

Marketing Your Business on the Internet

by

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Business and individuals are reaching out, introducing themselves on an international level. The World Wide Web is the ideal environment to accomplish what seemed to have been a daunting task just a few years ago. Roughly 30 million people are currently connected to the largest collection of information ever and the number is growing at an astronomical and unprecedented rate. The rush to become part of the on-line community has become a race for market share and visibility. This is not surprising, considering the advantages stated above. The age of faster communications has arrived and the web remains a cost-effective marketing tool.

The following tutorial is part of a series intended to help educate Dominican businesses about the use of the internet and related technology to promote and sell their products and services. In this tutorial, we will discuss web hosting services, and the many features and benefits web site hosting offers. Using basic terms, we will introduce the various features and offer ideas for how to apply each to your business.

One of the most effective methods to showcase your products or services to a worldwide audience, is through use of your company website. To own a website, you must own a domain name, and the site itself must be stored on a web server, a definition called web hosting. Your web browser software (such as Explorer or Netscape) will communicate with a web hosting server to retrieve and display your web pages on a user's screen.

How the Domain Names Actually Work

Before we elaborate on web hosting, let's discuss how domain names work. An example of a unique domain name would be caribeansupplies.com. When you register a domain name, it is added to a large database of domain names. In this database, your domain name, contact information, hosting providers name server information, etc. are stored. When a visitor enters your domain name in a browser, it is referenced in this database and then directed to your hosting providers domain name servers (DNS). The DNS server then directs your request to the computer that contains your site. It's like calling the operator for a phone number (This would represent the large domain name database). The operator connects you to the phone number (which represents the DNS server) and then you are transferred to the support department's extension (which represents your web site).

Choosing Your Domain Name

The first step in registering a domain name, is to determine whether you want a unique domain name for your site. We recommend that all business sites have a

unique domain name. This gives your site a professional look, at a small expense. When choosing a domain name, you want the domain name to reflect your site. Before you register your domain name, you should brainstorm for several variations to your original name, since most likely, the domain you want may be taken.

Your professional looking URL for your web site, should look like:

<http://www.yourcompany.com/> as in <http://www.tryoffshore.com/>

It should be easy to remember and it should be easy to type. The longer it is, the harder it will be to type. But it is more important that it be easy to remember. You will want to include this URL on any and all literature, advertising and correspondence from your company. And you will want your email address to appear as you@yourcompany.com as in webmaster@da-academy.org.

Some web site hosting providers will force you to include their web site URL as part of yours. These URLs are far less desirable, especially when you include the domain name in advertising. It means you are also advertising for your hosting provider. An example would be if we forced you to have this URL:
<http://www.caribbeansupplies.com/yourcompany/>

That is highly unfavorable. Don't settle for less than a full domain of your own, since the cost of having your own domain name (www.yourcompany.com) is minimal these days. With stiff competition, the prices for domain names have dropped significantly in the last few years. For example, it could cost you as low as US\$9.99 for setting up your domain name for one year.

Web Hosting

Web site hosting providers such as Caribbean Supplies, are a new breed of Internet providers. These specialists have one or more powerful web servers that can be shared by several companies. These servers allow each web site to appear with its own virtual web domain, like www.yourcompany.com. In addition to powerful web servers, providers also must have a very fast connection to the Internet. The better providers will have what is called a full T3 fiber-optic connection delivering a staggering 45Mbps. That is the equivalent of almost 2000 dial-up modems at 28.8kbps all operating simultaneously at top speed.

Along with your web site, you should get one or more POP email accounts. You may want a different email account for each person in your company. If you have three people in your company:

- Bill Jones
- David Bell
- Suzanne Thomas

Then you would setup three POP mail accounts:

- bill@company.com or bjones@company.com
- david@company.com or dbell@company.com
- suzanne@company.com or sthomas@company.com

The names you choose are entirely up to you, but it is most common to use either just your first name or your first initial and your last name as shown in the examples above.

By the way, POP stands for Post Office Protocol. You will keep hearing about different protocols relating to the Internet. These protocols are just the lingo that two computers use to send a specific type of information back and forth. POP is a protocol for retrieving email.

You can use an application such as Netscape or Internet Explorer or Eudora to retrieve email from your POP account. Your local Internet access provider may also provide you with POP email accounts and you may want to use email forwarding.

Marketing Your Website

Naming and hosting your business website is only the first step in getting to the final goal, reaching your TARGETED MARKET via the use of information technology, particularly web technologies. There are a number of other factors to be considered. These factors include maintaining the quality of products sold, ensuring just-in-time delivery to customers, pricing products competitively, providing superior customer service and participating actively in the marketing campaign to make your products and website visible. We will explore some of these options in our next tutorial.

Caribbean Supplies offers superior web design and low-cost web hosting services to our clients. We also offer search engine optimization services to get your website to appear at the top of the search engines. For further information, contact us at info@caribbeansupplies.com.

***About the author:** With several years of experience in designing and developing telecommunications and web applications, Avonelle Christian James is the founder of CaribbeanSupplies.com, an e-commerce company providing internet business solutions to its customers . During the bulk of her career, Ms. James was employed as a scientist at world-renowned Bell Laboratories, where she worked on a variety of telecommunications products. There she served as a software architect in the research and development of leading edge telecommunications products. In 1996, Ms. James left her position at Bell Laboratories, to form Advanced Software Concepts, Inc., an internet and telecommunications firm, based in Reading, Massachusetts.*

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