

Targeting your Success

If you are new to what it takes to build a website, then this document is the right place for you to start.

Gone are days where the web was an interesting plaything for the digerati. Millions of people have access to the Internet and each day first time users log on. A positive, professional presence on the web is a necessity in today's competitive economy. Your site is the welcoming mat for your business and where a lasting first impression is created in your customer's mind. You must get your web site right, if it does not stand out as a well designed portal to your business, your potential customers may very well leave before ever seeing what you have to offer.

We specialize in helping companies of all types to either get on the internet or to refine their current web presence. We assist you to plan, build, and promote your site and provide continuing operational support to help you make your business a success on the internet.

Your success is important to us. Whatever your objectives, our experience and resources will meet your needs.

Getting Started

If you are ready to build your site or even if you are not sure we will first work with you to clarify your vision for your site and then lead you through our building process.



Your Vision

The most successful web sites have a very clear focus. The more precise you can be about the business results you expect from your web site, the easier it will be to achieve those goals. You can think of your web site as the ambassador for your business. It sets the expectations that your customers will have for your business.

Before you meet with us, spend some time brainstorming about the vision of your website. Think through the questions below.

- What is the role your web site will play in your business?
 - How will you be marketing your business using your Website?
 - Is it a brochure or will your customer be able to do more?
 - Will customers be able to buy things from your web site or simply just tell them about products and services?
 - What interactions will it have with your customers (what will they be able to do)?
- What should your site look like? Is there a mood or emotion it should convey?
 - Spend some time browsing the internet and note the sites that you like and the ones that you don't. What kind of sites do your competitors have?
- What is the information you wish to convey?
 - A product list?
 - A description of your Services?
 - What is the value proposition of your business?
 - What actions do you want visitors to your site to take?
 - What should your contact us page say?
- How often will you maintain your web site and who will do the work?
 - Want to update the content yourself?
 - Have somebody else update the content so I can focus on what I do best – Run my Business?
 - Do some updates myself, but rely on the expertise of a web publisher and developer.

The Process

Working with us, a step-by-step guide to our process

Our refined process speeds you through your website creation and gets you the results you desire. Before you meet with us, it helps if you have a good sense of your vision for your site.

Step 1

We meet with you and talk through the vision of your site, shaped by your answers to the vision questions. The more specific direction you can give us, the faster and cheaper the process will be for you. Several re-takes of the design will cost more.

During this meeting we will also cover with you information on web hosting, domain registration, content management system, social media and analytics. You will need to decide on how to handle updates to the content. We can either perform those for you on an ongoing basis or train you to perform them yourself. Based on all these initial requirements we will provide an estimate of the total cost to you.

Step 2

We can create mockups of the website based on your input and the types of websites you like. A mockup is a visual, although non-functioning representation of your web site. Typically we will create two or three variants of the design for you to choose from. We will walk you through the flow of the website so you can see what your user will experience when visiting your site. During this meeting, we will note any modifications and then give you a second version for sign off.

Step 3

At this point we ask you to provide content for each of the pages. By content we mean all the text on your site. Since you know your business the best, content, at least initially, comes from you. However if you want a professional touch to your content, we can provide web copy resources.

Step 4

With the content and the agreed upon design, we are ready to build the site. You will get a final opportunity to review the site and make any changes before launch.

Step 5

Web site Launch. On your approval, we launch the site and celebrate a job well done!

Maintenance

After launch we move forward with any additional services that you may require such as search engine submission, maintenance/updates, and training.

Evaluate Your Content

With thanks to the School of Journalism & Library Science:

Up-to-date?

One of the quickest ways to lose your reader's interest is if your content is out of date. Make sure your date specific events, news items, indicate that the site is actively maintained.

Call to action?

What action do you want your visitor to perform? Is it clearly explained?

Coverage

What is the focus of the site? Are there clear headings to illustrate an outline of the content? Is the navigation within the website clear? Review the header for a clear title and web site description and ensure the navigation reflects content within the web site.

Objectivity

Are biases clearly stated? Are affiliations clear? Check the content for statement of purpose, to determine the type of web site and potential audience for outside links for information external to the website for graphics and cues for affiliations

Accuracy

Are sources of information and factual data listed, and available for cross-checking? Check the content for accuracy of spelling, grammar, facts (!), and consistency within website



Maintaining your website

Being up-to-date is fundamental to the success of any business. Your website is no exception. As we discussed in our search engine page, it is important to keep your site fresh with updated information and content. One of the quickest ways to lose your reader's interest is if your content is out of date.

One of the key value-add that we bring to your business, is that we design sites to be easily maintained. Whether you update your content using a content management system or have us do it. This keeps your website operational costs very low.

Since it is often more effective for you to focus on your business, Talksure provides website maintenance services. We will update your content and send out newsletters for you. We will even remind you to keep your content fresh. Why not let our professionals maintain your web site? We have the tools, the technical knowledge and the time, leaving you to do what you do best - "Running your business".

We specialize in helping small and medium businesses have a professional presence on the web just like a larger company. Even with the demise of many free services, we can provide an array of resources that can help you run your website and your business cost effectively.

We can also direct you towards great services aimed at help you spend more time running your business and less time trying to promote it.

Turn Key Sites

Many hosting companies provide templates that can be used to build a site. All that needs to be done is come up with your company logo and color scheme. If you are on a budget and your site is very small, then this "cookie cutter" approach may suite your needs. We can take advantage of site templates that can be purchased at very low cost. These templates tend to be for brochure sites and don't always scale well for dynamic sites or for easy maintenance. Talksure maintains templates which live up to our high code standards and are engineered to scale.

Website hosting

Once you have an awesome Web site, you will want to put it on the World Wide Web. The question is where and how?

Talksure International has over the years dealt with many web hosting providers. We take pride in finding the most cost effect provider that suits your pocket. For the most part free services have gone with the bust of the .com boom, but there are still some great deals out there. Talk to us to find the best service for you.

So what is a Web server or website host? Web hosting is the service of providing housing, serving, and maintaining files for any given Web site. Although computer space is provided for Web site files, more importantly, a fast connection to the Internet is needed. Web hosting allows you to use the hosting companies' fast, redundant Internet connections for serving your web site at affordable prices.

There are a wide variety of hosting services available at a wide range of costs. Many web hosting providers offer free space to post your pages. There are some drawbacks to these options such as displaying an advertisement banner on top of or within your page. However there are still a few where no banners or advertising is required by the hosting company.

Depending upon the site you choose to have, you may require a hosting provider that supports a variety of technologies. These services have remained relatively low cost and are very accessible.

If you are going to have blogs, forums, wiki, frequent questions, calendar, contact form or manage a list of customers a database is essential. In addition a programming language will all need to be JSP, PHP, .NET. Many hosting providers support these technologies and a MySQL database right out the box for a low monthly or annual fee.

We shop around and get you the best rate based on your needs.

Domain Registration

Your website will need its own web address (known as a domain).

Example: www.yourbusiness.com. Your domain is a key part of branding your business on the web. You will want to choose a domain that is easy to remember, such as Yahoo and eBay, and not subject to misspellings.

While many domains are already taken, with some creativity we can help you find a domain that suits your business. We provide domain registration services, however we do register it in your own name, so that you are the owner and have complete control. Today we can register a domain for a very reasonable price. We usually register the domain with the hosting provider we choose for you in order to save you money.

A tailored web address provides you complete influence over the image you present to your customers and demonstrates that your business is for real and one to do business with. If you have never chosen or registered a domain before, don't leave this to the amateurs.

We shop around and get you the best rate based on your needs.

Search Engine Optimization and Submission

Search Engine Optimization is a collection of techniques that helps your site rank high in the listings. We can submit your site to directories and tailor your content and link text so that the Google spider ranks it more highly.

Talksure uses some of the most powerful tools available to do this. You can save yourself time and money letting us do the work. Today, many Search Engines are emphasizing the ranking of Web sites based on the site's link popularity. This makes it very important to submit to more than just the top search engines. We have found that with regular submissions, at least once a quarter, your business can be recognized and found through search engines by potential customers.

Remember that search sites receive so many requests that it can take them several weeks to update their listings to include your web site.

Helpful Information Overview

We know that you have lots of questions about the internet and building web sites, so in this section we give you some information on types of websites and search engines.

Every web site is unique and serves different business needs but they can be grouped into types based on how they interact with a visitor.

A key part of web site design is how the pages link to each other. You want your visitors to easily click through your site, finding the information or product they need. As you can imagine there are a variety of different ways to organize this navigation flow and what we choose for you is dependent on what is best to promote your business.

How are your customers going to find your site? There are millions of web sites out there and you need to think about how your customer is going to get to yours. One key strategy to make sure that a search on the internet finds your site. If you have a web site, it is helpful to know what a search engine is and how users find your site.

Don't neglect other ways to drive traffic to your site. Newsletters, print advertising, and affiliate programs are all worth considering.

Content Management Systems

[Wikipedia](#) defined a content management system (CMS) as "a system used to manage the content of a Web site". This is true; CMS was around long before the web. Web content management systems are typically used for storing, controlling, versioning, and publishing content to a website. Whether it is documentation, articles, manuals or marketing brochures CMS not only provides the abilities listed above, but can actively support collaborative publishing and complex business workflow to ensure the accuracy and manageability of updating a website.

We have worked with many CMS over the years. Everything from the small open source product like Drupal & Mambo to large enterprise tools like Interwoven Teamsite. Here is a short list of CMS products that we can use in hosted solutions:

- Joomla
- Wordpress
- Drupal
- Mambo
- Post Nuke

Community Websites

What are community web sites?

Community web sites are sites where the information and content is driven by its visitors. These sites provide the ability for its members to share information with each other. This information comes in many forms; Blogs, Forums, Wiki, Personals, Photo Galleries, RSS and many more.

Community Web sites are big business today and are often referred to as Web 2.0 by those in the biz. There are many very successful sites that have established themselves as leaders; myspace.com and youtube.com are just two.

Is a community web site right for my business?

It depends! Just like any web site it requires a lot of marketing and effort to get off the ground, but once it's growing can often run very successfully on its own. One of the key benefits of a community web site is that the members contribute to the content- FOR FREE. This makes it a cheap way to have content added and reduces the burden on the business owner.

We've seen it work really well in the Service, Product and Recreational industry. Companies, that rely on word of mouth and communication between these customers benefit greatly because they share information like events, special offers and announcements.

Definitions:

BLOGS - A Blog (a portmanteau of web log) is a website where entries are written in chronological order and commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries...<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog>

FORUM -An Internet forum is a web application for holding discussions and posting user generated content. Internet forums are also commonly referred to as web ...http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_forum

RSS - RSS (formally "RDF Site Summary", known colloquially as "Really Simple Syndication") is a family of Web feed formats used to publish frequently updated content such as blog entries, newsletters, news headlines or podcasts. An RSS document, which is called a "feed", "web feed", or "channel", contains either a summary of content from an associated web site or the full text.

WIKI - A wiki is a type of computer software that allows users to easily create, edit and link web pages. Wikis are often used to create collaborative websites...
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>

Types of Websites

What type of site do I need?

There are three basic types of web site:

- Information or Brochure sites
- Interactive Sites
- E-commerce sites

INFORMATION or BROCHURE SITES

Those sites that can only be browsed by the user. They cannot leave any information, nor can they download information. These are the simplest type of sites and by far the most common on the web currently.

INTERACTIVE SITES

The interactive web site is a site where visitors can either request information, leave comments or where they can download information, software or graphics. Other forms of interactivity such as chat rooms, blogs, and message boards are becoming very popular. This type of site is becoming more popular as the underlying technology is more widely available and less expensive.

E-COMMERCE SITES

The best known example of a E-Commerce site is amazon.com. These sites provide an online shopping experience for the user. Generally they provide a shopping cart that the user places their items into and a secure checkout where payment is accepted. If you want to sell your products online you will need a E-Commerce site.

E-Commerce: to have or not to have?

E-Commerce website is a completely different type of site. Fortunes have been made and lost in this area (remember WebVan?) and there is a lot of hype around E-Commerce sites. However having a complementary set of products online that supplement your main business can be an easy way to expand your existing business.

Is the site architecture flexible enough to meet future business and commercial requirements?

When planning your website don't forget future developments, new product ranges, new corporate image or a change of address. These changes and undoubtedly many others will occur during the life of your website so it is important that your site design is flexible enough to grow with your business.

Website Organization

You want to make sure your users find what they are looking for on your website. The navigation of your site guides your user to the desired end result, whether that be purchasing a product or finding out information about your business.

Linear

Linear websites are like books. The site visitor accesses the pages one after the other. This type of design is best if the user is performing a task that has a couple of steps, for example registering to attend a seminar.

Hierarchical

Hierarchical structures work really well for browsing through sites for information. In this type of site there are multiple paths a user can take. If your company provides many services and products, this organizational structure may work well for you.

Circular or Web

The Hierarchical structure does not work as well for larger sites. If you have enough content or topics so that users need to click through several levels to get to the information they need, then a simple hierarchy will frustrate them and they will click away. Many of today's web sites have a multiple navigational styles where you can jump to multiple pages from any page. Circular sites provide entry pages where you can reach all the relevant pages. A true web structure allows you to reach any page from anywhere.

Your site

Unless your site is very simple, we will combine a number of the structures above so that the user can easily find what he or she is looking for.

Linear



Hierarchical



Circular



Web



Search Engines

What are search engines?

Most of us know the answer to this and have used one at some point. Typically Search Engines are websites that help people search the web or a specific website, but not all search engines are the same.

Search engines come in two flavors, crawler-based and directories. These two types of search engines gather their listings in very different ways.

Human-Powered Directories

A human-powered directory, such as Yahoo, depends on humans for its listings. Your site is reviewed by an editor and if deemed worthy, they add it to directory. You can submit your site to directories. It is important to provide an accurate description of your site in these submissions.

Changing your web pages has no effect on your listing. Things that are useful for improving a listing with a search engine have nothing to do with improving a listing in a directory. The only exception is that a good site, with good content, might be more likely to get reviewed for free than a poor site.

Crawler-Based Search Engines

Crawler-based search engines, such as Google, create their listings automatically. They "crawl" or "spider" the web and then store the information it finds in an "index" (also called a catalog) that are used to provide search results for the search engine users.

If you change your web pages, crawler-based search engines will find these changes, and that can affect how you are listed. The more often your pages change, the more often your site is spidered. This is why keeping your content fresh is so important. Page titles, body copy and other elements all play a role.

A question on everyone's mind is how to improve their Google ranking. Google is really a popularity contest. While there are multiple factors to consider, essentially the more sites that link to yours, the higher your rank will be.