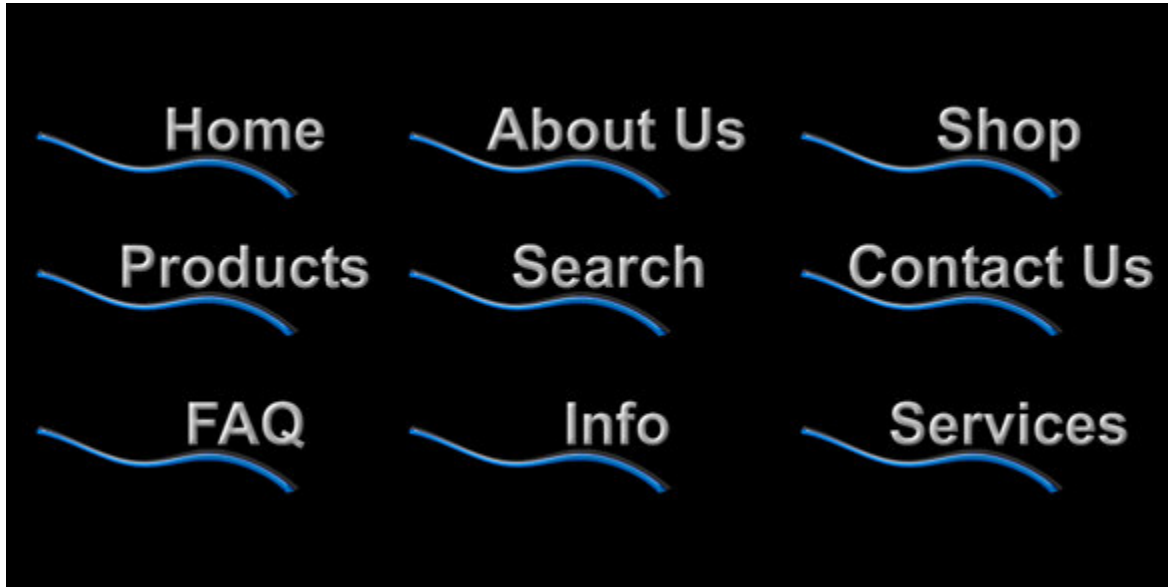


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How to Set Up a Web Business

written by Pam Baker



A Web site can make your career, sell your goods, or promote your services to new markets. You can just imagine all that money rolling in now! Beyond the hype and the excitement, however, is the reality that a web site is actually only as good as its operator. "It's work. It's not a 'post a Web site and money will fall from the sky' deal," says Glen Giles, co-owner of [Gorilla Guitars](#) in Georgia. He started his business solely as a Web site; it grew big enough that he built a bricks and mortar store in his hometown, Columbus, Georgia selling the same goods. Now he sells both ways, a perfect example of a small, successful start-up web business.

The good news is that you don't have to be that tech-savvy to build a Web site. In fact, good business skills are more important than you might realize when it comes to netting sales on the Internet. "So many people go headlong into Web businesses with little thought of the actual business model, and how the business will make money, assuming, usually wrongly, that the technology will see them through," says Chief Technology Officer and co-founder of [Strategic Advantage Inc](#), Mark Lowe. "Unsurprisingly, many fail for this very reason." He should know; Lowe's entire career has been dedicated to understanding technology and making technology decisions for his North Carolina-based company.

Assuming you've done your homework and built a strong business plan, you're now ready to build your virtual store or office, otherwise known as your Web site. "It's really not that hard to do," says Giles. "Just be sure you maintain control of it at all times. If you hire someone to do it for you, and they quit, you could be left with a Web site you can't get on and operate."

The easiest way to design and post your Web site is to host it on a professional service, according to Adam Warshaw, president of [DataVelocity](#).

TIP #1: Get and register a proper domain name for your business.

[GoDaddy.com](#) and [IX Web Hosting](#) are popular and have reasonable rates for purchasing domain names. Other sources include [iPowerWeb](#), [Register.com](#), and hundreds of others.

TIP #2: Select a company to "host" your Web site.

This can usually be done with the same company that you purchase the domain name from.

Or, you can use a different company entirely. When using a separate company, however, you'll need to change the DNS (in oversimplified terms, a code that tells other machines where to find your website.)

TIP #3: Create your Web site.

It is important to have valuable content with a fresh, clean look. One efficient way to get a fresh design without breaking the bank is to use [Instant Templates](#) where you can purchase all the supporting files for a Web site and simply plug in your own content. Their templates have been designed to work with the variety of different client browsers so that is one less concern to deal with.

TIP #4: Determine if you'll need to process payment information.

If so, you'll need to setup a merchant account. Paypal is a popular service because it offers a Web interface as well, so you can process payments on-line; this costs less than setting up a merchant account and purchasing a separate on-line agreement. Google has a competitive product, as do other vendors.

Or, you can set up a credit card payment system through a bank or directly thru MasterCard, Visa or American Express; just go to their Web sites and follow instructions.

TIP #5: Advertise your site so people know about it.

Use Web search engines, printed materials, whatever is appropriate to you target audience.

And, once you are up and running, stay in close touch with your new Web business. “Just remember if you start a Web site that you are selling to real people, who expect and deserve real products and real services in a timely nature from you,” advises Giles.

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