

WEBSITES

by Steve Ford

My Website Development Process

This document describes some of the things that need to be handled in the process of developing and maintaining a website. I can help you with the entire process, but you will need to provide the content and at least a general sense of the "look" you prefer. Here is a quick list followed by more detailed information.

1. Get a "domain name."
2. Decide what you want your website to look like.
3. Prototype development.
4. Produce the content.
5. Webpage development from the content.
6. Arrange a place to host your website.
7. Maintenance

Getting A Domain Name

Decide on a name that you want to use. It is best to keep it as short as possible and easy to remember. Spaces are not allowed in a domain name, so words are usually run together. Sometimes this is challenging because many domain names have already been reserved by other people. Try to avoid choosing a name that is very similar to a name that has already been reserved. After choosing the domain name you want to use, go to a domain registration website to register your chosen name (*most domain registrars also offer website hosting*).

Here are some domain registrars you can use (*there are many others*):

- godaddy.com
- networksolutions.com
- domain.com

You may want to shop for the best prices for domain registration and website hosting.

All domain names have a suffix, like ".com", appended to the name. There are many possible suffixes to choose from, but I recommend sticking with either ".com" or ".net". Any of these registration websites will allow you to enter your desired domain name and then search to see whether it is available. If it is available, it may not be available for all the possible suffixes. Only one suffix is necessary, but you can reserve more than one if you don't want other people using a similar domain name. Some of these registration websites give discounts for choosing more than one suffix and for long term registration. The cost is currently about \$10 per year. After identifying an available domain name you like, register it right away. If you wait, someone else might get it before you get back to reserve it.

Deciding On A "Look"

There are several aspects to the "look" of your website you will want to consider. Some of these are:

- General layout
- Colors
- Text fonts
- Photos and other images

One of the best ways to get started is to look at existing websites, especially people in your field or your competitors. Make a list of the sites you like, and what it is about each one that you like. If there are some things you don't like, note that as well.

Almost everybody will have several pages of information to present on their website. Give some thought to how you would like the information you want to present organized, and how you would break that information into separate categories. Again, you can use existing websites to assist you in determining what you do and don't want on your website. These pages can then be accessed from a menu that appears on every page. It is common for this menu to be placed vertically along the left side of the screen or horizontally near the top of the screen. In any event, it is important for the menu to be consistent from one page to the next.

Text Fonts

Using a unique text font is one way to personalize your website. But for the bulk of the written content I would stick to very standard fonts, either a serif font like Times Roman or a sans-serif font like Arial or Verdana. This is because even if the website calls for a fancy font to be used, that font must be present on the computer of the person viewing your website in order for it to display as you intend. If the font is not present, the browser will choose a font that is present on the system. Fancy text fonts in logos and titles can be converted to graphics so they are assured to display correctly, but it is best to stick with the basic text fonts.

Photos

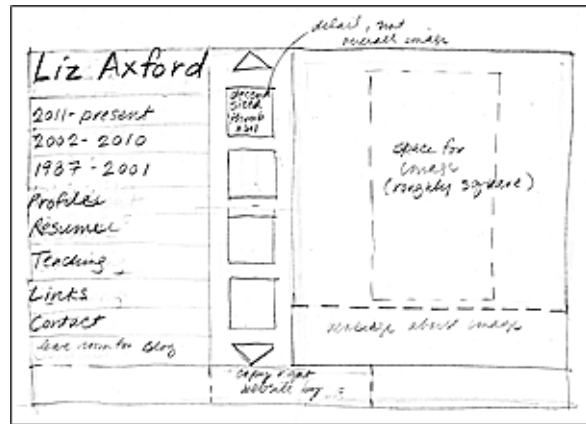
Photos are one of the best ways to personalize your website. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. Photos set the tone and character of your website, and they can convey an idea in a way that is clear, compelling, and difficult to replicate in words, or they can send a more subtle message.

Browser Considerations

I will test your website with several browsers to ensure that your site displays well in all browsers. However browsers do not all work exactly the same way, so your webpages may display somewhat differently in each browser.

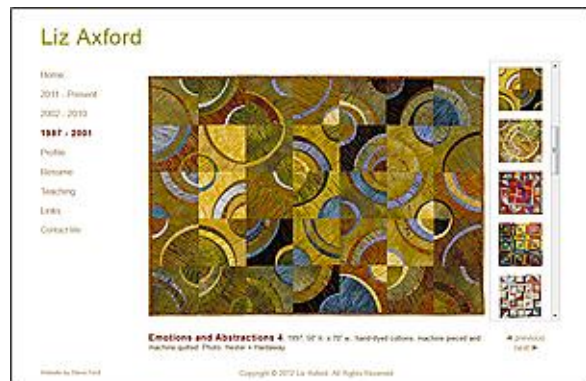
Prototype Development

I use the information you provide about the "look" you want to produce a prototype webpage. A very helpful and simple way to provide some of this information is in a sketch, similar to the sketch shown on the right. In a sketch you can show the general layout, including the navigation menu, the location of images and/or text, the header and footer, the relative sizes of the various elements, etc.



Preliminary Sketch by Liz Axford

I will work with you, producing several revisions of the prototype page until you are satisfied with the appearance and functionality. This prototype will then serve as a model for all of the pages using the content you provide. If your site involves a photo portfolio, it may be necessary to develop two prototype pages, one for the portfolio page and another for simple pages with static content.



The Result

Produce the Content

You will need to produce the written content. I can help with minor editing and formatting ideas. I can also do some photography and find other photos and images you may want to use. You may also want to consider hiring a professional writer to edit your written content.

Webpage Development

I will do the technical development. The cost will depend on the nature of the website architecture you choose, the number of pages, how simple or elaborate those pages are, and the amount of photography and graphics I provide or process. My rates are very competitive. I work on either an hourly or fixed bid basis. If you want specific information about cost, please contact me so we can discuss the details of the website you would like to have.

Arrange Website Hosting

When your website goes "live" it will be hosted with some Internet Service Provider (ISP). The ISP will provide space on its servers and set up your domain name so people will find your site. This sort of service usually includes some sort of email service as well. There are thousands of ISPs that do this kind of hosting. The cost for a fairly simple site varies widely, starting at about \$3 per month (or more). You will need to make arrangements for hosting and let them know that I will need to have access to your site so I can upload content and do maintenance if you should need that.

Maintenance

After posting your website "live" to your domain, I will do minor maintenance changes for free for the first 30 days. After that there will be a fee that is commensurate with the scope of the changes you need.