Section 5:

Guidelines to Developing a Web Site

5.1 Obtaining a Domain Name

Computers on the Internet **have a unique Internet Protocol** (IP) number which is their address. **A domain name is a reference to that IP address** on the Internet, and **may contain your company name**, indicate the type of organisation and the country where your web site is registered.

www.mycompanyname.com

indicates the organisation mycompanyname has a web site on the World Wide Web.

http://www.mycompanyname.com

means people can access the mycompanyname web site information using a web browser (such as Netscape or Internet Explorer).

5.1.1 Reading the Internet Addresses

It may help to read the Internet addresses backwards. Most web addresses indicate the country of registration by the characters after the last dot on the right. South Africa uses .za and Australia .au

5.1.2 Finding the Organisation's name

Reading further to the left you may find the organisation's name, brand or business activity.

5.1.3 Registering your Domain

Many Internet Service Providers (ISPs) will register a domain name for you, and host it on one of their servers. Ask the ISP to provide a full list of costs and indicate the length of time the domain name will be hosted for the advertised fee. Or you can register a domain name over the Internet.

The benefits of registering a domain name include the use of your business, organisation or brand name as a web address. Owning your own domain name also means that in future you could physically move your web address and web site files if you change your ISP, without changing your web site and email addresses. This would become an expensive exercise if the address printed on all your stationery needed changing.

More importantly, you will want your customers to continue using the same email and web address details whenever they want to contact you. Having your own domain name helps ensure your customers can reach you even if your business, or that of your ISP, should move.

The following three letter suffixes identify the type of organisation that owns a domain name.

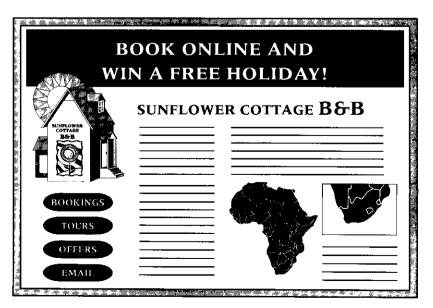
.com commercial .co company .edu educational .gov government

.net network administrative organisations

.mil military organisations

.org organisations that don't fit anywhere else

Your registered domain name is on the ISPs server, but remains your property, and you can move it to any server that you require. However, domain name registrations expire after a period of time so be careful to renew the registration.





5.2 Selecting an Interet Service Provider (ISP)

An Internet service provider **will not only allow you access** to the Internet, **but will form an important communication link** with your customer base. Your ISP **will allow you to have access** to e-mail, the World Wide Web (WWW), as well as a few other information sources.

When selecting an ISP the following factors need to be taken into consideration:

ACCESS:

Some ISPs offer unlimited access to the Internet, others will limit the time you are allowed on the Internet. This can affect your company communication.

SPEED:

Speed or bandwidth of the ISP's connection to the Internet.

COST:

Some ISPs offer free Internet access which can be slower than some of the other paid ISPs.

E-MAIL ADDRESSES:

Most ISPs will offer you more than one e-mail address which can be used for promotional feedback.

CALL COSTS:

Make sure that you can connect to your ISP with a local phone call. If not, then choose an ISP that is based as close to you as possible.

Some ISPs offer you free web space to host your web site. Around 5-10 Mb for a simple web site.

24-HOUR TECHNICAL SUPPORT:

Important when you are having problems, especially if you are new to the Internet.

It would be good practice to talk to a few people about their Internet access and compare the results.

5.3 Creating a Home Page or Web Site

This is usually **the first page you will view** of a web site. A web site **can be one page or multiple pages** that are linked together. A competent computer user should be able to **create a simple, effective web site**. There are numerous web sites that provide reference material and software to help.

The pages of a web site are written in Hypertext Markup Language (HTML). This allows the computer to read and interpret the format of the page and display the images on the page. Many of the word processor packages will allow you to save a document in html format, ready to transfer to your web server. A basic understanding of the html tags is needed if you are going to build the web page yourself. Alternatively, there are numerous companies that will design the web site for you. Remember, general design principles that apply to brochures also apply to the web pages.

Certain factors need to be taken into consideration when designing your web site:

Information from your existing brochure needs to be customised to fit on the computer screen, which is a different size

Text on a computer screen is harder to comprehend; therefore you may need to shorten some of the sentences in your brochure text

Images need to be of a lower resolution, this will make the pictures download faster

Background colours can make text hard to read



5.3.1 Links

Links are used to move from one web page to another. It is important to link your web site to other web sites to ensure that visitors view your site. The local tourism body may arrange for a link to their page. Linking to co-operative partners in the industry will increase the number of visitors. Special interest sites, relating to your product or advertising, on another web site (e.g. travel site) can be beneficial.

5.3.2 Banner Advertising

Banners are small adverts that appear at the top of a web page. The customer would click on the banner and it would then link to your web site. These banners are a good method of promoting your web site, but should be approached with caution. It is difficult to monitor the results, and can be costly.

5.3.3 E-mail Advertising

This is a **cost-effective method** of reaching a target, but it needs to be **approached with caution**. Ultimately you **need to seek permission from the intended recipient, before sending** the message. Often **unsolicited e-mail or "spam" is frowned upon** and may cause **more damage than good**. E-mail is **a good method** of **keeping in touch** with your past clientele or to **send out special offers** to travel agents.

Characteristics of a good web site

Appropriate balance between aesthetic appeal and the time it takes to download a page.

A description of the image comes up when an image is downloading so that the customer knows what is coming.

Careful selection and use of essential images only, as too many images slow download time.

Site is easily updateable and gives clients reasons to return to see new information.

Divide the site into categories and provide a logical flow of information. Navigation is constructed around these categories. Clear and concise information.

All information fits onto the screen or is no longer than 2 screens; people get frustrated scrolling back and forth.

Download time per page is no longer than 10 seconds.

Information the customer is seeking is within 3 links. For example, a home page motivates a customer to seek more information, then the next page provides a selection of different information and the third page should show the customer enough detail to be able to make a decision about your product.

Use complementary, rather than clashing colours, and minimise the use of too many different colours.

WHAT TO AVOID!

Frames on your site, as they cause major problems for search engines and will inhibit your rankings.

Extended tables, as they can increase download time.

Busy backgrounds, which distract the eye from your content, images and logos.

Abbreviations and incorrect grammar.



5.4 Search Engines and Meta Tags

A search engine is a database of web sites. Your customers will use a search engine to help locate your web site on the Internet. The search engines use key words from your web site to help index the web sites in its database. When a customer uses a keyword to search, the search engine will select the web sites in its database that have those keywords.

Meta tags are used to place keywords in a web page in a specific section. These are hidden and used by the search engine to index the site. Keywords should describe your service or product. Keywords are case sensitive and should not be repeated more that 3 times.

A tour operator conducting tours to The Kruger National Park would include some of the following keywords: "tours, lion, elephant, kruger national park, Kruger National Park, camping, Camping". The keywords should be repeated in the text of the web page as some of the search engines will check for these.

5.5 Promoting your Web Site

Once you have created your web site, **promotion is required** so that your **customers can discover** your Universal Resource Locator (URL) or web address.

This will include registering your web address with search engines, adding your web address to your brochure, all outgoing e-mail, business cards and any other promotional material.

5.6 Registering on Internet Guides and Search Engines

Search engines register web sites in various methods. Most have a web page that is a specifically designed form that you need to complete and submit to them. This form will ask for details of your product, key words describing your product, contact details of your company and details of the owners of the web site (you). Once submitted, the search engine will catalogue the information and the keywords. www.yahoo.com, and www.altavista.com both have pages to register your site. It may take a few weeks to have your registration appear in the index.

It is recommended that you return to the search engine every few months to check on your ranking by searching for your website. If it does not appear try to register it again.

GENERAL NOTES
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