

Marketing Options

Digital Marketing/Your Presence on the Web

Harness your digital marketing power and measure your results. Websites, electronic correspondence and social media allow you to connect with your customers and potential customers and speak for you when you are not there.

Websites, Electronic Newsletters, Social Media

- Give your customers a reason to go to your website and social media and share it with others
- Look for ways to build customer loyalty - "word of mouth" is king
- Understand what Social Media choices are best for reaching your target customer

A guide to online terminology and options

Domain registrar = the company which you pay to keep your domain name in your possession. Your domain name is your actual url "www" address.

- You can have multiple domain names that point to the same website, but your "primary" domain is what you share with clients and usually also have email addresses associated with (leslie@webaddress.com), but that is not mandatory.
- Although "free" domains are available, I would strongly discourage EVER using them. Domain registration is not expensive (usually \$8-\$15 yearly) and is your intellectual property, branding identity and vehicle and the driving force to get your online presence recognized. While you are building a website that is terrific to use, but when you launch you want your url.

Web host = the company you pay to house and maintain the server from which your website is served to the world. This is where your actual files (html, etc) live and it is important that this company be reliable and available.

- Not all web hosting is created equal. Think carefully before putting your web presence in the hands of a company that is not serious about having their servers up and working 24/7 no matter what and be able to communicate with them quickly if there is a problem.
- It is not unusual for some companies to offer multiple pieces you need such as the domain registration, web hosting and email service, but make sure you choose each piece based on your needs and requirements, not what is on sale. Each piece is very important to running your business effectively.

Website Designer and/or interface or "how is it built" and "how is it updated"

- This varies enormously and is critical.
- I am a big fan of "self managed websites" where you can have the ability to login yourself and feel comfortable enough to update content - self managed websites. Type of updates can vary greatly depending on the business and client needs and their comfort level with technology, but a website that stays fresh and gets updated is much more likely to be revisited by your current clients, shared and thus gives you a much better "web presence" in searches.
- A good web designer can create the shell for you on a self managed website AND have it look professional and not template based.
- There is certainly a case for websites that aren't self-managed, but I would discourage any small or mid size business from purposely going that route. The tools today are wonderful and the ability to control that piece and/or hire the professional as needed is enormous.

Web Costs

- compare your "raw costs" of physical out of pocket dollars, but be sure to take into account labor (yours or who you hire) and most importantly the cost of lost opportunity that a substandard web presence can cost you.
- You have the cost of your domain name, the cost of the web host/server, and the cost of your email integration. They CAN be all at the same place, but that is rarely the best solution.
- Production/building the actual initial website cost. Make sure you are comparing "apples to apples" and that everything that you NEED and is "best practice" for web presence is included or you add to your project budget.
- Cost for updates/maintenance. Can you do updates yourself or do you HAVE to call your web person and how much will that cost? What is the procedure for making sure updates are correct with no misinformation and embarrassing spelling and grammar issues.
- Does the new website have a mobile version built in? Does the presentation make the best use of viewing on a computer (tested for all browsers) AND view well on any tablet and any smartphone?
- Are SEO (Search Engine Optimization) analytics built into the website development and the importance of keywords (metatags) considered or do those have to manually be coded? This is huge and directly impacts your presence in search engines (or lack of presence) and should be integrated into the website - it is not something you do once in awhile.
- What measurements tools are integrated into your online presence so that you can measure what is working and what isn't?
- Are social media integrations/connections included and how will they be handled?
- Does your website allow detailed form building if that is a need?
- Is e-commerce an option? Either for sales of product or service payments?