

HOW TO BUILD A WEBSITE FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

BEFORE YOU START TO BUILD YOUR WEBSITE OR HIRE SOMEONE TO BUILD YOUR WEBSITE FOR YOU, THERE ARE SEVERAL QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO ASK YOURSELF IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT YOU REALLY GET THE RESULTS YOU ARE HOPING FOR. FOLLOWING, YOU WILL FIND THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS/FACTS:

What is the projected size of your website in general?

How big / extensive do you want your website to be (how many pages, multimedia elements, graphics / pictures etc)? This question is important since an extensive website demands more storage space on the server and a higher bandwidth / traffic volume.

How high is your expected/projected traffic/volume?

How many visitors do you expect to visit your website? How long do you think they will remain on your website? Will they view your whole website or just parts of it? These questions give you a possible hint about whether you will need a hosting package with a small, medium or high bandwidth / traffic volume.

Do you want to have a multilingual website?

Especially if you want to use your website for international business, offering a multilingual website is often viewed positively by potential clients / customers. In general, there are two ways to offer a multilingual website for your visitors:

- a) You build the same website several times, but each time in another language, and give a language choice selection on the very first page of your website which then directs the visitor / viewer to the version of your website that shows the selected language. This means that the necessary storage space on the server will increase.
- b) You can use tools that create computer generated translations by a click on a button. These tools can be included in your website and offer several languages. Some of them charge a monthly service fee, others are free. Be aware that computer generated translations will likely include errors.

1. http://www.altavista.com/help/free/free_searchbox_transl
2. http://www.worldlingo.com/en/products/instant_website_translator.html

Do you want to include a hit counter on your website and / or do you want to be able to trace back your visitors / viewers?

A hit counter allows you to monitor the traffic (visitors) on your website (daily, monthly, quarterly etc.). For most counters, you can choose whether you want the counter to be shown on the website (visible for every visitor) or hidden (visible just for you).

Some hosting companies offer hit counters in their hosting package, others don't. But there are several companies out there who offer free hit counters or charge only a small fee for their services. They can be easily included in your website and do not require only basic or even no knowledge in website editing.

While some hit counters do only count the hits on your website, others offer a variety of additional services, i.e. statistics and summaries (where do your visitors come from; how long do they stay on your website; which part of your website is the most viewed one etc).

Here are some companies who offer free or cheap hit counters:

1. <http://www.easycounter.com>
2. <http://www.statcounter.com>
3. <http://www.ritecounter.com>
4. <http://www.web-stat.com>
5. <http://www.amazingcounters.com>

Do you want to include multimedia content (video, sound, flash etc.)?

While it is nowadays no problem to include multimedia elements in your website, there are some things you have to pay attention to:

- a) Multimedia elements will increase the use of your given bandwidth, traffic volume and storage space. Therefore choose a hosting package that will give you enough capacities to cover these additional / higher demands.
- b) Although high-speed-internet is becoming more and more available for everyone, there are still many people out there who have only a dial-up internet access. That means that these people will not be able to enjoy all multimedia elements since it will take too long for them to open / load your website. Therefore you might want to think about building two separated websites (one for high-speed-internet, the other one for dial-up).
- c) The more different types of multimedia elements you want to include in your website, the higher the demands for installed browser plug-ins become (i.e. including flash-elements means that a flash player needs to be installed). You need to inform your visitors about the requirements for your website (this normally happens on the very first page of your website).
- d) If you use multimedia elements not created by your self, please do always obey to the copyright laws!

Do you want an intro for your website and / or (background) sounds / music?

Although it is absolutely not necessary, more and more websites show an intro the first time they get opened. These intros are mostly presented as flash-movie or slideshow. There are several programs out there which can help you to develop intros by your self, but you can also hire professional companies who would be glad to do that for you (of course, they charge a fee for that).

Some websites also feature (background) sounds / music and although they might be able to make the stay on your website even more pleasurable and enjoyable, they are not really necessary. Please do also obey to the copyright laws. Intro's and background sounds / music will increase your bandwidth / traffic and should be reserved for clients / customers with high-speed-internet.

Software for creating your own flash animation / movies:

1. Macromedia Flash Studio (<http://www.adobe.com/products/flash/flashpro>)
2. SwiSH Max Studio (<http://www.swishzone.com/index.php>)

This website gives you an overview about all kinds of flash tools:
<http://www.swftools.com/>

Do you want to include a “Guest book”?

A guest book gives every visitor of your website the opportunity to leave a feedback / comment about your services, your website etc.

It can be also used to stay in touch / communicate with your clients / customers / visitors since you can leave comments as well.

1. <http://www.vipergb.de.vu>
2. <http://www.smartgb.com>
3. <http://www.thequestbook.com>
4. <http://www.phpjunkyard.com/php-guestbook-script.php>

Do you want to make downloads available on your website?

Depending upon the kind of your business or the way you want to use your website, you might want to offer downloads to your clients / customers (i.e. manuals, examples etc). Have in mind that these downloads will increase your demand on storage space and bandwidth / traffic volume.

You might also want to consider providing these downloads in a restricted area so that only registered user can have access to it.

Do you want to offer special services for registered clients / customers?

Many companies allow their clients / customers to register themselves on their website (name, address, email etc). The information acquired during the registration process can be very valuable for you and your company, although you have to handle them with care and should use them only for internal purposes.

For example, you can use these information to get an overview about the structure of your clients (male/female, age, income, kind of company etc). This will be very valuable for marketing and advertisement and / or the development of new products / services. You can attract clients / customers to register themselves by offering them newsletter, special discount campaigns etc.

Do you want to use cookies in order to make the login process easier for returning clients / customers?

Cookies are a very common tool for websites. “The main purpose of cookies is to identify users and possibly prepare customized Web pages for them. When you enter a Web site using cookies, you may be asked to fill out a form providing such information as your name and interests.

This information is packaged into a cookie and sent to your Web browser which stores it for later use. The next time you go to the same Web site, your browser will send the cookie to the Web server. The server can use this information to present you with custom Web pages. So, for example, instead of seeing just a generic welcome page you might see a welcome page with your name on it.” (Source: <http://www.webopedia.com>)

Do you need / want protected contents / pages and / or (root) directories?

It is possible to restrict the access to certain (or even all) pages within in your website so that visitors / viewers need a password in order to gain access. This is useful if you want to use your website for employees too (i.e. internal communication) or if some parts of your website are restricted for registered users only.

It is also recommended to use hosting services that block external access to the (root) directories of your website so that third parties can not view into the structure of your website (security). Some (mostly cheap) hosting companies do not offer these kinds of services.

Do you want to include an “Online store” / payment options & procedures?

If you plan to sell items over your website, you will probably have to include an “Online store” in order to manage your orders and clients / customers. Unless you hire someone to build your website and online store for you, it is recommended to use “pre/fabricated” online stores that can be (easily) included in your website.

It is also common for online stores to accept all major credit cards (Visa, MasterCard etc.), next to checking accounts and / or checks as payment options.

Since the use of the credit card system is most likely connected with additional transaction fees, you want to inform yourself thoroughly before offering these services. Otherwise you might only offer “cash / collect on delivery” (COD) or prepayment by check, which will most likely lower your acceptance by potential clients / customers.

Do you want / need a SSL-encryption?

Especially if you want to include an online store, you will need a SSL-encryption for some pages. This provides clients / customers the security they need for ordering items and pay for them on your website (i.e. protecting credit card information from being stolen through external phishing attacks).

It is crucial for every online store owner to provide that kind of security since clients and customers are most likely afraid to buy from you if you do not offer SSL/encryption.

Is it advisable to include external advertisement (banners / pop-ups)?

Although it will affect the look / appearance of your website in a negative way (less professional look), the integration of external advertisement (banner and / or pop-ups) is a very common way for generating some additional income since the company who is posting the advertisement on your website is paying you money for every time your website (and with it the ad) is viewed by a visitor.

Because more and more people use so called “pop-up-blocker” in order to protect themselves from too many pop-ups which slow down their internet experience, banners are nowadays more recommended. Of course, you can use banners yourself in order to make advertisement for your own website / products on other websites.

1. <http://www.myfreebanner.com>
2. <http://www.bannersmania.com>

Is a website registration (for search engines) necessary?

Especially if you want to use your website for commercial purposes, you might want to consider registering your website with several search engines (i.e. Google, Yahoo etc.). That is necessary in order to ensure that other people can find your website in the World Wide Web. Because the registration of your domain name (your website address / URL) does not necessarily include a registration with search engines (there are more than 10,000 different search engines available), you can do this by using several services (most of them charge a fee).

1. <http://www.addpro.com>
2. <http://www.search-engine-submission-registration.com>
3. <http://www.virtual-submit.com/index.htm>

It is also important to know, that many companies / website owner pay (additional) fees to search engines in order to ensure that their website will be listed first within the list of search results. Therefore, the registration with a search engine will certainly make sure that your company can be found, but there is no guaranty that your company will be mentioned among the first search results, unless you pay for it additionally.

Do you want to design the website by yourself or do you want to hire someone professional? Who is supposed to host your website?

If you feel comfortable enough to program / design your website by your self, there are many programs out there that can help you.

You can also hire a professional company to design the website for you. As a rule, the more money you spend on software or external services, the higher the quality and appearance of your website will get.

Software for designing your website (DIY)

1. Adobe Dreamweaver (<http://www.adobe.com/products/dreamweaver>)
2. Namo WebEditor (<http://www.namo.com>)
3. Microsoft Frontpage (<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/frontpage/FX100743231033.aspx>)

Hoster / Server

Unless you decide to build and maintain your own server (which would give you independency from bandwidths and traffic volumes of third parties), you will depend upon external service providers:

Local Companies:

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. IVS-USA.com (http://www.ivs-usa.com) | → Web design + Hosting |
| 2. Arterburn.com (http://www.arterburn.com) | → Web design + Hosting |
| 3. Proline.us (http://www.proline.us) | → Web design + Hosting |
| 4. Your own internet provider | → Various |

Nationwide Companies:

1. Yahoo SmallBusiness Hosting (<http://smallbusiness.yahoo.com/webhosting>)
2. GoDaddy.com (<http://www.godaddy.com>)
3. X2Cms WebSiteSolution (<http://www.x2cms.com>)

Use these general sites in order to find the right hosting company by yourself:

1. <http://www.findmyhosting.com/>
2. <http://www.tophosts.com>

Disclaimer

The Purchase Area Development District (PADD) does not give any warranty for the correctness and completeness of the information given above. The PADD is also not connected or associated in any way with any of the mentioned companies, websites, products etc.

Business Website Guide – Purchase Area Development District

Question / Feature		Answer(s)		
1	What is the projected size of your website in general (how many pages, pictures, etc)			
2	How much is your expected / projected traffic / volume?			
Question / Feature		Yes	No	Maybe
3	Do you want to have a multilingual website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Do you want to include a hit counter on your website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Do you want to be able to trace back the visitors of your website (including statistics / summaries)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Do you want to include (many) multimedia contents (video, sound, flash etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Do you want an intro for your website and / or background sounds / music?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Do you want to include a guestbook?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Do you want to make downloads available on your website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Do you want to offer special services for registered clients / customers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Do you want to use cookies for an easier login of returning clients / customers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Do you need or want protected (restricted) contents / pages and / or (root) directories?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Do you want to include an online store in your website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Do you want or need a SSL encryption?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	Is it advisable for your purposes to include external advertisements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	Is a website registration (for search engines) necessary for you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	<i>Do you want to design the website by yourself?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	<i>Do you want to host your website on an own server?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please answer all questions. If you do decide to hire someone professional for the design and / or hosting of your website, this question form might be helpful for you while you are in consultation with the service provider.