



Phone/Fax: (250) 338-9567    <http://www.webstardesigns.ca>    email: [info@webstardesigns.ca](mailto:info@webstardesigns.ca)

**I**t is very important to plan your website well. Your website reflects your business, project or event, and should be well thought out. It may be the deciding factor in whether or not a prospective customer will or will not use your business.

**W**ebStar Designs and Digital Photography will make it easy to get your business or organization on the Internet, starting with a free 1 HR consultation: You have unique needs for your website and we will take special care that those needs are met. In order for us to get a better understanding of what you would like to see in your website, we have prepared the following questions and tips to help you in deciding what will work best for your business or organization:

- **1. Purpose**
- **2. Keyword Phrases and Site Description**
- **3. Site URL**
- **4. Index Page and Site Organization**
- **5. Graphics, etc.**
- **6. Background Colour or Texture**
- **7. Order Forms and Customer Response Forms**
- **8. How to Promote Your Website**
- **9. Maintaining Your Website**

---

## **1. Purpose**

- **Why do you want to have a website?**
- **What is the goal you are trying to achieve?**
  - **Who are your customers?**
  - **What is your purpose?**

**Consider the following reasons:**

- To have a "presence" on the net
- To get an advantage over my competition
- To keep up with my competition
- To let potential customers learn about our company, and gain a favourable impression of us
- To sell online
- To give my customers access to a detailed catalogue of my products
- To expand my market globally
- To interact with my customers via forms or live chat
- To enable my business to be open 24 hours per day
- To conduct market research online
- To decrease the cost of printing and distributing marketing materials
- To provide better customer support
- To provide great customer service at a reduced cost by offering in-depth content about care and maintenance of my products online.
- To reduce the cost of advertising and increase the range of options available in marketing (ie. online brochures or catalogues)
- To "level the playing field" with larger companies
- To be able to have online promotions (such as printable coupons and announcements of sales)

It is important to realize that a web site may not result in immediate results and unimaginable sales. When creating a web site you should be looking at the long-term view: Begin with patience, but be ready for success.

---

## **2. Keyword Phrases and Site Description**

Before doing anything else, I'd like you to stop and think about your business. how would you describe what you do in 25 words or less? As an example, here is what we would say for WebStar Designs:

"A Comox Valley, Vancouver Island company which specializes in creative, professional website design, digital photography, search engine optimization, domain names and hosting at affordable prices."

For us, being local is important so we make sure that the Comox Valley is mentioned, then we added in all of our services and made sure everyone knows that we provide quality at an affordable price. The description should have your best keywords in it.

What are keywords? Keywords (or more like keyword phrases) are words and phrases which people who are searching for a company like yours would type into a search engine such as Google. When they do, you'd like to be at the top of the results so they'll click on the link to your site first. This is where optimization comes in (more on that later). You can save a lot of money if you have a good idea of what

keyword phrases are relevant to your business so that when we start designing your site we keep these important phrases in mind, lessening the need for extensive optimization later on.

How do I make my list of keyword phrases???

1. You can start with the yellow pages. Is your business listed in the yellow pages? If so, what heading is it under? For us it's "Web Design" as well as "Internet Services other than access" so our keyword phrases would include "web design" and "internet services". We can then build on these keywords: website designers, webpage design, internet web services, hosting, search engine optimization, domain name registration, etc. etc.
2. You can add localities as well: Comox Valley web designers, Courtenay web designers. It's also a good idea to add spelling mistakes for some commonly misspelled words: Courtney web design.
3. Ask your friends what they think and brainstorm ideas together.
4. Give your friends the phonebook and tell them to find you in the yellow pages... write down what they are mumbling along the way in their attempts to find you.
5. Stop everyone you meet on the street... ok maybe now we're overdoing it. But you could ask peoples' opinions if the occasion arises in a conversation.

After we have your list we can utilize our keyword selection tools to possibly add to these even more, then determine which would be your best bets in an optimization campaign. A keyword phrase that is searched often by people on the internet, while not having a lot of other companies trying to optimize for it as well will most likely give you the best return for your efforts.

---


### **3. Site URL ([www.your-domain-name.ca](http://www.your-domain-name.ca))**

What would you like the name of your website to be? If your business name is descriptive enough you can use that, but if it isn't, you may want to add to it or use a different name for your site. Search engines tend to look more favourably on sites that have "keywords" in their name. You may also think about using a short and memorable name if your main target audience will be typing it in rather than finding it on the Internet search engines and entering by simply clicking. A short name will be more likely to be typed in correctly and remembered in the future.

An ideal website name will be descriptive, unique, short and memorable. Unfortunately short and descriptive don't often fall into the same category! What we suggest to companies that are serious about search engine optimization, but who still want an easy, memorable name for everyday use is to register 2 domain name: one short, and one with keywords in it. The extra cost is minimal (\$12.99 US per year for a .com) and the benefits to rankings are usually high. You can use the same hosting package for both URLs, and you can set up unlimited emails with both domain name endings. (using our hosting package - other hosting companies may not have this option included, so check first)

There are 2 options when choosing a domain name: You can register a domain name and have it hosted (see our hosting page for more information on our packages), or you can use the free web space provided by your internet service provider ( ISP).

A registered domain name will look more professional and is usually easier to remember than if you used your ISP's free web space. An important advantage of using a unique domain name for your business or organization is that you won't be dependant on your ISP. If your ISP goes out of business, changes hands (like what happened with the @home.com changing to @shaw.ca last year) or raises its prices too high, you can simply have another ISP assume the address for your site. Your name stays the same, any links to your page are protected and customers will not be affected. Another reason to have your own domain name is for search engine optimization purposes. A unique URL with keywords in it is usually given more weight than if that keyword came at the end of a typical ISP providers webspace URL. Examples of URLs would be [www.communitythings.com](http://www.communitythings.com), [www.comoxvalleyrealestate.net](http://www.comoxvalleyrealestate.net), [www.cvlandtrust.org](http://www.cvlandtrust.org), and of course our website, [www.webstardesigns.ca](http://www.webstardesigns.ca).

Once you have thought of a few names, you need to make sure that they have not already been registered by someone else. To check availability, please go to our domain names page. You can search for and register directly from our site and pay with your credit card using the secure payment method. (Always check for the little padlock  at the bottom of your browser window when making any purchases on the internet to show that you have a secure connection. In addition, you want to make sure you trust the person at the other end of that connection - a secure connection doesn't help if the person receiving your credit card information isn't honest!) If you're not comfortable using your credit card online, we'd be happy to do the registration for you.

**TIP:** We highly recommend that domain name registrations are done in your name and with your email address in the administration section so that you have ownership and thereby control over your domain. We have had many clients who have lost or have had a lot of trouble getting changes made to their domain name records when someone else had control. The last thing you want to hear is that the company who has your domain name registration is out of town or out of business, and your domain name is expired - meaning that your business is now offline, your search engine rankings are in danger of being lost, and all your advertising campaigns lead to a non-existent URL. Worse yet, another company could snap up your domain name and use your hard-earned rankings to redirect to their site instead.

**\*\*Always make sure that your email address is kept up to date on your administration records for your domain name. (You will receive expiry notices by email) Always keep your username and password in a safe place.**

If you want to switch domain name registrars, don't wait until too close to the expiry date to do it or your domain may be locked and unable to move. Most registrars give you the remainder of your current contract for free anyway if you switch to them, so no time is lost in the transfer.

The other option you have is to go with your Internet Service Provider's domain name. Your user name would then be at the end of the common web address that they use for all their clients. Examples are:

Shaw cable: username nothinflat's (drag boat racing) website is <http://members.shaw.ca/nothinflat>

Digital Ark: username ores (Oyster River Enhancement Society) <http://mars.ark.com/~ores> (ORES has since registered a domain name: [www.oysterriverenhancement.org](http://www.oysterriverenhancement.org) to enhance their image and search engine rankings.)

The benefit is that it is included in the fees that you are already paying for their internet service. It really depends on how much money you are willing to spend and the image you are trying to portray. For a business, we strongly recommend using a registered domain name to portray a professional image and for the above mentioned advantages. For a non-profit society however, I think most people would find it appropriate for a less expensive approach to be taken.

WebStar Designs and Digital Photography currently has a very cost effective hosting plan at \$16.50/month. (see our [hosting page](#) for more information) You can also register your domain name at our [domain names](#) page if you have not already registered your name. We can assist you in finding which name would be best for your business or community group.

---

## 4. Index Page and Site Organization

Also known as "home page" or "storefront". This page will describe what the whole site is about, and usually links to a series of pages that describe your business or organization. This page should load quickly and grab the visitor's attention, making them want to read on.

Common pages linking from the index page include:

1. **The "About" page:** This page will describe your business or organization. History, mission statement, philosophy, etc. This page gives you the opportunity to tell your customers why they should do business with you, rather than your competition.
2. **Products and Services:** photos and descriptions of features. These should be organized in easy to find, logical groupings. The use of a shopping cart allows for easy online orders.
3. **Ordering information:** This can include a form which your customer can use to email their information to you. It should also show alternate ways of ordering: your Phone/toll free numbers, mailing address etc.
4. **FAQ or technical support:** Providing technical information, frequently asked questions, specification, diagrams, troubleshooting information, etc. on your website will allow your customers to have technical support 24 hours per day, and could save you time on the phone in person.

5. **Newsletters and updates:** a section where you can post your newsletters and add any updates that may be of interest to your customers.
6. **Something that will keep customers coming back:** free information, news, contests, free samples, or a good list of related links which will save your customers time in searching. Keeping this information up-to-date and interesting will keep your customers coming back to your site.

---

## 5. Graphics, etc.

It is a good idea to have some graphics and pictures in your site to make your site look more appealing to your customers. Your home page should make your customers want to explore more of your site. There are a few factors to consider, however, when deciding on what type, and how many graphics to use. It should have enough to be appealing, but not so much that it becomes slow to load and confusing to read and navigate. Your home page should be graphically balanced, look appealing, and be informative.

Choices of graphics include:

1. **Clip art graphic** (make sure they are copyright free)
2. **Scanned-in graphics:** we can scan in your company logo or an artists drawing
3. **Digital photographs**, or scanned-in photographs
4. Graphics with **colored borders**, or with a **shadow effect**
5. Images with **transparent** backgrounds to seamlessly add them into your page
6. **Customized Type Fonts:** we can design your graphic for you using a combination of fonts and colour, then save them as a picture to ensure that they will show up as you intended on everyone's computer (no need for the end user to have the same type fonts installed on their computer)
7. **Superimposing fonts on a photograph**, either found on the Internet, from your private collection of photos, or from WebStar Designs stock photos, can make a great design for a logo or graphic
8. **"Hotspot" image maps:** different spots in the graphic will lead to different links
9. You can also get a professional graphic designer to design your logo or graphics for you.

You may also want to consider using:

1. **Sound:** a short greeting, a continuous background sound, or a sound that is initiated by clicking on a graphic. Beware of course that sound makes the page load more slowly, so should only be used sparingly if at all. (It really depends on your type of site - if it greatly enhances the "feel" of your site, then do it; if it's only frill, then we'd say no)
2. **Animation:** small animations can enhance a page nicely and make it look more impressive. Be careful, however, not to over-do it. They also take

longer to load, and may not always be compatible with older computer systems. (Keep your target audience in mind). Flash animations are professional looking if done right, and are specially designed to keep the loading time lower. Most computers nowadays are flash enabled, and if not, they'll be prompted to download it.

3. **Video clips:** This can be included as an option for your customers. If they wish to view the video they can click on a button.

---

## 6. Background Color or Texture

A well thought out background will compliment your graphics and text and enhance the overall design of your website. There are several options you have for your choice of background.

1. **One solid colour:** Then make your text a contrasting colour.
2. **Textured:** there are many backgrounds available in a variety of textures like wood, water, rocks, marbles, leaves, etc. If they are not too overwhelming, they can compliment your design nicely.
3. **Coloured:** a mixture of colours, such as a blending rainbow of colours, custom designed with you in mind.
4. **Background picture:** a small background picture which repeats itself over and over, or repeat itself along the side of a page can enhance a website
5. **Graphically enhanced pictures and art:** different pictures or art blend together in different areas of the page to make a very attractive website background.

A background should not be too overwhelming: we want to make sure the text is still readable! Sometimes white is still the best choice.

---

## 7. Order Forms or Customer Response Forms

You will want to interact with your customers, and to do so you need to make it easy and inviting for them: make sure your contact information is readily accessible on each page of your site, and provide forms that the customer can fill out and automatically send you by email:

1. **Request for Information form:** This form will have a place for the customer's name, address, phone number, etc. and provide check boxes and comment boxes which allow the customer to request information on certain products and services.
2. **Order Forms:** with the appropriate securities, you can take orders directly online. It is a good idea to also provide an alternate method of purchasing (ie

- 1-800 number) for the many people that are still concerned about purchasing online.
3. **Printable Order Form:** Have a page that the customer can fill in and print out on their printer ( or print out, and fill in afterwards), then mail it to you in the traditional way.
  4. **Guestbooks:** for guests to give their opinions of your products and service, etc.
  5. **"Join my mailing list" form:** You can invite customers to join your mailing list to be periodically updated on what your business is doing, and to receive special discounts etc. by email. You could entice them with a free gift for signing up. You may also ask if you may follow up with a telephone call or direct mail.
  6. **Shopping Cart:** If you have many products to sell on the Internet, a shopping cart may be a worthwhile investment. In order to take money online, you will need to have a secure server to allow your customers to safely conduct business with you. WebStar Designs can help you determine which method will work the best for your type of business or organization. There are very cost effective ways in which even the smallest business can sell online.

---

## 8. How to Promote your Website:

There are many ways to promote your website. Here are some of the highlights:

1. Register your site with the major search engines and directories. WebStar Designs provides this service, and is also experienced in Search Engine Optimization to give your site the best chance at a top listing for your keywords.
2. Optimize your site for the major search engines.
3. Include your site URL on your business cards, letterhead, flyers, etc.
4. Include your URL as part of your signature on every email you mail out. (even non-business emails)
5. Announce your site in newspapers and on the Internet.
6. Keep your site up-to-date and interesting, to give customers a reason to come back.

For more tips and tricks on promoting your website, check out our handout: "*30 ways to Promote your Site*". To get your copy, see our website promotion page.



## 9. Maintaining Your Website

After you have your site the way you want it, you may periodically need to make changes or updates to it to keep your website current. You'll need to think of how to handle:

1. Price changes
2. Product changes
3. Adding newsletters
4. Adding pages to describe other parts of your business
5. Updating links which have become obsolete
6. Updating external links which have changed
7. Updating images
8. Continuous search engine optimization and resubmissions to keep your site ranking high.

---

**W**ebStar Designs and Digital Photography will help you maintain, update, and optimize your site on a regular basis, or as needed. Please see our [Costs and Services](#) section for more information on prices and package deals.

If you have the time and desire, we can also give you or one of your staff members a tutorial on how to do minor updates (such as price changes, etc.) to the site.



**A**fter having taken these points into consideration, you will have a general idea of what you want in your website. Now it is time to turn this idea into reality! WebStar Designs and Digital Photography will take every measure possible to give you the website of your dreams, while ensuring that it will still be practical on the internet.

**Contact Us Now!**



**email: [info@webstardesigns.ca](mailto:info@webstardesigns.ca)**

**[www.webstardesigns.ca](http://www.webstardesigns.ca)**

**phone: (250) 338-9567**