

If You Build It, Will They Browse?

Six Steps to Setting Up a Web Page

"If you want to try marketing on the World Wide Web, it can cost as little as \$100 to \$200 a month," says TEC Resource Speaker Jordan Ayan, "if you do all the work internally. Or it can run into hundreds of thousands of dollars if you use outside help. It all depends on what you want to do and how you want to do it."

A specific part of the global Internet, the World Wide Web allows individuals and organizations to present customized graphic and textual information on any given subject. A Web page offers a quick and easy way for businesses, clients, prospects or interested browsers to hook up with each other through the Web.

An expert on business applications for emerging technologies, Ayan recommends the following steps for putting up a Web page (also called a Web site):

- 1 Have a Web site strategic plan.**
Start by defining your vision, goals and objectives for the Web site. Is it going to be a sales lead source? A customer support site? A sales order site? An information source for prospects? A combination of these or other uses?
- 2 Focus on content.**
The quality of information will make or break your Web page. Provide information that has real value to the reader, change the content regularly (weekly or monthly, depending on the type of information), and let readers know you update it. Fancy graphics won't bring readers back; interesting, well-written content will.
- 3 Keep the graphics simple (for now).**
Most Web browsers currently have relatively slow bit-transfer technology. If they have to wait too long for the graphics to download, they may lose interest and leave your page. As technology improves and prices come down, this should become less of an issue.

- 4 Link, link, link.**
Take full advantage of hyper-link—the Web's ability to mouse click on a highlighted phrase or graphic and instantly connect to related information on other pages or sites. Long blocks of text without interesting links will yield low reader response.
- 5 Browse your own page.**
Carefully review your completed Web page. Test it on several Web browsers (software that translated the code onto the screen) to ensure that what you programmed appears correctly on the screen. Periodically check all links to see if they are operating properly.

- 6 Sign up for your domain name NOW.**

A domain name is your company's address on the Web and is used to identify your Web page. Once a name is registered on the Web, it cannot be used by anyone else.

"Just because your company initials are trademarked doesn't mean they are trademarked for Internet use," cautions Ayan. "This is still a very gray area of the law. Names are going fast, so register yours now, even if you have no intentions of putting up a Web page in the near future. It only costs about \$100 and you can do it through almost any local access provider."

"On the positive side, this new medium has almost unlimited potential, although it may take a while to see the fruits of your labor. The idea is to create your vision, use it to construct your initial pages and then stick to that strategy as you build the Web site. Build it well and they *will* browse."

Jordan Ayan is president of Create-It! Inc., a consulting firm, and publisher of The Executive Technology Briefing newsletter. His company is based in Naperville, IL, and helps individuals and organizations creatively and effectively use emerging technologies.



Jordan Ayan