

## Rutherford County Lunch & Learn

### The Top 10 Things to Look for When Building Your Website

Presented by: Jo James, Isothermal Community College

1. **Conduct market research to identify your customers, determine their needs for your products.**
  - a. Market research is the collection and analysis of data about your customers and your competition. You need to be able to create a basic profile of your customers by reviewing the following information.
    - i. Demographics: customer profile information such as age, gender, income and education. Ask yourself “Who is buying my products?”
    - ii. Webographics: customer profile that analyzes surfing and computer literacy levels of customers. The webographics determine some content for your Web site. For example; if most of your customers are dial-up, you need to keep animations and multimedia content to a minimum.
    - iii. Psychographics: customer profile that analyzes how customers feel and think in relation to what they buy. Ask yourself “Why do they buy my products?”
  - b. Use this data to determine which products you should sell and how much you should charge for the product, how you should package the product, and how to interact with the customers. For most businesses, demographics and psychographics are part of a basic marketing plan. In the move to an online presence, you need to identify webographics of customers.
2. **Set goals for the online presence of your company.**
  - a. Determine level of involvement of your company’s needs for an online presence. Start slowly and then progress to a more complex presence. If you have NO online presence, consider getting an electronic brochure (an information Web site) as a start.
    - i. Electronic Brochure: Beginning stage. Sites contain limited information about the company and often list services or products that are available. They provide contact information for the customer, often in the method of email, fax, or phone. Web site may also have simple order forms that allow customer to complete form and then fax or email order to the company.
    - ii. Corporate Expansion: Second stage. Web site includes information about the company such as corporate history, job openings and press releases. Site generally focuses on providing the customer as much information about the company as possible in an effort to build customer loyalty and promote brand recognition.
    - iii. Online buying and selling: Third stage and the company leaps into e-commerce. Provide Web shoppers with the tools to order a product and

- pay for it using a credit card or other form of electronic payment. This type of Web site uses online ordering and extensive back-end databases.
- iv. Integration: Final stage. For the most part companies have not yet evolved to this station. The online presence and offline presence are fully integrated. This stage looks like the third stage to customers, but the integration aspect incorporates all systems throughout the company.
- b. In addition to setting the goals, you need to plan on how you are going to measure the progress toward the goals.

### **3. Obtain access to the Internet and get a domain name.**

- a. ISP (Internet Service Provider): connects your computer to the Internet. The company generally houses the hardware and technical experts inside the company for daily functions.
- b. Web Hosting provider: Company (possibly an ISP) to host the Web site rather than have the hardware and technical experts inside your company, but be warned that these basic packages may not allow you to reach the higher levels of e-commerce integration such as online buying and selling and Integration.
- c. Domain name: easily recognizable name of the company such as [www.isoothermal.edu](http://www.isoothermal.edu).
- d. Cybersquatting is registering a company name and then trying to resell to its lawful owner at a profit. When you purchase a domain name, you need to understand who owns the domain name. If your company does not own the name, make sure you understand how the transfer of the ownership be handled if you change hosting services.

### **4. Establish a layout for the Website.**

- a. The layout needs to provide an idea of how many pages the Web site will contain and the navigation structure of the site.
- b. Develop content for each of the pages identified in the layout. Identify how often updating the content will occur. Content of the site is often the most difficult and time-consuming part of creating a site. Make sure your content reflects information from #1 and 2.
- c. Outsourcing may also include hiring a developer, who will come into your company and design the web site, launch and then kept on retainer for maintenance. If you outsource this part of the project, keep a close eye on the end-result, making sure that your Web site does project the proper image your company wishes to present.

### **5. Set up e-commerce ordering and payment mechanisms, consider this if you are going to buy and sell online.**

- a. Develop ordering instructions so that you can remove all obstacles that stop your customers from making a purchase.
- b. Allow shopping carts for customer shopping, but keep in mind that some customers will abandon the carts.

- c. Provide alternative methods for ordering, for those leery of providing credit card information online. Not all customers trust Web sites to protect the information needed to make an online purchase.
- d. Have a variety of electronic payment options for customers, such as credit cards, e-checks, e-cash, paypal, etc...

**6. Establish viable delivery methods for local and international customers, consider this if you are going to buy and sell online.**

- a. Theoretically, you can have customers all over the world by having an online presence
- b. Issues that need to be address before developing an international presence include exchange rates, shipping, taxation, and trade restrictions, for both the US and other countries.
- c. Issues that need to be addressed before developing a global presence
  - i. Language: Does your Web site provide content in multiple languages?
  - ii. Culture: What cultural conflicts need addressing prior to launching your web site, such as religion, business policies, color combinations, etc...
  - iii. Shipping: What can you ship (export) how much will it cost? Who pays the shipping?

**7. Identify and implement security systems.**

- a. Security refers to the techniques used to store and transfer data. Security issues you need to consider when developing your online presence.
  - i. Privacy and confidentiality: what information is gathered about the individual and how that information will be used.
  - ii. Cookies: small file that contains information about you (credit card, surfing history, etc...).
  - iii. E-mail: unsolicited email (spam). I strongly discourage use of spam as a marketing tactic!

**8. Establish inventory tracking systems and systems handling for customer service, consider this if you are going to buy and sell online.**

- a. How do customers return purchases?
- b. How do customers get refunds?
- c. How do customers track of orders?
- d. Will you build a customer profile for shoppers to make their visit memorable, and if you do – how will you address privacy and security issues?

**9. Create the Web site**

- a. You can purchase Web site design software, prices range from \$100 to \$50,000 or higher, based on the features of the packages. The more expensive packages are often e-commerce packages that provide complex e-commerce solutions to the third level (Buying and Selling online). You can also use open-source software (some of which is free) to create your own sites.

- b. Outsourcing means you hire people outside your company. You can outsource the content (the stuff on the pages) as well as creating the pages themselves. When you outsource the content portion, the cost often sky-rockets because of the workload that the developer must take on.
- c. In-house creation means that someone inside your company takes on the responsibility of creating the Web pages. If you do not have people inside the company with the proper skills, make sure they get the training needed for proper use of the tools for Web site creation. This can be done by self-study (they teach themselves), workshops (often through continuing education programs), or by going back to college for a degree (curriculum program).
- d. A StoreFront Hosting service will supply a template that allows you to fill in the blanks and for Web site creation. When you use a StoreFront, check on how “portable” your site will be. In some cases, you use software to create your Web pages that makes you completely dependent on the hosting organization – which means that if you change hosting services you have to create your site from scratch.

#### **10. Launch the Web site.**

- a. After launching, maintain the Web site and monitor its security (ongoing). Once your site is up and running, you need to keep an eye on the content. Base the frequency of reviews on the complexity of the site (see #2 above). If your site is the brochure site, you need to update it only when company information changes. If your site is a complex site offering online sales – you need to monitor the site more frequently (which may mean daily).
- b. Review the success of your site to see if it meets the goals set for the site (see #2 above). If the site fails to meet the objectives, you need to figure out why and then revise your strategy. This review is a constant process.

## Web Site Resources

### Peoples, Places, and Things

P'casso Moon Designs  
Brenda Watkins  
[pcassomoon@gmail.com](mailto:pcassomoon@gmail.com)  
828.748.5454

Digital Essentials  
Dana Whitmire  
[www.digitalesentials.com](http://www.digitalesentials.com)  
828-245-6515

Archon Creative  
Matt Tice  
[www.archoncreative.com](http://www.archoncreative.com)  
828-748-9044

DLD Webweaver  
Debbie Decosta  
[devinlee3@yahoo.com](mailto:devinlee3@yahoo.com)  
828-287-7831

**Web Pages That Suck** – See some of the worst sites and learn what not to do when you create your own site.

<http://webpagesthatsuck.com/#axzz0sGfYt1Ct>

**Open Source Alternative** – This Web site offers open source (which may mean “free”) software for creating Web sites and multimedia objects.

<http://www.osalt.com/>

**Web Monkey Developers Web site** – For those who love a challenge, this site offers online training on how to create your own Web site.

<http://www.webmonkey.com/>

**Aviary** – An online set of tools to create multimedia elements (such as video, music, and images). The site also offers tutorials on how to use the tools.

<http://aviary.com/>

**GIMP** – An open source image manipulation software (images are photos).

<http://www.gimp.org/>

**Merchant Kit** – This site offers resources for setting up an online store. NOTE: this is not a free service.

<http://www.merchantkit.com/>

**“Creating An Online Store” by Sheryl Canter** – an article in PC magazine that addresses some of the things to consider when buying and selling online.

<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,1463434,00.asp>

**“6 Ways to Sell Your Stuff Online” by Josh Catone** – An article that provides a simple overview of selling “stuff” online.

[http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/6\\_ways\\_to\\_sell\\_your\\_stuff\\_online.php](http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/6_ways_to_sell_your_stuff_online.php)

