The only good Web site is a professional-looking one



DIGITAL SURVIVOR

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Lots of people with day jobs work away nights and weekends building their own little high-tech universe on the World Wide Web.

Maybe they're building a site related to a hobby, or they're trying to launch a dot-com in their spare time.

Many of them are using free facilities, such as GeoCities or others, to host these sites. And yet they end up with absolutely ugly and unwieldy Web addresses (www.webaddress.com/!bobsplace/!indexstuff/thisismysite.com) that look completely unprofessional.

Not only that, they subject their visitors to those annoying advertisements with almost every screen.

This is no way to build a business, and it isn't too great even for a hobby site.

If you're really serious about building a Web site, for whatever reason, why not spend a little bit of money to do it better? It can be remarkably inexpensive, just because the Web hosting business is truly global.

You can create your site with a company located anywhere. As long as it's on a fast Internet link, has a good support record, and offers professional service, it doesn't matter where it is.

I'm aware of someone who just signed up with a U.S.-based service, HiSpeed.com, for a new specialized Web site. The person paid a total of $160 (U.S.) in advance; for that, customers get a year's worth of unlimited Web space and unlimited traffic. That's but one of the many deals you can find out there.

But here's the key: You can find a good host for your site by visiting any number of Web site comparison services. These services let you examine and compare the features and costs you'll face in hosting your Web site.

Just take a look at CompareWebHosts.com, TopHosts.com, FindWebSpace.com or others. Services such as these will let you quickly find out which Web host might serve your needs.

> There are many features cheaply available for Web sites.

What if you're one of those people who hosts your Web site on the free space provided by your Internet service provider? You don't need to buy space anywhere, since what you've got is certainly cheap enough. But you still may have an unprofessional-looking address. You can overcome that by creating a domain name through a service that I now use to manage more than 25 domains, EasyDNS.com.

Visit **www.ebiz-canada.com**, for example. You'd never know that behind that simple address is a rather complicated, ugly Web address. EasyDNS.com's "domain redirection service" hides the ugliness, leaving the world to see just a straightforward, simple address. Cheap for $25 a year.

Of course, once you've got a better place for your Web initiative, you probably want to add some more sophisticated features. That's very easy, because there are lots of fascinating services available for free or minimal charge.

For example, what if you want to let people search all the pages of your site? Wander off to Atomz (**www.atomz.com**) — it will let you set up a search feature within your site in minutes.

Want to add an audio broadcast to your site, or do you have some audio files you'd like to let people listen to? The folks at Live365 (**www.live365.com**) have just the thing. In effect, they'll let you set up an Internet "talk radio" or music radio station on your Web site.

Or what if you want a mailing list, Web-based discussion board or other features? There are lots of those out there, and Listbot.com, Topica.com or other services add the functionality. There are hundreds of such services that you can add to your site.

What's the bottom line? If you are serious about having a Web site, you might as well be serious about doing it right.

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