

Checklist - For Establishing a Website

The Internet has become an important sales and service distribution channel. It is also an incredible communication tool. Information technologies are expanding at an astonishing rate, with everyone going online, Establishing and maintaining a Website for your company can be vital to the future success of your business.

I. **Hosting**

Hosting is where you put your website and all the Web pages. So the first thing you'll want to do is find a Web hosting provider. There are several types of Web hosting options you can choose: from:

- Standard Web hosting;
- Dedicated, Virtual, and Shared Hosting; and
- Co-location.

Most people gravitate to free Web hosting without too much thought, but there can be drawbacks to free hosting. You don't always get as much space, you might be required to run their ads on your site, or there may be bandwidth limits. Be sure to read all the fine print before you put your website on a free Web host

II. **Choose a Domain Name.**

You don't technically need a domain name to put up a website. You can put up a site on free hosting or even paid hosting plans without a domain name. However, it would be unwise for a business not to have a domain name. A domain name provides extra branding for your site and makes it easier for people to remember the URL

You should choose a name that represents your product and/or services and is easy to remember. Before you decide on a name, a full trademark search should be done. On its Website, www.uspto.gov, the U.S Patent and Trademark Office has a free search tool for making limited searches of the federal register of trademarks. You can then search Network Solutions Website, www.verio.gov or www.gobiqmedia.com to determine whether your desired URL is available. You will be able to buy the desired domain names directly online on those sites.

III. **Plan Your Website:**

Once you've gotten a domain and decided on your URL, (i.e., your website address) you can start planning your site. You need to decide:

1. **Type of site** -- Most websites are either news/information, product, or reference sites. As such they each have a slightly different focus.
2. **Navigation** -- The navigation affects the information architecture of your site.
3. **Content** -- Content is the actual pages you'll be building.

IV. **Design Your Website**

Think about what you want to accomplish with your site. You can obtain ideas for your site by looking at the Websites of your competitors. You can then design your site yourself or hire a Web design service or Internet consultant to design the site for you.

V. **Register Your Site with Different Search Engines**

You can hire professional (search engine positioning) or do it yourself by registering to the major search engines like Yahoo!, Google, MSN, Alta Vista, HotBot, AOL, etc.

VI. Inform Others about Your Site

The easiest way to promote your website is through search engine optimization engines. This can be very difficult, but it is inexpensive and can result in good results if you work at it. You build your Web content so that it ranks well in search

Other ways to promote your site include: word of mouth, email, and advertising. You should include your URL on all professional correspondence and whenever it makes sense in personal messages. Also include it on your letterhead, business cards, in all ads, and in the Yellow Pages.

VII. Track the Visits to Your Site

Log data software is available to record the number of hits your site receives. In addition, some ISP's provide access logs. You can ask visitors to your site to complete a questionnaire or to provide input as to your product or services.

VIII. Keep Your Site Current

No one likes outdated information. Make sure your site is updated.