

Ways to Reduce Web Site Costs

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TECHNOLOGY COSTS. Building a Web site for a business can be an expensive. In fact, the average cost for a basic business Web site is \$10,000 and \$50,000 and up for a fully e-commerce enabled site (that also includes electronic shopping cart and payment software).

These numbers shouldn't scare you. E-commerce is becoming a cost of doing business and is an investment in your future. Not making the move will leave you behind your competitors who do.

COST SAVING TIPS. There are several strategies you can use to reduce cost. They are:

- **Keep it simple.** Avoid making the Web site too complex or using too many graphics that slow it down. Remember buyers want to quickly access product information and make their purchases, not wait for fancy downloads.
- **Write down your functional requirements.** A very effective way to control costs is write down the functional requirements for your Web site. Writing them down will help clarify what you really need, rather than what's is nice to have. Written requirements help you focus on what's important and makes it easier for a Web site designer to understand what you want. This reduces costs and gets the Web site up faster.
- **Develop a web site budget.** One you have written down your Web site requirements, then it's time to determine what they cost and budget for them. Having written requirements helps you budget items by functional requirements, which makes it easier to determine what features are cost-effective. You should also plan to spend about 20 percent of the Web site's development cost on annual maintenance.
- **Use a modular approach.** A modular, or building block, approach to developing your Web site helps reduce costs and allows you to make regular updates that attract repeat business. Using a modular approach also makes it easier to upgrade your site.
- **Outsource.** Don't try and develop a technology infrastructure for your business with your own funds. It's best to outsource your Web site hosting to a third party. This saves most small businesses time and money.

- **Maximize use of free Web resources.** There are many free items you can get to improve your Web site such as free clip art, site visit counters, etc. Using these resources can help you stretch your Web site budget and provide additional useful features that make your Web site more productive.

BUDGET. Small businesses need to budget money to develop their Web site. If they already have one, they need to budget money to keep the site current. While it may seem like a lot of money, the cost of not having a Web site is even higher, e.g., lost sales, shrinking markets, etc. Overall, most small businesses can expect to spend about 20% of their funds on technology, e.g., Web site, computers, printers, cell phones, faxes, etc.

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