

Synchromesh Design

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Guide to Getting Your Own Web Site

What follows are some FAQs —Frequently Asked Questions— as well as some FUQs —Frequently Unasked Questions, plus some helpful discussion.

Why/when should a person or business have a web site?

You should only have a web site if:

- you are familiar with the use of the internet, having used it yourself. This seems self-evident, but I had one customer who couldn't see revisions to her site. After a week of trying to diagnose the problem from my end, it turned out that she didn't know how to browse the web. Anyone can sell you a car, but you'll be a lot happier if you know how to drive.

Spend some time looking at various web sites and try to figure out how well they look, work, and satisfy viewers. A web site can serve as your intermediary. Ever wish you could check up on a person or business without getting personally involved or bothering them.? YOU'RE NOT ALONE. A good reason to get a web site is to service, help or be nice to people that may be forming an interest in you. And, a web site that proceeds from the function of helping is destined for success. What is success? You'll have to determine that for yourself and be upfront with your designer. The designer will only communicate what you communicate. He or she may be very good at guessing or knowing your interests, but it's best that you are both "on the same page."

- you understand that it's got to work and be understandable to more people than just yourself, or yourself and a few friends.

- you understand that what viewers really want is information about you and your business. Generic stuff that gets copied from site to site, clip art images, boring universal claims, filler material —all contribute to offending and disappointing the viewer. You may be excited to see a very common image under your name, but for real viewers it's as exciting as a bad toupee. You may feel that matching another web site's look or contents puts you safely and squarely in the "good web site" category. But, to a large degree, not finding your own niche only undermines your efforts.

What will a web site do for a person/business?

- It won't substitute for your own work or personality, but it will do many of the services of a business office or secretary. A site is a representation of a person or business. Certainly you've seen abandoned sites, and sites with a promising welcome page but nothing behind it. A site will either represent you correctly or incorrectly. And, a site will have a life of its own. It will either give visitors a hearty handshake or hug or a limp, cold handshake and a distracted air. Done correctly, a web site will reveal more about you. While a designer will put the site together, it will be understood by viewers that somehow, to some degree, you approved of the site and that it reflects your person. And, the opinion of you and/or your business rises and falls on what's on your site.

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- So, a web site will or should help differentiate you and your work from others who are similar. It offers an intriguing, entertaining, and educational capsule of your self or your business or both 24 hours, 7 days a week for the entire world. As such, it offers by far the potential of the cheapest broadest form of advertising or just plain contact that can be found. While not being completely personal, it offers the ability to tell others what they usually ask of you, or what you hope they'll ask.
- A good web site can perform the functions of a business office. It's a quick, anytime way of getting your info and making a quick contact. It's your "best foot forward" and a business card that never wears out, gets lost, or has an old phone number. It can tell people many things they might be afraid to ask. It's both empowering for you and your viewer.

What's necessary to having a web site?

- For having what most people consider a web site you need:
 - A) a domain name, your dotcom, dotbiz, dotorg, dotwhatever —not unlike having a phone number
 - B) a web hosting service, the people who put your site files on a fast hard disk with a really good/fast connection to the internet
 - C) web design —taking your information and placing it in code that can be read and depicted by a web browser software like Internet Explorer. Web design usually entails digital picture-making and sorting and organizing and editing your information.

What are the liabilities or responsibilities involved in a web site?

- Registering your domain name, setting it out as your property and as a web address, costs anywhere from say 7 to 25 dollars per year. Then, you'll pay for hosting, generally from 7 to 20 dollars per month. My site costs me \$7.95 per month and there's plenty of room to grow.
- Then, there's actually creating the site. Whether you do it yourself or enlist the help of a graphic designer, you will generally have to work at coming up with the content. Our design services are particularly serious about getting the client to work at the content. We believe that is the only serious, legitimate, professional way. Of course there are other designers who will serve you up with whatever makes it easiest for you to pay quickly and go away happy quickly. Being a Synchromesh client makes you engaged and thinking about your work. It might be a little uncomfortable and seem a little fussy, but, in the end, you won't be scratching your head, wondering where the exciting functionality of your web site went.
- Patience. The web is fast, but the audiences are slow. And, audiences can be blasé and unwilling to react. But, you can watch the effect grow by viewing your sites statistics, and adjusting the site accordingly.

- **Upkeep.** As referred to above, a site can demand various levels of upkeep at various times. You don't want your latest news splash to be three years old or even three month old. A site with the slightest whiff of lack of upkeep will to some degree be regarded as bogus. Upkeep can involve as much or as little as you want, and in many instances and areas be kept up by the client with a little instruction. It should be as alive as you are. It's a web site, not an obituary.

How long will a web site take?

- * Just to see your name, without any web design? Two days to get to where you can be found by typing in your address.

- **Web design time.** How much do you want in content and attractiveness. An empty page can be made in a few seconds. A page with information can take anywhere from 15 minutes to quite a few hours. But for a cohesive, attractive, individual site, a good deal has to be decided on and researched before laying out the first page. Can the "fancy" stuff be done later. Yep, with plusses and minusses.

What web host is right for me?

- * Hard to say without your details, but generally there'll be ones that fit you better than others. Responsive web hosts are great, and so are ones that are proactively helpful. Unless you are building a huge, complex site, you'll only need the basics that will allow you a true domain name. You can get a host located on the other side of the country —it doesn't matter. Just consider how easy/expensive it will be to call them should you need to.

What web designer is right for me?

- Well, you want one that wants you. And, your designer should be understanding of your needs if not a champion of them. You neither want to be too small nor too big for your designer. Are you big enough to warrant weekly meetings and presentations? Would your site just be a "time-consuming" loss for a super design team. Would a casual or beginning web designer be a waste for you in the long run? You might want to do the work or, at least, direct the work yourself, but would you know if you were doing a good job for yourself? Huge companies —some even with internal advertising departments— hire advertising agencies. The real reason why? Most companies (and people) have a hard time looking at their own interests from the outside, the way a customer would. Sooner or later, every client develops a bit of tunnel vision about themselves and their own work. An outside designer alleviates that. In this way, hiring an outsider will inevitably make you a stronger person. There's plenty to learn for all.

What is the best pricing I should get from a designer?

• Figure out what you are comfortable with. Hourly rates and speed of design aren't good guides individually. What you want is either a quote for a specific set of requests or a trial by-hour period to see what the designer actually accomplishes in a given hour. Admittedly, it's difficult to estimate in the by-hour mode because jobs have varying degrees of difficulty and where one task can achieve complete finish in an hour, another task might find it only the beginning. So see what you are comfortable with. And see what the designer is agreeable to working with. You can get a taste of a designer and choose to have some easy work done for a few hours cost just to see what is produced. If you decide to look to another designer after that, the loss is small. You can also get the designer to price out work he or she has done already. How much for that site? How much for just these two pages of that site. Remember though, if you plan your site entirely based on price, spot picking "a page like this" and "a page like that," you may very well be undoing the complete value of your site by directing your site according to examples from others. The real value in design is that it works precisely for you, no one else. A designer that duplicates other sites and then stamps your name on them, probably isn't worth very much.

SOME OTHER THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

—Nothing is set in stone: just web code.

—No one will laugh at you. We're all figuring out the web stuff every day.

Did this help sort things out?

If you're the kind of person who likes being given a clear view of things, then you'll like having Synchromesh Design servicing your communication needs: print, web, photography, video, text.

For a growing assortment of other discussions on other topics click here:

To get a signed quote or estimate on work you are interested in, click here for a form.

To cut to the chase and something simpler answered, click here: john@synchromeshdesign.com