

## 10 Tips for Developing a Successful Website

### 1. Be clear on your purpose.

Building a website can be a long and arduous procedure if you are not sure what you are doing. However, if you have a clear focus as to what you expect your website to do for your business/organization, things will flow much more smoothly. The purpose can be anything from selling widgets online to keeping members of your soccer team updated. Regardless, figure that out before setting sail on your journey.

### 2. Establish your target audience.

Your target audience will affect what sort of content your site includes as well as how it will look and function. Obviously, writing for kids will be much different than writing for adults. For business websites, a narrow and specific target market, will not only make it easier for you to market your product or service, it will also make it easier for customers and clients to find you.

Also, consider how many graphics and "bells and whistles" you'll want. If your audience is not very computer literate and generally includes people with slow Internet connections, it doesn't make sense to include large, slow-loading graphics, animations, and video clips. You want your site to be user friendly and don't want your visitors to leave because they've become frustrated with the navigation or because your website loads too slowly. Conversely, if your audience is the younger generation, including flashy graphics and other "fun" elements might be more appropriate and even necessary to grab their attention.

### 3. Determine your budget.

One can spend anywhere from \$99 to \$10,000+ dollars on having a website developed. Your purpose should help you decide on your budget. Remember, a website should ideally be a work in progress. Don't worry if you can't do everything you want with it initially. You can always add to it later, and it will work better for you and your customers if you keep it up—to—date and fresh.

### 4. Assess the value of your time.

Many people have undertaken to create their own websites, especially with the advent of desktop publishing programs. Still, they expend a huge amount of time and energy and end up unsatisfied with the results. While it may be true that "anyone" can design a website, the same could be said about any type of work. If it takes you hours and plenty of frustration to cut your own hair, wouldn't you be better off going to a barber or hairdresser? If you have a flair for design, feel confident in your writing and marketing skills, and have the time, knowledge, and passion to build your own website, go for it! If your

time would be more productive doing your own work and contracting out the web creation, that might be worth considering.

**5. If hiring a professional designer, make sure you are comfortable working with him/her.**

Do you feel he or she understands your vision? Does he or she provide useful ideas and solutions you hadn't thought about? Have you looked through his or her past work? Do you feel like you're getting professional service? Is the price right for your budget? What is included in the fee you will be paying?

**6. Think about how you'd like the site to look and function.**

Often you will have a logo and/or other graphics you'd like to build a design around. You probably have some colour and style preferences. Perhaps a certain font has caught your eye. If you're stumped and lacking ideas, go surfing! Look through a wide variety of websites —both your competitors' and other successful businesses/organizations. Write down (or bookmark) the sites you like and what appealed (or didn't appeal) to you. Do the same with magazine ads. You'll get a lot of inspiration.

**7. Organize and formulate a layout for the information you'd like to include.**

Assign page names to each distinct "chunk" of information and, if the total number of pages is sufficiently high (over 12, as a rule of thumb), group them into sections. This will make navigating through your site that much easier. Your designer should be able to make some recommendations in this area.

**8. Make sure you understand the importance of effective web copy (text).**

Your web copy will be determined by your purpose and your audience. On the Internet, people have very short attention spans. If they don't get the information within a few seconds they'll usually move on to the next website — possibly your competition's. Furthermore, the more you know about writing website copy, the more customers you will draw in. You can learn some basic copywriting skills yourself, or you can hire a professional copywriter to write it for you. Always make sure you know what you want to say and say it concisely. If you have the need for a lot of text that can always follow further down the page or on another page.

**9. Choose a domain name and find a hosting company.**

Your website will need to reside somewhere so that others will be able to access it. And, you'll probably want to register a domain name, such as [www.mybusiness.com](http://www.mybusiness.com). Doing so rather than using the long, awkward name

(and free web space) provided by your Internet Service Provider (ISP), sounds much more professional and is much easier for customers to remember. Choosing a good domain name can also help you get found in search engines, such as Google. You'll also get related email addresses, such as info@mybusiness.com, which, again, sound professional and reinforce your domain name. There are plenty of hosting companies out there at a variety of prices. Find one that suits your needs. Your web designer or marketing consultant should be able to help you with all of the above.

## **10. If you have a business website, develop a strategy on how you will market it.**

Having a website without visitors will get you nowhere. An analogy is writing a fantastic book, hiding it in the library, and not telling anyone about it. You will need to drive traffic to your site. There are numerous ways to do this. You can either learn to do this yourself, or hire a marketing professional to help you. Although hiring someone will increase your initial costs, it can pay off in the long run when you have more potential customers visiting your site, and ultimately increasing your sales.

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### **Juliet Austin, MA**

Marketing Coach, Consultant & Copywriter

Juliet Austin is a Marketing Coach, Consultant & Copywriter who assists counselors and other professionals in building successful practices. Her focus is on helping her clients overcome their fears, learn no or low-cost marketing strategies, create effective promotional materials, and develop and follow through on a plan of action. In addition to her coaching and consulting, Juliet offers various workshops and teleclasses on a variety of both on and off—line marketing topics. She is a graduate of CoachU and The Institute for Life Coach Training. Juliet is also a member of The School of Coaching and Director of the Canadian Office of The Institute for Life Coach Training.

### **Nathaniel Richman**

Web Designer/Developer

Nathaniel Richman has been working in the multimedia industry for over seven years. He assists ethical and socially responsible businesses and organizations to promote themselves by creating unique, professional websites and other multimedia applications, such as CD-ROMs and newsletters. He also maintains and updates several large websites. His creative, solution-oriented approach has helped a wide variety of clients to succeed online. Nathaniel holds a Certificate of Recommendation from the

Vancouver Film School and an Honours degree in Mathematics from the University of Waterloo.

Together, Juliet and Nathaniel offer website design and promotional services. Combined, they provide a unique service helping individuals, businesses and organizations make the most out of their websites.

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