

Put your Business Online  
Easy as 1-2-3 ...

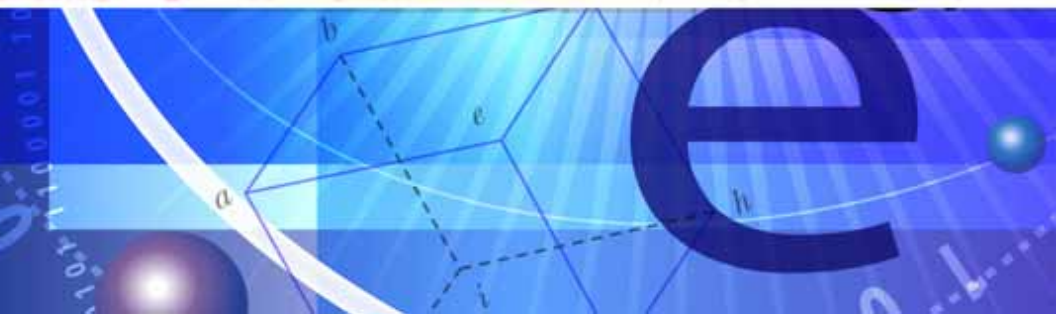


brought to you by

**CODA MULTIMEDIA**

[www.codamedia.com](http://www.codamedia.com)

Putting your  
**Small Business**  
Online



# *About the Author*

---

Sean Borton

Sean is an accomplished musician living in the sunny (but very cold) province of Manitoba. He has won 3 Manitoba Country Music Association awards; two for guitar player of the year, and one for instrumentalist of the year. He plays lead guitar with a moderately successful group called the Foster Martin Band and loves to freelance his studio skills whenever possible.

So why is a guitar player writing a book about putting a small business online: and why should I buy it?

Since 1997 Sean has been designing websites in his spare time and in 2001 left his full time job to pursue a business career in the computer industry. His business “CODA Multimedia” markets its services to small businesses and offers complete technology solutions, from computer service and office solutions (database design) to internet authoring and website hosting.

His website credits to date include:

The Foster Martin Band, The Manitoba Country Music Association, Doc Walker, Disabled Peoples International, The Network of Entrepreneurs with Disabilities, Community Futures Partners of Manitoba, Polar Bear Productions, WFO Productions and the list goes on and on ...

Sean has always been dedicated to providing great service and value to his clients. This book is intended to assist small business owners in understanding a topic which can be soooooo confusing!

# *Table of Contents*

<b>How to Use This Book</b>	1
How This Book Is Organized:	2
Part 1: Basic Things you Must Know!	2
Part 2: Determining your Business Direction	2
Part 3: Web Site Design (ers)	2
Part 4: Domain Name Registration	3
Part 5: Website Hosting	3
Part 6: Promoting your Website	3
The Top Ten Checklist!	3
Icons Used in The Book	4
Drop me an Email	4
<b>The Basics – The things you need to know!</b>	5
ISP's are not the same as Website Hosts	6
Part 2 + Part 3 = Part 4	7
The Importance of Good Planning!	7
Do it yourself? Or Hire a Guru?	8
<b>Web Site Structures</b>	10
Should my business have a website?	11
Email and Contact Websites	12
Basic Product and Information Sites	12
Interactive Websites	13
E-Commerce Sites	13
<b>Website Design(ers)</b>	15
Site Content – (It is your job, not the designers)	16
Hiring a Professional or Doing it yourself?	16
Timelines and Payments	17
The tools of the trade	18
Basic Design Notes:	19
Scripting Languages (advanced design)	19
Scripting Languages (continued)	20
Scripting Languages (continued)	21
Site Maintenance	21

## *Table of Contents (Continued)*

<b>Domain Name Registration</b> _____	23
Why do I need a name? _____	24
Choosing a “TLD”(top level domain) _____	24
Choosing a Name _____	25
Choosing a Name (continued) _____	26
Checking for name availability _____	26
How and Where do I register a name? _____	26
How and Where do I register a name? (continued) _____	27
How much should a name cost? _____	27
Important Facts _____	27
<b>Hosting your website</b> _____	29
Why do I need a Host? _____	30
NT, UNIX, or Linux _____	30
Features (What to look for) _____	31
Uptime/Bandwidth (the misunderstood ones) _____	31
Uptime/Bandwidth (continued) _____	32
How much should a hosting cost? _____	32
Extras features and add ons _____	33
<b>Promoting your Website</b> _____	35
Traditional Methods of Promotion (the best way) _____	36
Search Engines _____	36
Banner Ads (link exchange) _____	37
Banner Ads (purchased) _____	37
Self Site Promotion _____	38
<b>10 Step Checklist</b> _____	39

# *How to Use This Book*

---

If you are looking for a book that is easy to read, fits in any briefcase or handbag, and gives you easy access to all the pertinent information regarding putting your small business online, then this is the book for you.

*Putting Your Small Business Online* is designed to prepare you for creating and implementing a website for your small business. Whether or not you decide to “do it yourself” or hire professionals for the various tasks, *Putting Your Small Business Online* will help you understand the lingo used and in general, what will be required during the entire process.

This book is not the book to use if you want to learn “How to Design a Website”, or “Building Your Own Web Server”. For that there are many great books available at your local book stores.

There are two fundamental groups that should read this book.

## **Businesses with a current website:**

- Trying to decide what your next step should be to improve your site
- Having a hard time communicating and/or understanding the lingo with your designers
- You just want to understand the chain of events that go into the creation of a website

## **Businesses without a website:**

- Have you ever said to yourself, “**I just don’t know where to begin**”

**Three Words: “READ THIS BOOK”**

## *How This Book Is Organized:*

This book covers all the basics in regards to what is needed to effectively put your business online. You will not find any technical drivel about how to maintain web servers, or creating database connections. Rather it will explain, IN VERY PLAIN ENGLISH, what goes on behind the scenes.

### *Part 1: Basic Things you Must Know!*

Part 1 will explain the basics – the things you really need to know before you can proceed with a website. A quick explanation as to how the internet works, how you connect to the internet, and the history/future of the internet.

### *Part 2: Determining your Business Direction*

Obviously you already have (or should have) a business plan in place for the day to day activities of your business. But do you know how placing you business on the internet can help you? Do you know what you want to accomplish by having a website? Do you understand what your options are? Part 2 will clearly outline the basic online strategies of some businesses.

### *Part 3: Web Site Design (ers)*

Once you understand what type of site you will require, it is time get down to site design. This usually requires a lot of planning. Will you be doing it yourself or contracting someone to do it for you? What kind of tools (software and hardware) will be required? How much should you expect to pay for web design and what qualifications should you be looking for?

## *Part 4: Domain Name Registration*

Part 4 will deal with all the aspects of Domain Name registration. The importance of this stage is often overlooked even though it can have serious side effects on your business. We'll cover "how to choose a good name" right down to how and where to register it.

## *Part 5: Website Hosting*

What is website hosting? Do I really need it? How much is THIS going to cost me? Part 5 will explain why you DO need a good hosting company, what you should look for in this company and roughly what kind of costs you will incur.

## *Part 6: Promoting your Website*

Unlike Kevin Costner and Field of Dreams: If you build it, they WILL NOT come! Websites take promoting, and without it you will be waiting years for any type of traffic to start showing up. Part 6 will explain search engines, web banners, online ads, and traditional forms of marketing to promote your website.

## *The Top Ten Checklist!*

A step by step outline of the things you must do while putting your business online. Photocopy this page and live by it. If you follow each step carefully, you will reduce your risk of website failure.

## *Icons Used in The Book*

What's a computer book without icons. Dummies books are loaded with them! Let the following icons help to show you the way through this book.



The “Tip” icon signal a good way to do something, often making your life a little easier.



“Warning!” Don't ignore this icon. When it appears, it simply means I have made this mistake and it has cost me dearly. Don't let it cost you.



“The Reminder” – Simply points out something easily forgotten.

## *Drop me an Email*

If you have any questions or comments regarding this book, you may send me an email at any time. Did you find this book helpful? Is there any area you would like to see expanded on?

Email: [info@codamedia.com](mailto:info@codamedia.com)

Snail Mail (post office):

Sean Borton  
c/o CODA Multimedia  
229 Adsum Drive  
Winnipeg Manitoba, R2P 0V8

## *The Basics – The things you need to know!*

---

For the sake of argument, I will not assume anything other than the fact that you must be considering the idea of putting your business online. With this said, there are certain things you are going to need to know in order to proceed with reading this book.

You can skip this step if you already know everything (so to speak...), but if you have any doubt whatsoever about any of the topics listed below, then I would suggest reading this chapter.

### **In this section ...**

- **ISP's are different from Website hosts**
- **Part 2 (Site Needs) + Part 3 (Design) = Part 4 (Hosting)**
- **The importance of good planning**
- **Do it yourself, or hire a guru?**

## *ISP's are not the same as Website Hosts*

One of the most common questions I hear when I meet somebody to discuss a website is the following.

When I get a website, I guess I can cancel my “Shaw” account?  
(Substitute Shaw with any “ISP” name)

The short answer is, well – **NO!** ISP's and Website Hosts are two completely different animals. One is a donkey (ISP) and one is a bear (Website Host). Seriously, the differences are very clear.

**ISP (Internet Service Provider)** – This is the company you use to “physically connect” to the internet. In my home town of Winnipeg, the two big ISP's are “Shaw” (cable connection), and MTS (DSL). If you were to cancel these accounts, then you would not be able to connect to the internet. It will make no difference whether or not you have a site, because you cannot physically connect to the internet through your website.

**Website Hosts** – Your website host is a physical computer, sitting somewhere in the world, in which your website has a home. It's main purpose is to “serve” your site (and likely many others) to anyone who requests it.

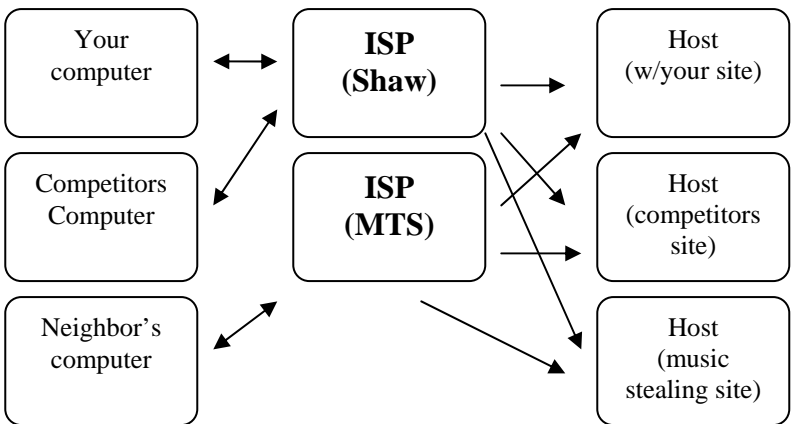


Image 1-1

Image 1-1 shows us how businesses and homes connect to the internet through an ISP, then connect to websites “through” the ISP.

There are ways to connect to the internet without having an ISP, but that is far beyond the realms of this book, and the realms of most small businesses. It would require a direct connection to the internet backbone (such as a T1 or T3 line) in essence making your business itself an ISP. (CAN YOU SAY, **EXPENSIVE?**)

## *Part 2 + Part 3 = Part 4*

I know we are only reading Part 1, but it is very important to understand that each section of this book fits together like a hand in a glove. The old phrase “which came first, the chicken or the egg” has nothing on this subject.

Once you understand what you want to accomplish with your website, the next step is finding the best way to accomplish this task. Whether you do it yourself or hire a guru for the job there will be specific tools (software and hardware) used in the design. It will be crucial to choose a host that can handle these “tools” or a lot of money will be thrown out the window.

## *The Importance of Good Planning!*

Failing to Plan is Planning to Fail (I never get sick of that line)

This book will guide you through a handful of choices and decisions, but it never hurts to hire a consultant if you are still uncertain. Getting a website off the ground is easy to do wrong, but can be very difficult to do properly. A mistake in the early going can cost you big dollars later down the road.

In chapter four we discuss Domain Names. I have seen so many sites fail due to poor name choices.

From a hosting standpoint, a lot of money can be saved by only looking for the features you need, but make sure the capability is there to upgrade at a later time. Transfers can be costly and result in downtime which is never good for business.

## *Do it yourself? Or Hire a Guru?*

Some will use this book to guide them through setting up a site all on their own. This is fine if you are certain you have the design skills and the technical knowledge to do so.

You must wear many hats to put a site online:

Site Planner

Site Designer

Graphics Designer

Site Administrator

Hosting administrator

Maintenance planner and implementer

Just to name a few!

If you are capable and have the confidence, then go for it! There is enough in this book to guide you through the areas you lack the knowledge, or just need a little push to get over the hill.

For the majority though, this is just too much work. But don't stop reading just because you decide to hire a guru for the job. Use this book to arm yourself with enough knowledge that when you do talk to the guru's you will understand what they are saying.

Not that guru's are bad people (that would be putting myself in my place), but wouldn't it be nice to have the confidence that someone isn't taking you for a ride!

Armed with the knowledge you gain from this book, you will be able to make educated decisions and choices for your business. You'll be able to express your concerns clearly to a designer and you may even be able to gain the confidence to maintain the email structure of your web server. (a valuable asset to any business)



# *Web Site Structures*

---

Web sites can come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Just because you feel everyone is using online shopping carts does not mean you should necessarily do this yourself.

It is important to create a site that fits your business – not to try to fit your business to the web site.

In this section we will try to explain 4 basic site structures. This may sound a little simple, and it is. The goal is simply for you to determine the best direction for your business.

**In this section ...**

- **Should my business have a website?**
- **Email and contact web sites**
- **Basic product and information sites**
- **Advanced sites including interactivity**
- **E-Commerce sites**

## *Should my business have a website?*

**YES!** It is that simple. There is no other possible answer to this question. Of course every business is not alike, and although some have full blown E-Commerce (selling product online), others will be equally successful but putting up a simple “contact style” web site.

Here are three quick examples:

Harry owns a “**Computer Service**” company, Jack owns a “**Consulting Firm**” and Jane owns a “**Record Store**” (or should I say “CD Store”) There I go, dating myself again!

**Computer Service:** This is a service industry without any hard products to sell. Obviously E-Commerce would be a waste of money and resources. But maybe Harry gets 10 phone calls a day asking for the SAME MUNDANE answers. Couldn't he use the site to provide those everyday answers (in the form of a Q&A) and direct people who phone to the site? This could save Harry many hours a week that he could surely enjoy expanding a client list, or playing golf.

**Consulting:** I doubt Jack would be able to sell any products on the internet, so that would rule out E-Commerce. He likely wouldn't be too quick to give free information on the internet, since that is how he makes his living. So what good will a website be to Jack? CONTACT! Jack could post a light description of what he specialized in, and encourage people to contact him via the phone, fax or email. This is a simple case of where a good email system, and a one page site will help the business.

**Record Store:** Here is a perfect industry for taking FULL ADVANTAGE of what the internet has to offer. Jane could have a complete database of her entire inventory, sell products online, provide samples of the products, run promotions, etc... The sky is the limit (or the budget is the limit) with this type of business.

## *Email and Contact Websites*

This is the most basic of all services. Most business would require more features, but some thrive off a site like this. Even for a business that does not have a budget for a website, this should be considered.

What's Included?

- A good email system. Nothing beats having an email address similar to “you@yourcompany.com” and the ability to allow your employees the same luxury. (Well, it was once a luxury, now it is pretty much expected)
- A simple, one or two page website that provides a general information page (home page) and a great contact page.

A site like this provides a general description of your business in a professional looking page. Without providing too much detail, it encourages the visitor to contact you for further information. The contact page should include phone, fax, email, address, etc...

## *Basic Product and Information Sites*

This is a very popular site for small business owners. Cost is kept to a minimum, but enough information is provided on the site to keep a visitor interested.

What's included?

- Complete email system
- A three to 10 page site which details information about the business, products and services offered.
- Also included is the all important contact page.

This type of a website can provide a lot of information to the visitor, without getting into the complexity of an interactive site or E-Commerce. It is common to provide online catalogues and/or prices lists, product and service descriptions, monthly flyers etc...

## *Interactive Websites*

Interactive websites are used to get the visitor involved. This is usually done with animation, questionnaires, online forms, site registration, newsletter subscriptions, etc...

What's Included?

- Everything covered up to this point from the other two websites.
- Usually spiced up with animation such as “Flash”
- Anything that involves the customer and collects information

An interactive website can be more exciting for a visitor and may entice them to visit more frequently. You may offer them a chance to subscribe to a newsletter. Once they supply their email address you can immediately start to send them monthly specials or important information. This in turn may encourage them to visit again and the cycle continues.

## *E-Commerce Sites*

The ultimate of Interactive sites is the E-Commerce site. You interact with the customer by providing them with product information while collecting orders and generating sales in return. Every one is a winner.

E-Commerce sites include virtually everything already discussed plus the addition of a shopping cart. Usually there is an online inventory database, which interacts with the shopping cart. These feature cost money, so you should be solidly prepared before venturing into this class of a website.

E-Commerce sites also require a “Digital Certificate” from Thawte or Verisign and a host that can handle SSL. This is beyond the scope of this book but there is plenty information available on the internet regarding this two subjects.



# *Website Design(ers)*

---

By now you may have an understanding of the type of site you want and what you want to accomplish with this site.

Now it's time to build it. This is where you will likely want to hire a professional, at least to take care of the theme of the site. Website design should not be taken lightly, as a poor design is a sure way to lose potential customers and even existing ones. If you "go it alone" make sure you at least get some family, friends and even employees critique it before it goes live. (This is a good plan, even if you do hire a guru for the job)

**In this section ...**

- **Site Data (It is your job, not the designer)**
- **Hiring a professional or doing it yourself**
- **Timelines and payments**
- **The tools of the trade(s)**
- **Basic design notes**
- **Advanced design notes (and scripting languages)**
- **Site Maintenance (or Okay, it's up. Now what?)**

## *Site Content – (It is your job, not the designers)*

Before we dive into the design of the site, I must make one very important comment. The content of your site can only be provided by you (or someone you trust in your business). Every word you want on your site must be prepared in great detail. The designer can only design the “eye candy” graphics, buttons, colours, etc... but he cannot create information about your business. (do you really want him to)

Not only is this important in the beginning stage of site design, but it is equally as important when it comes to keeping the site up-to-date.

I can't tell you how many times I get a call from a client saying, “Why isn't there anything new on my site?”.

My answer is always the same.

“I couldn't think of anything to write about your business”

## *Hiring a Professional or Doing it yourself?*

Although we have already touched on this subject earlier in the book, this is one area I strongly recommend you get somebody to do the job. Here's why:

Chances are if you are technically inclined and can learn the software to do a good job, you likely won't have any design skills.

If you are a great designer, you probably can't figure out how to open an email. So kiss the web developing software goodbye.

If you are good at both, you probably can't afford to take the necessary time away from your business to do the job.

A good designer will prepare the website in it's barest form. Usually this is called a “template”. From this stage you can either insert the site data yourself, or provide the designer with the site data so he/she can insert it for you.

(I make it sound easy by saying “insert”, but it can be difficult. Unless you know you can take over at this stage, leave it to the professionals)

## *Timelines and Payments*

If you are in the position of doing all the work yourself then you can skip this area. But if you have to hire outside help, this is a must read!

### **Determine the work that needs to be done.**

(is the designer doing a site template, or both the site template and content)

**Agree on a cost!** It may be a wise idea to get the cost on a template then ask how much he/she will charge per page of content.

**Make sure all “extra” costs are listed.** It is quite common for a designer to quote something like this:

Site Template - \$425.00 (+ - 15%)  
 Content insertion - \$12.50 per page  
 Advanced content insertion - \$18.00 per page  
 Scripting - \$75.00 per hour

Note how everything looks pretty solid with the price, except the scripting. This is normal. I will cover site scripting a little later in this chapter. As for the (+ - 15%) on the site template, this simply means the price is allowed to fluctuate 15% in either direction. You can always count on this going in his direction. But it is a fair statement for this industry.

Set strict timelines for delivery and payments. A designer will always want a deposit therefore you should demand a first draft within 2 weeks time. Final product should not exceed 4 weeks (depending of course on the size and complexity) and he should never be paid the balance until delivery has occurred.



On large projects, it is convenient to set timelines not later than every two weeks, and reward those timelines with partial payments. (like giving the dog a bone for a trick)



If the designer is also entering the content, he will want you to meet deadlines in regards to content delivery. If you cannot deliver him the content, he can't complete the job. This can cause huge problems!

## *The tools of the trade*

There was once a day when websites were written with “notepad”, the cheesy little Windows text editor. To this day many die hard web designers will use note pad (and swear by it) but I tend to think those days are long behind us. So what tools are required for creating a website?

**Macromedia Dreamweaver** – My personal favorite, this is available for both the Mac and the PC.

**Allaire Home Site** – Usually this is bundled with Dreamweaver for the PC. This handles scripting really well, as well as websites.

**Adobe Go Live** – I’ve never tried this program, but I do know some colleagues that like it a lot. This too is available for both the PC and the MAC.

**Microsoft FrontPage** – The ugly duckling that gets little respect in the industry. Front Page is fine, and if you have an MS Office suite on your computer, you may have it already.

The above programs are only a few of what is available. They range in price from \$100.00 or so for the stand alone version of Home Site to \$500.00 for Dreamweaver.



If you use a designer and plan on doing some updating yourself it is good to know what the designer is using. If you already have FrontPage and the designer has the capability to use it, **WHY NOT!** It will save you from buying another piece of software when it isn’t necessary.

Here is a list of some other popular software used in different aspects of website design. You may want to ask your designer what he/she uses so you can get a little more acquainted with the software.

**Graphics:** Adobe PhotoShop, Paint Shop Pro, Macromedia Fireworks, Freehand and Illustrator etc...

**Multimedia:** Macromedia Flash, Director (Shockwave), Swish, Real Audio, QuickTime Pro, Windows Media Encoder, etc...

## *Basic Design Notes:*

It is my practice (and I do believe it to be the best practice) that you always design a website that will be fast and easy to use with a dial up modem. Less than 30% of the world uses a high speed internet connection; therefore over 70% are still on dial up.

If you are using a designer, ask him to prep the template for use on a 33.6 modem. If he fights, raise the bar to a 56k but don't let him push you any further. The opening page (and even any subsequent pages) should download in less than 10 seconds with a 56k modem.

If you are doing the work yourself, any of the major design software will have a feature that allows you to track approximate download speeds. To receive better speeds, the key is optimizing your graphics.

Save photos as JPEG images with about a 50% compression ratio. For Logo's and Line Art, save them as GIF images.

(Optimizing graphics is a book in itself, these are simply starting guidelines)

Another rule I tend to practice is the art of EASY NAVIGATION. I always like the user to be "1 click" away from any major section of the site, and only "2 clicks" away from where they want to be. Ask you designer about that.

## *Scripting Languages (advanced design)*

On occasion you will hear the term "web application". A web application is simply a program that does a certain task on a website. A counter for instance is an example of a very small web application while a "shopping cart" is an example of a larger application.

## *Scripting Languages (continued)*

If your website is going to have advanced features including databases, E-Commerce, or even just a guestbook then you will need to use a scripting language. There are three leading languages to choose from (and many more) and your needs will effect your choice of which one to use. The choice you make for a server will also depend on the scripting language chosen.

**JavaScript:** JS is best used for simple tasks like image rollovers, basic authentication, timeline's etc... JS is the backbone of what is referred to as "DHTML" or Dynamic HTML.

**VBScript:** Similar to JavaScript, this is a lesser used language adopted by the folks at Microsoft. It is however, used extensively in ASP programming which is coming up.

**PHP:** This is one of my personal favorites. It is a reasonably easy language to learn, and it is FAST. Primarily this is "tied at the hip" with a MySQL database but it can certainly stand on its own. Best of all, most servers support this language (UNIX, NT and Linux) without any additional work on your part. Simply code PHP into an existing page, give it the "PHP" extension and you're off to the races.

**PERL (CGI):** CGI or "Common Gateway Interface" is not a language in itself, although many people refer to it as such. The common language used for CGI is PERL. This is a powerful language which unlike PHP, runs separate from your web page files (You do not code Perl into a web page file). It is more difficult to learn than PHP, it is generally slower than PHP, and it isn't as good at connecting to MySQL databases as PHP. BUT, it is very solid when written properly and you can write VERY LARGE web applications with it.

## *Scripting Languages (continued)*

**ASP:** ASP is similar to PHP and PERL but is primarily served using an NT Server. The nice thing about ASP is that it is a Microsoft product and therefore if everything you do is Microsoft, ASP should be relatively easy to pick up. The backbone of ASP is VBScript (not unlike CGI's backbone is PERL). VBScript is available in any MS Office product so resources are plentiful. The problem with ASP? It runs on NT servers which are generally more expensive than a Unix/Linux solution, and is arguably slower than CGI or PHP. Lesser know but also very good scripting languages include **Python** and **Cold Fusion**.



Although any scripting language can technically be run on any server, it just isn't practical. For ASP to be run on a Unix/Linux server you must program ASP in a different language. So why bother. Use this chart to figure out the recommended server for each language.

JavaScript and VB Script – These two are server independent.

PHP – Unix/Linux

PERL – Unix/Linux

ASP – NT

Python – Unix/Linux

Cold Fusion – NT

## *Site Maintenance*

Once your site is online, it is usually good practice to update it on occasion. Nothing is worse than going to a site months and even years down the road to find it hasn't changed.

## *Site Maintenance (continued)*

There are three common methods to updating a website.

Have the designer maintain the site with updates you provide him. You do your own updates by using the same (or similar) authoring tool. The designer can insert areas designated as “editable” on the site, which will allow you to make changes by simply logging onto the site, and editing.

The first choice is the easiest route to take, and therefore is the most common. The only problem with this is that site updates are now dependent on the designer. If you need something done immediately, and the designer isn’t available then you are out of luck. Keep in mind; this can also cost a lot of money in the long run. You could be looking at \$50.00 min for each update.

Number two is my favorite whenever possible. If you had a designer do the template and you added the content then you are already prepared to do all the updates. Just use your authoring software to make any changes you want. If the designer did all the work (design, content, etc...) then you will have to purchase the authoring software then learn how to use it before updates can be done.



The biggest downside to this approach is that you simply will have too much power at your fingertips. Not only will you be able to edit the content, but also the design and the functionality. One mistake and the designer may have to be called to bail you out.

The third option is really the best of both worlds. The designer can designate as little as one word, or as much as a whole page as editable. You would enter the website through a private (usually password protected) area in which you can make changes to these areas. Of course there is a downside to this. To create these areas, the designer must use some scripting languages which will cost extra, and your changes are immediate, without verification. If you put up a wrong price for instance, it’s there for the world to see. Not to mention spelling mistakes.

# *Domain Name Registration*

---

Everybody spends so much time dedicated to preparing a website that this stage is often overlooked. Think about it, how many hours (days or even weeks) did you put into coming up with a business name? This is no different. The name you choose, and the method you use to register the name will have a great impact on the success of your website and the ability to control it.

I would recommend that even a seasoned veteran of this business overlook this section. I cannot stress enough, how important it is to do it right!

**In this section ...**

- **Why do I need a Name**
- **Choosing a TLD**
- **Choosing a name**
- **How to check for name availability**
- **How to register a name**
- **How much should the name cost**
- **Important, very important facts about name registration (Read this area, 5 or 10 times)**

## *Why do I need a name?*

This is a common question I get asked when I am helping a client prepare a website. First you must understand how the internet works.

A name works like an address on the internet. Every website has an address. These addresses are really numbers in the form of 111.112.113.114 (this is an obvious fictitious number). A name points to a specific address. This is like putting a big NAME on a building. A name is much easier to remember than a number.

Now, WHY do you need a name? You can't have a dedicated website without it.

What is more professional?

www.yourcompanyname.com or www.shaw.ca/~yourcompanyname

How about email addresses?

you@yourcompany.com or you@hotmail.com

As you can see, **a name provides you with credibility.**

## *Choosing a "TLD" (top level domain)*

A "TLD" appears as the final part of a website name. ".com" is the most common "TLD" used but there are many others. Most people want a ".com" because it is the first one people try when searching for a site, but you shouldn't limit yourself to this approach. If the business is Canadian then why not look for ".ca". If you are purely provincial then try a ".mb.ca or .sk.ca".

Another approach is from the marketing side. Maybe you have a fishing outlet. Which name would you want?

**fishing.com** or **fishing.net**

(I don't know about you, but fishing net sounds pretty good. Don't try to get these examples though, there gone)

Common "TLD's" include, .com; .net, .org, .info, .biz, .ca. There are many others, but some must be registered through other countries, which can cause trouble.

## *Choosing a Name*

Choosing a name is very important. A name can have up to 256 alphanumeric characters plus the hyphen. So where do you start?

The common choice is to try and get your company name as a website name. This can be difficult since the internet is global, and there is a good chance that someone has already registered the name.

Let's try a case example: Company Name **“First Choice Designs”**

You would tend to start with the obvious and move backward:

firstchoicedesign.com  
 firstchoice.com  
 fcd.com  
 fcdesign.com  
 fcd-citynamehere.com  
 first-choice-design.com

The goal is to find a name that is easy to remember, and easy to market. Even though I use “.com” as a default, you can replace that with any “TLD” you wish.



Avoid using purposely misspelled words unless it is the exact way your company uses it. It will only be confusing and hard to remember.

The other approach to choosing a name is by using a catchy slogan or phrase that is associated with your business. In the case example above, a catchy slogan may be.

i-design.com  
 yourfirstchoice.com  
 designit.com

Yeah, I know those aren't very good, but you get the idea.

## *Choosing a Name (continued)*

I encountered a real life case example to share with you on this. I prepared a site for a company called CMA Entertainment. They were a booking agent for all different styles of entertainers from musicians to jugglers (and everything in between). The owner wanted to go with his “everyday slogan” to use as the website name. CMA Entertainment is still the business name, but the site would be its own entity. He told me the name and I laughed! NO WAY WILL THAT BE AVAILABLE! Guess what? I was WRONG!

He has the greatest domain name anyone in that business could possibly have.

bookmyact.com

## *Checking for name availability*

So how do you check to see if a name is available?

For the most common TLD’s (.com, .net, .org, .biz, .info, .ca) I usually would visit the “Dot Canuck” website (www.dotcanuck.ca). They seem to have a really good tool for checking and if your name is not available it will make suggestions for you. You can also use the “whois” tool to figure out who owns the name. This could be handy if you want to contact them to see if they are willing to sell.

Value added – they have a location to check for expired “.ca” names that are not on the market yet.

## *How and Where do I register a name?*

The most common site for name registration is Network Solutions (Verisign). I don’t like them and they are generally more expensive than most others, but they were the first, and still remain the largest company. Note that you cannot register a Canadian “TLD” with them.

[www.netsol.com](http://www.netsol.com)

## *How and Where do I register a name? (continued)*

I would recommend Dot Canuck for name registration. Most of the popular “TLD’s” are available through their site, and they deal in Canadian dollars (Isn’t that wonderful). They also have a very good record management system, unlike Network Solutions.

[www.dotcanuck.ca](http://www.dotcanuck.ca)

## *How much should a name cost?*

In the beginning the price for a standard name was \$35.00 USD. This has changed significantly over the past few years even though Network Solutions still tries to get that much. The Dot Canuck website has an extensive up-to-date price located at:

[www.dotcanuck.com/en/pricelist.php](http://www.dotcanuck.com/en/pricelist.php)

You should always receive a price break if you reserve the name for multiple years, and sometimes you will get a pricing break if you buy more than one name at a time.

Every registrar is allowed to set there own prices. Check around for a good price, but beware. Rock bottom prices may come with a surprise or two.

## *Important Facts*



- 1: If you register a name through a legitimate registrar, you are guaranteed to retain the ownership of the name.
- 2: Keep all data given to you during the registration. You will be supplied with “passwords, usernames, URL’s, etc... **KEEP IT ALL** or you could lose control of the name.

The above data I am talking about will allow you (or someone you hire) to redirect the name to the appropriate server locations. You will also need this data to renew the name or transfer it in the event you are unhappy with the service you are receiving.

## *Important Facts (continued)*

There are four important sections in filling out a Domain Name Registration.

**Owner** – This is the registered owner of the name. Usually YOU!

**Billing Contact** – This is the person responsible for paying for the registration. Usually YOU!

**Administrative Contact** – This is the name of the person or company, authorized to make changes to the registration. This authorization is usually given to someone who understands the technical side of this stage. If you know what DNS settings are, then go ahead and list yourself. If you don't, you better give control to someone who does. Usually a designer can take care of this change. Until you have someone to “authorize” simply make yourself the Administrative Contact.

**Technical Contact** – This is the name of the person or company responsible for hosting your website (next section). If you do not have a technical contact at the point of registration, simply use the “Parking Feature” which means the registrar will be listed as the technical contact until you find a host.

Any of these can be changed by logging into your account and entering the new information. The only one that cannot be changed this way is the ownership, which must be properly transferred.

Renew your name early. Usually you will get a renewal form 2 months before the expiry date. DO IT! If you forget, you could lose the name for good.

If you get a good name, and you can afford it, buy all the main “TLD’s” available. You can usually point all of the names to one location and you prevent the possibility of another business getting traffic because they have the “.net” version of your “.com” name. It can get really tricky if they mean to do you harm.

Check out [www.one2host.com](http://www.one2host.com) and [www.one2host.net](http://www.one2host.net) for an example of this. (note: at the time of this writing these links were active

# *Hosting your website*

---

Okay, now you have a site design, and you have a name right? Next step is to have somewhere to put this site.

Just like the name registration, this stage is often overlooked or not given the attention it needs. Without a hosting company you cannot use your newly purchased domain name.

Having a DSL or Cable connection and a server in the office is not the answer. You really do need an outside company to do this job. The nice part is, once you sign up for hosting you gain control of the server (actually you gain control of a small portion of the server, but I won't get into that now). The main advantage here is that you can usually add and delete email accounts at will (up to the limit number).

## **In this section ...**

- **Why do I need a host**
- **NT, UNIX or LINUX**
- **Site Features**
- **Up Time / Bandwidth**
- **How much should this cost**
- **Extra Features**

## *Why do I need a Host?*

If you have a domain name, you have thrown out \$35.00 if you don't get a host. Simply put, you cannot point a domain name to a "free hosting service" or your "ISP" site space.

Remember the little ISP discussion we had earlier. That's the company you connect to the internet with. Usually they give you free web space with that connection (about 10 Meg). Don't even bother trying to do business with this service. In most cases your ISP will not allow you to do business (earn money) from this space and you won't have any of the advanced features available to do business.

The same holds true for all the "FREE HOSTS" you see on the internet. Don't bother! It's a waste of time. The free hosts almost always force advertising on your visitors (pop up banners), you don't get email, and the feature set is very limited. Not to mention the name of your website will not be a credible one: ([www.geocities.com/~sunset/yourname](http://www.geocities.com/~sunset/yourname)) YUCK!

Just spend a little money and get a real host. It's worth every single penny, even if you just use Email.

## *NT, UNIX, or Linux*

For the most part, websites serve just as well on all three servers. But each style of server has its specialties. This goes back to the "Scripting Languages" we discussed earlier. You'll want to make sure that all the hard work a designer goes through in producing a shopping cart is going to WORK on the server you choose.

This is not that complicated. You'll either already know which server is needed because you are the designer, or you ask the designer what they will require for the scripts to work. If they say "NT", then find an NT server. If they say everything is CGI, go for a UNIX/Linux server.

NOTE: Unix and Linux function pretty much the same. Treat them as the same unit when looking at servers.

## *Features (What to look for)*

Here is a list of core features you should look for in a host.

**Space** – Make sure you get enough space to hold your website, and to allow growth. A 10 page site will fit comfortably on 10 Meg with room to grow. A 20 page site needs about 15meg, and a 50 page site could use about 25 Meg. Video and audio will consume more space as will a database/shopping cart. Talk to the designer to determine the needs.

**Email Accounts** – How many people work in your business? You’ll want 1.5 times that amount of email accounts, with a minimum of 3.

Just You – 3 email accounts

2 + you – 5 email accounts

10 + you – 15 email accounts

**Scripting Language Support** – Here we go again. Make sure the scripting language used in design is supported.

**Download Limit** – The more the better. This number should be at least 25X larger than the space required.

## *Uptime/Bandwidth (the misunderstood ones)*

**UPTIME** – This is a number most companies will use in their advertising. Take it with a grain of salt. If the company says it has an uptime of 99% then what it means is the site will be available to the public 99 minutes out of 100. Or maybe they are saying 99 days out of 100. Does this mean after 99 days they are going to drop the site for 1 day? NO!

I hate this term because there is no way to accurately tell somebody how long their site will be “live” to the public. Face it. THINGS CAN GO WRONG! If there is a lightning storm that takes out the T3 line at the server station then your site will be down for a few hours.

## *Uptime/Bandwidth (continued)*

These numbers are all fudged. Ignore them! All company's keep your site online as best they can by using redundant connections and RAID.

**Bandwidth** – Although it is important to know your download limit, the term bandwidth actually means something totally different. Most company's will say you get 2 gig of downloads per month (this is good by the way) but sometimes you will see the phrase “unlimited bandwidth”. This is not the same meaning. They don't mean you can serve millions of gigs every month, it means they don't restrict the size of the pipe. Confused? Don't worry about it, just make sure you are allowed to “download” at least 25X the amount of your space.

## *How much should a hosting cost?*

Of course it depends upon your space and extra features but there is more to it than that. SERVICE! This is where the real dollar amount is reflected.

If you know how to maintain a site and use the control panels supplied by a company then you may be able to trust a “budget” hosting company. If you have problems, you can figure it out yourself. But if you want to call for support, budget companies will not allow that. You'll have to submit by email and WAIT!

Budget hosting is available for as little as \$100.00 USD per year for 200 Meg of space and 50 emails. Company's that thrive on great service may charge \$300.00 per year for 50 Meg and 5 emails. I have tried many different services over the years so I have included a list of these, with a rating. This is meant as reference only. I am not responsible for any choices you make.

Affinity – [www.affinity.com](http://www.affinity.com) – 7/10

Hostsave – [www.hostsave.com](http://www.hostsave.com) – 3/10 (budget Linux)

Winsave – [www.winsave.com](http://www.winsave.com) – 4/10 (budget NT service)

One2Host – [www.one2host.com](http://www.one2host.com) – 5/10 (budget Linux)

Interland – [www.interland.com](http://www.interland.com) – 8/10

Coda Host – [www.codamedia.com](http://www.codamedia.com) – 10/10

(Of course, I'm just a little biased)

## *Extras features and add-ons*

Beyond the core features of a site you should also look at these extra features. Some will be free, some will cost extra, but every hosting company will be different. Shop around.

**FTP Access** – Although all hosts will supply you with FTP access to upload your site, you may want FTP access to store files in.

**FrontPage Extensions** – If your site is authored in FrontPage, it would be wise to have the extensions installed. These are usually supplied at no charge.

**DATABASE Connections** – For Unix/Linux this will likely be MySQL, and NT will likely be Access.

**SSL** – This will be required if you want to accept credit card payments online. Usually you don't have to add it immediately, but if you think you'll want to accept credit cards, make sure it's available

**SSI** – Server Side Includes may be required for your site. (Your designer will know this). Most sites offer this at no charge.

**Control Panel** – This is a very important feature. The easier the control panel is to use, the easier it will be to maintain the backend of the website. (Email accounts, ftp, database, etc...)

**Stats** – Stats are nicer to have than counters, but sometimes log information will interfere with your space. Approach this one cautiously.



# *Promoting your Website*

---

You've built the website, and placed it on a host. Where's the traffic? Where are the sales?

## **What a waste of money!**

Unfortunately this is the attitude many business owners have. This is not unlike buying a fax machine, getting a separate number for that fax machine, then wondering why no one is sending you a fax. **Do the customers know the fax number?**

A website in itself will not improve business. You must get people to visit the website. Promote it.

## **In this section ...**

- **Traditional methods of promotion**
- **Search Engines**
- **Banner Ads (link exchange)**
- **Banner Ads (purchased)**
- **Self Site Promotion**

## *Traditional Methods of Promotion (the best way)*

The best and most effective way of promoting your website is through the traditional methods.

Business Cards  
Stationary  
Newspaper Ads  
Radio  
TV

Obviously I don't mean you should take out a TV or radio ad to tell people you have a website. Just make sure the website is mentioned in the ad. If you are running a promotion in the newspaper, put your website in the ad. The name should be on any print that goes out to customer, including invoices, warranty cards, statements, flyers, etc...

## *Search Engines*

This is a necessary but difficult way to promote your site. Everybody in the world uses search engines to find what they are looking for, but only if they don't know how to find it to begin with. Getting your site listed on a search engine is a lot of work, but at least the basics should be done.

**META TAGS:** In the head of every document is a place for Meta Tags. There are two tags used to get on some (but not all) search engines.

“Description” – Used to provide a description of your site or business

“Keywords” – List the key words you think people will use in there search for your product of service.

Even more important than the Meta tags is a well laid out site with clear wording. Most search engines will review the text of your site and index it with those words.

Submitting your site to a search engine can be done by visiting the “search” you want to submit to and finding the “add link” or “add url” button. Every site is different so I cannot walk you through the procedure here.

## *Search Engines (continued)*

The other method is to pay for a service like “submit-it”  
[www.submitit.com](http://www.submitit.com)

Here you would enter all of your information once, and it will submit to many different engines on your behalf.

It should be noted that most of these engines are going to a “Payment Service”. Yahoo for instance cost \$299US to submit your site. Most are still free, but the highest ranking sites usually pay for that service.

## *Banner Ads (link exchange)*

It would be wise to create a banner for your company (or have a designer do it). These can be used in two different ways to promote your site.

The first is to join a link exchange program in which you will submit your banner and place a banner spot on one of your pages. For every banner that is advertised on your site, your banner will appear on someone else’s.

## *Banner Ads (purchased)*

With a banner already created, you can purchase spots on others websites. Of course, buying a banner at Yahoo is a lot more money than buying a spot at “[joes\\_private\\_engineering.com](http://joes_private_engineering.com)” but you can use this tool similar to that of radio advertising. Find the sites that could lead people to your business and see if they’ll sell you advertising.

## *Self Site Promotion*

What in the world is site self promotion? Well, the key is to get people to return to the site once they have been there once. By enticing them to come back you've retained contact with a customer or potential customer.

Here are some popular self promotions to offer your visitors.

- Subscribe to a newsletter
- Ask them to fill out a survey
- Enter a contest (must be a real contest)
- Encourage site feedback
- Offer printable store coupons

There is no limit to what you can do. If you keep the visitor returning to your site, you will gain a customer.

## 10 Step Checklist

---

1. **Assess your own skills** – Be honest with yourself on what you are and are not capable of.
2. Determine what **type of website** you need and what type of website you want in within a year. Make sure you plan for the latter.  
(a consultant may be required)
3. **Hire a designer** - Treat this just as though you are hiring a staff member. Interview and speak with more than one.  
(If you will be doing the work yourself. **Skip to 5**)
4. **Delivery and Payment** – Make sure all the details are in place between you and the designer. Payment, delivery schedules, and special requirements for hosting (scripting languages) etc...
5. **Design the Site** – Even if you have a designer, you will be providing much of the content. This is not that time to take a nap.

**(The next stages can actually be done during site construction)**

6. **Choose a Domain Name** – Take your time and make a choice that you are comfortable with. Make sure you check the availability of the names during this stage.
7. **Register a Domain Name** – Once you've chosen a name that is available and you like, don't forget to register it.
8. **Research a Hosting Company** – Now is the time to find a host you will be comfortable with. Make sure it has the feature set you will require as it can be problematic to transfer sites.
9. **Register with the Hosting Company** – Once you've found a host you are comfortable with, sign up.
10. **Promote your site** – Now is the time to register with the search engines and link exchanges. On the traditional front, re-print all of your business cards, letter head, invoices and statements to include the web site and email address.