

GETTING STARTED ON THE WEB

A step-by-step guide to building and promoting a profitable Web site.

STEP 1) WHY HAVE A WEB SITE?

Determine the primary reason you want to be on the Internet. Your purpose may be as general as to let the world know you exist by posting the online equivalent of a brochure, display ad or newsletter. Or it may be as specific as to increase sales via an online catalog.

- ◆ Who is the audience for your site?
- ◆ Do you want to inform or entertain?
- ◆ Will the site be designed for children or adults?
- ◆ Does your target audience access the Internet from work, school or home?
- ◆ Do you want the site to be accessed by as many people as possible, or are you targeting a select market?

Determining your audience helps you plan and organize the proper material needed to build an effective and meaningful site. Your site should be well organized, both for the benefit of your visitors and to make it easier to maintain. Map out your site in storyboard or schematic form, perhaps as a flow chart. It really helps to have some way to visualize the structure, whether you're working alone, with colleagues or co-workers.

Spend as much time as you can surfing the Web at this stage. Take a close look at the sites you like, and print out the pages or record the address for NAC's creative department.

STEP 2) WHAT WILL BE THE CONTENT?

The content of your site will most likely be a combination of information that you currently have and information you will have to create.

Most sites contain customer service information providing answers to questions people ask most often. The more your customers can get answers from your site, the less time has to be spent answering those same questions on the phone.

Select content by thinking from the perspective of your audience. How can you add value to their online experience? How can you make your Web site different than an electronic version of a printed page? In other words, how can you add interactivity?

The home page should draw your audience in, not overwhelm them with information. The layout should be simple and the text brief. Add graphics to communicate your image and message. Use only the most compelling information. Add headings and bold text, where appropriate, to make reading easy. Try to limit the length of a Web page to three screens.

Encourage feedback via e-mail. You will get invaluable information from your audience. Measure traffic to your site. Track viewers' paths through your Web pages, so you can adjust your content accordingly. Trial run or soft launch your Web site to friends, family and co-workers.

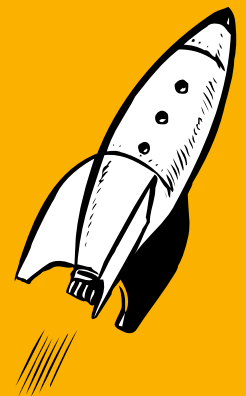
STEP 3) MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Creating a brilliant Web site is fruitless if no one knows about it. With more than 500,000 sites on the Internet, capturing attention can be a challenge. NAC's New Media Department offers marketing and promotional help as part of its online package.

STEP 4) MAINTENANCE

Don't make the mistake of assuming that once it's online, it's finished. If you want people to return to your site, fresh material, promotions and information encourages people to return. Working with the same people throughout will ensure consistency.

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