniosacral work is. Also, provide a short list of benefits for each.

4. Links. You can create hyperlinks to other sites (including the AMTA’s site!) if you want to direct your readers to more information, but don’t want to load the articles on the Web site yourself. (Or you may list the Web sites of others you work with—chiropractors, nutritionists, physicians, etc. Ask if they’ll list a link to your Web site in return.)

5. Articles Explaining The Details Of Your Work. Are you a budding writer? Write your heart out! But try to keep your writing clear and straightforward (not too many technical terms!) And save your most verbose pieces for back pages. You don’t want to scare visitors from your home page by making it too copy-dense.

6. Contact Information. Try to have this on every page. Nothing’s more frustrating that wanting to make an appointment, and not being able to find a phone number.

7. Pay Schedule. List the different lengths of sessions, and how much each costs. Also, you may want to include series discount information, seasonal specials and other special offers.

8. Directions. A map wouldn’t hurt, either.

9. Logo. Have you always wanted to have a logo that identifies you and your business? Here’s your chance. Try to include this logo at the top of each page, and cross-reference it on your brochures, pamphlets, signs and business cards.

10. Mailing List. Include a form where visitors to your Web site can enter their name, address, phone number and E-mail address. You can call them later to discuss their questions or interests, or place them on your snail-mail, or E-mailed newsletter or mailing list.
A Guide To Internet Lingo

SEARCH ENGINES: It’s not enough to just have a Web site, you also want to optimize it for search engines. This means including links, key words and other codes that will help the true search engines list your Web site. Submitting your site to search engines is also necessary (most of these are free). If you want more information, visit [www.searchenginewatch.com]. Here, you’ll find search engine listings, search engine submission tips and reviews of various Web sites.

Search engines such as Google rank sites on their relevance. Relevance is rated by the number of visits you receive, and the number of links to your site from other sites. You can go to other sites, and strike cross-link deals. Sometimes you will pay to have your site listed on other sites; other times it’s free. You go to them and strike deals and make arrangements. Also, the more useful your site, the greater its chances of surviving long-term. Cross-market your Web site. Make sure you list the address on all your pamphlets, brochures and business cards. Need more information? Check out the book 101 Ways to Promote Your Web Site by Susan Swaney (Independent Pub Group, 2000).

COPYRIGHT: You may have some questions about what content and photos you can use on your Web site. Here are some tips: First of all, nearly everything created in the United States since 1978 is copyrighted, or not in the public domain. Fair use means that you are reproducing something in order to make a commentary, or perform research. Usually, fair use is short, and attributed to its source. The best rule? If in doubt, ask the author, photographer or artist. You can reproduce nearly anything with permission.

DOMAIN NAME: Need some help coming up with that perfect name for your Web site? Here are some simple tips. Keep it simple, short, easy to remember, easy to spell and descriptive. Now is not the time for something that only you can remember. Need some help coming up with ideas? Visit [www.nameboy.com]. At this site, you can type in a few key words and watch them come up with a long list of still-available names. (You can also register your domain name on this site.)

HTML: This is not a foreign language, or an undecipherable acronym. Rather, this is just short for Hyper Text Markup Language. In a nutshell, this means the language used to create documents on the World Wide Web that incorporate text, graphics, photos and sound. You no longer have to know this to have a Web site, or even to send an e-mail. This service offers the following key services:

• Site promotion to top search engines;
• Unlimited visitors to your site;
• Site traffic and statistical reporting;
• Site promotion to top search engines;
• Members Online does all of the legwork, the customer just fills in a simple form. Once the information is received, the Web site will be up in less than a month.

One of the main advantages of this service is that members don’t need to worry about finding Web site developers, graphic designers, hosting services, a domain name, a statistics program, an e-mail provider or ongoing technical support. And members who already have a Web site can have it hosted for $12.95 per month, including unlimited e-mail accounts.

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for a simple site. Many Web designers offer host- ing services, and the larger and more complex your site, the more your hosting will cost you.) Finally, you may end up paying small fees for periodic changes and updates—or you can learn to do them yourself. You may also choose to pay a small fee to list your Web site with a local search engine. The more high-tech (animation, music, shopping cart), the more expensive your site will be to create and to host. Most massage therapists can probably get by with a simple four- to five-page Web site with contract information, several articles, and other helpful pieces of information (see page 105 for the 10 must-haves on your Web site.)

Have a clear menu that tells visitors exactly what they’ll find on the Web site, and links to each section.

Hayes keeps a weekly calendar, as well as an example, Ohio-based massage therapist Jack Henriques did. Second, you can limit the time to strike a deal by bartering your services, as well as you can create a Web site to make it easier to navigate.

Order-loving services, and the larger and more opportunity to catch key words, and more Web sites are slow-loading, usually because they are loaded down with large, bloated graphics files,” says Dysart. “Limit your page size to 80K, and people won’t be discouraged from exploring and revisiting your site.”

Instead, focus on clarity and simplicity. Use colors that complement each other and make your site easy to read.”

“You want a good contrast between background and text. Not, for example, dark blue background with red text,” says Otto. Keep it clean-looking. “Your home page represents your company,” says Wheeler. “It needs to look professional, and reflect who you are as a businessperson.”

You also want to use clear language and simple instructions. “Call this number for appoint- ments.” “Closed Mondays.” “Available for parties and other special occasions.” Make sure—and this sounds obvious—that visitors to your site know what type of site it is. “It’s not uncommon to go to a Web site,” says Wheeler, “and be confused as to what services are being offered.”

Most importantly, your Web site should reflect you, and the work that you do. “Know what you want your site to accomplish and have in mind a budget,” says Wheeler. And keep your expectations reasonable, and current. “I recently bought a new car,” says Pappas. “I see ads that remind me that I made a good decision. That may be the pur- pose of much of this.

“Let’s say I’m already your massage customer, and I find out you have a Web site. Now I have a ready tool to share you with my friends, via E-mail. ‘Here’s this massage therapist, he’s great, here’s his Web site.’ It becomes a very mobile tool that can spread out beyond you in ways you don’t understand.”

same time. “Too many pictures will make your Web site load slowly,” says Otto. The same goes for music, or Flash technology—which creates all those fun animated images and other special effects that you see on certain sites.

“Too many Web sites are slow-loading, usually because they are loaded down with large, bloated graphics files,” says Dysart. “Limit your page size to 80K, and people won’t be discouraged from exploring and revisiting your site.”

Even with the reasonable costs these days to create a Web site, you can still find ways to save money. You may be able to strike a deal by barring your services, as Henriques did. Second, you can limit the number of changes and updates to your site, although they may pay off in the long run.

For example, Ohio-based massage therapist Jack Hayes keeps a weekly calendar, as well as a daily inspirational message, both of which he believes attracts visitors to his business.

The next step, after choosing your designer or your software, is to choose your domain name—your address, such as [www.yournamehere.com]. The challenge? Finding a name that has not already been taken. And one that’s easy to remember. You can visit [www.myownmassa- sage.com] works well, so if anyone is looking for a massage in your town, your site comes up. Or name it after your business, or your name, so people don’t have to think too much to find you.

You also have to be aware of “Web site opti- mization,” which simply means how to get as many people to your site as possible. To this end, when you design your site, or have some- one design it for you, make sure he or she understand how to place key words, both in the computer language that creates the Web site, that is invisible to the reader, and on the site itself. Some key words may be “massage” or “Orange County,” or “relaxing.” It’s also a wise idea to create a Web site that is easily navigated. Think of it as a good book: You want each sentence to relate to the next, and each chapter to relate to the next. Therefore, have a clear menu that tells visitors exactly what they’ll find on the Web site, and links to each section. “If you have multiple pages, you should have a menu system,” says Otto. “Then, no matter what page you’re on, you can always see the menu. It makes it much easier to navigate.”

But don’t let it be a vanity site. “Don’t create a technological homage to yourself; or let your Web designer do the same,” says Dysart. “Instead, ensure that visitors can grasp the essential pur- pose of the site in seconds, and navigate the site extremely easily and effortlessly.”

Also, most experts agree on the KISS factor: Keep It Simple, Stupid. Including pictures is nice, but pictures take up a lot of bandwidth, or the amount of data that can be transmitted at the

This allows some traffic from that link,” says Wheeler, “and, more importantly, search engines such as Google rank your site in part according to how many links you have coming to your site.”

You can be creative, of course. For example, Hayes offers a “virtual tour” of his business on his Web site, so by the time customers arrive for their first appointment, they feel as though they’ve already “seen” the place.

Also, make sure you keep your site updated and current. Post new staff members, new services, new articles or simply new pictures of yourself. If you’re not making the changes yourself, make sure you understand how you will request the changes, and how quickly they will be listed. (If you are offering spe- cials, you certainly don’t want them listed after the special time has ended.) “Nothing looks less professional than an out-of-date Web site,” says Otto.

Most importantly, your Web site should reflect you, and the work that you do. “Know what you want your site to accomplish and have in mind a budget,” says Wheeler. And keep your expecta- tions reasonable, and current. “I recently bought a new car,” says Pappas. “I see ads that remind me that I made a good decision. That may be the pur- pose of much of this. You also have to be aware of “Web site opti- mization,” which simply means how to get as many people to your site as possible. To this end, when you design your site, or have some- one design it for you, make sure he or she understand how to place key words, both in the computer language that creates the Web site, that is invisible to the reader, and on the site itself. Some key words may be “massage” or “Orange County,” or “relaxing.” It’s also a wise idea to create a Web site that is easily navigated. Think of it as a good book: You want each sentence to relate to the next, and each chapter to relate to the next. Therefore, have a clear menu that tells visitors exactly what they’ll find on the Web site, and links to each section. “If you have multiple pages, you should have a menu system,” says Otto. “Then, no matter what page you’re on, you can always see the menu. It makes it much easier to navigate.”

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Let’s Network!

1. **www.integritymassage.com**
   - Owner: Tim Henriques
   - Where: Winter Park, Florida
   - Specialties: Swedish, Hawaiian lomi lomi, reiki and Myofacial Release
   - Length of Operation: five years
   - Cost: Design, with some bartering, $300. $20 monthly hosting. $35 an hour for changes (once or twice a year). $20 for software programs where he makes some minor updates himself. $30 a month to list with local search engine.
   - His Response: “It’s paid for itself many times over.” He can reach out-of-towners who are visiting nearby Orlando, or who want to order gift certificates for local friends and family. It’s also allowed him to save time on the phone. “I always ask, ‘Do you have any questions?’ And they say, ‘No, I’ve seen your Web site.’”
   - His Advice To Others: “I tried many different types of print advertising. It’s limited and expensive. This is a more economical way to do it. Give it as much of yourself as you can. Go for the best that they can afford. It makes an impression. You want to put your best face forward.”
   - To Contact Him: Visit his Web site

2. **www.connectingtouch.com**
   - Owner: Jack Hayes
   - Where: Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio
   - Specialties: Prenatal, sports, geriatric relaxation, deep tissue, Swedish massage and Myofacial Release
   - Length of Operation: seven years
   - Cost: Found designer through networking group, and bartered for services. With that, Web design eventually cost several hundred dollars. $40 month for hosting and monthly updates.
   - His Response: “With the virtual tour, people can tour my facility in a nonthreatening way before they make an appointment. I’m reaching many different people. It’s inexpensive advertising, and it adds professionalism to our profession.”
   - His Advice To Others: “Do it. It’s a great asset to your marketing—and it pays for itself. It’s a quick and easy way to reach new and existing customers. If you’re intimidated by it, seek out someone who will help you. It’s nothing to be afraid of.”
   - To Contact Him: jack@connectingtouch.com

3. **www.naturaltouchtherapy.com**
   - Owner: Dale Huston
   - Where: Mishawaka, Indiana
   - Specialties: Deep tissue, deep muscle, neuromuscular and lymph drainage
   - Length of Operation: three months
   - Cost: There was a new Web designer in town who was looking to drum up business. Therefore, the whole thing, design and hosting, was $250.
   - His Response: Web sites are getting much more affordable. His last one cost $700 to create, and $60 for every change.
   - His Advice To Others: “Ask questions and know enough about it so you can get someone reasonable and personable enough who makes sure your interests are taken care of first.”
   - To Contact Him: DHu9210074@aol.com

4. **www.ckayem.com**
   - Owner: Cheryl Middaugh
   - Where: Indianapolis, Indiana
   - Specialties: Deep tissue, sports massage, reflexology, hot stone and healing touch
   - Length Of Operation: four months
   - Cost: $1,000 for design and content; $25 a month for hosting, including all updates.
   - Her Response: I E-mail weekly specials to clients. For example, 10 percent off if you make an appointment on Thursday between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.
   - Her Advice To Others: “Ask questions and know enough about it so you can get someone reasonable and personable enough who makes sure your interests are taken care of first.”
   - To Contact Her: Cheryl@ckayem.com

Want some great case examples from your peers? Check out these snazzy Web sites from four AMTA members.
THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE SELECTING THE WEB HOST FOR YOUR BUSINESS

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE THE RIGHT HOST FOR YOUR WEB SITE ANYWAY?

By Chris Krilv, the marketing manager for INETU Managed Hosting, an Allentown, Pennsylvania-based hosting provider, for some tips. You can contact him at this E-mail: ChrisK@inetu.net.

1. What are the different hosts out there? What do I need to know about them?

To understand the distinctions between shared, collocated, unmanaged dedicated, and managed dedicated hosting so you choose the one that is right for your business. The hosting industry has matured, hosting offers have split into a couple of distinct categories, each with its own strengths and weaknesses.

Shared hosting (sometimes called virtual hosting), means that you are sharing one server with a number of other clients of that company. The host manages the server almost completely (though you maintain your site and your account). They can afford to charge you little since many clients are paying for use of the server. However, companies other than yours are using the resources of that server. That means heavy traffic to one of the other sites on the server can really hammer the performance of your site. Also, you are typically not able to install special software programs on these types of machines, because the host will need to keep a stable environment for all of the clients using the server.

Collocated hosting means that you purchase a server from a hardware vendor, like Dell or Hewlett-Packard for example, and you supply this server to the host. The host will then plug your server into its network and it redundant power systems. The host is responsible for making sure its network is available, and you are responsible for all support and maintenance of your server.

Good hosts will offer management contracts to their clients so that you can outsource much of the support to them and come to an arrangement similar to managed dedicated hosting. Most collocation hosts do not offer this service, however.

Unmanaged dedicated hosting is very similar to collocation, except that you lease a server from a host and do not actually own it yourself. Some very limited support (typically Web-based only) is included, but the level of support varies widely from unmanaged dedicated host to unmanaged dedicated host. This type of server can be had for around $99 a month. Support levels are typically only provided in general terms. Ask the host to go into specifics about what support they will provide. Will they apply security patches to your server, for example, before signing up? This service is typically good for gaming servers (like Doom or Counterstrike servers) or hobbyist servers, but not for serious businesses that need responsive, expert level services.

Managed dedicated hosting means leasing a server from a host, and having that company provide a robust level of support and maintenance on the server that is backed by quality guarantees. This maintenance typically includes services such as server uptime monitoring, a hardware warranty, security patch updates and more. Be sure to make sure your managed dedicated host is specific about its managed services included so that you can be sure they are not disguising an unmanaged dedicated offering as a managed dedicated server.

2. What questions should I ask my Web host?

Many hosts care little about who is actually hosting on their networks, so long as the clients pay their bill. That means many hosts will allow porn sites, spammers and servers that create security issues on their network for the sake of the dollar. Even if you are to place ethical issues aside, this does have a negative impact on customers, like when a network gets blackholed for spamming. Getting blackholed means that other networks will refuse E-mail originated from those IP addresses. Check with any hosts you are considering to see if their networks are blackholed. Also, here is a link to a third-party source of traffic tracking lists of blackholed networks and lists them. [www.spamhaus.org/sbl/isp.la.js]. In addition, the following URL is a good resource to help you understand what is labeled SPAM and what isn’t. [www.spamhaus.org/mailinglists.html].

3. How big a hosting company do I need?

Just because a Web hosting company is big, does not mean it is stable and secure. In fact, many of the biggest filed for bankruptcy protection or were saved by being sold to some other company, in some cases causing uncomfortable transitions in service. How do you protect yourself? Ask some key questions:

• How long has the host been in business?
• Is current ownership the same as always?
• Are they profitable and cash-flow positive from operation-generated revenue?

4. What should I expect to pay?

The old saying, “You get what you pay for,” applies to most things in life, and hosting is certainly one of those things. When you over-prioritize price, you run the risk of ending up with a host that will provide you with a connection to the Internet and little else in terms of support (and even that connection may be running at maximum capacity or have uptime issues). For shared hosting, you’ll pay around $7 to $10 a month. A higher level of shared hosting will cost between $20 to $30 a month. For unmanaged dedicated, you’ll pay anywhere from $60 to $200 a month. (This is about the power of the server—you’re paying for speed.) The managed dedicated starts at $120 and goes up to $20,000 a month, depending on the power of the machine. For a very basic Web site, it doesn’t matter much.

5. What qualifications should I look for in a host?

When dealing with smaller vendors, make sure that they have their own data centers and that those data centers are fully redundant in terms of power and connectivity. Here are a few questions to ask:

• How many lines do they have coming into the facility?
• What is the average utilization of their connections? (No matter how large the connection, if it is running at maximum capacity, it will be slow.)
• Do they have redundant power to the servers?
• Do they have a generator on-site?
• How often do they test their generator?
• What sort of security measures do they have in place for the network?
• What physical security do they have?
• What type of fire suppression systems do they have in place?

6. Who will I talk to if I have a problem?

When you call in for technical support, it can be a frustrating experience to be stuck talking with a nontechnical “customer service” representative when you really need to talk to a systems administrator who can resolve your issues. Find out what structure of their support department, how quickly you can get to an actual systems administrator when you need help, and which systems administrators can help you when you need help.

7. I’m a massage therapist, not a techie. How can I find a host that understands me?

It is important that the hoster understands how important quality servers are to their clients’ businesses. Even most managed dedicated hosts will not go near supporting applications that are not part of their initial server setup. Find a host that has a vast amount of experience to support a wide variety of applications, and one that can bring that expertise to you through their services. You want to deal with a vendor who is easy to work with.

8. How can I tell if the host is a reputable company?

Ask for references and success stories. Also, look up reviews. Findmyhost.com will have reviews of different hosts.

9. What are some things to look out for?

Make sure any host you consider provides you with a comprehensive list outlining the support they offer so that you can have an understanding of what is supported for free, what is supported at a fee, and what is not supported at all. Many hosts will try to hide a substandard level of free support behind nonspecific statements of high-quality support, so make them get specific to win your business. They may say it’s 24/7 customer support, for example, but you may call and have to wait in line.

Just because a Web hosting company is big, does not mean it is stable and secure. In fact, many of the biggest filed for bankruptcy protection.

112 Massage Therapy Journal • Fall 2004
I t seems as though everyone’s doing one: Your cousin who is getting married. Your nephew for his class project. Even your mother to commemorate the next family reunion.

So, you think, What does it take to create my own Web site? Here’s the good news: With the new software, and Web-creating sites out there, it’s relatively easy to create your own, basic Web site. (Anyone who wants a lot of bells and whistles will still have to hire someone, or go back to school.) You don’t even need to know HTML, you just need to follow some basic software and understand some basic concepts of good design.

“For all of us, the biggest misperception about creating a Web site is that it’s difficult,” says Bob Parsons, president and founder of Godaddy.com, a domain-name registrar, based in Scottsdale, Arizona. “It isn’t.”

No matter if you choose software, such as Microsoft’s FrontPage, or CoffeeCup, or a Web site such as Godaddy.com, where you can purchase a template online, if you keep in mind these basic pointers, you can be the proud designer of your very own site.

Think Simple. “A five-page Web site is plenty,” says Parsons. “It can be an online brochure that points visitors to the Web site where you are, your hours, what your specialties are, what your fees are.” He says that most Web visitors are looking to be informed, not entertained. “It should be straight to the point, no beating around the bush.”

Don’t Waste Money. The biggest money-wasters are unnecessary distractions, Parsons says. For example, “Using the space in the Web site to provide information that is not informative and factual.” Instead, he says, “You need to skip the fluff. Get right to the point. When we’re browsing on the Internet, our time is at a premium. Your Web site should tell visitors exactly what they need to know.”

Be Color-Coordinated. This is not the time to be garish. “It doesn’t have to be glamorous,” says Parsons. “But it should be reasonably balanced. You look at some sites, and it’s a strain to look at them.” This is where being a savvy Web surfer comes in handy. What Web sites have worked for you? What colors do you find most professional? How can you color-coordinate your Web site with your other marketing materials, such as your brochures, and business cards?

Remember, this is just one tool in your marketing kit. “The best way for massage therapists to promote their Web site is through self-promotion. Use your Web address on your business cards, on your brochure, on your pamphlet,” says Parsons.

Shop Around. When you’re trying to find the right vendor for your software, or your Web site design site, make sure you check out the prices and technology. Talk to friends who have created a Web site. Ask them what worked for them.

GIVE ME THREE GOOD REASONS WHY I SHOULD HAVE A WEB SITE.

• A well made Web site can generate business for you throughout your career.
• A Web site can serve as an online brochure, providing helpful information about your services to current and prospective customers, 24-hours a day. It provides a way for people to contact you at any time by E-mailing you from your site.
• An online presence lends credibility to your business. An E-mail address with your own domain looks a lot more professional than yourname@aol.com, or xyz@yahoo.com.

ASK AN EXPERT

1. GIVE ME THREE GOOD REASONS WHY I SHOULD HAVE A WEB SITE.

You really don’t need to know much about technology in order to have a Web site. What you do need is a Web designer and a Web host who will take care of your needs and help walk you through the things that you do need to know. There are some new things you will need to learn, but none of them are difficult, or overly technical. For example, a new Web hosting account will usually come with E-mail services so that you can receive E-mail at your domain name (yourname@yourdomain.com). Any good Web host will be able to talk you through this process on the phone.

2. I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT TECHNOLOGY. DOES IT MAKE SENSE FOR ME TO HAVE A WEB SITE?

Think about the people you want to reach with your Web site. Provide some unique content. This is an area where the vast majority of Web sites fall short. If your site provides quality information that isn’t readily available elsewhere, they’ll appreciate it, bookmark it and come back for more. This can be in the form of articles, or simply informative copy on your home page. The hidden benefit of extra copy is that it gives the search engines something to use in order to index your site appropriately.

Not any more than having an ad in the Yellow Pages. Simply having a Web site does not automatically provide any access to your personal information. If getting spam E-mail (unwanted advertising) is a concern, you can always register your domain as “private.” This will hide your personal information in the listings, so the only information that is available to the public is what you specifically provide on your Web site.

4. I’VE HEARD ABOUT “PACKAGE DEALS” FOR WEB SITE DESIGN AND HOSTING. BUT, REALLY, WHAT WILL IT COST ME? WHAT ABOUT HIDDEN FEES?

In my opinion, you usually don’t end up saving much, if any, money with this type of package deal. The main reason is that the design and layout that you end up with is often less than professional. Many times, these packages provide a design that comes from a template, so it may not even be original. Then, if you do decide to make changes, the clock starts running and it can cost as much or more than if you went with a custom design in the first place.

5. HOW DO I MAKE MY WEB SITE STAND OUT FROM OTHERS?

Provide some unique content. This is an area where the vast majority of Web sites fall short. If your site provides quality information that isn’t readily available elsewhere, they’ll appreciate it, bookmark it and come back for more. This can be in the form of articles, or simply informative copy on your home page. The hidden benefit of extra copy is that it gives the search engines something to use in order to index your site appropriately.