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A Beginner's Guide to Getting a Website

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My "Ah-Ha" Moment

I recently met someone and learned that, coincidentally, he had just been on our website looking at our portfolio and prices. He said he definitely needed a website.

"Why didn't you call us after you looked at our site?" I asked. He had said he liked our work and liked our prices, so I sincerely wanted to know what had prevented him from following through.

"I don't know anything about getting a website," he confessed. "I didn't want to call until I was better prepared."

"Ah-ha," I thought! For years we'd been helping our clients learn about what's involved in getting a website, what are smart practices and what are not. But we hadn't provided enough information in simple enough terms that a total novice would feel comfortable and confident before even making that first call.

This guide is our attempt to remedy that feeling of apprehension some people may feel when they first delve into the wonderful world of web design.

The Short Answer

First, allow me to reassure you: You do *not* need to read this entire guide from start to finish. You can skim through the parts that interest you or just skip it altogether. We can help you through each step of getting a website without the need for you to be familiar with everything listed here.



All you have to do is call us at (877) WEB-0050. We can talk you through each step as we go. This guide is just for those people who need a little more information before feeling ready to make that call. We hope that you'll decide to call us after reading this guide or even *instead* of reading this guide!

What is a Website?

Of course, when you're learning the absolute basics, the first few things to consider are, "What is a website, and do I really need one?" Let's start with a few definitions:

Web Page – A web page is an electronic file that typically presents information such as text and possibly photographs. It is viewable using a web browser.

Web Browser – A web browser is a computer software program used to view web pages. Typical web browser programs include Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Safari, Opera, and Chrome.

Website, Home Page, and Sub Pages - A website is a collection of web pages that go together. For example, let's say you go to a website called MyCompanyWebsite.com. When going directly to the website address like this, the first web page you'll typically reach is the home page of that site. Let's say from there you have the option of going to four other pages: About Us, Our Services, Testimonials, and Contact Us. Typically, each time you click on one of those links, you go to another web page for that company. The home page plus those four other pages, referred to as sub pages, make up the whole website. Sometimes people use the term website when they mean web page and vice versa.

World Wide Web – This term refers to the collection of websites available on the Internet. Since websites typically link to other websites, the imaginary lines linking from one website to another may be thought of as being similar to a spider's web.

Internet – The Internet refers to the connection between computers in remote locations. (Connections to computers in the same building are typically called a network.) An Internet connection is required in order to be able to view web pages and to send and receive email.

Internet Access Provider or Internet Service Provider (ISP) – These terms refer to the company one uses to connect to the Internet. Common Internet Access Providers include AT&T, EarthLink, Comcast, NuVox, and other telephone and communications companies. Internet Access is not the same thing as a website, website hosting, or email, although Internet Access Providers may offer these services.

Email – The term "email" or "e-mail" is an abbreviation for electronic mail. It refers to typed messages that can be sent electronically. An email address will always include the @ symbol. For example, myname@mycompanywebsite.com is an email address because the @ in the middle gives it away. If the address were only mycompanywebsite.com, that refers to a website address. Website addresses may or may not include www. at the beginning of it. These days, most (but not all) websites can be reached with or without typing in the www. at the beginning of the website address.

Blog – The word blog came about as a shortened version of the term *web log*, as it started out primarily as a few individuals kept an online journal, making regular posts about what was going on in their daily lives. Surprisingly, enough people found it interesting that *blogging* (publishing regular posts online) evolved into a hobby for many people. As the *bloggers* (those people publishing a blog) began to focus on niche subject matter instead of just what they ate for breakfast, the interest grew exponentially. Today, millions of people read and write blogs regularly. Many bloggers get nothing but the personal satisfaction that comes from publishing a blog. Others may have built up enough traffic to their blog-based websites that they get revenue from advertisements on their site. People also use blogs to boost their reputation as an expert and thus garner additional revenue at their primary business. At Griffin Web Design, **we set up blog-based sites (meaning we install Wordpress [the most common blogging software] on our web hosting server, modify the Wordpress template graphics to make the site suit your subject, and provide you with the login) for a one time setup fee of \$325 plus \$20 per month hosting. (Fully custom blog sites start at \$825.)** This can be done as a stand-alone website or as a complement to a full website.

Flash Animation – Anytime you see something moving on a website, that's animation. There are several different techniques that can be used to add animation to a website. One of the most common, robust ways to do it is to use a technology called Flash.

Interactive Forms – When you have the option to type directly into a webpage and submit the information, that is an interactive form. Typically, the form will email the information you submit to the intended recipient. It may also save the information in a database.

Do I Really Need a Website?

Not every company needs a website... but more do than don't! Below are a few types of businesses that may really benefit from a website a few that may not.

BUSINESS TYPES THAT MAY BENEFIT BY HAVING A WEBSITE

Businesses Desiring an Enhanced Image – A professional website can showcase your work and present an image that lets people know you are serious about your work.

Businesses Desiring More Customers – More and more people use the Internet to find the business professionals they want to work with. If you want more customers, it's pretty important to have a website.

Businesses Desiring More Employees – Potential employees often use the Internet to decide whom they'd like to work for. If your company wants more employees or better employees, it's a great idea to have a professional website that presents your company in a positive light.

Businesses Desiring Streamlined Business Processes

If your staff spends time faxing or emailing information to clients, or repeating the same information on the phone, then offering an informative website can save you time.

BUSINESS TYPES THAT ARE LESS LIKELY TO BENEFIT BY HAVING A WEBSITE

Certain Small-Town Businesses – If your business is located in a prominent location in a small town, and all of your customers already reside in that town, a website may not make a big improvement in your business.

Low Cash Flow Businesses – If your income is very low or very sporadic, it may not make sense for you to invest in a website that will cost you fees to host and possibly to update as necessary. Unless the point of the website is to streamline your processes, you may be better off waiting until you have a solid business plan to smooth out the rough spots in your cash flow.

Saturation Point Businesses – If your business cannot handle adding any more customers, adding a website may not be a wise investment. Unless the point of the website is to streamline your processes, it would be better to focus on your management first, so you can be prepared for more customers in the future.

What's Involved in Getting a Website?

So now you have a basic understanding of what a website is, and we'll assume you've decided your business needs one. Next we'll talk about the basic steps involved in getting a website.

There are five main elements to a website. I'll list them off first, then go into the explanations and details next:

- 1. A Domain Name**
- 2. Setup (Design and Optional Backend Enhancements)***
 - *BONUS – How to Choose a Good Web Designer**
 - *BONUS – What a Web Designer Will and Will Not Do**
 - *BONUS – What to Expect From the Design Process**
- 3. Hosting the Website**
- 4. Getting Traffic to the Website**
- 5. Updating or Maintaining the Website**

Now the details:

ELEMENT #1 - Domain Names, Website Addresses, and URLs **Typically \$10 to \$35 per year**

Why do those techies have to have so many different terms? Well, I can't answer that one for you, but I can tell you that these three terms are commonly used interchangeably to refer to the same thing: The website name/location where your site can be found, such as MyCompanyWebsite.com or MyCompanyWebsite.net or MyCompanyWebsite.org etc.

URL actually stands for Uniform Resource Locator, so you can think of these terms as the way that the *resource* of your website is *located* by all your customers.

A domain name is not something that is bought; it's actually more like a lease. If you fail to renew it, your lease will be terminated so that someone else may use it later.



PLEASE BE CAREFUL!

CHECK FOR TRADEMARKS! When choosing a domain name, it's a good idea to check what domain names are available for registration and then compare those names to make sure your chosen name does not infringe on any existing trademark. We're not licensed to give legal advice, but we can tell you that the United States has a searchable database of registered national trademarks at this website address: <http://www.uspto.gov/main/sitesearch.htm> It's also a good idea to check with your local Secretary of State for state trademarks.



PLEASE BE CAREFUL!

PROTECT YOUR IDEAS! There've been some recent reports that domains checked for availability at some major registrars have been available one moment and then suddenly turned up registered within a very short time frame. There's been some speculation that unscrupulous individuals or companies have accessed search data and registered potentially profitable names. To err on the side of caution, we recommend you avoid checking name availability in any browser, search engine, or registrar unless you are prepared to purchase the name within minutes. To compensate for this inconvenience, we are now using a tool called PureWhois at <http://www.purewhois.com> to see if someone else has registered the domain you're considering. To check a domain name availability, simply search that name on the

PureWhois site and scroll down to see if any contact information is listed. If no contact information is listed, that domain should be available for registration.

Domain names must be registered through domain name registration companies, referred to as registrars. A few common registrars include MelbourneIt.com, NetworkSolutions.com, Register.com, GoDaddy.com, and GKG.net. The cost to register a domain name varies from company to company, but it is typically in the \$10 to \$35 range per year, with a registration period from one to ten years. The fee may be affected by whether or not you need assistance in entering the correct Registrant data, Administrative contact, Technical contact, Billing Contact, and DNS settings to specify what server you're using.

WAIT! Don't register your domain name yet! If you want to go to a registrar's website to check what names are available, that's fine. But remember that **we include the price of your initial domain name registration in the price of our creating the website for you.** If you have already registered a website domain name, that's fine. We can use your existing domain name. (But sorry, there's no discount for that!)

By the way, the most common endings for website domain names are as follows:

- .com
- .net
- .org
- .info
- .biz
- .us

The first three of the above list are the most well-known. ".Com" stands for commercial, as this domain name extension was originally intended for commercial sites. ".Net" was originally intended for networks, and ".org" was originally intended for organizations. These days, anyone can register any one of these extensions as well as the ".info" (associated with information-based sites, of course) and ".biz" (associated with businesses). The ".us" extension requires the registrant have a United States address, and there are many other extensions for other countries. There are many other domain name endings, but these are all you need to know for this beginner's guide.



BEWARE! Some companies register your domain name in their name instead of yours. This may never cause you problems, but it has the *potential* to cause you *major* problems. Let's say for example, you have gone to a lot of trouble to create a website and build up a customer base going to that website. Then you have a falling out with the company that registered your domain name. Since they are the registrant for your domain name, they can prevent you from using it. Theoretically, they could even go so far as to create a competitive site at your old website address!

Some companies may use their own information when they register domain names because it's easier than typing in all that new client data. Some companies may do it because they're new to the business and don't know any better. Then there are those companies who follow this practice with some "other" motivation in mind.

I won't second guess the competition, but at Griffin Web Design, we feel very strongly about putting domain name registrations in the name of the businesses using them.

If another company has registered a domain name for you and you're not sure if your name is listed as the registrant, here is a link where you can research the record:

<http://www.purewhois.com>

If you learn that another company has put their name on your registration, just politely contact them and ask that they correct the registration to include your company. Hopefully, it was just an oversight which they will remedy for you. Good luck!



Obviously, there's a lot involved with registering a domain name. But don't be intimidated. Remember, we can help you with that for free as part of our web design or hosting service. Just give us a call at (877) WEB-0050.

ELEMENT #2 (Part One) - Setting up the Website Design

Typically \$300 to \$3000 one-time setup fee depending on the request

Unless you're using a template (a website that's already been designed and is just being customized for you) or a Click-n-Build service (where you can click on stock design elements to assemble a quick, simple, do-it-yourself job), you can expect a web designer will need to spend some time creating your website and adding your logo, text, photos, etc. The price is typically based on the amount of time the designer must spend on building the site. Therefore, you can expect the price to vary depending on the complexity of the design you've requested and the number of web pages included. Price may also vary greatly depending on the experience of the designer and the amount of customization. You may see some templates, beginners, click-n-build options, or sweatshop operations charging as low as \$100 to \$300 as a setup fee for small, simple sites (or even lower prices if you're tied to monthly charges). Typically, these super cheap options produce lower quality websites, so be careful to check out the quality first. Alternately, some high-priced designers may charge \$3000 and up for custom sites. (We'll talk later about additional backend functionality such as shopping carts and custom programming.) At Griffin Web Design, **we charge \$325 for a high quality template with your choice of colors and a custom header graphic created just for you, or you can get a custom-designed home page home page for only \$825. Additional pages (sub pages) are \$90 per each.** (If you can email us your content--the text and photos that go on your site--within ten business days of signing up, we'll **discount \$50 off your final bill.**) If you're on an extremely tight budget, remember you always get just a blog website (see the definition section above for blog details, including pricing information) or a template home page without sub pages.

Of course, there may be additional charges for additional features, such as Flash animation or interactive forms, etc. At Griffin Web Design, **we offer Flash animation starting at \$400. For interactive forms, we charge \$5 per form field (plus the price of the page it's on), so to add a simple feedback form with four form fields (Name, Email Address, Phone Number, and Question/Comment) to an existing web page would be an extra \$20.**

***BONUS - How to Choose a Good Web Designer** – There are tons of web designers out there. Some may be very good; others may not. Some new designers may *believe* they are quite good, but they may not know all the details that come with experience. Basically, in this industry, many people don't know what they don't know! A high price does not necessarily equate to a high quality. A low price is not always a good value.



The Portfolio - The first thing to do when considering a web designer is to look at their portfolio. By this, of course, I'm referring to examples of their work. It's important to see actual, working websites. Anyone can sound confident, but you need to see their style for yourself to see if they can achieve what you're after.



The Quality of the Coding – Yes, yes, I know that if you're reading the Beginner's Guide to Getting a Website, you're probably a beginner. And if you're a beginner, the idea of evaluating the coding of a website probably sounds intimidating. Don't worry! There's a very easy trick you can do that will provide you with a lot of insight. You see, there is an overseeing body for the World Wide Web. It's called the World Wide Web Consortium, or W3C. They create the standards of website coding. When new browsers come on the market, they will be using the W3C standards to determine how the website code will work in their browsers. The W3C also created a tool that people can use to see if a site has any coding errors. A lot of high-quality, professional web designers and developers use this tool to check their work and correct any errors. To check a website using the validator tool, simply go to this website: <http://validator.w3.org> and enter in the website address you'd like to check. Honestly, it's not easy to consistently create error-free coding, so if a web design company has one or a few errors, they're still worth considering. However, if they have a ton of errors, I recommend looking elsewhere. **At Griffin Web Design, we code our custom designs to the standards of the W3C.**



The Better Business Bureau – It's easy to talk a good game, so don't let your interaction with a sales person be your only source of information about a company. It's a great idea to contact the [Better Business Bureau](#) to see what type of reputation a company has. **At Griffin Web Design, we are accredited with an A+ score with the Better Business Bureau.**



The Policies or Terms of Service – So many people make purchases or enter into agreements without taking the time to read all the fine print. They don't want to take the time to read pages and pages of legalese. If they are dealing with a large or successful company, they may assume the terms are acceptable. After all, how could the company still be in business if there were something really wrong with their policies? What many people fail to understand is that very stringent, even unethical terms of service still create a legally binding contract. People may be very unhappy; they may even feel swindled. But if the company has everything in writing, and clients agreed, there is little recourse.

I recently heard about a competitor that is very large and successful. They offer custom websites at unbelievably low prices. Their website was very convincing, and their portfolio was attractive. Our company has been in the web design business since 2000, so we have a good deal of experience, and we know what it takes to create a quality website. At first, I just couldn't figure out how they could offer such low prices. I did an Internet search for their company name, and (avoiding the websites they actually owned) I started finding answers... one unhappy customer at a time.

It turned out that, according to their own terms of service written in black and white, the company "does not guarantee a time frame for completion of ANY custom website."

The company actually put in writing that they could steal your ideas: "Client hereby agrees that any information or ideas submitted to [company name] by any means may be used by [company name] without compensation or liability to Client for any purpose whatsoever..."

And that company provides absolutely no guarantee of satisfaction: "[Company name] disclaims any warranties regarding [company name's] services, including that they will meet with client's requirements, that they will be uninterrupted, timely, secure, or error-free."

I wondered how this company could be so successful when they clearly had such shockingly bad policies. Then I read a little further and discovered that they outlaw complaining about them: "Client specifically agrees not to engage in negative comments or slander regarding [company name], including but not limited to publishing, or causing to be published, complaints or derogatory comments regarding [company name] on internet complaint sites, blogs or other public internet forums. Should there be a breach of this condition [company name] will be entitled to liquidated damages in the amount of \$500 for each publishing or posting. If said breach occurs on an internet complaint site each hit to that website will be considered an individual breach of this condition, and subject to liquidated damages of \$100 per occurrence."

Fortunately, I like to think this particular company is not typical of what's out there, but the lesson remains the same: Do not enter into ANY agreement without reading the fine print. If you don't have time to read the fine print, don't sign up. Period.



Beware of Beginners – I like giving beginners a chance. After all, we all had to start somewhere. The trouble is that good web design is more involved than most people realize, and it is very common for beginners to know just enough to believe they can do a great job, but not enough to avoid all the common mistakes.

A design that looks good on one computer may look entirely different on a different computer that has different fonts loaded, uses a different monitor resolution or different browser type, or one that has a slower connection to the Internet. And of course, it is vitally important that consideration be given to building a solid foundation that will help your site rank well in search engines. Proper keyword placement and search engine registration are two absolute musts.

I have often made the analogy that creating a website is a lot like cutting hair. I own a pair of scissors, and I know how to use them. However, you do *not* want me to give you a haircut. My best friend in the fourth grade can attest to that!

If a beginning designer wants to gain experience, I recommend they spend about a year donating websites to non-profit organizations. They will gain experience and examples for their portfolios, and the organizations will benefit from websites they may not have been able to afford otherwise. It's a win-win situation.



Choose a Web Design Company – This may sound like an odd thing to say, but keep in mind that there are many companies that specialize in one thing, such as printing, communications, or computer repair; and they may offer web design as well. Sometimes it's tempting to keep all your services with one company, but the fact remains that these companies are not going to be as devoted to learning the ins and outs of all the web design technologies if web design is just a sideline. There are many pitfalls that can and do happen in these circumstances.

***BONUS – What a Web Designer Will and Will Not Do**

The web designer is typically responsible for the look of the website, adding your text and photos, publishing your website to the server where you are hosting the site, and registering the site with search engines. Unless it's part of a special promotion, most designers do not write text, proofread your text, or take your photos. Talk to your web designer to be sure what is and is not included. Even if your designer does not offer services

you would like, he/she may be able to refer you to trusted service providers who offer professional writing, proofreading, and/or photography services. At Griffin Web Design, **We have professional photographers available starting at only \$90 per hour. Professional content-writers are available to compose keyword-rich web page content for \$150 per page. We also offer proof-reading of your content for only \$15 per page.**

***BONUS – What to Expect From the Design Process**

Talk to your web designer to see how he/she handles the design process, as each designer may have different procedures. At Griffin Web Design, we start with a series of questions to determine the goals of your site, the look and feel you're after, even the colors and fonts you may want to use. Then we go to work to create the ideal design for you. Then we send you a preview of the design to approve. It's just a graphic at this time, but it looks pretty much the way your website will look. Hopefully, we got it just right the first time, but if you need us to make adjustments, that's your opportunity to give a little more direction. Once we have it just right, we'll convert it into a fully-functioning website and add your content before publishing it up to the World Wide Web.

ELEMENT #2 (Part Two) - Setting up Additional Backend Functionality (Shopping Carts and Custom Programming, etc.) **Typically \$500 to \$5,000 Depending on the Request**

If the purpose of your website is to market your image and provide information about your company, all you need is a basic, information-based website. You can skip this section.

If you need to actually sell your products on your website, or if you need other special functions, then there will be additional time and expense invested in setting up the "backend" or your website.

E-Commerce – When your website actually sells items by collecting payment information online, that is called e-commerce. Due to the added expense and effort, setting up an e-commerce website isn't for everyone. Of course you hear about the great success stories, but you may not hear about the many businesses that do not make it.



Remember, when you sell on the Internet, you're competing with all the companies on the World Wide Web! If you're really going to go for it, you need to figure out what's going to set your website apart from the competition. Are you going to sell items cheaper than anyone else? Are you going to provide a better selection than anyone else? Do you sell a unique, niche item that people can't find elsewhere? Are you the manufacturer of a product that people expect to be able to purchase through your site? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then getting an e-commerce site may make sense. However, if you're just reselling another company's products, and you don't have a plan to set your site apart from the competition, I don't recommend you invest in an e-commerce website.

When it comes to setting up an e-commerce website, you can expect to typically pay an additional \$500 to \$1500 for a fully-functioning, database-driven e-commerce backend. You will also need something called a Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) Certificate (typically \$120 to \$300 per year) to make your site secure, a merchant account to process credit cards, and an account with an online payment gateway such as Authorize.net (typically up to \$100 to \$300 setup fee plus up to \$20 to \$35 per month) to process the credit cards online. You can also expect your hosting prices to increase (typically in the \$30 to \$60 range) to host a

database-driven, e-commerce site. **At Griffin Web Design, we have complete, database driven e-commerce shopping carts starting at \$500. Our database-driven hosting is only \$35 per month. And we can help you get your SSL certificate for \$120 per year, and put you in contact with the appropriate folks to get your Authorize.net account for only \$100 to set up and \$20 per month.**



If you have a low budget, but you have a great niche product you think would sell well, you may want to consider an intermediate step like a PayPal shopping cart. These typically cost \$100 for the first 10 product buttons. They don't require you to have a merchant account or online gateway account since the payments are processed through PayPal.

Custom Programming – There are all kinds of reasons you may need custom programming. Maybe you need to tie your website's shopping cart into your inventory system; maybe you need customers to be able to specify engraving or monogramming options when they buy your products online; or maybe you'd like the prices on your website to be based on something unique like a measurement or a quantity. For all these examples, you'll need an experienced programmer.

Programming is a specialization that requires a lot of education and experience, so you can expect that adding custom functionality onto a website will cost more, sometimes significantly more, than an information-based or typical e-commerce website.

Because of the complexity of the task and the added costs, it is imperative that you choose a programmer you can trust—one that has experience in taking a project from start to finish. Ask to see examples of live websites with custom programming they've done.



Of course, you want your website to be built in a non-proprietary way so it can be moved to another company's server if you ever choose to. However, anytime you are developing an e-commerce website or a website with custom functionality, it is a good idea to have the hosting and the programming done by the same, responsible company. This will ensure you are never in a position of having a programmer blame problems on the hosting company while the hosting company blames problems on the programmer.

ELEMENT #3 - Hosting **Typically \$5 to \$90 per month**

Every website in the world has to be hosted somewhere. This means that all of the electronic files that make up your website reside on a special computer server so that any time of the day or night, people can access your website from the server. They are *not* trying to access your *personal* computer. You can think of your hosting fees as being like renting space on the computer server.

There are tons of hosting companies out there. Some of them are very reliable; some are rather unreliable. Some of them are very expensive; some are very cheap. Some are huge conglomerates; some are tiny one-server operations. Some companies *require* that you use their hosting services. They may even mark down their initial setup fees to justify marking up their monthly hosting fees.

We do not require you to use hosting services, but of course, we hope that you will! Our hosting fee is **\$20.00 per month**. Our hosting is very reliable, with greater than 99.9% up

time, free traffic statistics, and 24-hour technical support. Our hosting includes up to 5,000 MB disk space and up to 50,000 MB of bandwidth. Whoa! Wasn't this supposed to be a *Beginner's Guide*?! Well, yes. Yes it is. Let's explain:

Unless you're developing a major website, destined to be the main focus of your business, you probably don't really need to understand all the hosting particulars yet. Feel free to skip the next section. But in case you're truly interested, here's a breakdown:

Up-Time – This refers to the time that your website is available for people to view it. Of course, we all hope our websites will constantly be available any time of the day or night. Let's imagine someone can't sleep because she is stressed out thinking about the perfect gift for her mother-in-law. She gets up to surf the Internet. She finds the link to YourWidgets.com, clicks on the link, and ZIP. Nothing. Your website is down. She assumes your company is out of business and places her order with someone else, never to return. Now you understand why your website should always be available. Of course, *always* is a pretty strong word. Even the best servers may occasionally need to be rebooted or they may run into a glitch here or there. But you get the idea. You need a hosting company that's going to be reliable; otherwise, what's the point in having a website? **At Griffin Web Design, our hosting has greater than 99.9% up-time.**

Traffic Statistics – You may have seen hit counters on the bottom of little websites claiming they've had 14,000 visitors. Hit counters can be faked, and they don't really provide detailed data that can be analyzed. This is why you typically don't see hit counters on large sites such as Amazon.com, CNN.com, or Weather.com. However, a good hosting company will provide a login where you can view your traffic statistics so you can see how many visitors you're getting to your site, how long they stay on your site, even what search engines and keywords they use to find your site. It's a great tool so you can see how much benefit you're getting from your investment in your website. **At Griffin Web Design, our hosting includes free traffic statistics.**

Technical Support – If your website ever does go down, you need to be able to reach someone. Make sure your web hosting company provides technical support, even after hours. **At Griffin Web Design, our hosting includes free technical support, including 24-hour coverage in the case of an outage or other emergency.** (After business hours, just leave a voicemail message with the nature of the emergency, and a technician will be paged.)

Disk Space – This term just refers to the amount of space your website is allowed to take up on the server. Many small websites take up only about 20 MB of space. Most hosting plans will provide this much space or even more. **At Griffin Web Design, our starter hosting plans will provide up to 5,000 MB of disk space!**

Bandwidth / Transfer / Traffic Allotment – This refers to the resources your website uses when people visit your site. You can imagine a telephone line that has information passing across the line as people talk. Each time someone visits a page on your site, the data on that page gets passed to them, using a little bit of your bandwidth. If your website is mostly just text, each visitor will use very little bandwidth. If your website is full of videos, music, or large graphics, each visitor will use more bandwidth. Many small websites use only up to about 1,000 MB of bandwidth each month. Most hosting companies will provide about this much or even more. **At Griffin Web Design, our starter hosting plan includes up to 50,000 MB of bandwidth!**

As more and more people visit your site, you may eventually need to add more bandwidth onto your account. But if you have sooooo many visitors that you need to increase your bandwidth, that should be a sign of your *tremendous* success!

ELEMENT #4 – Getting Traffic to Your Website

Typically No Additional Charge – up to Thousands per Month

You could invest tons of time, effort, and money into creating the most wonderful website you can imagine, but if no one is going to your website, it would all be a waste. That's why you need to ensure you have a plan to get traffic to your website. There are companies out there that do nothing but offer services to help get more traffic to your website. These are called Search Engine Optimization (SEO) companies, and some of them charge thousands of dollars per month. We believe that most businesses can do well without paying extra for search engine optimization. For no additional charge, we include basic techniques and tips to help ensure your site is search-engine friendly:

Include Your Keywords – When people look for your services on the Internet, they may typically go to a search engine website such as Google.com. We hope the term they enter into the search bar will be included in your website, so that Google will know to return your website link in the search results. The terms you think people will use to search for your products, services, or company are your keywords.

Make sure you include your keywords in the text of your website. Even if you have a picture that completely explains what you do, you still need to include some text. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but they're words a search engine can't read! The search engines will index all the keywords in your website and store that information for future use.

Your industry may have numerous terms that describe the same thing, and you may have a tendency to stick to your preferred term. When writing your website text, however, make sure you include *all* the terms, not just your favorite.

If people are likely to search for your services based on your geographic location, be sure to include the keywords of your region, including both the town names and the county names.



Talk to your web designer to make sure your keywords are added to the appropriate locations in your website. The most powerful place to include your keywords is in the title bar. This is the text at the very top of the browser window (above the "Back" button, above the "File" menu, and above the address bar). Because this title appears at the top of the browser, it does not even look like it's a part of the web page. Thus, believe it or not, many professional web designers actually forget to place keywords in the title most powerful location of all!

It's also a good idea to include a meaningful sentence that includes a few keywords in a place called the "Alternate Text" behind your graphics. (For Internet Explorer users, this little bit of text is briefly visible when your cursor hovers over the picture.)

There's also a special place called Meta Tags that's hidden in the HTML code of your website, behind the scenes where viewers typically don't see. Meta Tags are not as important as they used to be (since spammer-types took advantage of them). But there are still a few search engines that use them, so it's a good idea to include them just to cover your bases.

Register With Search Engines – When your website is all ready, make sure your web designer registers it with search engines. This is how the search engines will know to index all the keywords in your website.



PLEASE BE CAREFUL!

Do not register with search engines before your website is complete, as the lack of content may penalize you. Wait until you have good content on each of your pages.

Get Others to Link to You – It's a good idea to get other businesses to add a link to their websites where people can link over to your site. The obvious benefit is that people on another website may click on the link and come to yours. However, many people aren't aware of another important benefit. Some search engines actually rate your site's importance by how many others are linking to you. If there are lots of websites linking to you, then they assume your website must be important.

An easy way to get people to post your link on their site is to contact businesses with complementary products or services. For example, if you run a landscaping business, you may ask the local garden center to add a link onto their site where people may click to come over to your site. Usually it's easiest to approach others if you are willing to add a reciprocal link from your site back to theirs. For this reason, you may wish to consider having one page of your site devoted to relevant links.

Market Your Website Address – Make sure your website address is on your business cards, letterhead, signs, and all your advertising. Basically, anytime you list your phone number, you would likely benefit from also listing your website address.

ELEMENT #5 – Updating or Maintaining Your Website

Typically \$0 to \$90 per month, with different prices for different options

You need to consider whether or not the information on your website will need to be updated, and if so, how often. It doesn't reflect well on your company to have out-dated information representing you.

No Updates – If your business does not change much, you may be able to include all the information necessary without worrying about it getting out-of-date for a long time. Be sure to word things in such a way that won't easily become dated. For example, the text on our website lets people know that Griffin Web Design has been in business since January 2000. This statement will always be accurate. If we told people we've been in business for ten years, that would become dated in a year's time.

Periodic Updates – Maybe you don't anticipate a lot of updates to your site, but something may come up once every so often. If that's the case, you may wish to contact a web designer to have some work done by the hour. Hourly rates may be higher than flat rate projects or maintenance plans, but most quality web designers will give you a free quote for the work you need done. At Griffin Web Design, we charge an off-the-shelf hourly rate of \$90.00, but **our minimum order is only a quarter hour, or \$22.50**. So if you just need a phone number, a price, or a photo changed out, it's still pretty economical.

Website Maintenance Plans – If you know you're going to need to have your website updated on a regular basis, and you'd like to have a web designer do it for you, may prefer to be on a maintenance plan. Talk to your web designer about what options he/she offers.

At Griffin Web Design, we offer web maintenance plans starting at \$40.00 per month for up to a half hour of updates to your site each month. A half hour is enough time to add about five photos or a few paragraphs of text. We will never go over your allotted time unless you request us to do so. Then we will give you a quote and you will be charged a reduced hourly rate.

We also have a new "Customized Template" service we offer in partnership with RiaEnjolie, a New Jersey based company with world wide operations. This service covers unlimited webmaster support along with a content management system for \$79 per month, and that even includes your hosting. That's a good option if you anticipate lots of regular website updates.

Content Management Systems – If you would like to be able to update your website yourself, but you don't have someone on staff who has experience working with web pages and HTML code, you may want to consider a content management system. This is a system that will allow you to login with a username and password to update the text or photos in certain locations on your website. It can be set up in a way that can prevent you from accidentally messing up the header area, the footer area, the navigation area, etc. Talk to your web designer about what content management options he/she offers.

At Griffin Web Design, we offer a content management system for a one time setup fee of \$250.00 for a single user license. This system does require that we host your website, so that we can ensure the program is set up and working properly on the server.

The Bottom Line

Website Setup Cost*:

\$325.00 to setup a standard home page (template) with a custom header graphic

- OR -

\$825.00 to setup a fully custom home page

- PLUS -

\$90.00 to set up each additional sub page

- AND -

Optional Extras include Flash Animation, Interactive Forms, a Content Management System, Shopping Cart, and/or Custom Programming

*You also get a \$50 rebate for submitting your content within 10 business days.

Website Hosting Cost:

\$20.00 per month for most sites

If you made it through the many pages in this Beginner's Guide to Getting a Website, then you must realize there are quite a few options available. Depending on the options you choose, and of course, the company providing these options, your final price could vary tremendously. However, as you've made your way through each section, you may realize that it doesn't have to add to up to too much. The point of this guide is to give you enough understanding that you're confident enough to take the next step: Call us at (877) WEB-0050. We look forward to hearing from you!