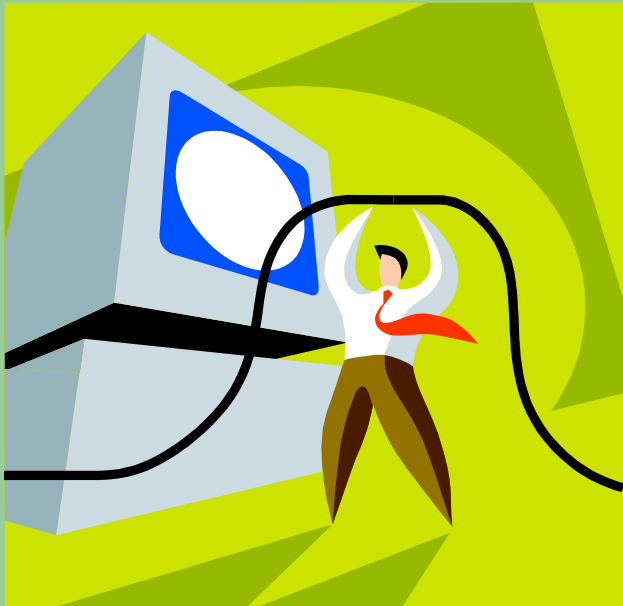


# Getting Your Business Online

A Service of The Vermont Small Business Development Center and e-Vermont



Statewide Broadband  
Business Advisor  
Patrick Ripley



# What Do We Do ?

## VtSBDC MISSION STATEMENT:

“VtSBDC’s mission is to strengthen existing businesses and assist start-ups through high quality, no cost counseling, and high quality, affordable training programs.”

More at: [www.vtsbdc.org](http://www.vtsbdc.org)

# Should My Business Be Online?



The Quick Answer – Yes!

Your Customers Are Online,  
So You Should Be Too.  
But It's Never That Easy ...

Things To Consider:

- Cost
- Time
- Benefits
- Goals/Expectations

# More Things To Consider:

- Competition (Are others in your industry online?)
- Sales (Can you increase your market size?)
- Image / Branding (Are you hip, modern, do you 'get it?')
- Productivity (Increased efficiency, e-mail, cheap online brochure, etc.)

# How Much Will This Cost Me?

Buying A website is like buying a car. Do You Want A Cadillac or a Pinto?

- High End – \$20,000+ (Includes CMS, Database, Forms, Etc.)
- Middle – \$5,000-\$8,000 (CMS, e-Commerce, Etc.)
- Low End – \$700-\$2,500 (No CMS, Risk, Etc.)
- Don't Forget Hosting – \$50-\$20 A Month or Less

# So Where Do I Fit In?

**Most Small Businesses Do Not Need To Spend More Than \$5,000 – \$8,000**

## **Unless:**

- Dynamic Site With Multiple Content Producers (media site)
- Pageview Driven Revenue
- Very Large and Diverse Product Inventory
- Heavy Traffic Load
- Database Dependent

# What You Get For \$5,000 – \$8,000

- Quality Assurance
  - Effective and Appealing Design
  - Consistent Branding and Content
  - Content Management System
  - Basic E-Commerce
  - Search Engine Optimization
  - Forms, e-mail, etc.

# I Can't Afford That!

For \$1,500 – \$3,000:

- Branded Online Presence That Works 24 Hours A Day
- A Searchable Online Presence (You Exist!)
- Marketing/Informational Tool For Customers
- A Social Media Link (Facebook, Twitter, Etc.)
- Modern Image (You 'Get It)
- New Customer Base
- Something to Build From



# Low-End Site Cost Concerns

- Dynamic Content (CMS limited or nonexistent)
- Search Engine Optimization (Can I Be Found?)
- ‘Look’ appeal of Branding and design
- User-Friendly E-Commerce
- Forms/E-Mail/Interactivity (Can Buyers Reach Me Online Easily?)
- Can I Trust My Designer?
- Does This Site Accomplish My Goals?

# I Still Can't Afford That!!

There Are Other Options:

- Wordpress [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com)
- Joomla [www.joomla.com](http://www.joomla.com)
- Intuit [www.intuit.com](http://www.intuit.com)
- <http://www.fatcow.com>

Benefit = Cost

Drawback = Time, Ability, 'Look,' Usability, Etc.

# Further Cost Considerations

In addition to the monthly or annual hosting fees, you can be charged for site maintenance if you are not managing your own site.

Reasonable Rates:

Between \$75 and \$125 per hour for site updates and maintenance.



# What Do I Need On My Site?

What Do You Want To Do With It? Set Reasonable Goals and Expectations

- Will I Sell From My Site?
- Do I Need To Regularly Change Content?
- Is This A Marketing/Informational Platform?
- How Much Do I Care How It Looks?
- Do I Have Time To Manage It?

# Determining the Site's Purpose

- Gathering information
  - Will the site provide in-depth information about a topic, product or service?
  - Will the site be someone's professional portfolio?
  - Will the site sell products (and what kinds)?
  - Will the site market services (and what kinds)?
  - Keeping up with the competition
- Develop a purpose statement

# Do I Need A Database?

Determining database content; ask these questions:

- How often is content updated?
- Are more than 20 products being sold?
- What kind of growth is expected in one year? Three years? Five years?
- Need to collect and use visitor data?
- Is there enough dynamic content to justify cost?

# Determining Site Content Requirements

Don't Let Cost Dictate Form and Function While Planning Site Needs, Goals

The bare minimum:

- Contact info. (address, phone number, e-mail)
- Home page info. and Dynamic Lede (What Do You Do?)
- Branding, tag line
- Footer
- Navigation
- Social Media Links if Available

# Looking at Competitors' Web Sites

Consult The Google Monster!

- Evaluate competitors for their successes and failures.
- Use keyword searches to research competitors' Web sites in various markets (local, regional, state, national, and global).
- Review content of Web sites found in keyword searches.
- Pay attention to colors, shapes, fonts, photos, and other design elements.

Your Web designer's role in demographic market research is to gather and distill the research provided by the client to help define the ideal site visitor. Conduct "research by proxy" (by harvesting information from competitors' sites) if there is insufficient research for the demographic profile. Define the ideal site visitor.



# Lets Get Started!

Decide on a domain name for the site

Your URL should:

- Be Easy To Say, Write and Remember
- Reflect Your Business/Brand
- Not Contain dashes or other characters
- Preferably a .com
- Verify that the name is available.

# See If Your Name Is Available

There Are Countless Providers, So Shop Around.

Some Well-Known Domain Search Engines:

<http://instantdomainsearch.com> (Free Search)

<http://www.godaddy.com>

<http://www.whois.net>

# I Found My Domain

Buy It Now! Register the name with a domain registrar or host provider.

Why?

- It's Cheap (\$10-\$15 Annually)
- It May Get Snatched Up
- You Can Always Change It Later Or Add More
- It Drives Site Production Cost Down

# How Else Can I Drive Cost Down?

- Harvest Pre-Existing Marketing Research To Help Identify Ideal Site Visitor, But Be Sure Not To Rule Out New Customer Base
- Write Your Own Copy For The Site Or Have An Employee Do So
- Utilize Pre-Existing Graphic Materials
- Have A Good Idea What You Want Before You Contact A Designer (Site Research)

# Finding A Site Designer

There are Website Designers Throughout The Region. Shop Around!

Tips:

- Look For Reputable Design Firms (Google)
- Avoid Start-ups Or Unknown Freelancers
- Consult Your Local SBDC Advisor

# What Questions To Ask

Good Designers Should Be Able to Answer These Questions Quickly And Easily

- Can You Show Me Some Other Sites You Designed?
- Are Your Sites WC3 Compliant?
- How Do You Handle SEO?
- Can You Provide Me With A Site Proposal?

# More Questions To Ask

- How Will the Site Be Hosted?
- What Is The Hosting Fee? (\$50 +/- Per Month)
- What Is The “Up-Time” Percentage
- How Much Traffic Can Hosting Plan Handle
- How Will You Handle The CMS?
- Can I Speak With Some Of Your Other Clients?

# Taking The Plunge



You Can't Drive It Off The Lot Today

Steps:

- Accept design proposal with clear cost outlines
- Provide necessary materials to designer
- Receive site mockup before production begins
- Be prepared for setbacks and/or obstacles



# How Long Should It Take?

\$20,000+ = As long as it takes, but clear milestones should be set with payment parameters

\$5,000-\$8,000 = Eight to Twelve Weeks

\$2,500- = No More Than A Month



# Post-Production Work

Websites Are  
Not A Field  
Of Dreams.

You Need To  
Get People  
To Come  
Home.



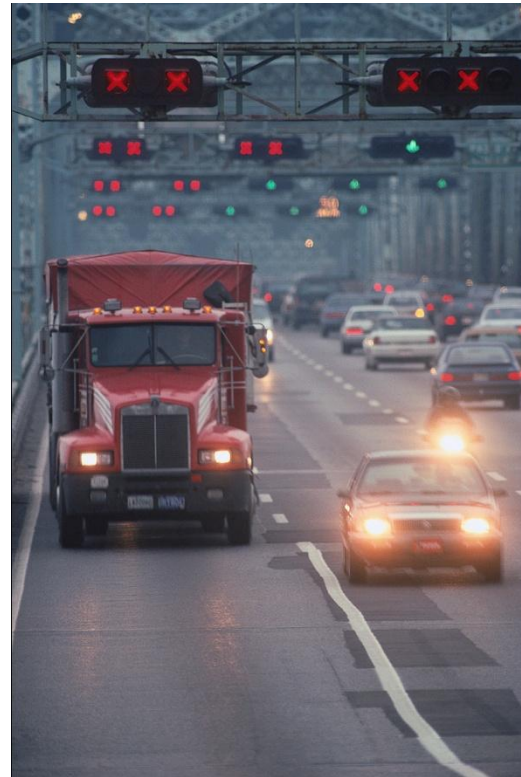
# Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Be Sure Your Site Is Optimized For Search

- Research High Searchable Sites In Your Industry
- Start Global, Then Regional, Then Local
- View Page Source Code for “title,” “keywords” and “description” (meta tags or meta info.)

# Defining Ways to Drive Traffic to a Site

- E-newsletters
- Blogs
- Polls
- Contests and sweepstakes
- Coupons
- Integrated Advertising
- Useful Content
- E-Mail Marketing
- Social Media



# Social Media Marketing

## Protect Your Investment

- Get On Facebook (profile page, “Like” page)
- Raise comfort level and move on (Twitter, etc.)
- Be consistent with posts
- Don’t Be Annoying (too many posts hurt you)
- Link Back To Your Site
- Personality

# To Contact Us

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*Thanks so much for your time!*