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1 Introduction

This complimentary tip sheet aims to provide some unbiased advice on creating a web presence for your business.

Feedback and questions are welcome at info@webilicious.com.au.

2 Do You Really Need a Web Site?

Only you can answer this question but consider the following:

- You may have plenty of work at the moment and see no reason to have a web site, but what happens when there is a downturn in your business?
- Should clients be able to find you on the web for you to look professional?
- Some clients may still use the Yellow Pages, but how many of your potential clients prefer to search online for your products or services?
- Can you justify spending a minimum of \$150 each year for domain registration (the web address) / domain hosting (where the web site lives)?

Did You Know?...

In 2008, only 26.8% of Australian micro businesses (0 to 4 employees) had a web site¹.

3 Web Site Types

There are three main types of web site:

- “template web site”
- “content management system”
- “custom design”

A “template web site” is created by selecting options and entering information on a series of forms on the web to create a simple web site very quickly.

A “content management system” is web site software that can be set up to allow the owners to create and manage content with no special programming knowledge or tools.

A “custom design” is one where code is written by a programmer specifically for your web site.

The following table explains some of the differences between the three types of web site.

	Template Web Site	Content Management System (e.g. Joomla)	Custom Design
Time to set up:	Quick.	Medium.	Tends to take longer.
Flexibility:	Usually poor.	Good.	Good.
Relative Cost:	Low.	Medium.	Tends to be high.
Scalability:	Usually poor.	Good.	Depends on design.
Delivery:	Quick.	Medium.	Tends to be slow.
Content Updates:	Varies.	Easy.	Depends on design.
Support:	Varies.	Good.	Depends on designer.
Uniqueness of Design:	Usually poor.	Good.	Excellent.
Security:	Varies.	Good.	Depends on design.
Functionality:	Usually poor.	Good.	Depends on design.

4 Choosing the Type of Web Site

Work out the purpose of your web site before deciding what type of web site is suitable for you.

Note that I am not endorsing or promoting the services listed below (except my own!) but only mention them here as examples of the types of services available. This information can quickly become out of date and you should do your own research.

If the only reason you need a web site is to have your contact details on the web, then a simple “template web site” may be suitable. Some examples of “template web site” suppliers are:

<http://www.bounce.com.au>
<http://www.ezsite.com.au>
<http://www.vistaprint.com.au>
<http://www.yola.com>

If you need something that will grow with your business and not cost too much money then a “content management system” web site may be more appropriate. Some examples of “content management system” web site suppliers are:

<http://www.businesscontent.com.au>
<http://www.footefrancis.com.au>
<http://openwire.com.au>
<http://www.webilicious.com.au> ← **shameless plug!**
<http://www.thewebshowroom.com.au>

If you need a unique web site and are prepared to pay for a customised solution, then a “custom design” web site may be suitable. Some examples of “custom design” web site suppliers are:

<http://www.2roomsinteractive.com.au>

<http://www.ology.com.au>

5 Choosing a Web Designer

It is important to understand that “Web Designer” seems to have become a generic term encompassing many different skills. These are:

- **web design:** layout, look and navigation of the web site
- **web development:** the technical “behind the scenes” functionality of the web site
- **graphic design:** the images and colours of the web site including logos
- **Internet marketing:** the strategy for how the web site helps achieve the traffic and sales that you are after

It is rare to find an individual that has all of these skills. This may not matter for a simple web site but if you have some particular technical requirements (for example), then you should be hiring someone who is a good web developer rather than just a designer.

Services such as www.odesk.com enable you to outsource web design and development jobs to countries with lower wages and this can be a way to save you money. You may prefer to work with someone locally especially if you would like to meet face to face. Local service providers are more likely to be aware of local conditions such as enabling a shopping cart to handle GST correctly.

In either case, there are a number of precautions you can take to ensure that you get the best value for money. By asking a few key questions, you should quickly be able to tell if the web designer/developer is going to be able to deliver a quality web site or not. If it is not apparent from the service provider web site, some questions you should probably ask are as follows:

Who controls the domain name?

How much will domain registration and hosting cost?

Does the hosting provider have an up-time guarantee?

Show me some examples of your work?

Do you have any references that I can contact?

What will it cost?

When will it be delivered?

What documentation will be delivered with the web site?

How will I maintain the site after it is delivered?

How will the site be optimised for search engines?

With which web browsers will the site work?

How portable will my web site be if I decide to move it to another service provider?

How will my web site be backed up?

Do you offer a guarantee?

Some questions your proposed web designer/developer should be asking you:

What are your business goals for the website?
How will the success of the web site be measured?
Who is the target audience?
How should the website be maintained?
How many pages will the website have?
What is your budget?
What are the technical and functional requirements of the web site?
When does the web site need to be ready?
Who will supply the content?
Who will be maintaining the content?

Did You Know?...

Of the (mostly) sole traders who were asked why they don't have a web site, *"the main reasons given were a fairly equal mix of time and financial constraint".²*

6 References

1. "81660DO001_200708 Summary of IT Use and Innovation in Australian Business, 2007-08", Australian Bureau of Statistics
2. "Understanding Micro Business, 2008 - Australia's Largest Solo & Micro Business Survey" Flying Solo

