

My First Website



Ok so you have a great business idea and you want to reach the rest of the world via the Internet. You have seen lots of websites but you probably don't know what goes on behind the scenes. If this is you read on.

Websites are essentially files of text and pictures that tell your browser how to present them. All that is well and good but how do you get them on the Internet. Basically you need a domain, website and a host.

The domain itself is really your brand on the Internet like MSN, Hotmail or Google. You pay a registrar for the rights to the domain and you have exclusive control over anything going to that domain like websites and email addresses. It's sort of like the registration for you car.

Hosting is a place to store your website. In our car analogy, this would be the garage. Like your car, you could store it at home but then you would have to maintain the "garage".

Lastly you need the website which would be the car in our analogy.

The Host

The host should be a dependable server. There are very reasonable hosts like [Go Daddy](#) - that have limited support. On the other end of the spectrum there are hosts with excellent support that are pricey like Rackspace. Since this is your first website, you probably don't want to spend hundreds of dollars a month for a host.



There are Windows hosts and Linux hosts. Both would do for your first website but we'll stick to Linux hosts since they are generally cheaper. Typically you don't want a Windows host unless you are using a Windows application like .NET.

There are also dedicated servers and virtual servers. Since we are looking for an economical server then we'll stick to virtual servers.

OK so you need a Linux host from a dependable company that doesn't cost much. Feel free to search Google for any number of likely prospects. Go Daddy currently has economy hosting for around \$50/year.

The Registrar

The Registrar sells and registers your domain. It really doesn't matter where you register your domain so it's easiest to just register with your host. You will pay the registrar annually for the rights to the domain.

The Website



Ok so now you need the website. You can design a website from the ground up but that's going to be costly as it takes a lot more time. A better approach is to find a site that you like and customize it with your text and pictures. There are lots of sites that sell templates very reasonably priced like [Template Monster](#). Just search Google to find something that's close to what you want. [Downs Consulting Services](#) can help you search and narrow down the categories depending on your goals.

There are, of course, simpler designs like [Houston Concert Tickets](#) if you are on a strict budget.

If you want a website that will rank high in the search engines it's best to stay away from Flash sites. Flash sites are more difficult to maintain so will be costly to design. You will want to check with your webmaster before you actually purchase the website template.

If you have lots of products to sell you may need an ecommerce site with a shopping cart. If you just have a few items then a few Paypal links is probably your most economical bet.

The good thing about templates is that they have cool features built into them like sliders and galleries.

You will want a contact page that emails the form data to you. The form could interface to a database but that's not economical.

Summary

You need a host and a registered domain to get started. You can pick a simple website for tight budgets or pick out a template to customize.

At [Downs Consulting Services](#), we advise the customer to pay for registration, hosting and the template (if needed). We feel that you should have control of registration, and hosting. If you prefer we can set these up for you.