

Intro

Like most businesses, you know you need a website - but where do you start? Getting online is not as difficult or time consuming as you may think. As part of our commitment to giving small to medium-sized businesses the tools and resources they need to succeed online, we have created this Getting Started guide.

From choosing a domain name, to finding the hosting plan that fits your needs, to navigating the processes of setting up your website, and putting your site to work for you, we've got the answers right here. We committed to one goal - to get you online easily, and keep you online successfully.

Step 1 - Securing a Domain Name

Your Domain Name is your unique online brand, and the address for your website (www.example.com) and e-mail (name@example.com). This is an important first step, because you want a Web address that makes it as easy as possible for potential customers to find you.

So, how do you select a domain name? Here are some tips to help you get started:

- Choose a domain as close to your company name as possible. If the web address you want is taken, you have a variety of alternatives. You can use a domain name that describes your product or services, or try a variation on your company name, like a hyphen or abbreviation.
- Try several variations on your desired name. Avoid overly long or complex names that will be difficult to remember.
- Names can include up to 67 alphanumeric characters, including hyphens. Names cannot begin with a hyphen, but they can begin with a number. Also, names should be at least 4 characters long.
- The extension ".com" is the most common, but you could also use .net, .org, .biz or .info. Some businesses register their name with all available extensions so their business is not accidentally confused with another, and to ensure their business is the one customers find first when looking for them.

Step 2 - Build & Host Your Website

Your website is built from a set of image and text files. Common file types you will use include HTML for text pages, and JPEG or GIF for graphic images and photos. You can also include databases, multimedia and e-commerce functionality. You can build everything yourself using an HTML editor like Homesite® and graphics programs like Photoshop®, or you can use Web design software like FrontPage® and shopping cart software like PAYPAL, which is easier for less-experienced users. There are even template-based software programs, like our Site Builder tool, that don't even require you to know HTML. Whatever your skill level, there's a tool out there for you – or use one of our expert programmer or designers to create a professional looking website.

For people to access your site, the files that make it up must be stored on a specialized computer, connected to the Internet around the clock. It's like renting a storefront at your local shopping mall, except on the Internet there's no advantage to location; you have access to the same visitors as anyone else. A Web host provides storage space, availability and security for your data, so that your website is always "on", 24x7x365.

Step 3 - Promote Your Site

Just putting your website online isn't enough. You have to promote your business online, so that potential customers can find you. Search engines are the most common way people find what they're looking for online, and can be a cheap and easy way to get your website noticed. You can submit your site yourself for free, or use a variety of software tools to help you optimize your site and submit it so that it achieves

the highest possible ranking.

Online advertising with companies like Overture® and Google™ is another way to get your site noticed. You can purchase keywords, so that when someone types those words into a search engine, your website is among the first displayed. Newsletters and email advertising are also great promotional tools, and you can create these yourself, or use tools to more quickly and easily create professional-quality marketing materials. These are just a few of the ways you can promote your business online - the important thing is that you devise a marketing plan that makes sense for your business and budget, and there are a multitude of options available to help you achieve your marketing goals.

Whether you're just getting started online, need to redesign your website, or are ready for an eCommerce solution, we make sure you have the tools and knowledge needed to succeed online. Our award-winning website management tools and hands-on consulting make maintaining your website as easy as it's ever been. Add our online marketing tools to drive the leads and sales you need to grow your business.

We will help you make the most of your online presence.