New Site Information Packet

We have now plunged head long into the new millennium and the World Wide Web is *the* way to do business. Your customers are getting plugged in and spending their cash in cyberspace! Can you really afford not to have your own website?

The next question is, how are you going to get a website that looks stunning at a price you can afford? That's where my design services and expertise come in. With ten years experience in website design and over twenty years as a fine artist, my design philosophy is a website should be clean, direct, easy to navigate and pleasing to the eye.

This is an exciting venture, so let's get started!

Determine your objectives and target audience before planning the layout and design of your site.

Determine your objectives. It's one thing to know you need a website-but do you know *why* you need one? You are the expert at your business and your input into the process is vital to your site's success.

Before you start designing your site, have a clear set of goals in mind. For instance, which of these objectives fit your website plans?

- Provide potential customers basic information about your business (brochure site).
- Help customers contact you.
- Enable customers to secure your services or purchase your products via telephone or mail-order.
- Allow customers to purchase directly online.
- Save time answering the same questions over and over.
- Reduce the cost of marketing. (i.e. print literature, postage.)

- Share your expertise with others via articles.
- Other

Once you have determined everything you want your site to accomplish, you can start thinking about how your design and content will support these goals.

Profile Your Target Audience. A good rule of thumb is to keep your site as simple and easy to use as possible while still using enough graphical elements to make it visually interesting. A profile of your target audience will help you determine your layout and design. For example, if your audience is conservative and serious, a classic, toned down theme may be best. A young and energetic audience may prefer brighter themes and more multimedia.

Develop Your Site

Now it's time to gather resources such as product/price lists, brochures, logos, company information, photographs, etc.

Use A Flowchart To Organize Your Site. Visualize your site and write it down on a flowchart. This will help determine how many pages you may need, what content will be on them and how they will link together.

The following outline is a general guide which can be used to determine what pages you may want to include. Feel free to select from the list some or all of the following:

A. Home page/Start page
B. Company Profile and History/About You
C. Products/Services/Prices
D. Order Form
E. Customer Service/Order and Shipping Information
F. Contact Information
G. Privacy Policy
H. Legal Information/Disclaimer/Site Terms of Use
I. Helpful Links/Resources
J. Site Map for Larger Sites
K. Directions to Your Facility
L. Articles/Helpful Tips Pertaining to Your Industry
M. Industry Affiliations
N. Photos
O. Calendar of Events

One of the primary goals of practically every website is to share information. The information you choose to share in the content of your site is essential to its success. Based on your outline above, jot down what you plan to include on each page.

The next step will be to determine the general appearance of your site.

The Site Design

Now that you have collected most of the information that you wish to publish on your site, think about the kind of design and layout that you would like. What is the overall mood that you would like to project on your site (professional, whimsical, formal, or informal, etc.)? What colors do you want on your site? Do you have a company logo? What color scheme would look best with the logo?

Take a look at other sites in your industry. Make a list of 5 – 10 sites that you like and list what you like about them. Do the same for sites that you do not like.

Just a few things to take into consideration when deciding on a design:

Navigation - Customers will want to know where they are and how to get to where they want to be on your site. If you use a graphical navigation system (buttons) you will also want to include a text link for those who do not have, or choose to turn off, graphics in their browser. As a rule of thumb, it should never take more than 2-3 clicks to get to any *major section* of your site. The navigation menu should appear in the same place on each page.

Responsiveness – In the age of mobile devices, it is critical that your site is accessible to all. We design each site to function at any size, on every device and still maintain the utmost in clarity and design aesthetics.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) – Text should be user friendly while at the same time incorporating essential keywords to increase your visibility in the search engines. SEO should be part of your site development from the beginning.

Purchase Your Domain Name

If you haven't already, you should purchase a domain name for your site. With domain names disappearing by the 1000's each day, reserve

your name as soon as you come up with one so that it is not taken when it comes time to launch your site.

Domain names can run anywhere from $6.95 per year (when purchased for a 10 year period) to $35 per year, depending on where you register your name. Gallantry Web Design highly recommends www.register.com or www.networksolutions.com.

Your domain name should be meaningful and easy to remember. You can try the name of your business. If that is not available, try it with hyphens. For example, if the name of your business is XYZ Auto Repair and XYZAutoRepair.com is not available, try X-Y-ZAutoRepair.com. Domain names are NOT case sensitive so, xyzautorepair.com is the same as XYZAutoRepair.com. You can also try the name with a different Top Level Domain extension like xyzautorepair.net. Although domain names can have up to 63 characters, the shorter the better. Make it easy to remember!

You can (and should) reserve your name with your registrar and have it "parked" until you are ready to launch your site. If you purchase your name from someone other than your hosting company, you will then transfer your name to "point" to the hosting company's servers. Gallantry Web Design will help you do all of this if needed.

E-commerce

If you plan to sell products or services from your site, you will need to look into what e-commerce package will suit your needs. Do you need a shopping cart system? Do you need a way to accept credit cards on-line along with an Internet Merchant account and a payment gateway?

Taking Orders - If you plan to take orders on-line, you will need to consider a shopping cart system. Some hosting companies supply e-commerce packages or you can "bolt on" a shopping cart to your pages.

Then there is the issue of accepting payments. If you already accept credit cards with a terminal, you can go to your bank and ask if they offer Internet merchant accounts. Then you will need a payment gateway, which transfers the payment from your customer's bank to yours. Although these items can increase your cost of doing business, there are free and low cost shopping carts and payment systems available. Gallantry Web Design highly recommends PayPal and can integrate PayPal's system seamlessly into the look of your website.

Hosting

When your site design is complete you will want to upload it to a host server for the rest of the world to see! To do this, you will need a hosting company – a company that provides storage space for your site files on a computer called a server. This computer is always connected to the Internet and is ready to "serve" your site to visitors around the world!

Things to consider when choosing a hosting company:

- How much storage space do you need?
- How many e-mail addresses do you need?
- Can I edit my site online?
- How much bandwidth (how much information will be passed from the server to the end user) is needed?
- Do you need an e-commerce enabled site?
- Will you need a secure server?
- Are site stats provided (hit counters, etc)?
- What is the quality of the customer service and technical support?
- What is the percentage of uptime?
- What kind of connections do they have (T-1 or T-3 are best)?
- How much will it cost?

The more features you require, the more it could cost. Gallantry Web Design does not offer hosting, but can recommend an excellent hosting company if you are in need of one.

Other Things To Consider

There are several other things you may want to include when planning your site:

- Site search
- A map/directions to your facility
- Interactivity (polls, contests, etc)
- Search engine optimization
- List company or personal accolades, memberships
- Testimonials from customers
- Newsletter signup

Marketing Your Site

Once your site is up and running, you will want people to find it. Start by placing your web address on all your marketing and office materials and use it in your e-mail signature. Leave your URL on your answering machine message.

Your site should be submitted to the major search engines and directories. Some of the major companies are now charging a fee simply to look at your site for consideration. This fee is nonrefundable and does not guarantee that you will get listed. There are still a few free engines and directories to submit to however. Gallantry Web Design will submit your website to the major free search engines as part of your website package.

List your site in your local online AND offline directories. Get sites to link to you. Link popularity is becoming a major factor in the search engine rankings. If you can swap links with sites that compliment your business and are higher in the rankings, this may help your rankings as well.

Send out flyers, postcards, prepare a press release, advertise in the newspaper, get your domain name in your yellow page ad, use word of mouth…the possibilities are endless!

Maintaining Your Site

How will your site be maintained and updated once it has been launched? How much updating do you anticipate? Can you do it yourself? Do you have the proper software, personnel and time to maintain the site? Will there be someone available to answer e-mails from your site's visitors?

Gallantry Web Design offers you the ability to maintain it yourself, or have us maintain it for you.

Getting your business on-line is an exciting venture. With the proper planning, you are sure to develop an outstanding site!

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How long will it take to get my site up and running?

A: Once you have all the information collected and organized, getting a site up and running can take a day or two or several weeks, depending on the size and complexity of the site.

Q: How much does it cost to have a site designed?
A: The cost is dependent upon the size and scope of your web site, and whether you prefer to update it yourself, or have me make updates for you. Call 603-890-1677 or email info@gallantrywebdesign.com for a free consultation about your web site needs, and we will be happy to provide you with an estimate.

Q: What if I have already purchased a site template elsewhere?
A: We will be happy to set up your purchased template and re-create this template for the rest of your site for a fee. Please call 603-890-1677 for an estimate.

Q: What payment methods do you accept?
A: We accept all major credit cards, money orders and business checks.

Q: Can I maintain my site once it is up and running?
A: Absolutely. We suggest using WordPress or Site Commander. We can install this for you and provide a personalized guidebook for your site.

Q: Will you teach me how to maintain my website?
A: You may opt to update your content with WordPress or Site Commander. Selecting either of these options will come with personalized instructions. However, all template design changes must be made through Gallantry Web Design.

About Gallantry Web Design

Gallantry Web Design was founded in 1997 by fine artist and designer, Rebecca Gallant.

Rebecca attended Fitchburg State College, MA and studied psychology for two years before gradually switching to communications, marketing and eventually graphic design. She went on to study fine arts and furthered her studies in graphic design at U Mass Lowell.

Rebecca has worked with many clients from all backgrounds and walks of life ever since. She has designed pages for other creative individuals, such as published authors, award winning artists, sculptors and musicians. She is also adept at designing for any small business or large corporation with a keen eye on using imagery that gets buyers, clients and results.

Stephanie Baldwin - Marketing Guru

Stephanie Baldwin has over fifteen years of experience working in the marketing field for a variety of industries. In 2006 Stephanie founded marketing consulting firm, Creative E-Concepts. The core focus of Creative E-Concepts began with email marketing, but has since branched into nearly every marketing aspect to fully service their clients.

Will Fastie - Web Developer Extraordinaire

Will Fastie is a Web developer specializing in self-service Web sites for small and very small businesses. Trained in computer science at Johns Hopkins University, Will was a transaction processing systems programmer for the first decade of his career. He subsequently held positions as a computer magazine editor, a newsletter publisher, a Wall Street analyst following software companies and a CTO for a start-up before becoming a free-lance information systems consultant in the '90s.

Will is an expert in Web technologies including HTML/HTML5, CSS, JavaScript, MySQL, PHP, jQuery, and many other useful components that grace his solutions. For more details about Will and web development, visit www.fastie.com and view his portfolio.

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