

The Quick Guide to Marketing Your Business on the Internet

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!

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HELP BLURB

Explanations of important terms are scattered throughout the guide.



CHAPTER 1—KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Business owners are having important conversations about a new opportunity to increase business. It often starts with a question like “Should we be doing business on the Internet?” and typically ends with another question like “Yes, but how?”

Well, as the cliché goes, knowledge is power, so we put together this free guide to offer some real-world website advice for small to medium-sized business owners. The no-nonsense information will help demystify the steps to design, publish, and maintain a website so you’re well-prepared to profit from the Internet.

We’ll explain:

- ♦ **How the Internet works and explain the services you’ll need to launch a business website.**
- ♦ **The benefits of owning a website.**
- ♦ **How to interview and hire the right web designer.**
- ♦ **How to choose and secure a quality online identity.**
- ♦ **How to effectively and inexpensively promote your website, both online and offline.**

We’ll also detail:

- ♦ **How a website can both increase your sales and reduce your advertising costs.**
- ♦ **Why you need a website even if you operate a niche business or your customers are local.**
- ♦ **Why online advertising, especially through search engines, isn’t usually the best use of your time and money.**
- ♦ **Why an online store might be far less costly than you think.**
- ♦ **Why hiring a web designer will save you money, time, and grief.**
- ♦ **How the simplest and least expensive websites are often the best.**
- ♦ **Why you don’t need to have any computer experience, or even own a computer, to own a great website.**
- ♦ **Why it takes more than website authoring software to create a quality website.**
- ♦ **Why choosing a good name for your online presence is so important.**

INTERNET

The Internet is a global network that connects commercial, government, research, and academic institutions around the world.

It is actually a collection of thousands of smaller networks, all using a set of common tools, protocols, and conventions to create a vast web of resources and information.

DSL (DIGITAL SUBSCRIBER LINE)

DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) services allow residential clients a high-speed “always-on” Internet connection access without the costs of a dedicated T1 or T3 high-speed line.

Typical DSL connection speeds range from 384K to 1.5M bps. A 56k modem transfers at a maximum of 56,000 bps.

NETWORK

Two or more connected computers.

If the computers are in close proximity, the network is referred to as a LAN, or Local Area Network.

If the computers are spread across a much larger area, the network is referred to as a WAN, or Wide Area Network. A WAN usually consists of computers in different cities, countries, or continents.

CHAPTER 2—A QUICK INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERNET

In the last 25 years computers have become an integral part of our lives. The ability to process and exchange information through digital networks has resulted in new technologies, businesses, and an unprecedented ability to communicate with the world at large.

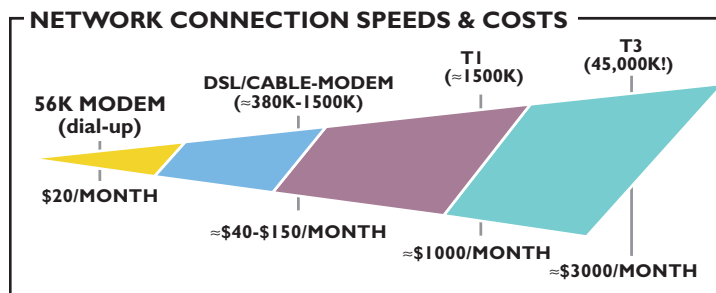
The Internet is one such network. Comprised of numerous smaller networks, the Internet's original framework was developed in the 1970s as part of a military communications project. Later it was adapted for public access.

The Internet is a global network that connects commercial, government, research, and academic institutions around the world.

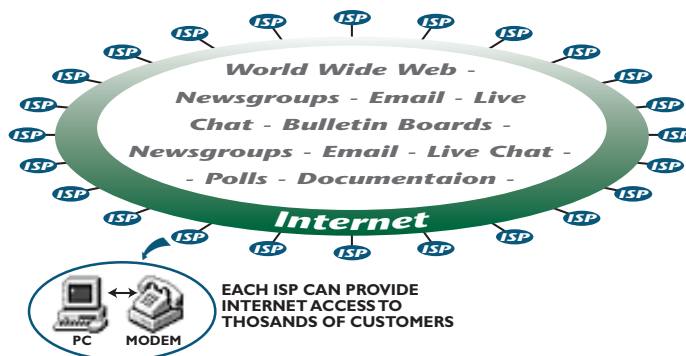
Connecting to the Internet

Like a telephone each computer needs its own identification number, called an IP address (Internet Protocol address), to be able to communicate with other computers on the Internet. And like a local telephone office the thousands of computers in your local area are connected to the Internet through various Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

Often the phone company itself, Verizon for example, will serve as the ISP. But unlike telephones a computer can be connected to the Internet at different speeds.



The most common Internet access account is a Dial-Up connection typically costing around \$20 per month. With Dial-Up access you connect to the Internet through an ordinary phone line and modem. The modem dials a local phone number the ISP provides for Internet access. Faster access, such as through DSL or cable modem, costs between \$40 and \$150 a month depending on the connection speed.



WWW (World Wide Web)

The feature of the Internet which provides information through webpages composed of text, graphics, audio and video (multimedia).

Also called Web, WWW, W3, Triple-Dub, or Three-Dub.

CABLE MODEM

A cable-modem provides high-speed Internet access through a cable television network.

SNAIL MAIL

Slang for postal mail, referring to its speed compared to that of email.

SPAM

Online junk-mail

Many claim the source to be Monty Python's "Spam" sketch in which one character ongoingly complains "I don't like Spam!"

What You Can Do on the Internet

While it seems there's no limit to the variety of activities you can pursue on the Internet: chatting, posting messages, listening to one of thousands of online radio stations, or viewing movie trailers, by far the two most common activities are using electronic mail and viewing websites on the World Wide Web.

Email

Like postal mail, email lets you send and receive messages to specific individuals through an email address like "tigerwoods@golf.com. Once you're connected to the Internet you use email software, such as Microsoft Outlook or Qualcomm's Eudora, to create messages, "attach" documents, and have them delivered to the recipients' e-mailbox specified by their email address. You can always tell an email address by the "at" ("@") character.

ANATOMY OF AN EMAIL ADDRESS:

<username> + "@" + <domain name>
(info@stonerosedesign.com for example)

You can always tell an email address by the "at" ("@") character.

World Wide Web (WWW)

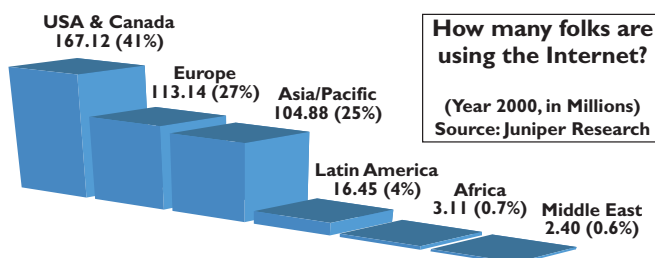
Design fashions and want to show off your fantastic new summer product line? Want to publish a few sample chapters of your latest novel? Want to discuss your obsession with salt and pepper shaker collecting?

The World Wide Web is where you can. The WWW is to the online (Internet) world what desktop publishing is to the offline (print) world—it's where you can publish your company's information, online, through a website as a collection of individual web pages.

ANATOMY OF A WEB ADDRESS:

"http://" + "www" + "." + <domain name>
(www.ebay.com for example)

You can see the incredible popularity of the WWW anywhere you see advertising: newspapers, billboards, business cards, the sides of trucks, anywhere there's a surface available you'll see a "WWW" address.



HTTP/HTTPS

(Hyper Text Transfer Protocol)

The World Wide Web protocol for moving hypertext (HTML) files across the Internet.

Another protocol you'll see in a web address is "FTP" (file transfer protocol) used for transferring (downloading) documents.

HTTPS (or SHTTP) Secure Hypertext Transfer Protocol. If a web address begins with "https://," it is likely a part of a secure site.

ISP (Internet Service Provider)

A company that provides Internet access and hosting services.

Also known as an Internet Access Provider.

FTP (FILE TRANSFER PROTOCOL)

The most common method of moving files between Internet sites. FTP provides security features to limit file access to accessible parties.

CHAPTER 3—WEBSITE BENEFITS

The ever growing number of businesses that have embraced the Internet as a powerful advertising venue speaks for itself. But even so, perhaps many business owners aren't aware of the variety of advantages a website offers.

♦ Make Your Message Accessible

Suppose you'd like to find some new customers. If you place a print advertisement it's likely the only folks to phone are those who have definite interest in securing your services.

But how many others might be swayed if they could learn a little more about you, your company, your products, etc., without having to phone or taking the time to meet you in person? A website provides that opportunity by allowing you to publish the Who, What, Why, Where, and Hows of your business in a powerful and attractive manner.

A website makes it easy for folks to learn more about your business in their own time.

♦ Reduce Publishing Costs

Designing, printing, and delivering marketing materials can be expensive. It's often one of the largest expenses a business can incur.

With a website you can instantly publish that same information: new product announcements, employment opportunities, contact information, job openings, surveys, coupons, investor information, almost anything, without material or delivery costs. Folks can learn about it instantly just by visiting your website.

♦ Reduce Marketing Costs

Buying advertising space, whether it's a newspaper ad, billboard, or radio spot, can be expensive. Adding to the burden are the hours spent trying to figure out the perfect set of words to say everything you want within the constraints of your ad.

A website is an unlimited number of full-page ads that you can change at will!

By advertising your website in addition to your product, you give folks the opportunity to learn far more about your product than you can ever place in an ad.

SUPERIOR HARDWARE!

**Plumbing, Houshold, Auto,
Painting, Cleaning Supplies!**

**Visit us at 5th & Cherry!
CALL 610-555-6325**

BEFORE – This ad offers only two ways to learn about the business, by phone or by visiting the store.

SUPERIOR HARDWARE!

**Plumbing, Houshold, Auto, Painting,
Cleaning Supplies! 610-555-6325**

**Coupons, Specials, and tips at
www.SuperiorHardware.com**

AFTER – This ad offers many more options for the same price. Visitors can learn about products, see what's on sale, find out directions, hours of operation, etc.

♦ **Test and Expand your Marketplace**

Come up with a new advertising campaign and want to try it? Just update your website and tell your customers. Want to see if you can expand your marketing reach? Try placing a few small ads promoting the website in other regions to gauge the interest before you commit to a larger campaign.

♦ **Reduce Communication Costs**

A website can do far more than sell products, it can supply your staff and business partners with pertinent and timely information. Practically any printed matter can be converted to a webpage and distributed by email at far less cost and time than by fax, mail, or courier.

♦ **Increase Sales**

An online store might be a wise and inexpensive investment. You can sell to your existing customers 24/7 and expand your reach to a market that may have been difficult or expensive to reach through traditional advertising. (You'd be amazed how much shopping occurs on the 'Net overnight!)

♦ **Reduce Support Costs While Improving Quality**

How much time does your support staff spend repeatedly answering the same questions by phone? What are the costs to track down and deliver solutions to clients?

A website lets you publish support information with up-to-the-minute accuracy. In fact some companies, software companies in particular, *only* offer support through their website. If the website doesn't offer the answer an online feedback form is provided. This is perhaps the most underrated usage for business websites.

♦ **Enhance Your Image**

Since every website starts as a blank slate the Internet offers the opportunity for a small-business "David" to portray itself as a big-business "Goliath". (Or, for the Goliath to fall flat by having a website that poorly represents its true stature.)

With an online store you can sell and service your clients all day and night!

CHAPTER 4—PUBLISHING YOUR WEBSITE

If you can visualize how a website can open new markets, cut costs, provide better customer support, and pay for itself in a variety of ways, you're in good company—according to Network Solutions (the folks who sell domain names) there are now over 36 million website names registered (22 million are dot-com names).

If you'd like to join them you'll find it can be painless and far less costly than you might think. In fact the whole process can be broken down to perhaps four basic steps. We explored the first step in the previous chapter, *Website Benefits*, and we'll explore the remaining steps in the following chapters.

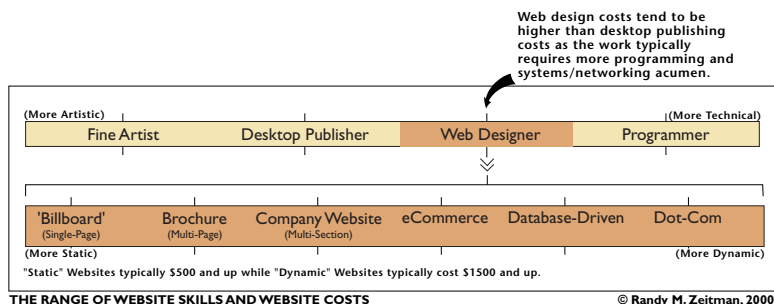
There are over 36 million website names.

1. Clarify Your Goals

Of course the purpose of your website is to generate revenue, but by what means?

- ♦ **By finding new customers?**
- ♦ **By making it easier for existing customers to order?**
- ♦ **To sell online?**
- ♦ **To reduce travel and communication costs by publishing company information online?**
- ♦ **To act as a temporary website while you research what it really should be?**
- ♦ **To look bigger than you really are? To scare your competition?**

All are worthy goals but the time and cost to implement each certainly isn't the same—there's no "one size fits all" website that can address every possible intention. So in addition to thinking about your website goals you'll also benefit from thinking about a budget for your website.



2. Secure Website Hosting Services

Your website needs to be "hosted" by an Internet Service Provider in order for others to be able to view it on the WWW. A commercial hosting account typically includes email addresses and other website development tools to help make your website a powerful marketing tool.

3. Create an Informative and Easy to Use Website

Unless you're a seasoned website designer it's probably best to not create your own website. You'll find yourself spending excessive time and money to create a website that won't powerfully represent the quality of product or service you want to promote.

4. Secure an Online Identity

Your domain name is the the address folks enter into website browser software to view your website. Examples you probably know include Yahoo, eBay, and Amazon. It's easy and inexpensive to buy a domain name. What's not always easy is choosing a *good* domain name.

Even in this infancy of the Internet the domain name you want may not be available.

In the Choosing a Domain Name chapter we'll reveal some of the tricks for choosing a great domain name (and how to avoid choosing a bad one).

BANDWIDTH

The transmission capacity, usually measured in bits per second, of a network connection.

HOST

Any network computer that is a repository for services available to other computers on the network.

BROWSER

An application used to access the world wide web such as Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer.

WEBMASTER

An individual who operates the website, akin to a Station Manager at a television station.

WEB SERVER

Software that provides services used by other computers.

An ISP uses various server software to support mail, WWW, and other features to its clients.

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.



CHAPTER 6—HIRING A WEB DESIGNER

Creating Your Own Website

Unless you're an experienced website designer there are several reasons you shouldn't create your own business website.

♦ Nothing Substitutes for Experience

Just as registering a business name and opening a store doesn't give someone the expertise to run a business, owning a computer with even the best graphics or website authoring software won't make anyone a skilled web designer.

Only years of design experience can give one that "artist's eye" needed to create websites that are easy to use, accessible, and easy to maintain. Anything less simply isn't worthy of your business or your time.

♦ Print Design Isn't Web Design

Even if you may have access to experienced print designers, perhaps even in-house, the skills required to create a website aren't the same as those needed to create print materials.

However you should certainly take advantage of your designers skills by hiring a web designer who can take your existing materials and seamlessly convert them into a strong website.

WEB VS. PRINT DESIGN

Cost	Paper costs, color costs, printing costs, distribution costs, etc.	Though short-term development costs are higher, long-term costs are far less.
Production	Proportional to the number of pages.	Small cost for additional pages.
Layout	Hi-Fidelity; Virtually unlimited control of all elements.	Lo-Fidelity; less control and options.
Typography	A virtually unlimited number of typefaces can be used.	Any typeface can be specified but only a few (Times, Arial, Helvetica) can be guaranteed to be available on more computers.
Tangibility	Paper easier to read than a computer screen.	Extra skill and care is needed to make information easy to find, read, and print.
Maintenance	Reprinting required for the smallest change.	Websites are easily and inexpensively upgraded significantly reducing long-term costs.
Implementation	Desktop publishing and design software. No programming skills required.	Websites authored in HTML script. Advanced features require more advanced scripting and programming.
Distribution	Printing, mailing, and fulfillment costs.	No cost to e-mail web address.
Novelty	None. "Hey I got this great ad in the mail" not often heard.	Lots. "Hey I saw this great website" not an uncommon expression.

PRINT

WEB

♦ Your Time Has Value So Don't Reinvent the Wheel

Buying web training for your designers is certainly one way to create a great website but requires far more time and cost than hiring a web designer.

Rather than wait months for a "first-attempt" website you can hire a web designer and own a profit-generating website in a matter of weeks.

Hiring a Web Designer

"A picture is worth a thousand words." A memorable cliché that best explains why you probably shouldn't make your own website (or brochure, stationery, business cards, or any other promotional materials which represent your business).

As mentioned above, graphic design, the visual arts to be more specific, is a skill developed over the long term. Just as knowing how to type doesn't make someone a copywriter no collection of software and books can substitute for the years of practice necessary to develop savvy design skills.

Owning web design software doesn't make one a competent designer any more than owning a set of tools makes one a competent mechanic.

It's these artistic skills—the sense of shape, color, composition, etc.—that distinguish designers from technicians allowing them to combine elements into a strong visual message that's far more than the sum of the parts.

Unfortunately it's often easy to see when this advice is ignored as evidenced by the following examples of home grown websites. (The website URLs have been omitted to protect the innocent.)



Just a very few of the problems with these sample home grown websites include: A logo composed of flashing garish characters, red text on lime green background—very hard to read, poorly applied “freebie” clip art, visually challenging background pattern, distorted, rainbow and blue colored graphics against a bright red background, and a wedding photograph having no relationship to any feature on the website.

But bad design isn't reserved for novices—there are plenty of poorly designed websites for which web design “pros” were paid a handsome price.

That's why it's so imperative for a business owner to be able to hire a qualified designer at an affordable price. Toward that goal the next two sections detail some of the qualities of a skilled web designer and some useful strategies for evaluating web design firms.

Web Design Skills

If you want a professional website, hire a professional web designer. But before you begin to interview candidates it's important to understand some of the skills that distinguish a qualified web designer.

The best web designers aren't just artists but also demonstrate strong technical and marketing acumen.

To help you identify the right candidate here's a list of noteworthy website skills you'll typically find in a skilled web designer.

PDF

(Portable Document Format)

File format created by Adobe for publishing documents electronically.

The Acrobat Reader software is free from www.Adobe.com

This document is available online as a PDF file.

PERL

Perl is a powerful computer language, especially used for writing CGI scripts which handle input/output actions on Web pages.

One typical example of using Perl is for transferring information from one webpage to another.

COLD FUSION

Website development software that allows webpages to be created on-the-fly from databases.

Similar to Microsoft's Active Server Pages development software.

JAVASCRIPT

A scripting language designed by Netscape to add interactivity to web pages such as image rollovers.

Don't confuse JavaScript with Java. Java is a rich platform-independent programming language invented by Sun Microsystems, much like C++, capable of creating stand-alone applications.

Communication Skills—Seek someone who:

- ♦ **Makes a more than earnest effort to understand your needs. Understands you may not know all the Internet jargon necessary to perfectly explain your needs and ideas. That is, hire a good listener.**
- ♦ **Respects your ideas and intelligence. Just because you may not be a web designer doesn't mean you don't have great ideas.**
- ♦ **Provides clearly written proposals and contracts.**
- ♦ **Details project goals, deadlines, and responsibilities.**
- ♦ **Regularly offers cost-saving alternatives.**
- ♦ **Details their approach to the development process.**

Find a web designer who is a good listener. Just because you may not be a web designer doesn't mean you don't have great ideas.

Artistic Skills—Search out someone who:

- ♦ **Creates visually cohesive, easily expandable websites emphasizing concise copy, seamless navigation, mature layout, and ease of use. Their work should be able to pass "The Print Test": If the site were printed in full color would it be attractive enough to mail as a brochure?**

The best designers are masters of simplicity—they strive to reduce the number of visual elements to increase the visual impact of each.

- ♦ **Creates complementary print pieces such as catalogs, brochures, stationery, business cards, etc., in the course of creating an online presence.**
- ♦ **Converts almost any existing printed materials to a representative web-friendly format.**
- ♦ **Creates quality animated advertising banners.**
- ♦ **Selects appropriate imagery and can incorporate it seamlessly into any style design.**
- ♦ **Has mastery of web color and other image-related skills required to display images with high quality.**

Technical Skills—Hire a web designer who:

- ♦ **Creates and maintains sophisticated e-commerce websites.**

*16% of All websites are e-commerce capable.
(Source: NetFactual.com)*

- ♦ **Implements sophisticated interactive features such as online stores, customer feedback forms, and onsite searching.**
- ♦ **Powerfully enhances websites using scripting and programming languages such as Cold Fusion, JavaScript, SQL,**

CLIP ART

Typically royalty-free images. The term comes from printed catalogs of royalty-free artwork which could be clipped and pasted as needed.



FLASH

Sophisticated frame-based animation software published by Macromedia.

Flash animations are typically small in size making them excellent choices for websites.



Perl, PHP, and Active Server Pages (ASP).

- ♦ Amends and maintains websites authored by other web designers.
- ♦ Finds creative solutions to overcome limitations of software development tools.
- ♦ Enjoys close relationships with Internet Service Providers insuring low-cost, quality hosting services.
- ♦ Creates effective online versions of print catalogs in either HTML or PDF formats.

In real estate it's "location, location, location". In web design it's "experience, experience, experience"!

Advertising Skills—Look for someone who:

- ♦ Creates effective copy for print and website marketing materials.
- ♦ Designs brochures, logos, and other advertising materials.
- ♦ Authors successful advertising slogans, tag lines, and domain names.

A SAMPLING OF MACINTOSH WEB DEVELOPMENT TOOLS



Entrepreneurial Skills—Interview someone who:

- ♦ Shares your business sense.
- ♦ Understands website promotion and helps you clarify your website goals and vision.
- ♦ Offers methods to cut costs while increasing online presence.
- ♦ Is an authority in the field, who perhaps authors design-related articles, conducts public lectures, or trains others.

Choosing a Web Designer

Web design is an unlicensed discipline. Unlike nurses or lawyers anyone can buy website design software and instantly declare themselves a skilled website designer. To buttress their claim they can also join web designer guilds or certification organizations and adorn their webpages with plaques provided with a paid

membership. These organizations do have value, for learning and sharing, but not as a source for accreditation.



The unfortunate result is that website design skills and pricing run the gamut. On one occasion we received information from, to be polite, a clearly unskilled web designer who pitched that “You can’t get a good website today for under \$10,000.”

Web design is an unlicensed discipline. Carefully evaluate whom you consider hiring.

There are certainly good, affordable, web designers to be found, but as with any business services search it comes down to knowing how to evaluate their skills and then asking some hard, revealing, questions.

Evaluating Websites

The most direct gauge of a web designer’s skill is their portfolio. The portfolio should offer at least a half-dozen professional, graphically diverse websites that are indicative of the types of websites they can create for you. If the designer claims they can create an e-commerce site it’s certainly reasonable to expect a few to be displayed in their portfolio.

You can also glean quick insights about a web designer’s skill by looking for a number of website red flags such as:

- ♦ **Counters. No one needs to know how many visitors you have any more than how many sales you make each day. A website counter can be set to start at any number making it impossible to confirm its authenticity.**
- ♦ **Excessive use of bright text on a dark background challenging the vision of the visitor.**
- ♦ **Hodge-Podge or other visual gotchas and animations that are inconsistent with the look and feel of the website.**



Examples of “send email” clip art found on home grown websites.

Neither are appropriate for a professional business website.



◆ **Distorted or poorly implemented graphics**



- ◆ **The website requires a specific hardware or software configuration, such as Internet Explorer or a 17" monitor.**
- ◆ **Inappropriate music upon entering the website. (Imagine hearing a stock market ticker each time you open a newspaper business section.)**
- ◆ **Animated "Hey! Great News!" message tickers (Why challenge visitors' patience?)**



It's also a good idea to ask the designer to evaluate your competitors' websites to both gauge their design values and brainstorm ideas for your own site.

Interviewing the Prospect

Here are some no-nonsense questions and considerations that will also help to quickly reveal the website designer's skill level.

- ◆ **Do subcontractors design their websites? If so, who will maintain and update the site should they leave?**
- ◆ **Did they create all the work in their portfolio? If not, who authored the other portions?**
- ◆ **How do they charge and bill? Do they itemize costs?**
- ◆ **Are there any administration or setup costs?**
- ◆ **Do they offer a package deal, hourly, a combination of both? Why?**
- ◆ **Are they willing to detail all the costs involved, including hosting and maintenance-related fees?**
- ◆ **Do they offer reasonable payment terms?**
- ◆ **Will they detail the costs of the websites in their portfolio?**
- ◆ **What do they charge to register a domain name?**
- ◆ **How long have they been in business?**
- ◆ **How many total websites have they completed and why are all not displayed in their portfolio?**
- ◆ **Do they have a close relationships with local ISPs?**
- ◆ **Do they have good references? Can they offer testimonials?**

There's another important reason to inquire about references—because you don't want to buy someone else's website.

Though a website isn't a piece of software it can be copied, edited, and claimed to be created by someone other than the author. It's certainly uncommon but it's good to

URL

(Uniform Resource Locator)

URL is synonymous with web address.

The most common way to use a URL is to enter into a WWW browser program, such as Netscape or Internet Explorer.

**.TV
.CC
.WS**

As a result of the difficulty to find a good dot-com domain name some countries are vigorously marketing their own domain designations as an alternative.

**.BIZ
.INFO
.PRO**

Three new domain extensions, .biz, .info, and .pro, will become live in late 2001.

Business may file to request one these domain names before they become available for registration.

**SEARCH ENGINE-
SPIDERS**

Spiders and Robots (or "bots") are automated programs that explore the Web.

The most common Spiders collect Website addresses for Search Engines to index.

be aware that the practice exists.

Chapter 7—All About Domain Names

A domain name is synonymous with “web address” or “URL.” Domain names that have become almost household names include Amazon, eBay, and Yahoo.

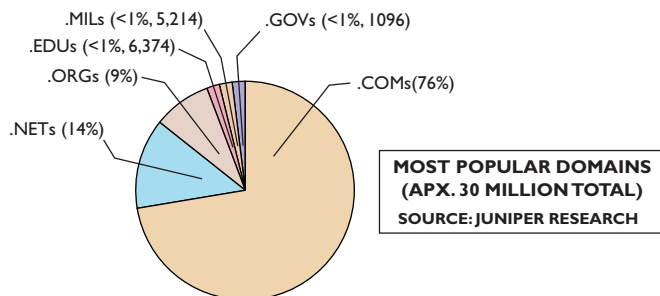
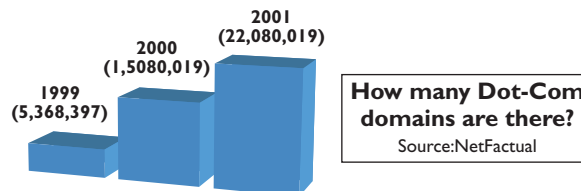
But formally the web address of the Amazon website is www.amazon.com. The suffix of the web address, the “.com” (hereafter referred to as a dot-com), standing for commerce, is called the Domain Designation. While there are other domain designations such as dot-org, dot-edu, and dot-net, the dot-com domain is by far the most popular with over 22 million dot-com domains registered to date.

DOMESTIC DOMAIN DESIGNATIONS:		INTERNATIONAL DESIGNATIONS:	
.com	Commercial	.ca	Canada
.net	Internet related sites	.se	Sweden
.edu	Educational Institution	.tv	Tuvalu
.mil	Military	.cc	Cocos (Keeling) Islands
.org	Non-Profit organization	.ws	Samoa
.gov	Government organization	.uk	United Kingdom

This is why it’s so important to own and favor a dot-com domain name for your online business—because the dot-com is presumed. For example, if you’re www.WeddingPhotos.net, instead of www.WeddingPhotos.com, you always have to remind folks about the dot-net. And if they don’t remember you just promoted your competitor who owns www.weddingphotos.com.

Always try to buy a dot-com domain name.

But just the same you should also buy the dot-net version of your web address to prevent others from attempting to profit from your good name. It doesn’t have to be used for any website, but for \$35 a year it’s a no-brainer decision to protect your business identity.



And if you have a business name that's generic enough for others to capitalize upon it's also not a bad idea to also secure the dot-net and dot-biz variations of your domain name. For example, if your business name is Chester Country Automotive it might also be worthwhile to secure:

DOMAIN NAME VARIATIONS	
ChesterCountryAutomotive.com	ChesterCountryCarRepair.com
“ “.net	“ “.net
“ “.biz	“ “.biz
ChesterCountryAuto.com	ChesterCountryAutoRepair.com
“ “.net	“ “.net
“ “.biz	“ “.biz

The Case for Sensitivity

As far as the Internet is concerned it's ok to mix upper and lowercase characters in the main portion of a domain name. If you couldn't "Apple.com" would represent a different website than "AAple.com" or "AAPle.com." And that would be quite a problem.

But what's *not* case sensitive are any characters that succeed the domain name—characters that identify specific folders or files on the Unix-based computers that manage the websites you're trying to view.

For example, <http://www.apple.com/quicktime> is *not* the same as <http://www.apple.com/Quicktime>. The former will take you to Apple's Quicktime webpage and the latter results in "Page Not Found".

THESE REPRESENT THE SAME WEBSITE:	EACH OF THESE REPRESENT A DIFFERENT WEBSITE ADDRESS:
http://www.apple.com/quicktime	http://www.apple.com/quicktime
http://www.APPLE.com/quicktime	http://www.apple.com/QuickTime
HTTP://WWW.APPLE.COM/quicktime	http://www.apple.com/QUICKTIME

Choosing a Domain Name

For some companies the domain name is almost as valuable as the business itself. Business.com recently sold for \$7.5 million.

As for the rest of us there's some good and bad news. The good news is it's very inexpensive to buy a new domain name—just \$35 a year, sometimes less. The bad news is that it's getting harder to buy a good dot-com domain name because of the sheer number of similarly named businesses across the United States.

For example, there may be hundreds of businesses called Best Cleaners but only one www.BestCleaners.com. The result is that you may need to be highly creative to find a domain name that complements or describes your business while not being wordy, lengthy, obtuse, or even corny. For example, the Philadelphia Orchestra's web address is www.philorch.org, not www.philadelphiaorchestra.org.

So are there any good domain names left? According to one domain naming "expert," "though there are 22 million dot-com names registered, more than 99.99% of all possible names are still available."

Too many business websites are poorly named.

This isn't very comforting unless some jumble of random characters such as www.HK4-OLP-G.com has some appeal. Our suggestion is to seek help from a web designer who has solid experience thinking up meaningful, and available, domain names.

Naming Tips

If, like most businesses, you don't have a multi-million dollar advertising budget to advertise your website all over the Internet, or on buses, billboards, and in magazines, it's crucial to choose a domain name that's easy to remember.

To help you get started here are a quick list of tips and trouble spots to try to avoid when choosing a domain name.

♦ Keep It Short

www.WeMakeTheBestVerticalBlinds.com is just too long. Would you be able to fit it in a small classified ad? Would it be easy to read in a store window or on a business card? Keep it short, perhaps even if you have to abbreviate or truncate, so folks can easily remember the domain name.

If the domain name is hard to remember, any opportunity for word of mouth advertising will probably be lost.

And by the way, a domain name can only be 32 characters long. www.BurlingtonCountyIndustrialSupply.com is as long as it can get—"BurlingtonCountyIndustrialSupply" is 32 characters long.

♦ Avoid Troublesome words

Some words are hard to spell and others are hard to read such as "leprechaun" and "segue" respectively. (Segue is more easily recognized by how it's pronounced, seg-way, to make a transition.)

♦ Avoid Hyphens (Dashes)

Although this is one of the favorite rules to break, often with good reason, it's still a good idea to try to avoid using dashes (hyphens) in your domain name, such as with www.talk-of-the-town.com.

One useful exception arises in print advertising where the complete domain name can't comfortably fit on a single line. Owning a hyphenated version of the domain name gives you more flexibility and control.

VERTICAL BLINDS!
TOP SELECTION AND PRICING!
www.WeMakeTheBestVerticalBlinds.com

BEFORE

VERTICAL BLINDS!
TOP SELECTION AND PRICING!
www.We-Make-The-
Best-Vertical-Blinds.com

AFTER

Another exception is a name where a single letter needs to be isolated, as with www.wash-n-dry.com, or when the hyphen is literally part of the company name, like www.hanley-goodman.com.

♦ Avoid Rebus Characters

www.oujust8agr8meal.com (“oh you just ate a great meal”) is an example of this common problem. Try not to use characters or numbers to represent words such as “O” for “Oh” or “4” for “for” or “2” for “to”.

In fact you should be careful using any numbers as you’ll have to always state whether it’s a numeral or not—is your domain “magnificent7.com or “magnificentseven.com?

♦ Avoid Homonyms

A domain name like www.TwoManyCooks.com can obviously cause a variety of problems. No doubt the owner of TooManyCooks.com will be getting some extra traffic.

♦ Be Careful with Cute and Clever

Just as you don’t share every joke you know with everyone you meet, you can’t take the chance of having a domain name that requires folks to share your sense of humor. An exaggerated example would be a fitness center using www.TheButtOfAllJokes.com.

♦ Honor Copyrights and Registered Names

www.SixersSportGear.com might also cause more trouble than it’s worth. Suffice it to say to be careful with your words because they might actually be registered to others.

♦ Be Careful Using Proper Names

Sometimes a sole-proprietor will want to incorporate their name into their website address. This is fine but as with the first example it’s a matter of being able to remember it—www.LoisPalmerDesign is probably easier to read and remember than www.JaniceSalkovitzCreations.com.

♦ Be Considerate of Pronunciation

Even a speaking coach might have trouble saying www.MissMythsFits.com.

A good way to test your domain is to use “The Bus Test”. Imagine your domain name is advertised on the side of a bus. Would you be able to read and remember it as the bus passed by?

Domain Name Generator Websites

A number of online domain name generators are available in which you provide a keyword and in return receive a list of possible domain names. While perhaps some have value, the ones we tested with prices ranging from \$50 to \$500 have never justified the cost.

absbilebike	bikebelenet	bikebiva	bikexike	bigeqipepipe	bikerike
amdbikegiwe	bikebihe	bikeboke	bikexiko	bikabike	bikesika
bakebise	bikebika	bikebuke	bikibike	bikabiwe	biketike
bakobikeence	bikebike	bikebukead	bikibikeera	bikahika	biketine
bekebikeunp	bikebikeent	bikebuku	bikiboke	bikebake	bikevike
bibebike	bikebikeex	bikefike	bikobike	bikebikepipi	bilobike
bicebike	bikebikeilit	bikelike	bikubike	bikebikex	bimebeke
biceqike	bikebikem	bikepiko	bilebike	bikebiki	binebife
bikesika	bikahika	bipabake	bikebite	bikebiku	binebiku

A SAMPLING OF THE OVER ONE THOUSAND “WORDS” GENERATED BY SUBMITTING “BIKE” TO A DOMAIN NAMING SERVICE.

SEARCH ENGINE

Search Engines websites are the card catalogs of the Web.

One problem with search engines is that they are not intelligent—a search for “Philadelphia Eagles” would probably list both sports teams and Philadelphia car dealers who sell Eagle brand cars.

HITS

Each graphic, page, or other element a web browser reads from a webpage registers as a hit.

As such, many websites use hit statistics to embellish the number of site visitors.

Unique Visitors, the count of how many different people visited your site, is a better indicator of a website’s popularity.

INTERSTITIAL ADVERTISEMENT

Literally means “between stitches”.

An website advertisement that appears in a separate window.

Buying a Domain Name

You can buy your online business identity from any number of websites, most notably the Network Solutions website at www.NetworkSolutions.com. Through Network Solutions the cost for a domain name is \$35 per year.

You can also purchase a domain name through other websites, sometimes at lower cost, but it's likely those sources offer the discounted price on the expectation that you will also use them to host your website. Should you later choose to host your website at another ISP (perhaps it will be cheaper or they will provide better service) you'll almost certainly need to pay a transfer fee to move your domain to that ISP.

Our advice? The safest bet is to buy the domain name yourself from Network Solutions for \$35, even if you've already secured hosting from an ISP. You'll have no problem transferring it later and very importantly, the domain will be registered in your name.

It's crucial to register your domain in your own name. Not doing so is basically handing your online business identity to a third party. Should you and the domain owner decide to part ways you might find yourself entwined in a lengthy legal battle to regain the rights to your own domain name.

It's crucial to register your domain in your own name. Not doing so is handing the keys to your online business to a third party.

IMPRESSIONS

Each time a banner advertisement appears counts as a single impression.

Internet banner advertising is usually purchased in thousands of impressions.



BANNER

Website advertisement which jumps to advertiser's site when clicked.

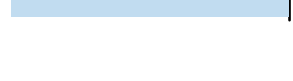
Banners in GIF format can be animated.



GIF

Graphic Interchange Format files (GIF) is one of the two common graphic file formats found on the Internet.

GIFs have two important advantages: ability to compress areas of solid color into a small file, and animation.



JPG/JPEG

Joint Photographic Experts Group file format. Pronounced "jay-peg", these graphic files are best used for photographic or other continuous tone images.



CHAPTER 8—PROMOTING YOUR WEBSITE

With few exceptions the best place to advertise your website isn't on the Internet, it's in print.

Although 25% to 33% of Internet users find new websites through search engines, most people still learn about new websites through traditional advertising such as print ads, direct mail, brochures, business cards, media (TV and radio), billboards (especially those great smaller mobile billboards known as vans and trucks), and of course, word-of-mouth.

The simple reason is comfort—people are accustomed to seeing advertising where it has always been: mail, commercials, billboards, etc. When most folks browse through a newspaper they'll comfortably read through any number of advertisements without thinking twice.

With few exceptions the best place to advertise your website isn't on the Internet, it's in print.

But that's not so on the Internet because it's more interactive—you choose what websites you visit, what email you read and write, what room you're chatting in, etc.

And when your attention is focused on completing a particular task it's unlikely an online ad will pique your interest enough to click it. In fact the average Internet banner ad has a "Click-Through" rate of about 0.25% (2.5 clicks out of one thousand impressions).

To combat this aversion some websites resort to using advertisements that pop-up in a new browser window. These Interstitial advertisements are the online equivalent to a telephone solicitation while in the middle of dinner.



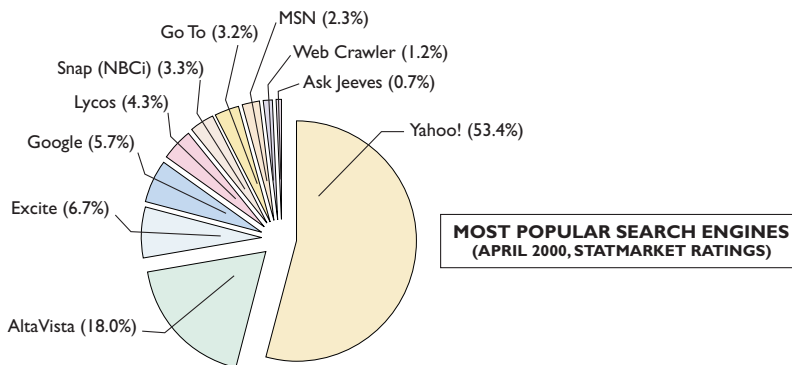
But this doesn't mean you shouldn't advertise on the Internet because some of the most effective online advertising available happens to be free (usually)—*search engines!*

A Brief Introduction to Search Engines

There's no question Search Engines, such as Yahoo and Ask Jeeves, have been paramount to the success of the Internet. In fact most web browsers are set by default to jump to a search engine page upon launching.



While there are literally hundreds of search engines, or search directories if you prefer, the majority of Internet users rely on only the top three or four.



There are two ways a search engine learns about your website.

- ♦ **It finds out automatically by using sophisticated search engine spidering software that literally travels the Internet looking for new websites to catalog.**
- ♦ **You manually submit your site to each respective search engine through an "add site" link found at each search engine website.**

But before you start submitting your site to every search engine it's worthwhile to examine how search engines actually work so you can make intelligent decisions about the value of promoting your site through search engines.

Understanding Real World Searching

Search engines and dictionaries share a common problem—you have to know how the information is listed before you can find it. For a dictionary that means you have to know the spelling. For a search engine it means you have to know which search terms will result in a list of websites that actually provide useful information.

In other words, even after your website is listed in a search engine you're at the mercy of the intelligence, patience, and fortitude of the person doing the searching. Even if that person has entered the perfect searching criteria your website might be grouped, like the Yellow Pages, with dozens, perhaps hundreds, of similar websites.

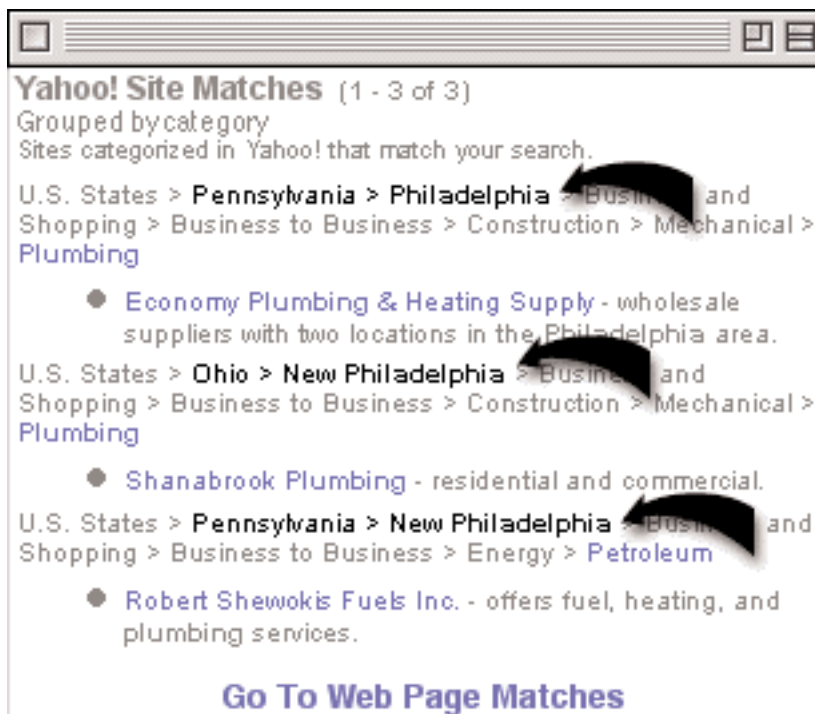
To demonstrate we're going to show what happens when we try to find a residential plumber in downtown Philadelphia, Pennsylvania using Yahoo. Yahoo is a good choice not only because it's the largest and most comprehensive search engine but many other top search engines make use of the same information sources.

Every search engine has a field where you enter the terms, or keywords, you'd like to use to search. To try to find a plumber in Philadelphia we're simply going to search Yahoo for "philadelphia plumbing."

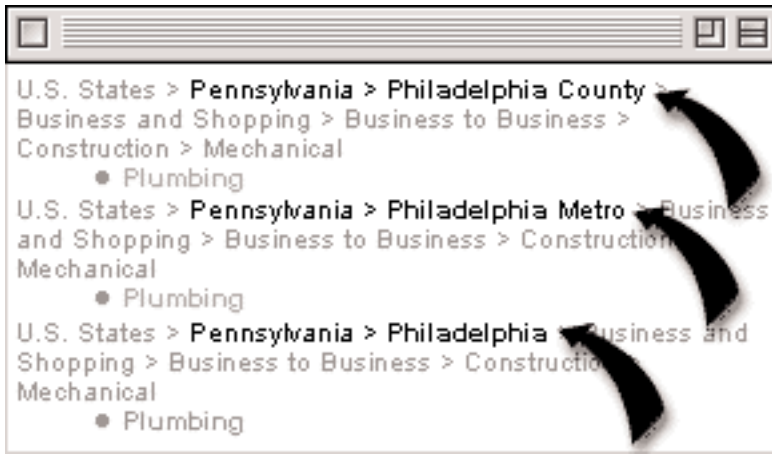
Depending on the success of the search most search engines will display the results in two formats: category matches or web page matches.

Category Matches

The results of our "philadelphia plumbing" query match three Yahoo categories. But if you look closer you'll see that each category is for a different city: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; New Philadelphia, Ohio; and New Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



To narrow the results we tried a second search using "Philadelphia, PA, plumbing" resulting in a list of three different categories: one for Philadelphia County, one for Philadelphia Metro, and the third for Philadelphia.



CONTENT

Actual information available on a website—articles, charts, photographs, any information of value.

In the process of trying to figure out the differences between these three categories we noticed a more pressing problem—none of the categories listed residential plumbers, all were “Business-to-Business.” This reveals one of the most common problems with search engines—the category where you want to list your website might not even exist.

There's no “Dewey Decimal System” of search engines. The category where you'd like to list your website may not even exist.

This is also a good time to note that the listings in a categorical match are alphabetical. For example, here's a partial Yahoo listing for Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in the Philadelphia, PA area. Because they're alphabetical any claim by Internet marketers to be able to insure a high ranking in these categorical pages surely can't be so—they're always alphabetical.



Returning to the plumbing problem, at the bottom of the categorical results listings is a choice for “Go To Web Page Matches”:

[Go To Web Page Matches](#)

Web Page Matches

The Web Page Matches link displays all web pages that match the search criteria of “philadelphia plumbing” but couldn’t be placed in an existing Yahoo category. There could be a variety of possible reasons for this such as:

- ♦ **The website on which the pages reside is listed in a different Yahoo category. (Perhaps it’s a site about Pennsylvania plumbers and only a few pages refer to Philadelphia plumbers.)**
- ♦ **The site was never submitted to the search engine or was not accepted into the category requested.**
- ♦ **The intent of the page couldn’t be easily surmised by the search engine. (Was the page about the history of plumbing, a novel about a plumber, or plumbing building codes?)**
- ♦ **The search is actually for the words “philadelphia” and “plumbing” falling anywhere on the webpage, not “philadelphia” and “plumbing” together as “philadelphia plumbing.”**

Clicking the Web Page Matches button results in a staggering 5750 matches, displayed twenty pages at a time, with the best matches first. There’s little doubt the number of matches is so high because Yahoo is listing all the pages that match to the word “philadelphia.”

For the sake of brevity here’s a list of the services listed in the first twenty Yahoo matches as well as some additional comments, in parentheses, about the resulting pages.

1. City of Philadelphia Plumbing Codes(Self explanatory)
2. Herman Goldner Co.(Large scale business plumbing)
3. Plumbing and Industrial Supply; Philadelphia Street, Whittier CA(Industrial supplier)
4. Plumbing & Heating Supply(Germantown section of Philadelphia. A possible match.)
5. History of Plumbing in America(Self explanatory)
6. A large plumber hired a contractor based in Philadelphia(News story)
7. Philadelphia Water Department website(Self explanatory)
8. Whitpain Township Plumbing Codes(Self explanatory)
9. Philadelphia Business Directory(No listings for plumber as yet)
10. City of Philadelphia Plumbing Codes(more codes)
11. Plumbing Apprenticeship Occupations Programs(Self explanatory)
12. McMahon Plumbing, Heating & Air Conditioning; Chester Country PA(A possible match.)
13. Online service mall(No listing for plumbers)
14. Plumbing Contractors on the Web List(A possible match.)
15. PA plumbing(A possible match.)
16. Summers & Zim’s Plumbing, Atglen, PA(Too far away.)
17. Philadelphia.GoMainSt Business Directory(Link not active.)
18. Plumbing Parts Depot(Plumbing parts distributor)
19. Al Melvin Plumbing & Heating(Though they service NorthEast Philadelphia it’s a good match.)
20. Homes In Philly real estate site(The plumbing category exists but has no entries.)

Of these first twenty matches were about five links that might provide the answer. Two of those five links finally revealed a good list of Philadelphia plumbers.

That’s good, but it took over an hour, with a fast DSL connection, to track down the same information readily available in a phone book. This reveals another inherent problem with search engines— how much time will someone invest to find your website?

ANTI-ALIASING

A color averaging technique. For jagged lines anti-aliasing helps smooth out the staircase effect.

This is one of the key reasons many small businesses websites get so little online traffic—because they often make the mistake of relying on search engines for promotion. The “If I build it they will come” strategy almost always results in a fall in income and a rise in frustration.

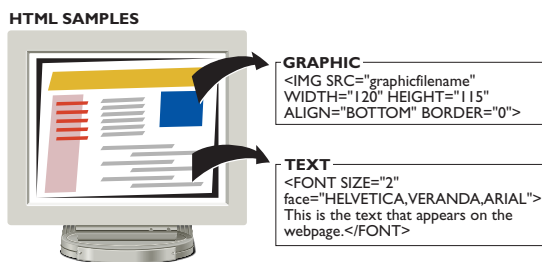
Don't rely on search engines for generating new business, particularly if you're selling a niche product or only to a local market.

This is particularly important for smaller businesses because most typically serve their immediate locality or sell a niche product or service. But search engines don't always have categories for niches and smaller communities. There's no surprise there were several plumbing categories for Philadelphia, but it's unlikely there's a plumbing category for each surrounding community.

Preparing Your Website for Search Engines

Before you submit your website to a search engine it's crucial to make sure each page is properly formatted to insure the search engines will properly index each webpage. This is done through special webpage codes called Meta-Tags.

A webpage is actually just a page of text composed of HTML programming codes. There are HTML codes to format text, codes to display graphics and animations, codes which govern all the elements you see as a cohesive webpage.



Meta-Tags are the HTML codes that help search engines figure out how to list your website. Folks who visit your website don't see the meta-tag information (which is what makes it a “meta” tag).

```
SIMPLE HTML WITH META-TAGS
<HTML>
<HEAD>
  <TITLE>A Financial Company</TITLE>
  <META name="description" content=" Financial
  Company provides financial planning specializing
  in insurance and investments.">
  <META name="keywords" content="investments,
  finances, financial planning, insurance, stocks">
</HEAD>
<BODY>
  Welcome to our company! This is where all the page
  content, also in HTML form, goes.
</BODY>
</HTML>
```

Choosing an appropriate set of Meta-Tags isn't always cut and dried because they're just one of the tools a search engine uses to figure out how to index a website. Search engines also examine the page title, page content, and other attributes to surmise the true purpose of the website. Search engines make such an effort because on occasion website owners use less than honest methods to try to have their websites listed where they don't really belong.

eBay

eBay (www.ebay.com) is the world's largest online auction house.

On average sellers typically pay a percent or two to auction their item to a large audience.

A simple example would be a business website listing the competitor names in its meta-tags. The hope is the website will be listed when someone searches for a competitor. A similar example would be a company listing the names of larger, related businesses. For example, a luggage company listing various airlines in its meta-tags.

Not only don't these schemes work but almost every search engine will penalize the ranking of websites that resort to these "Meta-Tag Loading" tactics. And this is certainly easy to understand because search engines want to protect the manner in which they choose to index websites as well as provide motivation to purchase advertising from them.

Search engines are savvy to meta-tag tricks. Don't use them.

1 family	21 video	41 web address	61 homes	81 porn
2 internet	22 internic	42 auto	62 www	82 java
3 web	23 web hosting	43 health	63 information	83 management
4 free	24 advertising	44 registry	64 news	84 house
5 ecommerce	25 marketing	45 gifts	65 verisign	85 jobs
6 design	26 com	46 domains	66 car	86 hotel
7 business	27 website	47 server	67 internet address	87 domain registration
8 domain	28 shopping	48 multimedia	68 xxx	88 html
9 email	29 music	49 sports	69 audio	89 adult
10 sex	30 services	50 computer	70 sales	90 property
11 art	31 org	51 education	71 nude	91 development
12 hosting	32 home	52 net	72 pictures	92 graphics
13 online	33 search	53 registration	73 international	93 employment
14 software	34 net	54 training	74 insurance	94 vacation
15 real estate	35 web design	55 web site	75 cgi l	95 canada
16 travel	36 consulting	56 buy	76 entertainment	96 texas
17 domain name	37 secure	57 mail	77 money	97 registrar
18 service	38 name	58 isp	78 site	98 chat
19 domain	39 commercial	59 network	79 california	99 florida
20 domain name	40 whois	60 books	80 construction	100 icann

**TOP 100 MOST POPULAR META-TAG KEYWORDS
(AUGUST 2000) SOURCE:NETFACTUAL.COM**

If you'd like to legitimately attempt to improve your chances for a higher search engine ranking we suggest the following tips.

- ♦ **Give each HTML file a meaningful name. Use hyphens (dashes) to separate words.**

For example, if you have several web pages detailing oak chairs then "oak_chair_1.html"; "oak_chair_2.html"; etc. are more meaningful file names than "prodch1.html"; "prodch2.html"; etc.

- ♦ **Don't use graphics to display body text. Search engines can't read graphics.**

**BODY COPY AS HTML
(HARD EDGES, NO ANTI-ALIASING)**

BODY COPY AS A GRAPHIC. LOOKS GOOD BUT UNREADABLE TO A SEARCH ENGINE.

- ♦ **Use important keywords in your body copy—the same keywords used in your meta-tags.**
- ♦ **Don't submit a site to a search engine with "Under Construction" text on any pages.**
- ♦ **Don't use words like "great" or "fantastic" in the meta-tag description field. Like Joe Friday said, "Just the facts, Ma'am."**

- ♦ **Don't create extra webpages with similar content to make your website look bigger than it is.**
- ♦ **Don't hide words and links by coloring them to match the background or by reducing their size.**
- ♦ **Don't change the website's page titles, meta-tags, and HTML file names just for the purpose of resubmitting the website.**

Search Engine Placement Services

Because so many online searches result in hundreds of web page matches, it obviously becomes valuable to have your website appear at the top of that list.

To that end there's no shortage of companies touting extravagant claims to "List your site at the top of the best 500 search engines on the net!" (One company claimed it would submit "to over 500,000 search engines and directories." We had no idea there were that many!)

Save your money. Search engines constantly change the criteria they use to evaluate and rank websites. After all they have their own method for getting your site listed high in their listing—selling advertising. (Yahoo advertising starts at \$1500/month in case you're interested.)

Don't use search engine placement services. You can perform the same task in an hour or two and be sure it was done correctly.

Submitting Your Site to Search Engines

While it can be sobering to understand what promotion a search engine can or can't offer, it's still worthwhile to submit your site to the most popular search engines because it's easy enough to do yourself and still free—usually.

That is, submitting your site to a search engine is no guarantee the site will be indexed, let alone in the category you request. Yahoo offers a Business Express Service, a \$200 one-time fee, which guarantees your site will be evaluated in no more than ten business days. Other search engine companies are following suit.

While this may initially seem to be a good value the decision to use these express services isn't always simple. Each search engine's selection of categories is unique and there's no guarantee your website will be listed in what you think is the most appropriate category.

For example, one of our own websites, GuitarList.com, lets music stores place online classified ads for guitars and basses. Though we requested to be listed in the main Guitars category Yahoo listed it in a far less visited, but admittedly more appropriate, Musical Instruments Classifieds sub-category.

Every search engine has its own indexing methods and placement criteria. Your site might not be listed in the category you requested.

So to find the website through Yahoo someone would have to search using the words "guitar" and "classified." Not very likely. Perhaps in retrospect the \$200 express service placement fee would've been better spent on a magazine ad.

Once your website is prepared, submitting it to a search engine usually takes only a few simple steps:

- 1. Browse to the category page where you want to be listed;**
- 2. Click the Suggest a Site link at the bottom of the page;**
- 3. Add the information requested (such as site owner, keywords, and description).**

Domain Name Typography

As stated at the beginning of this chapter it's important to imprint your website address wherever possible: on business cards, stationery, signs, windows, car doors, etc. But if domain name can't be easily read another opportunity to convince folks to visit your website has been lost.

Most domain names are typeset as #1 below—all characters are the same size making it hard to distinguish each portion of the address. One simple way to help make a domain name more readable is to only capitalize the first character of each word (#3).

It's easy to improve on this by enlarging the actual name of the website as in #4. Even better is using color is more strongly distinguish the name as in #5. Whether #6's alternating colors hurt or help readability is up for debate.

Various Ways to Display Your Domain Name

1. WWW.MYWEBSITE.COM	4. www.MyWebSite.com
2. www.MYWEBSITE.com	5. www.MyWebSite.com
3. www.MyWebSite.com	6. www.MyWebSite.com

Most often it's displayed like #1

But #6 is far easier to read as it's distinguished by both size and color.

Word-of-Mouth Advertising

Time and time again the top marketers tout the virtues of word-of-mouth advertising. But, as you may know, it also takes the most effort.

You can overcome one of these hurdles by taking advantage the novelty of the Internet and your website. The Internet is changing society and it seems everywhere you turn there's a conversation about the Internet. Hand someone a business card touting a website address and you'll not be surprised to hear "Hey, what's on your website?" in return.

OFTEN OVERHEARD

"Hey, we just got a new website. Here's the address, take a look!"

RARELY OVERHEARD

"Hey, we just printed a new brochure! Wanna see it?"

Taking Advantage of eBay and Auction Websites

If you sell a product or service that's commonly listed at online auctions you can inexpensively direct market your business to dozens, sometimes hundreds, of potential customers by simply holding an online auction.

As part of your auction ample space is provided to detail the size, age, color, condition, etc., of the item being auctioned—even enough room to plug your business! Feel free to regularly insert phone numbers, website links, any information at all, into the description field. After all, you paid for the advertising space!

The result is that each person who visits your website also sees a custom advertisement for your business. The number of people that view any particular auction can be in the hundreds—eBay even allows your auction to display a page counter at no extra cost so you can track the number of visitors. (eBay's page counters are secure, they can't be reset as can personal web page counters.)

There's no extra cost to plug your business in an online auction. Take advantage of it.

If you're concerned your item will sell for far less than its value you can opt to hold a "reserve auction." In a reserve auction if the desired price isn't met the item remains unsold. On the minus side reserve auctions command an additional fee.

1962 Gibson Les Paul Amp

- Visit our website at: www.guitarvile.com

[Click here to go to](#)

Musical Instruments Mall

[Please click here to see my other auctions.](#)

00498

ALMOST 500 PEOPLE HAVE VIEWED THIS \$4 EBAY® AD!
(LESS THAN A PENNY PER PERSON!)

Chapter 9—Internet Facts and Stats

According to the UCLA Internet Report, UCLA Center for Communications Policy, October 2000:

- ♦ **More than two-thirds of Americans have some type of access to the Internet.**
 - ♦ **The most popular Internet activities are Web surfing, email, finding hobby information, reading news, and finding entertainment information.**
 - ♦ **More than half (50.7 percent) of Internet users have purchased online.**
 - ♦ **42 percent of Americans use email every day**
 - ♦ **Nearly two-thirds of users and nearly half of non-users believe that new communication technologies including the Internet have made the world a better place.**
 - ♦ **Users of the Internet are generally satisfied with the technology, with the Internet overall achieving a rating of 4.0 on a scale of 1 to 5.**
 - ♦ **Only about half (54.7 percent) of Internet users and one-third of non-users believe that most or all online information is reliable and accurate. (Page 22.)**
 - ♦ **When asked if “people who go online put their privacy at risk,” almost two-thirds (63.6 percent) of Internet users and more than three-quarters (76.1 percent) of non-users either agree or strongly agree.**
 - ♦ **41.4 percent of non-users say they are likely to access the Internet in the next year. The older the non-users, the less likely they are to say they will access the Internet.**
 - ♦ **When asked why they are not online, one-third of non-users are “not interested.”**
 - ♦ **16.8 percent of Internet non-users say they would not purchase a computer at any price ! Many non-users would be in the market for a first computer—if the price is right. Only 9.1 percent of non-users say they don’t use the Internet because it is “too expensive.”**
 - ♦ **Adults say that children spend about the right amount of time online, that grades are not affected, and that Internet use does not cause social isolation from friends.**
 - ♦ **Nearly half (47.1 percent) of users report spending at least some time each week using the Internet with other household members.**
 - ♦ **Nearly all users (91.8 percent) say that since being connected to the Internet at home, members of the household spend about the same amount of time together or more time together.**
 - ♦ **Internet users watch significantly less television than non-users. Users and non-users spend about the same amount of time talking on the telephone, and reading books and newspapers, but users watch 28 percent (4.6 hours per week) less television than non-users.**
 - ♦ **More than two-thirds of Internet users (67.3 percent) consider the technology to be an “important” or “extremely important” source of information for them, while 53.1 percent of those**
- V.27 surveyed rank television and 46.8 percent rank radio at the

same level.

- ♦ 48.6 percent of users say that their use of email is monitored by employers, and 54.1 percent say that their use of the Web is monitored.
- ♦ 8.9 percent of purchasers buy online weekly; 28.5 percent of purchasers shop monthly! A very small group of users is responsible for a large proportion of purchasing; 4.5 percent of all Internet users are responsible for 31.4 percent of all online purchases.
- ♦ Internet purchasers do have concerns that may discourage them from shopping online, and privacy is at the top of the list.
- ♦ Nearly two-thirds of Internet purchasers (65.1 percent) say that online purchasing has at least somewhat reduced their purchases from retail stores! The more frequently users buy online, the more they shift away from stores.
- ♦ Nearly all Internet users (91.2 percent) are concerned about credit card security! Concern about credit card security drops substantially as online purchases increase, and as both Internet use and experience increase.

On a lighter note here are some interesting Internet curiosities. Sources are displayed with each factoid.

- ♦ **Approximate percentage of words in Webster's English Dictionary that have been registered as domain names: 98; Wall Street Journal, 24 April 2000**
- ♦ **Maximum number of characters in one component of a domain name: 63; RFC 1034**
- ♦ **Average number of characters in a domain name in 1999: 11; Network Solutions**
- ♦ **Approximate number of students notified by email of their admission to American University in Washington, D.C.: 4200; Wall Street Journal, 24 April 2000**
- ♦ **Percentage discount for Internet orders at Armadillo Willie's Barbeque in Santa Clara, CA: 5; Personal Visit, 3/22/00**
- ♦ **Amount spent on advertising by dot-com companies in 1999, in billions of dollars: 3.1; Wall Street Journal, 24 April 2000**
- ♦ **Percentage of domain names purchased by consumers: 14; Network Solutions**
- ♦ **Number of Internet-related trade shows on the Internet Trade Show List: 595; Internet Trade Show List**
- ♦ **Estimated number of households in mainland China with access to the Web, in millions: 7.2; Interactive Week, 17 May 2000**
- ♦ **Estimated number of adult Internet users in France, in millions: 7.2; Nua Internet Surveys, 29 May 2000, citing Mediametrie**
- ♦ **Number of network drops added to the Williams College library last year: 800; Mass High Tech, 15 May 2000**
- ♦ **Number of issues of the New Yorker that include, in the text of an article, a sample of the output from the Unix traceroute command: 1; New Yorker, Dec. 6 1999, p. 100 (thanks to Jeff Mogul)**
- ♦ **Budget requested by the U.S. Department of Commerce for tracking e-commerce, in millions of dollars: 3.5; Wall Street**

Journal, February 8, 2000

- ♦ **Reported approximate number of stock options received by William Shatner for advertising for priceline.com: 100,000; USA Today, December 28, 1999, p.1**
- ♦ **Amount budgeted by Rhode Island economic officials to lure Massachusetts Internet companies to the state, in dollars: \$110,000**
- ♦ **Amount Microsoft failed to pay to renew registration for the domain name passport.com, resulting in an outage for many Hotmail users, in dollars: \$35; USA Today, December 29, 1999**
- ♦ **Percentage of full-time, four-year college students in the U.S. who use the Internet: 90; The Industry Standard, February 7, 2000 citing Student Monitor**
- ♦ **Rank of "Pokemon" among the most popular search terms at Lycos for 1999: 1; Lycos 50**
- ♦ **Number of times President Clinton mentioned the Internet in the 2000 State of the Union address: 6; text of the address**
- ♦ **Amount of campaign contributions on-line to John McCain in the first two days after he won the New Hampshire Republican primary, in dollars: 1,000,000; McCain campaign press release, February 3, 2000**
- ♦ **Maximum percentage of foreign ownership permitted by China for Chinese Internet content or service providers: 50; Wall Street Journal, January 26, 2000**
- ♦ **Number of record companies suing mp3.com over a new digital music service: 10; Wall Street Journal, January 24, 2000**
- ♦ **Percentage of Internet users who "like spam or have some use for it": 3; Infoworld, January 24, 2000, citing a Gartner Group poll**
- ♦ **Number of email messages I needed to change a name server address with Network Solutions: 7**
- ♦ **Number of U.S. cities with greater than 50% Internet penetration among adults: 5; Scarborough Research**
- ♦ **Number of dot-com balloons in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade: 2**
- ♦ **Number of people sued by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission for illegally offering securities for sale on eBay: 3; Securities and Exchange Commission**
- ♦ **Sale price of the domain name name business.com, in millions of dollars: 7.5; Wall Street Journal, 11/30/99**
- ♦ **Estimated number of Internet users in China, in millions: 4; The Industry Standard, 9/27/99**
- ♦ **Percentage of adults in the UK who use the Internet: 27; CommerceNet/Nielsen survey, 10/27/99**
- ♦ **Estimated number of Internet users, worldwide, at the end of 1998: 147,800,000**
- ♦ **Number of U.S. households joining the Internet, per hour: 760; The Industry Standard, March 29, 1999, citing Nielsen Media Research**
- ♦ **Number of commercial email messages sent each day in the U.S., in billions: 7.3; eMarketer**

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Randy M. Zeitman is the founder of Stone Rose Design, a Philadelphia-based marketing communications firm specializing in website design and business marketing services.

With a diverse background as a graphic designer, consultant, copywriter, software trainer, programmer, technical editor, and columnist, Mr. Zeitman has been providing small to medium-sized businesses with affordable business communication materials for over twelve years.

The secret of the company's success is simply expressed in their creed—
"Never Underestimate Simplicity."

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Visit their websites at:

Bux-Mont MUG	http://www.buxmontmug.org
Macs@Pacs	http://www.pacsnet.org
Macintosh Users of Delaware	http://www.mudel.org
Main Line Macintosh User Group	http://www.mlmg.org
MUGSNJ	http://www.mugsnj.org
Princeton Macintosh User Group	http://www.pmug-nj.org

You can also visit Apple's user group page at <http://www.apple.com/usergroups/> or the User Group Network at <http://www.user-groups.net>