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Planning your website:

Step One: Plan your content and write your text.

Start by writing one or two short, sharply focused paragraphs that describe your business or organization. This is for the home page. Be clear and concise. Web surfers are looking for information--not hype. Your first paragraph is very important. Make sure it tells your reader the essence of what your business or organization is about.

Next write an outline of the major topics you want to address. Good things to include (you don't have to do them all) are:

- descriptions of your services/products
- prices
- a few testimonials from satisfied customers
- your hours
- driving directions to your location
- answers to frequently asked questions
- an "about us" page describing your companies history, your qualifications
- "public service" information related to your business
- a links page to businesses and informational sites that are related to your business
- your contact information: address, phone, fax and email

If you have a good brochure, use it as a starting point--you may be able to use much of it as is.

Develop a list of "keywords." These are any and all words that a person might use to do a search when looking for the types of services or products you provide. I will add to your list to fill in any gaps I see, but you should come up with the initial list as you know your business best.

Write all of your copy. Be as clear and concise as possible while working in as many of your important keywords as you can, and as often as you can. Keyword rich text will

help your search engine ranking tremendously. However, be sure the copy still reads well.

If search engine traffic is not important to you, you can skip trying to work in the keywords.

If writing is not your thing, just give me your outline and I will work on the copy, and consult with you as I proceed.

Step Two: Select your graphics and photographs.

If you have a logo, provide a very clear, crisp copy of it. Original artwork scans the best. I will return it to you. If you already have the logo as an image file, so much the better. I can work with many standard image types. If you're not sure, email me.

Select your photographs. Regular color prints are fine. Make sure your photographs are sharply focused, have good contrast, and are well composed. The average computer monitor is a low-resolution device compared to hard copy. Using only the best quality photographs is essential. If your photographs are already digitized, send me the files without sizing or compressing them.

Include cropping instructions if you only want part of the photograph used.

Step Three: Select a domain name.

You can use any combination of letters and numbers. The only symbol allowed is the hyphen. Spaces are not allowed. Domain names are not case sensitive. Also select a second, and even a third and fourth choice in case your first choice is not available. If you are a business, your address should end with .com, .biz, or .us. If you are a club or non-profit organization, your address should end with .org. As an alternative if what you want is not available, .net and .info are also possibilities. Try to keep it reasonably short -- shorter addresses are nicer looking on printed pieces and are easier for people to type in. If search engine traffic is critical to you, select a name with your most important keywords in it separated by hyphens.

If you are not going with a Virtual Domain, the front of your address will be the server's address. You may select the rest subject to any limitations set by the server. It will look something like: www.servername.com/yourcompany.

Step Four: Send me your materials.

If possible, give me your text in the form of "plain text" or MS Word (.doc) files rather than hard copy--it will save you some money as I won't have to retype. If you have an IBM computer, you may send them to me on floppy disks, CDs or 100 MB zip disks. If you have a Macintosh be sure any disks are IBM formatted. Or if you prefer, you may email your files to me as attachments. If you can't provide your text as files, don't worry, I can type it all in from hard copy.

If you are mailing your artwork and photos to me, a piece of cardboard in the envelope will help protect them from mishaps. Image files may be included on disk with the text, or emailed.

I will begin actual work on your website only after I have received your deposit and the check has cleared. The deposit is usually 1/3 of the estimated costs for your site.

Step Five: Sit back and wait for your site work to be done.

When I have completed the first draft of the design and development of your site, I will upload your site files to a directory on my business site for your inspection, at which time you may request changes and corrections. I will work with you until you are happy with every detail.

After you are satisfied, I will submit an invoice with an account of actual expenses. When your payment for the final 2/3 of that amount is received, then I will upload the files to your website host.

You will have 30 days from that date to make minor corrections and changes. Though I try very hard to watch for them, sometimes typos escape my notice. Of course, I will fix those as soon as possible. Any changes you want done to the site that affect the layout or design will require additional payment.

Please note that you are solely responsible for the content of your site including typographical errors. Proof read everything carefully!

Step Six: Your site goes public.

I will register your site with the major search engines and directories that accept unpaid submissions.

You should add your Web address to all your printed materials (business cards, brochures, letterhead, invoice forms, etc.) and print advertising (especially your yellow pages ad).

Step Seven: Start benefiting from your new Web site!