

# Getting Your Business onto the World Wide Web

By Dan Raymo – Platypus Multimedia Solutions

There are opportunities abound for growing your business on the World Wide Web. The start up costs can be minimal, and the upside potential can be unlimited. You can open markets that were never available to you before, enhance your image, and improve your service. But, “How do I get started?”

- **STEP I**

**Conduct some research.** Get on the Internet and search for companies like your own (use the search engines – like [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)). What types of things are they doing? Would you buy their products or services (based on what you see)? If possible, try to talk to them and find out if and why they have been successful. This process should start your wheels spinning and give you ideas on what kinds of things you might want to do.

- **STEP II**

**Set the scope of your project.** Generally your plans will include one or all of the following:

1. **Advertise your business** – Tell people who you are, what you do, how to contact you. This can generally be done effectively with minimal resources.
2. **Provide a complimentary service to your customers** – Provide your customers resources that will enhance the value of your product or service. This may include: information on trouble shooting your product, providing your customers another avenue for sending or receiving information, provide your customers “goodwill” information (i.e. an accountant may provide tax tips, which would help to establish him/her as an expert in their field).
3. **Conduct on-line transactions** – Sell your products or services on the Internet by putting your catalog on-line and conducting electronic transactions. This probably is the most ambitious task and requires the greatest amount of expertise. It will also require constant attention and updating.
4. **Create a product on the Web** – Translate the equity you have in your business to create a Web based product (i.e. an on-line version of a newspaper). Revenue can be generated by selling advertising space or charging a subscription fee. The success of this type of endeavor is generally based on your ability to generate strong interest in your site.

Resist the temptation to be overly ambitious...It is better to start small and build on your success, than to bite off more than you can chew.

- **STEP III**

**Define budget and resources** – Ok...now you have devised all your lofty plans...how much time and money are you going to have to spend on them? Your expenses are going to fall into three main areas.

1. **Site Design** – Probably your biggest expense and most important area of decision. The price range here is all over the board. But you can usually find a quality designer within your budget (of course...the lower your budget, the tougher they are to find...but they are out there) If someone cannot recommend someone to you, the Internet is the best place to look. Using the search engines with keywords like “web site design”, “graphic designer”, or “new media” should supply you with endless possibilities. You can evaluate their work immediately by visiting their sites. Look for a clean-professional look and reasonable download times. If your not “wowed” by their site, you probably will not be too impressed with what they will do for

you. Of course there is always friends, family, or the do-it yourself route. Just remember, if your site is not going to leave people with a positive impression of your business; you are better off doing nothing at all.

2. **Site Hosting** – Unless you have an Information Technology Department, you are probably going to want to outsource your hosting. If you are using a designer, they should be able to recommend someone to you. Quality hosting can be found for as little as \$300-\$500 a year. This should include a domain name registration ([www.mycompany.com](http://www.mycompany.com)). Go to <http://names.platypusmultimedia.com> and you will be able to test for the availability of domain names. You should use something that is short, easy to remember, and says something about your business. Many times your company's name is already taken. Try something that talks to what you do -([www.greatclothes.com](http://www.greatclothes.com)).
3. **On-Going Expenses** – Remember to consider any time and money your going to need to spend once your site is up and running.

Ok...now you have your budget. Too much?...go back to “Step II” or “You have to spend money to make money!”...go on to “Step VI”.

- **STEP VI**

**“Build it and they will come”** – No one knows your business better than you, so make sure you are closely involved in the content development of your site. Start with a strong purpose and play to YOUR customer. Provide your designer with quality photographs and graphics that you may have from your hard copy marketing materials. Have your address and phone number in an obvious place on your web page. Make sure your designer includes Meta tags (hidden lists of keywords that help some search engines index your page) Include competitors names and industry associations in your list of keywords...just because someone isn't looking for you, it doesn't mean they shouldn't find you. Once your happy with your site, check it...check it again...then put it on-line.

- **STEP V**

**Market your site** – Now let's make sure they come. The single most important thing you can do, is to register your site with the search engines. [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) is the single most important engine to be included in. [www.submit-it.com](http://www.submit-it.com) provides site registration services, including many free services. There are many advertising opportunities available on the Internet, but none better than using traditional vehicles--Include your site address wherever possible...on business cards, newspaper ads, radio spots (your site address will probably be a lot easier to remember than your phone number), answering machine (for off hours), etc...

- **STEP VI**

**Evolve** – Treat your Internet site as a business investment . Get feedback from your customers. What is working? What isn't? Make changes and additions when needed, but be patient success doesn't usually happen over night.

Well—what do you say? Is your company ready for the “World Wide Web”?