

Building Your Own Website...



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By Ritcor Internet Services:

<http://ritcor.com/>

Important Things You Should Know About Website Design.



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Introduction:

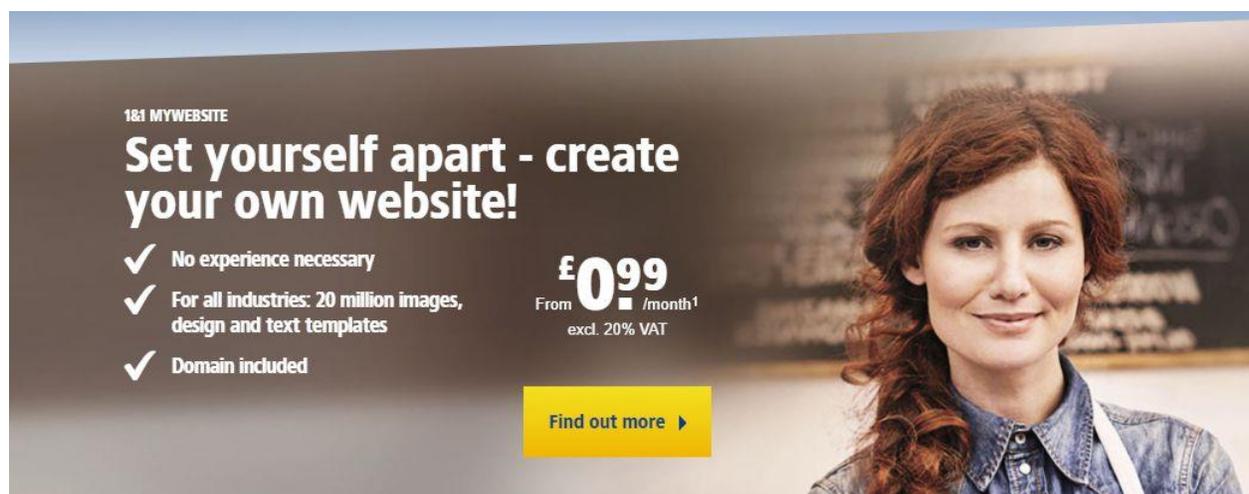
Should I Create a Website? Do I Need One?

People always want to follow the latest thing, be it in fashion, sports, that kind of thing. Websites have become a necessity to almost everyone. Companies, businesses, individuals, even young adults have created personal websites with their respective purposes, be it for profit, or for entertainment.

What one must consider, however, before creating a website, are the factors in which must be put to thought before doing so, such as the cost, maintenance, use, web host and so forth.

Firstly, associating with the cost, we must always try to find an affordable host, not spending too much, nor too little. A cheap host does not exactly symbolize a credible reliability rating, but we must always look for value for money deals.

Here is a Great website Hosting service that I use which the most affordable while is providing excellent services. [CLICK HERE](#)



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The advertisement features a woman with long, wavy red hair wearing a denim shirt, positioned on the right side. The background is a blurred image of a chalkboard with some text on it.

Also, regarding the efficiency and server/web host reliability, there are many cases of web hosts not providing the service they had assured other people, some had even shut down and were nowhere to be seen. Keep this note in mind; as if you would like a long-lasting website, this would be the first thing to look for.

Next, would hiring a professional be affordable? Is it the best option? For simple websites, we could always pick up the coding, or even use programs, as it is relatively simple.

However, when it comes to more complex coding, and when you want it to do a tad more than just providing information, hiring help in doing so would be the best way.

Not only in terms of design, but security is also a key factor in assuring a quality website. If the website also acts as a portal for businesses, security would definitely be the issue here.

So, having considered the things to do before building a website, do we actually NEED one? If creating one would boost sales or promote positive implications for your business, then by all means, go ahead and do what's best. Yet again, planning is the key to success, in everything we do.

5 Important Rules in Website Design

When it comes to your website, extra attention should be paid to every minute detail to make sure it performs optimally to serve its purpose. Here are seven important rules of thumb to observe to make sure your website performs well.

- 1) Do not use splash pages

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Splash pages are the first pages you see when you arrive at a website. They normally have a very beautiful image with words like "welcome" or "click here to enter". In fact, they are just that -- pretty vases with no real purpose. Do not let your visitors have a reason to click on the "back" button! Give them the value of your site up front without the splash page.

2) Do not use excessive banner advertisements

Even the least net savvy people have trained themselves to ignore banner advertisements so you will be wasting valuable website real estate. Instead, provide more valuable content and weave relevant affiliate links into your content, and let your visitors feel that they want to buy instead of being pushed to buy.

3) Have a simple and clear navigation

You have to provide a simple and very straightforward navigation menu so that even a young child will know how to use it. Stay away from complicated Flash based menus or multi-tiered dropdown menus. If your visitors don't know how to navigate, they will leave your site.

4) Have a clear indication of where the user is

When visitors are deeply engrossed in browsing your site, you will want to make sure they know which part of the site they are in at that moment. That way, they will be able to browse relevant information or navigate to any section of the site easily. Don't confuse your visitors because confusion means "abandon ship"!

5) Avoid using audio on your site

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If your visitor is going to stay a long time at your site, reading your content, you will want to make sure they're not annoyed by some audio looping on and on your website. If you insist on adding audio, make sure they have some control over it -- volume or muting controls would work fine.



Good Design Practices

Your website is where your business resides -- it's like the headquarters of an offline company. Hence, it is important to practice good design principles to make sure your site reaches out to the maximum number of visitors and sells to as many people as possible.

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Make sure you have clear directions on the navigation of your website. The navigation menu should be uncluttered and concise so that visitors know how to navigate around your website without confusion.

Reduce the number of images on your website. They make your site load very slowly and more often than not they are very unnecessary. If you think any image is essential on your site, make sure you optimize them using image editing programs so that they have a minimum file size.

Keep your text paragraphs at a reasonable length. If a paragraph is too long, you should split it into separate paragraphs so that the text blocks will not be too big. This is important because a block of text that is too large will deter visitors from reading your content.

Make sure your website complies with web standards at www.w3.org and make sure they are cross-browser compatible. If your website looks great in Internet Explorer but breaks horribly in Firefox and Opera, you will lose out on a lot of prospective visitors.

Avoid using scripting languages on your site unless it is absolutely necessary. Use scripting languages to handle or manipulate data, not to create visual effects on your website.

Heavy scripts will slow down the loading time of your site and even crash some browsers. Also, scripts are not supported across all browsers, so some visitors might miss important information because of that.

Use CSS to style your page content because they save a lot of work by styling all elements on your website in one go.



Improve Usability of Your Website

No matter how brilliant your website design is, if it is hard to reach the content of your site then your site is as useful as an empty shell. Here are some tips to improve the usability of your website to ensure it serves its functions optimally.

The first method is to make sure the typography of your content is suitable. If you have large blocks of text, make sure to use CSS to space out the lines accordingly.

The longer a single line of text is, the greater the line-height of each line should be. Also, make sure the font size of your text is big enough to read easily.

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Some sites have 10-pixel-tall text in Verdana font; while that may look neat and tidy, you have to really strain your eyes to read the actual text.

Make it easy for visitors to find content that they want on your site. If you have thousands of articles on your site and a certain visitor wants to find one single article from that pile, you have to provide a feasible means to enable visitors to do that without hassle. Be it an SQL-driven database search engine or just a glossary or index of articles that you have, providing such a feature will make sure your visitors can use your site with ease.

Ensure that your site loads fast if you do not want to lose visitors. Most internet users will leave a website if it doesn't load completely within 15 seconds, so make sure the crème de la crème of your website is delivered to the visitors as soon as possible to retain their attention.

Last of all, test each and every link on your site before it goes online. There is nothing more effective in tarnishing your professional image than broken links, so be very careful about that.



Mistakes to Avoid When Using Web Templates.

Website templates are very affordable and you can even download free ones as well which save you a lot of effort and time when you want to create a new layout for your website.

However, a lot of people make mistakes in the process of choosing and using a web template and end up with something that was unlike the image they had in mind. Here are some guidelines to help you avoid those mistakes.

The first obvious mistake you should be aware of is using a template that is very popular.

If many people use the same template, your website will not appear unique at all and your credibility as a solid, different website will be tarnished. In other words, you will appear generic just like your next-door neighbors.

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To whole point of using a web template is to save time and effort. You just change the title and appropriate details and you're done. The biggest mistake one makes is to customize the template beyond recognition.

While that may be good in the sense that you're creating a unique graphic, you're defying the very purpose of using a web template -- saving time and effort.

However, on the opposite side, if a template you purchase is suitable but some changes must be made to suit your site's theme, then you will have to take some time to make the changes.

For example, you can find a very nice template that suits your hobby site except the original designer has put an image of stamps in the header.

You can find images of garden plants and spades to replace the stamps for your gardening hobby site. However, do only make the necessary changes and don't redesign the whole template.

In some circumstances, some people simply make the wrong choice of templates. This is a very subjective issue but you have to be careful in selecting templates to suit your audience.

Do not choose templates just because they are pretty; choose them because they serve your purpose.

The Importance of a Good Design

Your website is the hub of your online business; it is the virtual representation of your company whether your company exists

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physically or not. When you are doing business online, people cannot see you physically like how they could if they were dealing with an offline company. Hence, people do judge you by your covers. This is where a good design comes in.

Imagine if you are running an offline company. Would you allow your salespersons to be dressed in shabby or casual clothes when they are dealing with your customers?

By making your staff wear professionally, you are telling your customers that you do care about quality. This works simply because first impressions matter.

Similarly, the same case is with your website. If your website is put together shabbily and looks like a 5 minute "quick fix", you are literally shouting to your visitors that you are not professional and you do not care for quality.

On the opposite, if you have a totally professional looking website layout, you are giving your visitors the perception that you have given meticulous attention to every detail and you care about professionalism. You are organized, focused and you really mean business.

On the other hand, you should also have anything related to your company well designed. From business cards to letterheads to promotional brochures, every little bit matters.

This is because as you grow your business, these items become the face of your business. Once again, think of the "salesperson dressed shabbily" analogy and you will get my point.

Website Customization: What can we do?

Nowadays, in this trendy world, people get very uptight when they do not look entirely presentable. This would also be the case in web designing.

Every individual would definitely want their website to look good, if not, to the best they can. Here are a few things we could look out for when wanting to create a professional looking webpage.

Color Schemes and Themes.

When designing, always choose matching colors. An example of a matching color would be to have a dark background, with visible words and designs. With the dark theme, try not to mix too many bright colors into the design. What we should NEVER do, is to mix two very different colors, such as purple and yellow. Now, of course, it would depend on the purpose of the website, but those two colors are too striking for one who wants it to look more professional.

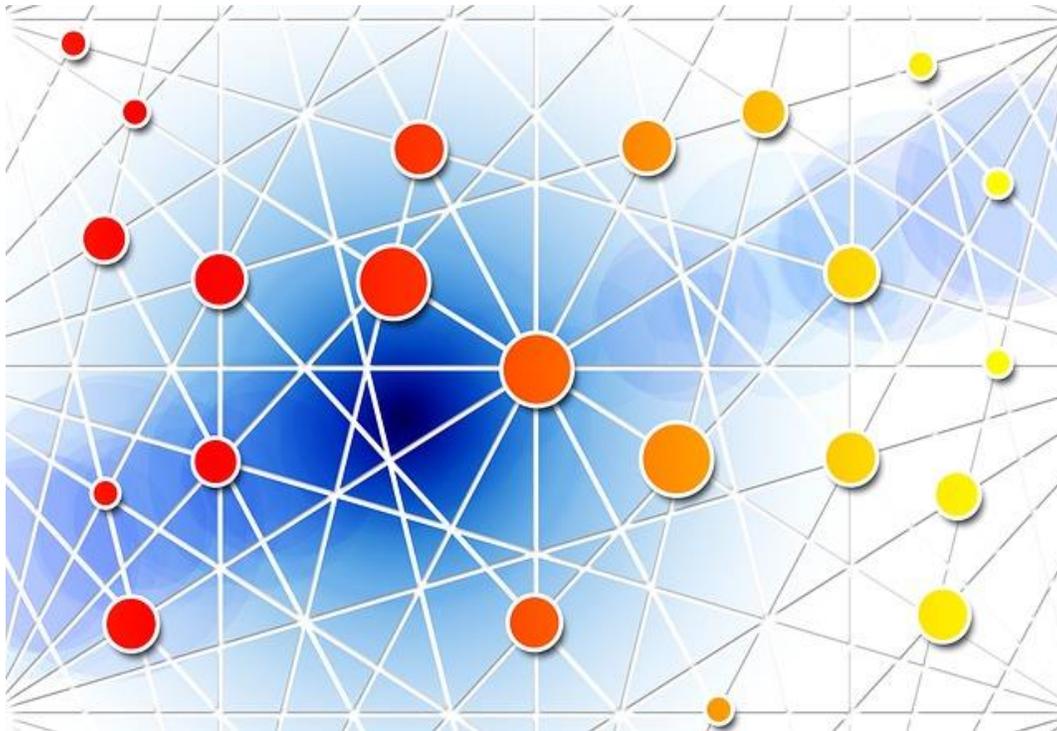
Themes must always suit the company or rather, the organization / etc. If the website was made to cater for a food company, it would be wise to stick to that particular category, rather than to revert to a different theme, such as machinery.

Fonts should be used in regard to the formality of the website. A simple sans-serif font would suffice in most cases. Exceptional cases such as design and art groups might want to use fanciful designs and fonts. Of course, that's only if you know what you're doing.

Finally, we must always try to think of our visitors, see the way they see. The resolutions and file sizes of the pictures must not

be too large in terms of size. This is to allow maximum compatibility and cater our visitor's needs.

So, planning is something we should always do, before attempting something.



Who Is Your Audience?

Understanding the type of people who visit your site is a very important task because you can use that information to enhance your site to suit them. As a result, you will gain more loyal returning visitors that come back again and again for more.

What is the age level and what kind of knowledge does your audience have?

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A layman might linger around a general site on gardening, but a professional botanist might turn his nose at the very same site. Similarly, a regular person will leave a site filled with astronomy abstracts but a well educated university graduate will find that site interesting.

Take your audience's emotional state into consideration when building your site. If a very irritated visitor searches for a solution and comes across your site, you will want to make sure you offer the solution right up front and sell or promote your product to him second.

In this way, the visitor will put his trust in you for offering the solution to his problems and is more likely to buy your product when you offer it to him after that.

When you design the layout for your site, you have to take into account the characteristics of your audience.

Are they old or young people? Are they looking for trends or are they just looking for information served without any icing on the cake?

For example, introducing a new, exciting game with a simple, straightforward black text against white background page will definitely turn prospects away. Make sure your design suits your site's general theme.

Try to sprinkle colloquial language in your sites sparingly where you see fit and you will create a sense that your audience is on common ground with you.

This in turn builds a trusting relationship between you and your audience, which will come in useful should you want to market a product to your audience.

When Is the Right Time to Redesign?

If you run a website, chances are you often wonder whether it is the right time to do a total redesign of the layout of your website. Here are some points to consider:

Are you thinking of a redesign just for the sake of it? If you answered yes to that question, it is not yet the right time to do a redesign. Remember, a design serves a specific purpose. If you are not sure whether to do an overhaul of your site, keep in mind that your current design might have a specific purpose that you might not know about. You will lose that function if you do a redesign.

On the other hand, if your website has had the same website design since 1990, perhaps it is high time to do a redesign. The last thing you would ever want to happen to your site is when visitors leave your site without taking a look at your content just because the design is old fashioned. If this is your case, here are some points to ponder before doing a redesign.

Redesigning your website is like performing plastic surgery on it. Your website loses its current identity (for the better or worse) and your regular visitors might not recognize your new design at first glance.

You risk losing them just because they thought they landed on the wrong page. Hence, it is very important that you retain a characteristic feature from your old layout. Perhaps it is the logo

of your site; perhaps it is the same text style for the title for your site.

To play it safe, put a poll on your site to let your visitors do the talking. If they think it is necessary for the website to have a fresh look, give it to them!



Search Engine Friendly Pages

There is no point in building a website unless there are visitors coming in. A major source of traffic for most sites on the Internet is search engines like Google, Yahoo!, MSN, Altavista and so on. Hence, by designing a search engine friendly site, you will be able to rank easily in search engines and obtain more visitors.

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Major search engines use programs called crawlers or robots to index websites to list on their search result pages.

They follow links to a page, read the content of the page and record it in their own database, pulling up the listing as people search for it.

If you want to make your site indexed easily, you should avoid using frames on your website.

Frames will only confuse search engine robots and they might even abandon your site because of that. Moreover, frames make it difficult for users to bookmark a specific page on your site without using long, complicated scripts.

Do not present important information in Flash movies or in images. Search engine robots can only read text on your source code so if you present important words in Flash movies and images rather than textual form, your search engine ranking will be affected dramatically.

Use Meta tags accordingly on each and every page of your site so that search engine robots know at first glance what that particular page is about and whether or not to index it.

By using Meta tags, you are making the search engine robot's job easier so they will crawl and index your site more frequently.

Stop using wrong HTML tags like `` to style your page.

Use CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) instead because they are more effective and efficient. By using CSS, you can eliminate redundant HTML tags and make your pages much lighter and faster to load.

5 Ways to Keep Visitors Coming Back

A lot of successful websites depend on returning visitors to account for a major part of their traffic. Returning visitors are easier to convert into paying customers because the more often they return to a site, the more trust they have in that site. The credibility issue just melts away.

Hence, keep your visitors coming back to your site with the following methods:

1) Start a forum, chat room or shout box

When you start a forum, chat room or shout box, you are providing your visitors a place to voice their opinions and interact with their peers -- all of them are visitors of your site. As conversations build up, a sense of community will also follow and your visitors will come back to your site almost religiously every day.

2) Start a web log (blog)

Keep an online journal or more commonly known as a blog, on your site and keep it updated with latest news about yourself. Human beings are curious creatures and they will keep their eyes glued to the monitor if you post fresh news frequently. You will also build up your credibility as you are proving to them that there is also a real life person behind the website.

3) Carry out polls or surveys

Polls and surveys are other forms of interaction that you should definitely consider adding to your site. They provide a quick way

for visitors to voice their opinions and to get involved in your website. Be sure to publish polls or surveys that are strongly relevant to the target market of your website to keep them interested to find out about the results.

4) Hold puzzles, quizzes and games

Just imagine how many office workers procrastinate at work every day, and you will be able to gauge how many people will keep visiting your site if you provide a very interesting or addicting way of entertainment. You can also hold competitions to award the high score winner to keep people trying continuously to earn the prize.

5) Update frequently with fresh content

Update your site frequently with fresh content so that every time your visitors come back, they will have something to read on your site. This is the most widely known and most effective method of attracting returning visitors, but this is also the least carried out one because of the laziness of webmasters.

No one will want to browse a site that looks the same over ten years, so keep your site updated with fresh bites!



Generating Revenue with Good Planning

For anything to work well, care must be taken to make firm, workable plans to execute it and the same goes for website designs. With a well thought out website design, you will be able to create a site that generates multiple streams of revenue for you.

In fact, many websites turn into online wasteland because they are not well planned and do not get a single visitor. Gradually, the webmaster will not be motivated to update it anymore and it turns into wasted cyberspace.

The crucial point of planning your site is optimizing it for revenue if you want to gain any income from the site. Divide your site into major blocks, ordered by themes, and start building new pages and subsections in those blocks.

For example, you might have a "food" section, an "accommodation" section and an "entertainment" section for a

tourism site. You can then write and publish relevant articles in the respective sections to attract a stream of traffic that comes looking for further information.

When you have a broader, better-defined scope of themes for your website, you can sell space on your pages to people interested in advertising on your page.

You can also earn from programs like Google's AdSense and Yahoo! Search Marketing if people surf to those themed pages and click on the ads. For this very reason, the advertisement blocks on your pages need to be relevant to the content, so a themed page fits that criteria perfectly.

As Internet becomes more widespread, advertising on the Internet will bear more results than on magazines or offline media. Hence, start tapping in on this lucrative stream of profit right away!

Reducing Load Time Through Image Optimization

Even though more and more Internet users switch to broadband every year, a large portion of the web's population is still running on good old dialup connections.

It is therefore unwise to count them out of the equation when you're designing your website, and a very major consideration we have to make for dialup users is the loading time of your website.

Generally, all the text on your website will be loaded in a very short time even on a dialup connection. The culprit of slow-

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loading sites is mainly large images on your website, and it is very important to strike a delicate balance between using just enough images to attract your users and not to bog down the overall loading time of your site.

You should also go to a greater length and optimize every image on your site to make sure it loads in the least time possible.

What I really mean is to use image editing software to remove unnecessary information on your images, and thereby effectively reducing the file size of your image without affecting its appearance.

If you own Photoshop, it will be obvious to you that when you save an image as a JPEG file, a dialog box appears and lets you choose the "quality" of the JPEG image -- normally a setting of 8 to 10 is good enough as it will preserve the quality of your image while saving it at a small file size.

If you do not have Photoshop, there are many free image compressors online that you can download and use to reduce your image's file size.

On the other hand, you can opt to save your images in PNG format to get the best quality at the least file size. You can also save your images in GIF format -- the image editing software clips away all the color information not used in your image, hence giving you the smallest file size possible.

However, saving in GIF format will often compromise the appearance of your image, so make your choice wisely!

Ways to Improve Sales Through Your Website

Anyone who has been marketing online knows that the lifeblood of a business is the traffic of a site. More visitors equal more sales. However, here are some ways that you can tweak your sites with to improve sales without the need to get more visitors.

The first method is to weave in your personal touch in your sales message. Nobody wants to be sold to by a total stranger, but many people will buy what their close friends recommend to them.

If you can convince your audience that you are a personal friend who has their best interest at heart, they will be convinced to buy your products. Remember to speak to an individual in your sales letter, not to your whole audience.

The second method is to publish testimonials and comments from your customers. A good idea would be to publish both good and bad comments; that way prospects will be really convinced that these testimonials are real.

When prospects see testimonials on your website, they will have the confidence to buy from you because human beings follow the herd mentality; when others have bought and proven it authentic, they will jump on the bandwagon and buy too.

Use visual representations for the problems and solutions that your product offers. Not everyone will read your text copy from the head to the tail, but most people will pay attention to images on your website.

poorly done you won't be able to sell even one copy of it because visitors will be driven off your website by the lousy design.

When I'm talking about a "good design", I'm not only talking about a good graphical design. A professional web design will be able to point out that there are many components which contribute to a good website design -- accessibility design, interface or layout design, user experience design and of course the most straightforward, which is graphic design.

Hence, I have highlighted some features of the worst web designs I've come across. Hopefully, you will be able to compare that against your own site as a checklist and if anything on your site fits the criteria, you should know it's high time to take serious action!

1) Background music

Unless you are running a site which promotes a band, a CD or anything related to music, I would really advise you to stay away from putting looping background music onto your site. It might sound pleasant to you at first, but imagine if you ran a big site with hundreds of pages and every time a visitor browses to another page on your site, the background music starts playing again. If I were your visitor, I'd just turn off my speakers or leave your site. Moreover, they just add to the visitor's burden when viewing your site -- users on dial up connections will have to wait longer just to view your site as it is meant to be viewed.

2) Extra large/small text size

As I said, there is more to web design than purely graphics -- user accessibility is one big part of it too! You should design the text on your site to be legible and reasonably sized to enable your

visitors to read it without straining their eyes. No matter how good the content of your website or your sales copy is, if it's illegible you won't be selling anything!

3) Popup windows

Popup windows are so blatantly used to display advertisements that in my mind, 90% of popup windows are not worth my attention so I just close them on instinct every time each one manages to pass through my popup blocker (yes, I do have one like many users out there!) and, well, pops up on my screen.

Imagine if you had a very important message to convey and you put it in a popup window that gets killed most of the time it appears on a visitor's screen. Your website loses its function immediately!

In concluding this article, let me remind you that as a webmaster your job is to make sure your website does what it's meant to do effectively. Don't let some minor mistakes stop your site from functioning optimally!

Conclusion:

The face of the internet is changing every day and once you are comfortable with website design there is no problem keeping up with them. Keeping your website fresh and engaging ensures that your visitors will keep coming back too.

With mobile being the current in thing these days it is useful to try and use a website that automatically resizes according to the browser and website monitor, and the best options for these are

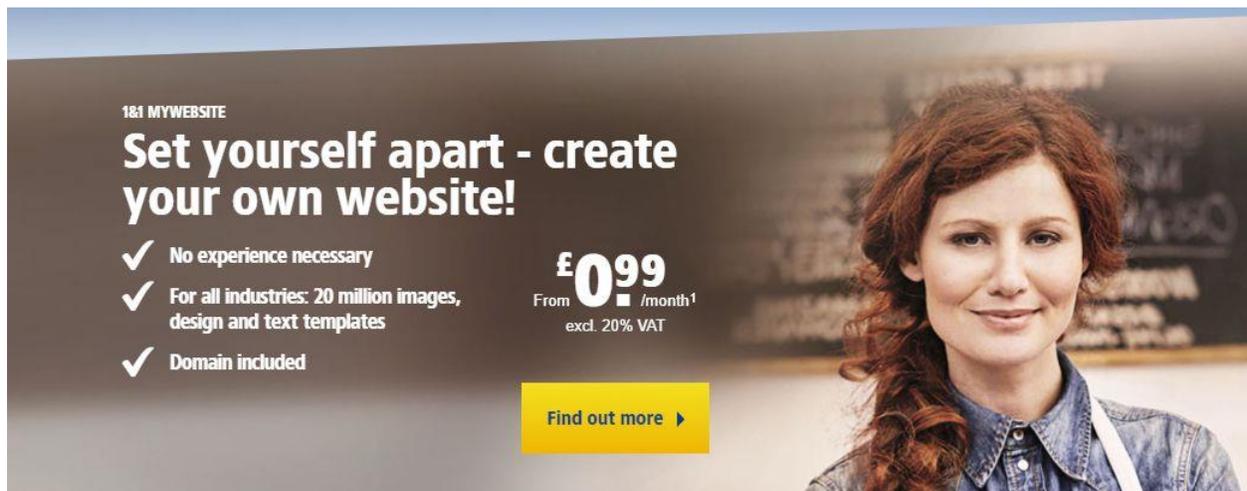
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CSS templates which are also easy to modify. Complete the entire program you have and soon enough website design will become second nature. I taught myself and you can too no matter what your background is.

Best Wishes for your success

Richard Ritcorservices.com

Here is a super cheap hosting service I recommend:



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The advertisement features a woman with long, wavy red hair wearing a denim shirt, standing in front of a chalkboard with some writing on it. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.