

Website enquiry information & questions

Thankyou for your website enquiry. This document tells you about what I will need to know to get started & what you may need to provide me with if you wish me to go ahead & create a site for you. It also tells you a little about how the site needs to be set up & gives you an idea of the costs that will be involved.

Firstly, a few questions which you may already know the answers to.....

What do you want your website for?

It may seem an obvious question, but it will affect what will be going onto your site & what I will need from you. Do you want to use it to just convey information or to promote or sell something(s)? If you just want to make some information available, you would just need to provide me with it to display on the pages. If you have something(s) to sell, whilst you would need to be generating a reasonable trade to make online credit card sales worthwhile, this can be set up for you. Alternatively, a simple order form could be produced which can be printed out by the customer & mailed to you with payment for your products. In such a case I would also need to know what you are selling & to where (abroad?), your mailing charges & what you need the customer to be telling you.

As this example demonstrates, there are different things that I need to know, depending on what you want to include on your site. Therefore if you are able to work out the different pages you want before I start & roughly what you want displayed on each of them, this will be a great time (& cost) saver.

Do you have a 'look' or colour scheme in mind?

If you already have a look on paper, such as a letterhead, logo or leaflets, then these can provide a good basis for the look of your website & establishes continuity. If you wish me to use these, then I would need you to provide me with samples for me to work from. Otherwise an idea of colours would be good, as a guide though, light & unobtrusive backgrounds provide the easiest viewing for text without distracting from the main images that you wish to display. If you have favourite fonts, then let me know what they are. Whilst not everyone who views your site will have some of the more exotic fonts on their computer (which they need to display ordinary text), these can still be used on banners & buttons where they will be turned into pictures & therefore displayed correctly.

Is 'speed' or 'aesthetics' your priority?

Do you want a fast-downloading mostly text based site or do you want to use a lot of images? Images, especially photos, are larger files & will slow the downloading speed of your pages. If you are concerned that people will give up quickly & surf elsewhere, then speed may be important. However, if you have something unique to offer that they won't find elsewhere, then it may not. A website that exists to display artwork for instance would be pointless without the pictures! In such a case, the surfer should be expecting to have to wait a little longer for the pages to display anyway.

Will your site need regular updating?

This is something else to bear in mind. If you intend to promote events for instance on a calendar page then updating is inevitable (along with the probably small, but regular extra work involved). However, if this is unnecessary you may find it simpler to have a site that doesn't include elements that can go out of date & if unattended can make the site look neglected. A program called 'Contribute' is available at around £100 a licence that can make updating the site yourself without fear of 'breaking it' easy & this could be cheaper for you in the long run than asking me to do any updating for you.

How are you planning to promote your site?

It may be that you only have a need to promote your site locally with posters or business cards for instance. An example of this may be a local service provider (i.e. gardening work) where responses were only required locally & the site is just serving to provide more information about that. You may however have something that you are wanting to be picked up far & wide & so getting a good ranking with the internet search engines (directories) will be much more important. It is however still worth promoting your site via other means, even word of mouth as these will generate a significant amount of web traffic for you, especially early on.

To promote your site with search engines you need to choose some 'keywords'. These are words that people might type into a search box to find a site like yours. For instance, if you were selling artwork of crop circles & sacred geometry, your keywords may be 'art' 'crop', 'circle', 'sacred' & 'geometry'. You may also like to add a few others like 'prints', 'present', or 'cards'. Anything that relates to what you are putting on your site. These words are placed invisibly on each page for the search engines to read & then categorise your site in the directory.

Naming your site:

For a small cost (currently as little as around £5 + VAT for .co.uk names - .coms are a bit more expensive) you can register (for two years), your own domain name (i.e. www.yourname.co.uk) which will then be unique to your website. Obviously, if someone has already registered the name that you would choose you will need to change it a little; there are for instance different choices of endings available (i.e. .co.uk, .com, .org, .biz etc).

Also a little creativity can often come up with a name that is currently unregistered by anyone else. A domain name is a much more memorable & professional alternative to the cumbersome addresses of the free web space offered by many ISPs.

Hosting your site:

Are you happy hosting your site for free with banner adverts all over it or would you rather pay a little for server space that enables you complete control over your webpage content?

The former option is usually fairly limited in the amount of space you have available for your pages & if something goes wrong, you are normally pretty low in the list of priorities for fixing. Having tried unsuccessfully on several occasions in the past to get a response from the technical support departments of such free services, I consider them to be virtually non-existent! You are also restricted to using a web address consisting of your ISP name & your own name; not ideal if you want to look 'professional'.

Paying for your web hosting provides you with far more flexibility & reliability & none of those ugly adverts. You will also be able to use a unique domain name for your website if you choose (setting up a domain name on a web host can take a couple of days).

Whilst you certainly get what you pay for when it comes to web hosting, you don't always need what's on offer. I have worked with a few small businesses that have spent several hundred pounds on a web package, most of which they didn't need. Many of my clients have simple sites that don't use a lot of storage or require all the 'extras', so I now rent server space that enables me to offer them cheap basic hosting packages (£20 per year) if that is all they need. For those sites that need more (databases, shopping carts, guestbooks etc.) I can also now provide these options at a little extra cost.

Costings:

There are a few different factors that affect the amount of time involved in setting up a new site & these are things that I need to take into account when charging for my work. A simple example being that a web page can be any size at all & contain any number of different elements.

Obviously a page that takes up no more than the screen space & containing for instance just text, supplied to me as a Word document will be a very quick job. Whereas a lot of text that I need to type in along with photos that need placing & other interactive elements, together making up a page that scrolls down a long way will clearly be a great deal more work.

So, as I have already mentioned, any preliminary work that you can do will save me time & reduce costs. The main elements that will affect the amount of work I need to do on a site are the following:

The look of the site: Designing a look from scratch obviously takes longer than if I am provided with logos, colour schemes, fonts etc to use.

Total number of pages: The more different pages that I need to create, the more time is involved obviously.... *However*, if some of those pages have a similar layout (i.e. a set of pages each displaying a different work of art at the same size), they may only differ slightly.

Such pages would be much easier & quicker for me to produce than those with different layouts. Also, some sites use different sized pages to suit the different screen resolutions that surfers may be viewing. A second set of pages at a different resolution is much easier to create than the originals & only adds a third or so extra to the total cost.

The size of each page: Need I say that the bigger each page is the more work is likely to be involved in creating it?

Typing in text: If you can supply me with your text in a computer word processing format, then that would be a lot less work for me than scanning & correcting or typing from paper documents.

Scanning images: Whilst I can scan your images for you, time would again be saved if the images that are to be used are already in a digital format & provided on a CDROM. However, you may feel that this is something that is easier for me to do if you don't have this option at home.

On average, using my previously created sites as a guide I have found that after initial preparations & laying out the design, each new page comes out at between £15 & £25 worth of work. Because setting up the basic design only needs to be done once, sites with a lot of pages will inevitably cost less per page, than those with only a few. So for a site without a predominance of large complicated pages, this can be a good guide to costing.

The best way that I have found to proceed with a project is to use this average cost per page to give a rough guide at the start as to the likely end costs. Then to work to an agreed budget, keeping the client regularly informed of how much the project has cost to date as different stages are completed. This allows for some flexibility as the project progresses where the client may choose to add or remove elements or pages to better suit their own needs.

To give you a better idea, a simple site with four basic pages, with everything provided ready to use would cost around £100. Whilst the more detailed 17-page <http://www.s-a-p.org.uk> site would instead cost around £300, though again this all depends on your level of input. You will of course also need to remember the additional costs of hosting the site on a web server & the cost of registering a domain name for your site if either of these are required.

So to recap, if you want me to create a site for you these are the things that I would need you to tell me about & provide me with if you have them:

Site Layout: What do you want to convey? Do you have a site layout in mind & what do you want to include on the different pages? Sketching these details out on paper is a great help. The more that you can define for me, the less time I need to be spending working it out. Don't forget that I will need the contact details for you that you want included on the site.

Images: Digital format is best & at least 600x400 pixels big for any that will need to be displayed large. Please provide these on a CDROM (or a lot of floppies?). Please don't try to email them to me, they are almost certainly *too big* (I don't have broadband access). If this is not possible, I can still scan any images, but this will involve more work - & you will still have to post or deliver them to me.

Logo & Colour scheme: (including background, fonts & text colours).

Text: Any word document(s) on a floppy disk or CDROM will save me time over text on paper that will need scanning & then correcting.

Keywords: Any keywords that you feel are relevant to your site.

Links: Any links to other websites that you may wish to include.

Domain name: Would you like to register a domain name? Do you have one in mind (& an alternative if it's taken)?

Hosting: Do you already have a web host or will you need me to arrange that for you?

Budget: Do you have a strict budget that you want to stick within? Does this include hosting & domain name?

Summary:

Whilst there will inevitably be things that will need to be clarified as the project proceeds, sorting out these things at the beginning make it a lot easier for me to get on with. Then I can keep you informed about progress & ask you for your feedback at various stages along the way to ensure that you get what you want from your new site.

If you want to see some samples of my previous work, you might like to investigate any of the following:

<http://www.yavanna.co.uk>

<http://www.paddoxfarm.co.uk>

<http://www.aranyagardens.co.uk>

Aranya Gardens Web Design – www.aranyagardens.co.uk

<http://www.s-a-p.org.uk>

<http://www.permaculturemusicians.co.uk/>

Thank you again for your interest.

Aranya

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