

Web Essentials For Creative Ministry

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So, you think your puppet team should have a web site but you don't know where to start. Or maybe you have a site already but you'd like to liven it up a bit. This class will provide some basic information about how to plan and build a ministry site, and suggest tools to better manage, expand, and promote it.

Initial questions:

- Who is your _____?
 - o This will dictate the design, colors, and navigation of the site.
 - Internet junkies / newbies
 - Public / private
 - Promotion / training
 - o Many sites will have multiple audiences.
 - Puppeteers / parents
 - Public / private
- What is your _____?
 - o This will guide initial development choices.
 - Information
 - Features
 - Activities
 - o Don't be afraid to start small and grow.
 - Start with the basics.
 - Avoid "Under Construction" or "Coming Soon" labels.
 - Use new additions to bring people back.

What might a good puppet ministry web site include?

- Brochure info
 - o Who we are
 - o What we do
 - o Contact info
- Calendar
 - o Performances
 - o Practices
- Guestbook
- Photo gallery
- Publicity info
 - o Posters
 - o Flyers
 - o Bulletin inserts
- Performance contracts
- References
- Blog
 - o News / Tour reports
 - o Member communication
- Video clips / Podcasts
- Member forum
 - o For puppeteers
 - o For parents
- Member forms
 - o Commitment contracts
 - o Permission slips
 - o Medical release
- New member applications
- Store

How do we get started?

- Determine _____.
 - o Free
 - Pro: Wouldn't cost a dime
 - Con: Might have to put up with random advertising
 - Con: Might have slow transfer rates or limited disk space
 - Con: Might be difficult to remember
 - o Piggyback
 - Pro: Could be free or very inexpensive
 - Con: Would not have own domain name
 - Con: Might not have direct access to the server

- Virtual
 - Pro: Could select a domain that is easy to remember
 - Pro: Would have access to domain e-mail
 - Pro: Would have direct access to the server
 - Con: Would require annual name registration fees
 - Con: Would require monthly/annual hosting fees
- Collect _____.
- Get to it!
 - Build it yourself.
 - Use blogging technology as a CMS.
 - Blogger / WordPress / Joomla!
 - Open-source
 - Or, invest in web design software.
 - Dreamweaver / Front Page / iWeb
 - Non-profit pricing
 - Solicit a puppeteer, parent, or church member.
 - That person might have a personal interest in the ministry.
 - The project could qualify for a puppeteer's class credit.
 - A friend may offer design services as an investment in your ministry.
 - Hire a design company.
 - It could cost you \$40-\$80/hour.
 - They would have professional coding and scripting capabilities.

Web site specifics:

- Brochure info
 - Be organized before you begin.
 - Know some basic design rules:
 - Simple is good. Don't clutter.
 - Watch out for overusing fonts.
 - Use economy of verbage.
 - Remember good web etiquette.
- Calendar / guestbook / gallery
 - Find or purchase scripts that can be implemented on your site.
 - oneadmin
 - php.resourceindex.com
 - cgi.resourceindex.com
 - Be aware that not all scripts are "plug and play".
- Publicity info
 - Provide pre-made materials that can be printed out by your clients.
 - Consider PDFs and/or FlashPaper.
- Forum
 - Decide if the forum will be open to the public or protected for your members.
 - Decide if the forum be externally hosted or on your own server.
 - Consider assigning a moderator.
- Video / audio
 - Check with your host provider regarding bandwidth and server capabilities.
 - Watch out for copyrighted material.
 - Consider podcasting.

<http://del.icio.us/DearMyrah/ahWE>