

Using Your Web Site to Market Your Rating Services

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First...

You Need all the Pieces in Place

- ◆ The right domain name
- ◆ The right emails setup
- ◆ Need to know your target audience
- ◆ Need to have A site with good content
- ◆ Your site needs to be easy to navigate
- ◆ Your site needs to be pleasing to the eye
- ◆ You need to have the right host

The slide features a dark blue background with a light blue grid. A vertical line is on the left, and a horizontal line is at the top. A small circle is at the intersection of the vertical line and the top horizontal line. Another horizontal line is below the main title, and a vertical line is on the right. A small circle is at the intersection of the right vertical line and the bottom horizontal line.

The Right Domain Name

The First Step

Register a Domain Name

- ◆ Pick something that people can associate with your company
- ◆ Pick something easy to remember
- ◆ BuyDomains.com (\$16/year) & Others
- ◆ Main choices .com .net .org
- ◆ New choices
.info .biz .cc .us .ws .name
- ◆ If name is taken, try adding a dash

Domain Examples

- ◆ Natresnet.org
- ◆ Buildingscience.com
- ◆ Naseo.org
- ◆ Energyscience.org
- ◆ Buildersintegritygroup.com
- ◆ Ecodeck.com
- ◆ BuiltWrightInc.com

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Email Setup

Use Your Domain

Email Setup

- ◆ Nothing looks less professional than using an AOL address for your business
- ◆ Setup email addresses for all your staff:
randy@rlmartin.com
- ◆ Setup a general email address for your web site (e.g. info@yourdomain.com) something that you can change frequently to combat spam
- ◆ Make sure your email address is on your business card and all other information you give out


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Web Sites that Work

The Planning Phase

Keys to a Successful Web Site

- ◆ Good, useful content
- ◆ Well organized, easily accessible content
- ◆ Well written, easily read content
- ◆ A consistent and attractive appearance



The most important factors in creating a good site are having good content, planning its presentation well and understanding and responding to the needs of your audience. The bells and whistles are nice and may add to the user experience but they will not compensate if the basics are wrong.

-- Katherine Nolan
Web Design Author

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Target Audience

Who's going to visit your site?

Determine Your Target Audience

- ◆ Homebuilders?
- ◆ Homeowners?
- ◆ Government Officials?
- ◆ Real Estate Agents?
- ◆ Building Code Officials?

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Content

What are you going to include?

Make a List

- ◆ List everything you want to include on your site
- ◆ Information about your company
- ◆ Information about your product(s) or service(s).
- ◆ FAQ
- ◆ Other Sites to Link

What Does Your Target Audience Want?

- ◆ You need to determine what each target audience would be looking for on your site
- ◆ What content can you include in your site for each of your targets
- ◆ Arrange your list for each target
- ◆ Arrange it as content for now and content to add later

Content Questions?

- ◆ Do you have content relevant to your users?
- ◆ Will they be able to understand it as it currently exists?
- ◆ Do you want to cater for these users at all?
- ◆ Is there content that is, honestly, of no great interest to anyone?
- ◆ Is there content you had not planned but might now aim to include at a later date?

Site Navigation

- ◆ Is clear -- it looks like navigation
- ◆ Leads to obvious content - users have a good idea what they will find if they click a particular link
- ◆ Is consistent with other navigation controls
- ◆ Is predictable in its style and location on the page

Navigation Categories

- ◆ Main Navigation
- ◆ Subsidiary Navigation
- ◆ Secondary Navigation

Main Navigation

- ◆ Should appear on ALL pages in the same style and in the same place.
- ◆ Placing it on the left or the top is generally a good idea since this is where people expect to find it.

Subsidiary Navigation

- ◆ Navigation specific to a particular section
- ◆ Can be integrated with Main Navigation like pop-ups, drop downs, etc.
- ◆ Can have intro paragraph and text links within sections

Secondary Navigation

- ◆ Site maps, search pages, drop-down boxes
- ◆ These may be on special pages or selected pages only or may appear on all pages
- ◆ Links within the page content are NOT navigation; they may be used, and should be, but should not be the main or the only way to reach that content.

Secondary Navigation

- ◆ If a user gets lost then a drop down box, search function or a site map provides an opportunity for them to quickly re-orientate themselves or get back to a familiar page
- ◆ A site map page can provide more detail about what is in each section of the site than a navigation bar can.
- ◆ Secondary navigation provides a fast way for users to get to content at a deep level, especially in areas of the site where there is a lot of content.

Site Navigation

- ◆ Links to other sites should NEVER appear in the main navigation controls

General Considerations

- ◆ Keep main navigation as short and simple as possible.
- ◆ No more than 10 -12 links in your main navigation.
- ◆ If the site is large, then you may want prominent links to Search | Site Map | Home, etc.

General Considerations

- ◆ Always link your main site logo to the home page. Users expect this.
- ◆ If a different logo or header graphic is used to indicate sections these should link to the main section page.
- ◆ Include a text version of your navigation at the bottom of each page.

Focus on the User

- ◆ Is it clear to the each user the path they need to follow to reach the content they are looking for from the home page?
- ◆ You should keep the number of clicks to no more than 3 for a user to find the information they want.
- ◆ If a user enters the site in the middle in the 'wrong' section, can they easily get to where they want to be?

Problems with Frames

- ◆ Many users find frames annoying and the benefits of having an 'always available' navigation bar are questionable.
- ◆ If users arrive on a page without the frame, they won't be able to go anywhere.
- ◆ Its difficult for users to bookmark a page in frames since the URL in the address bar will always be the same.
- ◆ Some search engines can't navigate a framed site and you won't be indexed.

The slide features a dark blue background with a light blue grid. A white horizontal line is positioned above the word 'Outline', and another white horizontal line is positioned below it. A white vertical line is on the left side, and another is on the right side. Small white circles are at the intersections of these lines: one at the top-left, one at the bottom-right, and one at the intersection of the two horizontal lines.

Outline

Organizing your content?

Develop Outline

- ◆ Clear to the user and to you
- ◆ Flexible enough to cope with change

Two Types of Organization

- ◆ Content based organization
- ◆ User based organization

Content Based Rater Site

- ◆ Who We Are
- ◆ Services
- ◆ FAQs
- ◆ New Construction
- ◆ Existing Homes
- ◆ Related Sites
- ◆ Contact Us
- ◆ www.builtwrightinc.com

User Based Organization Site

- ◆ Home Buyer
- ◆ Home Builder
- ◆ Supplier/Subcontractor
- ◆ Developer Planner
- ◆ Lender
- ◆ Real Estate / Sales
- ◆ Government Official
- ◆ www.builtgreen.org

The slide features a dark blue background with a light blue grid. A white L-shaped line is positioned in the top-left corner, with a small white circle at its intersection. Another white L-shaped line is in the bottom-right corner, also with a small white circle at its intersection. A horizontal white line spans the width of the slide, and a vertical white line spans its height, intersecting at the center.

Design Ideas

What should your site look like?

General Design Tips

- ◆ Ideally, main page and all links should be able to be viewed without scrolling
- ◆ Site should have a consistent look
- ◆ Design for a screen size of:
640x480 or 800x600
- ◆ Pages need to load quickly
- ◆ Contact information on every page
- ◆ Every graphic should have alternative text
- ◆ Don't use animated gimmicks

Color and Readability

- ◆ In most cases areas intended for reading look best with a white background and black text.
- ◆ A lot of people are color blind – be conscious of this when choosing background and text combinations
- ◆ Avoid putting text on any but the most subtle background image
- ◆ Reverse text is very hard on the eye.

Web Safe Colors

- ◆ Some older computers can only display 256 colors. If an unavailable color is specified these computers will replace it with the nearest equivalent.
- ◆ Check your site with your monitor set at 256 colors to see what it would look like. You can do this in Windows by choosing Start / Control Panel / Display Settings and changing your color settings.

Consistent Design

- ◆ Consistency is at the heart of good web design.
- ◆ Color consistency is important. You can change colors for different sections of your site, but not randomly.
- ◆ Positional consistency is also important. Navigation bars, navigation text, location indicators, logos, footer information and so on should be in the same place on each page.

Consistent Design

- ◆ The width of margins, the positioning of images within articles, the size of photographs, the amount of space around text and images, the positioning and style of captions for images and so on should also be consistent.
- ◆ Use Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) to control as many aspects as possible of the page design. There is an introduction to using CSS here: www.outfront.net/articles/css1.htm

Images

- ◆ Images should be relevant to the site
- ◆ All graphic elements need to be chosen carefully to avoid an amateurish appearance.
- ◆ Using images just because you have them, usually detracts more than it adds.
- ◆ What about animated gifs? Just say NO!!! Especially to spinning globes and cute little running dogs!
- ◆ Keep them small.
- ◆ Always use the Alt text function.

What About Flash

- ◆ Flash animation is fun to create and can be used to present content in a manner that would be impossible with HTML.
- ◆ Overuse or inappropriate use of Flash however is a scourge which stalks the Internet.

What About Flash

- ❖ Creating a splash page with fancy animation is almost always an example of abuse. Its a barrier to users accessing information and no matter how entertaining the animation, it is a bore the 10th time you see it.
- ❖ Small flash animations embedded in a page or use of flash to provide demonstrations or content geared to specific audiences can be a good use of the technology.
- ❖ In every case though you should provide an alternative for non-flash users.

Fonts and Text

- ◆ Can't use just any font. Viewers must have that font on their computer. You are stuck with primarily Arial, or Times New Roman
- ◆ Size: 10-12pt - Don't go less than 10pt.
- ◆ Width: Don't use wide lines of text. Anything more than 10 to 12 words per line.
- ◆ Never use underlines for emphasis.
- ◆ Alignment: Align text left. Justified doesn't work well on web pages.

Writing is Different

- ◆ It is more difficult to read from a screen
- ◆ Web users tend not to read full articles but rather short chunks of the page in search of what they need
- ◆ Readers tend to be impatient and want fast access to information
- ◆ Good writing for the web will be clear, concise, relevant, scannable, consistent and error free.

Web Friendly Writing

- ◆ Use a brief style of writing with much less use of adverbs and adjectives than would be the norm for print
- ◆ Keep to the point, if additional information or an explanation seems necessary for some readers consider providing a hyperlink
- ◆ Use short paragraphs of no more than 8 to 12 lines, shorter if possible.
- ◆ Keep sentences short; never use two sentences where one would do.

Web Friendly Writing

- ◆ Think about the different ways you could present information. Would a diagram or a bulleted list work better than a paragraph? If so it will add variety, attract the user's attention and may also reduce the amount of text needed.
- ◆ Edit, edit and edit again. Delete unnecessary words or sentences; consider how things could be rephrased more concisely.

Web Friendly Writing

- ◆ Extract information from your text and display it separately. For example if you had a series of articles about flowers you could have a standard section at the top of each listing Latin name, common names, flowering season, color, habitat and so on. This would both lighten your text and provide users with a lot of information at a glance. Web users like information at a glance!

Behavior of Users

- ◆ Most web users are impatient most of the time. Few settle down in front of the computer for a good read.
- ◆ Most web users are searching for a particular nugget of information and will filter out just about everything else.

Behavior of Users

- ◆ When they open a page web users do not start reading, they quickly scan the page to see if it seems likely to have the information they are seeking. If it is not immediately obvious that it does they will probably leave.
- ◆ The fact that web access in many areas is paid for by time adds a certain urgency to all this.

Creating 'Scannable' Pages

- ◆ Don't fight the web users' love of scanning pages: facilitate it.
- ◆ Use frequent and meaningful subheadings within your text.
- ◆ Highlight words by making them bold or italicized but don't underline them unless they really are hyperlinks.
- ◆ Use 'pull quotes' in larger text in a margin or within the article itself.

Creating 'Scannable' Pages

- ◆ Use a contents list at the top of a long page, linking to the appropriate part of the article. You will see this at the top of glossary pages where it is possible to jump to a specific letter or on FAQs pages where the questions are listed at the top.
- ◆ Use a summary of the article, either on the same page or a page linking to the actual article. If you choose the latter link back to the summary at the top of the second page.

Using Hyperlinks

- ◆ Links within your text are an extremely important part of writing for the Internet. Whether the links are to another place in your site or another site entirely the destination of all links should be immediately clear. Linked text stands out from surrounding text and is very important to users scanning a page.

Using Hyperlinks

- ◆ As a general rule if you mention companies or organizations their names should be links, the first time they are mentioned at least. Similarly if you refer to another article at your site a link should be provided to that article. Saving links for the end of the article, in the hope of preventing users from leaving your site, is both ignoring the point of the Internet and futile.

Designing for Maintenance

- ◆ Some designs are easier to update than others
- ◆ Any thing that is repetitive should be saved as a separate file to include on your pages

Designing for Maintenance

- ◆ Using includes for:
 - Headers
 - Logos
 - Navigation buttons
 - Footers
- ◆ Use Cascading Style Sheets

Types of Designs

- ◆ Text covering the page
- ◆ Color bar on left
- ◆ Graphic intro page
- ◆ Complete graphic design
- ◆ Flash sites

Site Organization

- ◆ Don't put all files in main folder
- ◆ Design folders so addresses to pages make sense and are as short as possible
(e.g. www.naseo.org/events/)
- ◆ Use the default file names for main pages in folders so you don't have to type the file name

Don'ts

- ◆ Don't put all your information on one page
- ◆ Don't fill the front page with 100s of links
- ◆ Don't try to use every color in the rainbow
- ◆ Don't use page counters
- ◆ Don't put under construction
- ◆ Don't post links that don't work
- ◆ Don't have misspellings
- ◆ Don't make it hard to find your contact information

Web Hosting

Where do you put your site?

Typical Web Hosting

- ◆ Setup Cost: \$35-50
- ◆ FrontPage Server Extensions / FTP Access
- ◆ Web Space: 10-100MB
- ◆ Email Addresses: 5-Unlimited, Unlimited aliases
- ◆ Stats: some include

Web Site Promotion

“You can have the most beautiful web site and the best product, but if no one can find it, you are wasting your time and your money”

Promoting Your Web Site

- ◆ Direct Marketing
- ◆ Semi-Direct Marketing
- ◆ Indirect Marketing

Direct Marketing

- ◆ Put Web address on all your printed and promotional materials
 - Business cards
 - Stationary
 - Signature on all email
 - Vehicles
 - Signs
 - Exhibits
 - All printed promotional materials

Step 1: Defining Your Objectives

- ◆ Most people skip this step
- ◆ Its as important as a business plan
- ◆ What do you expect to gain from having a web site?
 - Do you wish to provide information to your customers?
 - Do you wish to brand your company, creating a particular image?
 - Do you wish to sell a product or service?

Step 2: Define Your Target Audience

- ◆ Who will benefit from coming to your web site?
- ◆ Write them down
- ◆ Don't put "General Public", be specific
- ◆ Write down at least 3 or 4
- ◆ My Target Audience

Step 3: Research, Research,....

- ◆ Research other web sites that provide the same or similar services
- ◆ Forget that you have every heard of your product or service
- ◆ Write down 4-6 “keywords” or “keyword phrases” that you would use to type into a search engine
- ◆ Choosing the right “keywords” is critical

...and More Research

- ◆ Do people search for words using singular or plurals?
- ◆ Do people search for words in the past, present or future tense?
- ◆ Do most people search for words using adjectives?
- ◆ Do most people search for single or multiple words?
- ◆ Answers depend on age, education, region or topic

Step 4: Know the Search Engines

- ◆ All search engines index differently
- ◆ They all vary in the time it takes to index a site
- ◆ There are companies that specialize in getting you listed in the top 10

Main Search Engines

- ◆ Google
- ◆ MSN Search
- ◆ Alta Vista
- ◆ Excite
- ◆ Infoseek
- ◆ HotBot
- ◆ Lycos
- ◆ Webcrawler
- ◆ Yahoo

Search Engine Preparation

- ◆ Make list of keywords that you think people would use to find you
- ◆ Write brief description
- ◆ Add meta tags to your site
- ◆ Some index text in the Page Title
- ◆ Some require text on the front page

Meta Tags

- ◆ `<meta name="description" content="Built Green Colorado is a statewide program promoting green building in the Denver metro area and all of Colorado. Built Green is operated by the HBA of Metro Denver. The program promotes energy and resource efficient new construction in Colorado.">`
- ◆ `<meta name="keywords" content="built green, BUILT GREEN, green building, resource efficient, green builder, denver, colorado, CO, denver hba, hba of denver, hba of metro denver">`

Step 5: Search Engine Submission

- ◆ Use Free Submission Pages
- ◆ Go to Each Search Engine and submit
- ◆ Use one of the Submit to 500 for \$49.95
- ◆ Hire a professional search engine placement specialist

Search Engines

- ◆ **1st Goal:** They can easily find you when they know your name
- ◆ **2nd Goal:** They can find you if they are looking for you, but don't know your name
- ◆ **3rd Goal:** They can find you when they don't know you but are looking for what you do or sell

Step 6: Setup Reciprocal Links

- ◆ Using Reciprocal links is as effective if not more effective than using search engines
- ◆ You need a links page on your site to reciprocate

Step 7: Tracking Your Marketing Efforts

- ◆ Create a leader page for each web site that is customized for that web site
- ◆ Track your visitors
 - Detailed access reports
 - How many and what pages
- ◆ Leader pages allow you to see where people came to you from

Search Engine Summary

- ◆ Define your objectives
- ◆ Define your target audience
- ◆ Research, research and more research
- ◆ Know the search engines
- ◆ Submit your site to the search engines
- ◆ Setup reciprocal links
- ◆ Track your marketing efforts

Credits

- ◆ “Creating a Useable Web Site”
by Katherine Nolan
- ◆ “The Step by Step Guide to
Successfully Promoting a Web Site”
by John R. DeUlloa

The slide features a dark blue background with a light blue grid. A white crosshair is centered on the slide, with a small white circle at each of the four intersections. The word "Questions" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font in the upper-left quadrant of the slide.

Questions