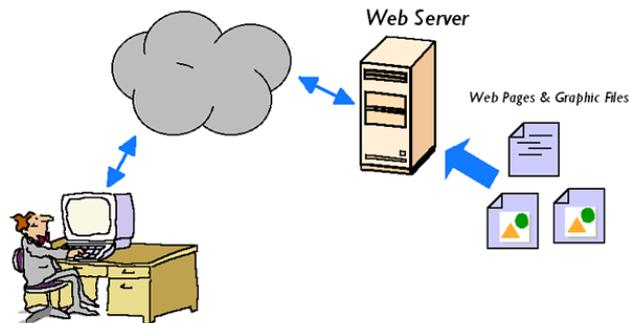


Planning a website

Understanding how to edit and update a website



Your visitor types your domain name into his internet browser, the domain settings 'point' the browser at a folder on a hard-drive of a specific computer which allows the internet access to it's files (server).

You create pages either online such as with Plone, Wordpress, WIX or offline such as directly in HTML or other web 'language' or with a HTML generator such as Dreamweaver. Offline content is then manually uploaded onto a server via FTP.

Deciding what type of system to choose may be a process that is made easier by working out what your requirements and priorities are.

Some questions to ask:

- **Aim** - is the website going to mainly provide information for a specific niche group of people who will be aware of the site and it's domain name?
- Is the website primarily interested in being visible to search engines in order to reach a world wide 'audience'?
- **Content** - will the content be largely 'static' or constantly being updated (up to several times a day/week)?
- Will there be multiple contributors/editors?
- Do you want visitor interaction/allow 'commenting'/site membership etc?
- **Depth** - How many pages/sections/subsections do you envisage will be required
- broadly speaking what would these be?

Online vs Offline

Online systems such as WIX or Wordpress offer templates for website design that can give you a professional looking site relatively quickly. In addition with a CMS (Content Management System) such as Wordpress, the entire website can be updated to a totally new design with just a few clicks (content remains the same). On the downside, arranging your content in a way that makes sense and is easy to navigate, can be slightly mind-bending, however when you get to grips with it, the results can be excellent.

Online systems also allow others to add and edit content (and may be allowed different levels of access). In fact most of these applications are designed to be used as blogging platforms, but can be tweaked to give the impression of a 'normal' website.

Offline systems can give you a lot more control over the appearance of your site, however that also means you are going to have to work out a design that will work within the confines of the HTML editor that you are using (Dreamweaver, Kompozer etc..). Offline sites are perfect for small simple sites with maybe just a few pages of content. Offline systems are less suitable for multiple editors as you can easily end up uploading old content that had previously been updated by someone else.

Wordpress

Websitetastic offers the online 'Wordpress' system for clients, this means we do all the initial set-up on our own server, and give the client a login and password so that they can edit their own site. The site is hosted initially on our subdomain (yoursite.websitetastic.co.uk) until you are ready to 'point' your own domain at your new site. Other systems such as 'Drupal' and 'Joomla' are also available if the client has had previous experience of these alternative CMS options.

Audience

If you are planning a site that will be reliant on traffic from search engines, you will ideally need to petition like-minded web-masters to 'link' to your site, or work out some very specific search terms that you want the site to pick up traffic from. For instance it would be possible to optimise a site for a search term such as 'homemade cookies in Newport' or 'photographers in Caerphilly' - the more specific the search term, the more likely you will be able to rank highly for it in Google searches. Avoid general terms for which it is likely that there will be a high level of 'competition'.

If you are planning a site which will provide information to a group of people who are likely to already know of your existence, then your emphasis can be on content alone. For instance, although a website may be optimised for all sorts of search terms at different times, sometimes, by far the most popular search term that actually brings traffic from search engines is simply the name of the business.... More than half of traffic for popular sites comes from just the name of the company implying that the visitor wasn't looking for a product, but for a specific company.

Google Webmaster Tools (free service) will give you an idea of 'bounce-rate' and what terms your visitors are using to find your site. You can add sites to your Google account and you get a code to embed in every page that you want to collect statistics for.

Content

The web world has always said that 'content is king' - having fresh well-written up to date information that is geared to your audience will keep your traffic at reasonable levels. The reason a lot of organisations use Facebook is that the content is being constantly updated - Wordpress sites can quickly and easily be updated, but it's a good idea to have a Facebook presence and 'embed' a Facebook feed into your website. That way, visitors can see that the site has interactions and is not merely static (you could say 'stale').

Web 2.0 - an idea that was mooted probably a decade ago now, was all about visitors interacting with a site. Facebook is the ultimate in visitor-interaction, adding Facebook and Twitter feeds to a site can help to add another dimension to what might otherwise be a fairly static site.

Server

You may already have a domain administered by a domain service (such as 123-reg, 1and1 internet etc..). The settings should allow you to point your domain at a specific server but by default will point to their own in the hope that you will take out a hosting package with the domain vendor. The server itself has an index which 'informs' internet traffic exactly which part of the server holds your site. Moving server is a two-fold (but relatively painless) operation. You just need to enter the 'name' or IP address of your preferred server into the settings, and tell the new server exactly what domain you want to use as the 'address' for your website. You would not normally do this until your new site is completely set up and ready to go. It's also worth considering whether you want to use your domain for emails as this will dictate whether you use a server-name or simply an IP address to point your domain at a server, and note that you can still use your existing Gmail account to pick up and reply to mail even if it's in your own domain name.

Websitetastic can offer unlimited email addresses if the 'nameserver' settings are set to our server, however if you already have them set up with your domain vendor, they can be left alone to operate as now. Moving servers as described above can take anything from a few minutes to 48 hours.