



DAVID
WILLIAMS

Affordable Web Design
Professional Web Development

Volume

3

DAVID A. WILLIAMS

Getting Started Guide for Web Development Customers

Getting Started Guide

WEB SITE DEVELOPMENT

Getting Started Guide

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*"to be found in the field...
you must first plant the seed"*



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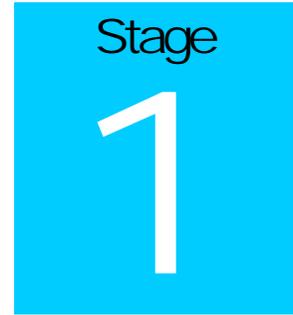
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Stage 1 Planning

Like all of the other decisions you make regarding your business the decision to take your business online requires planning some thought ahead of time.

Whether you are a small business, home based business or a corporation there are many benefits to taking your business online. Building a web site is like planting a seed for future growth. We hold it to be true that, "To be found in the field, you must first plant the seed." You want to increase your visibility in your market place and we want to help you effect that outcome.

I C O N K E Y

? Important
Consideration

☞ Tip

This guide is designed to assist you in the planning process as you prepare to take your business online. Throughout the guide we will seek to answer potential questions you may have about marketing your business via the World Wide Web and minimize some of the confusion surrounding web development. The icon key to the left helps you to identify key informational elements of this guide.

What Is The Purpose Of This Site?

One does not hire an architect to design a building until the function of the structure is clearly defined. The same is true of your web site. It is important to recognize the intended purpose of your web site prior to beginning the construction. As you continue your planning please take some time to consider some of the following questions.



A word about total marketing strategies

If I build it, they will come ~ is a common misconception in the minds of many business people. It takes more than putting up a site with a home page and 5 product and/or services pages ~ it takes planning to promote your new site. What keywords will you use to help search engines find your site? How will you determine the appropriate keyword density of your pages? How will having a web site influence future marketing efforts via other media forms and printed materials? We recommend that our customers consider these important questions before beginning construction of their web sites.

- What story should my web site tell about my business? My Employees? My Products/Services? My USP?
- If you have many products/services - What products and/or services do I want to promote?
- What market area do I hope to serve?
- What are my marketing goals on the web?
- Will the site be informational or more like a catalog of goods & services?
- Do you serve a special need for the community?
- If the business grows how will I expand my site?
- How will I measure the success of my web site?

By thinking ahead and answering some of these questions before construction begins you can save money and potential headaches in the future.

Who Is My Audience?

Before you begin construction of your web site it is necessary to understand your targeted audience on the World Wide Web. Understanding your audience is crucial to the choices you will make regarding color schemes, fonts, graphics and the actual body copy of your web site. Spending a few minutes surfing the web will help you recognize varying characteristics and components of site design. Some sites seem more elegant in appearance and others are more functional in their layout and language. Taking a few moments to visualize your site through the eyes of both your

existing as well as prospective customers will pay great rewards later as well as saving you time and money now.



We recommend that our customers think in these terms:

- What are my customer's intentions when they visit my site?
- What do they hope to find when they visit my site?
- What skills and understanding of web navigation do they possess?
- How can I meet their needs online?

What Is The Best Layout For My Site?

When in doubt follow this simple rule in designing your site ~ *"Form Follows Function."* If you've spent any time online at all you have probably also noticed that some sites are very easy to read while others are fragmented in layout and have too many typefaces thereby reducing readability. Additionally, many sites appear "too busy" because the developer loaded the page with graphics and bells and whistles.



As you consider the layout of your new sight we recommend simplicity and functionality vs. busy and noisy. When we say *form* should follow *function* we simply mean that any artwork and graphics you choose should have a purpose to your customer and they should enhance the body copy rather than distract from it. Therefore, we recommend that our customers write the copy before selecting images to accompany that copy text.

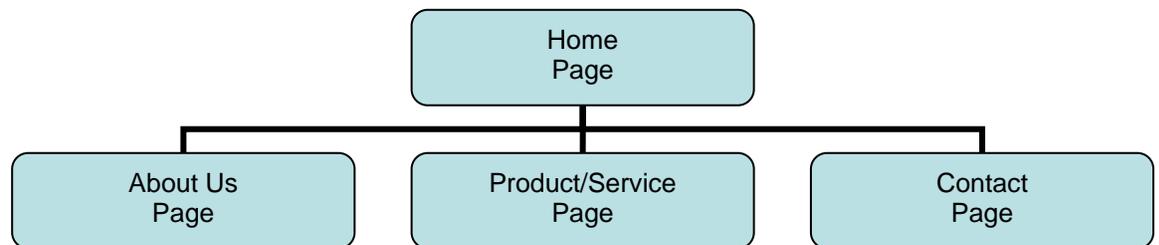


About the site copy and images

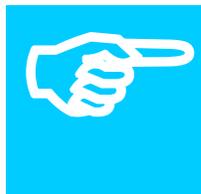
We encourage our customers to take control of the body copy and images on their sites. After all, who better understands the needs of your customers than you? This being true we believe it is necessary for you to speak to the needs of your customers as only you can. The same is true of the images you will provide for your site ~ they should speak to the needs of your customers as you have come to know them. Think of us as your partner in successfully promoting your business online ~ we are here to assist you as needed.

Navigation

We have introduced a variety of points to consider prior to the construction of your web site. This would be a good time to start “talking to the paper.” Talking to the paper is just another way of describing the next level in your brainstorming – outlining the structure. We recommend creating a story board with pen and paper to reflect page titles and navigation between the pages. You can use your computer if you’d like by utilizing flow-chart or organization chart software. We like to use pen & paper to give us more flexibility as we think and re-think the organization of our sites. (a sample chart for hierarchy can be found on page 10 and sample pages for page layout on pp 11 & 12)



This process helps us to visualize the hierarchy and the number of pages necessary to do the job right. While some developers prefer to put 90% of the site content in the home page... we prefer not to over load our pages (and our visitors) and let each page be sufficient unto itself.



A word about hyperlinks and navigation

We encourage our customers to think about the hyperlinks and navigation of their site from the eyes of a relative ‘beginner’ to the web. Over the years the web sites we have visited have trained us that “buttony” looking graphics are “clickable” as are blue underlined text links. While we recognize the value of clickable images and image maps we recommend that our customers keep the navigation simple in look and function. After all, we’re not marketing to other web developers hoping to impress them with a cool new design ~ we’re marketing to every potential customer we can attract. The young and old, the beginner and the web experienced alike will enjoy a site that is easy to move through and accomplish what they wanted when they took the time to visit us.

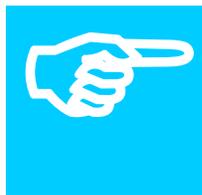
We also recommend Global Navigation as a means to simplify the browsing experience. Global navigation allows the visitor to move to any page in your web site from any page in your web site. This is of great value according to the stated preferences of those who surf regularly and respond to such navigation surveys.

Stage 2

Development & Deployment

Building a web site is like planting a seed for future growth.

Assuming you will not be designing and/or developing your own web site it is time to begin researching developers. If you have downloaded this e-book from my web site let me say in advance that we appreciate your consideration. That being said let me move on to describe some of the key things to consider as you enter this stage of your web site development.



Budget

You know best what your budget allows and I appreciate saving money as much as the next person so let me share some ideas that may help you reduce your costs from a developer's standpoint.

- **Write your own copy** if at all possible. Not only does this give control to the person who knows your customers needs the best (you), it can save you considerable amounts of money over the long run.
- **Provide your developer with 'web-ready' images** if at all possible. By web-ready I mean pictures that are sized both physically and in resolution for use on the web. JPEG and GIF are the most frequently used formats. Remember, large images tend to make pages load slowly and this will have a detrimental impact on your visitor's experience.

- **Give yourself ample time** between the conceptualization and the finished web site. We are all tempted to fall into the “right here - right now” mindset as consumers. To be sure, a good developer can handle a rush job *if* you are willing to pay the difference for such luxury. The more flexible you can be with regard to the project time the lower your overall costs should be. Don’t assume this to be true with all developers – ask during your initial visit.
- **Modularize your construction plans** by thinking in terms of what you need now and what you can add later. Remembering that you can grow your web site as your business grows will help you to decide what is needed immediately and what can be added as time and money allow. Again, don’t assume – seek quotes for additional work you may plan to implement in the near future.
- **Identify ongoing site maintenance needs** up front. If you plan to publish a manager’s special on a monthly basis bring your developer into the loop ahead of time and seek a quote for the additional expense. Again, speak to your developer in advance - most of the high end rush jobs command the higher price but if you can deliver the necessary maintenance changes well in advance of the deadline most developers will offer lower pricing in return for your consideration of their time.
- **Do I need a full E-Commerce solution?** If you are anticipating rapid growth in the near future and wish to extend secure online ordering to your customers now is the time to communicate this with your developer so you can insure you have the correct infrastructure and hosting services to handle your transactions.
- **Per Page Pricing, Per Hour Pricing** – There are pros and cons to each approach depending on your needs and the developer you choose. Many developers will work try to with you and perform work for payment by the method you prefer. Again, never assume, speak to your developer in advance to learn what their payment terms are and ask for a quote. For example, we provide web packages to help minimize any confusion in these areas but even with the packages ~ unique needs are brought to the table and this requires that we remain flexible to our customer’s preferences when handling those additional services and the related expenses.
- **Domain Names** aren’t vital to your success but they do lend credibility to your name and the perceived value of your organization. Most people only type a URL address once if they acquired it by referral or click a link from a search engine. *If they like your site* and what

you are offering they will likely add your site to their list of favorites (bookmark it). *If they didn't find what they were looking for* they will associate that negative experience with your business offering and move on to the next business. Checking availability of a particular domain name is fairly simple. Once you've established the name is available it is relatively simple to register the domain name as well. You can expect to pay somewhere in the neighborhood of \$50 to \$85 to register your domain for 3 -5 years.

- **Host Service Providers** are the businesses who provide the shared server space for your web site. They typically offer:
 - a speedy connection to your site for your visitors
 - 50 – 100 MB of space for your web site files
 - 1 – 3 GB of data transfer monthly
 - 3 or more email accounts @ your domain name
 - and even routine backup of your web site

We would be happy to refer you to a local company we have come to know and trust over the last several years.

Closing Comments

While there may be additional questions or needs that arise as you continue planning I have hopefully helped you to better understand the process. Let me go the additional step and offer you my services as your web developer. I am available to serve you and your organization with the same sensitivity to your needs demonstrated in this free e-book!

I hope you have found the information in this guide to be of value. I welcome any feedback or comments you would be willing to share. Please feel free to contact me and let me know how I may be of further service to you.

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Glossary

GB

Gigabyte

One gigabyte is equal to 1,073,741,824 bytes. Abbreviated as GB.

GIF

graphics interchange format

Most color images and backgrounds on the Web are GIF files. This compact file format is ideal for graphics that use only a few colors, and it was once the most popular format for online color photos. However, GIF has lost ground to the JPEG format when it comes to photos. GIF images are limited to 256 colors, but JPEGs can contain up to 16 million colors--and they can look almost as good as a photograph.

CompuServe developed GIF in 1987, calling it GIF87, and two years later added new features such as interlacing, transparency, and animation to create the format known as GIF89a. People don't usually distinguish between the two GIF versions, so if someone refers to an image as a "GIF89" rather than simply a "GIF," it's probably animated.

HSP

Hosting service provider

Host Service Providers as the name would imply will register your domain name for you and host your web site for a nominal monthly fee.

HTML

Hypertext Markup Language

As its name suggests, HTML is a collection of formatting commands that create hypertext documents--Web pages, to be exact. When you point your Web browser to a URL, the browser interprets the HTML commands embedded in the page and uses them to format the page's text and graphic elements. HTML commands cover many types of text formatting (**bold** and *italic* text, lists, headline fonts in various sizes, and so on), and also have the ability to include graphics and other non text elements.

JPEG

Joint Photographic Experts Group

This file format for color-rich images was developed by the Joint Photographic Experts Group committee. JPEG compresses graphics of photographic color depth better than competing file formats like GIF, and it retains a high degree of color fidelity. This makes JPEG files smaller and therefore quicker to download. You can choose how much to compress a JPEG file, but since it is a *lossy* format, the smaller you compress the file, the more color information will be lost. JPEG files can be viewed by a variety of downloadable software on both the PC and Mac.

ISP

Internet Service Provider

ISPs have arrived to act as your user-friendly front end to all that the Internet offers. Most ISPs have a network of servers (mail, news, Web, and the like), routers, and modems attached to a permanent, high-speed Internet "backbone" connection. Subscribers can then dial into the local network to gain Internet access--without having to maintain servers, file for domain names, or learn Unix.

MB

Megabyte

One megabyte is equal to 1,024 kilobytes of information

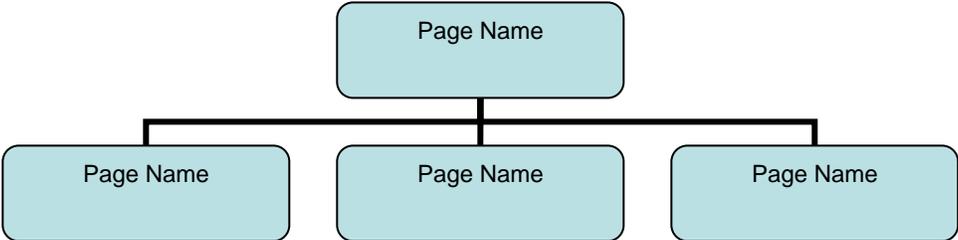
USP

Unique Selling Proposition (or Position)

All of your marketing and promotional plans should clearly define your unique selling proposition. Plainly said, this is what sets you apart from your competition and states your strengths.

Sample Chart for Website Hierarchy

You can use this flow chart to begin planning the hierarchy portion of your site. Sketch in additional pages as needed.



Sample Page Layouts

You can use the following pages to begin planning the page layout for each page in your site. Print as many copies as need for each page. Sketch graphics and logos as needed.

Header	
Navigation	Body Copy

Header

Body Copy

Navigation