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(Criteria 6.3)**Guide to Designing a Club Website****Where to Start**

Are you developing a website for your club, and don't know where to start? The first step is to take some time to think about who is going to take part in building the site, much in the same way you would when putting together a club newsletter.

Options for Creating your Website

- Employ a web designer - a designer does come at a price but can save much time and provide valuable advice
- Writing your own website - this is cheap & you keep control – this is also an ideal opportunity to involve the younger members of your club who may have these skills - it can be fun!

The following hints have been put together for those of you wanting to write your own website but it is also useful if you are employing someone else, in order to check on their procedures.

Planning your Website

A good website is the product of careful planning. Below is a suggested process that highlights the key stages of development.

Define the Site's Goals

Without a goal your site has no purpose. If you do not have a clear goal from the outset it is worth meeting with other key players to establish ideas and thoughts. This can be a formal or informal process but usually involves asking questions such as:

- What is the mission or purpose of the organisation?
- Who are our intended audience?
- Why will people visit our site?

From these questions it will be easy to identify ideas and establish how important they are.

Define the Audience

Without an audience, your site is not necessary. The design and content of your site should depend on what your audience want from it. In the previous step you should have already listed your intended audience. If your audience is made up of various groups, you should list how important they are and write down what their needs and goals are. You can also create scenarios whereby you take on the role of your audience. This will give you a feel for what they will want from your site.

Competitive Analysis

Why not look at other cycling club's sites to see what they are doing? Chances are you'll identify good and bad features, as well as obtaining design and layout ideas.

Identify Content and Functional Requirements

You now have your goals, you know your audience and you know what mistakes not to make. You now need to know what content you want.

- Create an inventory of the information that you want on the site; e.g. press releases, events, staff contacts, etc
- Group and label content so that you can draft out a site structure
- Identify content owners and what process you'll put in place to keep it current
- Establish what dynamic functionality your site will need e.g. databases or online forms

Define Site Navigation

How will your audience get around your site without getting lost or frustrated? If you refer back to the site structure you should be able to pick out the major sections, these usually form the global navigation system – links that will appear on every page. These enable users to jump quickly between sections. Each major section will have it's own links but wherever a user is – they should always be able to return to the homepage at the press of a button.

Keep your navigation consistent

- Think about using your logo as a link to your homepage
- Try and keep to no more than 7 major sections
- Try and keep to no more than 7 links from the major sections

Design your Site

You now have everything you need to know about your site; why you are building it, who your audience is, what information it will contain and how it is structured. That just leaves the design. The most important goal of design in the context of web pages is to provide a sense of place. You can do this using visual signifiers such as colour, graphics or photographs. You'll probably want to incorporate your club/organisation logo and branding. There are no rules as such when it comes to designing your site 'look and feel' but now is a good time to get out the sketchpad and crayons.

What do you need to get started?

- Basic knowledge of HTML / HTML Editor
- A Host
- An FTP programme

HTML and HTML Editors

HTML stands for Hypertext Mark-up Language. To learn the basics of HTML there are a number of places to find the information:

- On the Internet
- From a book
- Anyone with knowledge of writing in HTML language

This will take a little time to learn and will take approximately one to two months for the basics. However once learned, a HTML Editor is quicker and easier to use, and you will find that it will do much of the programme writing for you as you design the pages. As you work on the design

(text, fonts and graphics), it will write in the HTML part for you. It is still a good idea to learn a little of the basics of HTML. A good place to start looking for an HTML editor is www.download.com. Through this website you will find tutorials and other software that will be of help. Have a good look around the site.

Hosts

Now you have designed your club's website it is time to find a host for your site. There are a number of ways to locate a host. If your club is already with a service provider e.g. AOL, Freeserve or ntl, there be will web space available for free. However, if not, there are many places on the Internet that will host your site. Try a Google search for 'web hosting'. When looking for a host ask about 'ad banners'. Some hosts will put ads onto the site, so you need check whether you want this on your club site, and how appropriate they will be. Also, ask how much space will you get for your club site.

FTP Programme

You have now designed your club website and you have chosen your host. How do you get your site from your computer to the host? An FTP Programme is used to transfer files from your computer to your host. You can download this program from the net (www.download.com). It is easy to use and most allow you to drag and drop files.

And Finally...

After you have done all this work and got the site up and running – you can't stop there! As with any source of information, it must be up to date. This is where the Web Team in your club will now come into their own - to do regular updates and of course, there will be potential new members to look after and send information out to!

GOOD LUCK!

The information contained within this guide is based on information from the Volunteer Investment Programme Guide #7: *Building a web site*