



There's a Better Way to Do Business on the Internet!

Are you a business owner who can't wait to take advantage of the Internet?

This free guide offers some real-world website advice for small to medium-sized business owners. Inside we'll reveal:

How to launch a great website at an affordable price!

The best way to promote your business website!

The benefits of owning an online business!

The truths and myths about search engines!

How to choose a great website name!

Why you shouldn't create your own website!

...and much more!

The Quick Guide to Marketing Your Business on the Internet

Introduction to Hosting Services

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Chapter 5—Introduction to Hosting Services

Even if you own the best computer on the market, with the fastest Internet connection, it doesn't come close to the important services an Internet Service Provider offers including:

♦ Bandwidth

If you think of an ISP as an "Internet water works" it's not too hard to understand how its pipes can handle far more flow than your residential plumbing. It's this bandwidth, the total amount of data flowing at any moment, that allows any number of visitors to enjoy your website simultaneously.

♦ Reliability

A typical ISP has multiple computers which "serve" each website to visitors. If one web server isn't available the others instantly pick up the load. This and a variety of other website server features insure your website is available at all times.

♦ Security

A number of security services insure visitors see only what they need to see, that your email is safe and secure, and other potential online threats are stopped in their tracks.

♦ Services

ISPs provide the software and services to enhance your website with online forms, shopping carts, database interactivity, and custom programming.

Understanding Hosting Services

The two most notable services an ISP provides are Internet access, so you can get online; and hosting services, so others already online can view your website.

Though there's little difference between Internet access for a home or business there are several important distinctions between residential and commercial hosting services.

Residential Hosting

One of the first things you do when you purchase Internet access is to choose a username. The username also serves as your email address. For example, if your username is "earlgrey" and your Internet access is provided by Tea.Net, the merging of the two results in your email address: earlgrey@tea.net.

Along with Internet access and an email address a residential Internet access account also includes website storage space, typically five megabytes, which is more than most business websites typically need. An e-commerce website might require more storage space to accommodate a large number of product photos.

But there's a catch. If the Internet account is residential so is the storage space. For example, the WWW address of earlgrey's storage space is `www.tea.net/~earlgrey`, not `www.earlgrey.com` as might exist for a commercial website.

ANATOMY OF A RESIDENTIAL WEB ADDRESS:

```
"http://" + "www" + "." + <domain name> + ".com" + "/" + ~<username>"  
(http://www.gettysburg.com/~abelincoln for example)
```

If you're clever you might decide to purchase a residential access account with a username that describes your business, like "weddingcakes". Although you'll get the username you want in your web address, such as www.aol.com/~weddingcakes there are still at least three problems that can't be easily overcome:

1. A business website should have a business website address—a domain name. The tilde ("~") character is the giveaway of a residential web address. With a residential website address you're promoting your ISP as much as your business.
2. You won't be able to take advantage of the commercial website services an ISP provides such as visitor statistics, online forms, online shopping services, or custom programming. ISPs reserve these services solely for commercial hosting accounts.
3. Many search engines will not list a residential website in their commercial directories.

A tilde ("~") in a web address denotes a personal web page.

Commercial Hosting

A commercial hosting account includes all the features you need to bring your first business website to life such as multiple email addresses using your domain name, additional storage space, and most importantly the ability to promote your website with a commercial domain name.

But, not surprisingly, there's a cost to do business on the Internet. A commercial hosting account typically costs between \$25 and \$35 per month.

Subdomain Hosting

To offer a business style web address without the cost of commercial website hosting, some ISPs offer what is called "subdomain" or "subsite" hosting.

With some technical magic subsite hosting lets the ISP take a residential address like www.coffeenet.com/~darkroast and turn it into www.darkroast.coffeenet.com. This allows you to make a residential web address appear as a business domain address.

The good news with this strategy is that you can avoid domain registration costs and choose the exact name you'd like. The bad news is that a subdomain still has all the same failings as a residential web address and should typically be avoided.

The exception to the rule are websites where the subdomain is closely related to the main domain. For example, Apple promotes its QuickTime product with the subdomain address www.quicktime.apple.com. Although entering this address actually takes you to www.apple.com/quicktime they avoid the confusion and stigma of promoting a web address that might be falsely recognized as a residential web address.

Buying Hosting Services

Though an ISP provides a plethora of services it's neither practical nor necessary for you to attempt to become a hosting/ISP expert to secure quality hosting. The simplest, and best, solution is to secure hosting services through your web designer.

An experienced web designer will typically have business relationships with several ISPs. As part of this symbiotic relationship the ISP will often provide hosting services to the web designer at a bulk discount. In turn web designers provides website hosting services as part of their own services.

The result is the opportunity to secure quality hosting at a discounted price and, perhaps more valuable, the peace of mind that comes from being able to rely on your web designer when a question or technical issue arises.

A web designer who doesn't offer website hosting services is like a car mechanic who doesn't do oil changes.

If you'd like to find website hosting on your own the best advice we can offer is to:

- ♦ **Think locally—often the smaller the ISP the better the service.**
- ♦ **Avoid long-term contracts**
- ♦ **Get referrals. Everyone has a friend with a website. Ask if they like their hosting service.**



PREPRESS

The technique of creating and preparing digital artwork for printing.

