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INTRODUCTION

Creating a web site is NOT brain surgery. And you don't have to be a computer programmer to create a successful web page. Don't be intimidated by all the jargon. Putting material on the World Wide Web is not as hard as you think.

Personally, I subscribe to the "KISS" principle of web building. Oh sure, you're probably thinking that stands for "Keep It Simple, Stupid," which actually isn't too bad. But for me, KISS stands for "Kibitz, Inquire, Surf, Steal!"

Kibitz means talking with other webmasters. (See, I've already promoted you to webmaster...go ahead say it, "I'm a WEBMASTER!" Feels good, doesn't it?) There are plenty of good resource people throughout the public broadcasting system and beyond who would be more than happy to lend a hand, offer a clue, or otherwise help out when you hit that occasional brick wall.

Inquire. Ask questions. Even dumb questions. Asking questions is a lot better than spending four hours trying to troubleshoot your web page only to find out that you forgot one simple code. The best way to inquire is simple flattery. "Gee, cool site. How'd you DO that?"

Surf the web, dudes and dudettes! Meaning, visit sites. LOTS of sites. See what you like, and what you don't like. Learn from what's already out there and don't reinvent the wheel...or, um, the web. You get the idea. Start by surfing both the NETA and PBS sites, since they both have links to PTV web sites around the country. Start to compile a bookmark list on your web browser of sample sites, online web tutorials and resources. Contact webmasters of sites you like (see Kibitz, above).

Steal. Okay. I don't REALLY mean steal. It's more like....borrow. But if I'd said borrow, it would have come out KISB instead of KISS. See what hoops I jump through for you? Anyway. There's a way in most new web browsers to reveal the codes.

CONTENT

There are a lot of fancy web sites out there, with lots of bells and whistles. The bottom line here is whether or not your viewers will sit around while a 3-D graphic of your station explodes into a 14-piece menu with 16 million color graphics and surround sound. Or do they just want to find your station's mailing address so they can write the general manager to complain about the web site? This is where the original "KISS" axiom comes in handy. A good, clean web site with lots of content wins hands down over an "artsy" site where you can go to lunch (via the Concord) while the splash page is loading.

BELLS AND WHISTLES. Okay, I just told you to avoid these. But as your knowledge of web building grows, you will naturally be tempted to add new and exciting things like streaming audio and video, java script, frames, and other things that will consume a great deal of your time while annoying many of your users who are still dialing up your site with a slow modem and a bad phone line. The rule here is...be careful. Make sure

you design your web site to fulfill your station's goals, not to gratify some internal need to express yourself through complex multi-media. That said, if there is a compelling reason to use something a little extra, then by all means, do it, but think twice.

WHAT GOES ON THE SITE? Who decides? A truly good station web site offers a variety of information, some topical, some evergreen, that provides valuable information to the visitor. Whether you are a one-person department, or part of a web committee, the final goal is still the same. Give the users what they need. And make it easy for them to find it, or they will go away and not necessarily come back.

It's important to come up with a plan of attack (content, basic design, duties relating to updating and creating material for the site, etc.) before you start. It's much easier to fix something on paper than reprogram multiple pages on your site once you've found something that needs correcting.

Keep in mind that evergreen material needs to be accurate, concise and complete, but once it's done, you won't have to update it. Factor in time needed to update topical content (e.g. program listings, special event pages, etc.) which may mean an ongoing commitment from you or someone else. Some things can be automated, but you'll still have to check to see that they get done, and done right.

Make sure all your graphics are at their cleanest and smallest size (for faster loading on a home computer screen). There are programs that will take existing web graphics and optimize them.

One more thing. Don't feel you have to create the whole site at one time. As long as you have a plan, a design, a concept, you can start small and add. (Rome wasn't built in a day, and heaven and earth took six days according to most sources).

NAVIGATION: In the world of the web, content (over form) is king. There are plenty of pretty web sites out there that are a mile wide and an inch deep. Think about what your end user (your viewer, member, potential corporate supporter) wants. Then make it VERY easy for that person to find it. Sounds simple. It is simple. Make your site easy to navigate. Make sure the navigation is consistent throughout your web site in terms of look and operation.

PROMOTION: Let people know about your site. Make sure you register with all the appropriate big sites like NETA, PBS, CPB, etc. You will want to include the site address in your program guide. You should promote the site on your air. There are also a variety of places to register your site (either for free or for a small fee) with the major search engines, which are just other web sites that point people to stuff they are looking for...like your station's web site. Get the word out.

JARGON AND BUZZ WORDS

Now let's demystify some of the jargon.

WWW. Hopefully by now most people have heard of the World Wide Web (also called World Wide Wait when you hook up with a slow-loading web page... something to keep in mind.)

URL stands for Uniform Resource Locator, which is just a fancy, geekoid way of saying, the web site address. For example, NETA's URL is:

`http://www.netaonline.org`

(In most cases you can omit the "http://" part of the URL and you'll still get to the web site. By the way, **HTTP** stands for hypertext transport protocol, which is probably not something you should lose sleep over.)

A **LINK** is simply a word, group of words, or on-screen graphic which, when clicked with your mouse, takes you to another page within the site or to another site. It's kind of like Star Trek's transporter, only a lot less complicated, and you don't have to have pointy ears to run the console.

FAQ is short for Frequently Asked Questions. If you're a newbie, you'll be looking at a lot of these, but even old timers can get a much-needed answer.

HTML simply stands for Hypertext Markup Language. Which basically MEANS the codes that make things look a certain way on your web page. Most of the HTML codes - or "tags" - used are put in those "greater than" and "less than" signs. They look like this:

`< >`

So, for example, if you wanted to make a word or phrase bold on your page, you would put HTML codes around that word or phrase. Here's what the code would look like:

`This phrase is now bold.`

And here's how it would look:

This phrase is now bold.

I told you it wasn't brain surgery. There is also software available which will do most of the basic HTML coding for you, which makes designing a web page almost as easy as working with any current professional word processor program. But it doesn't hurt to learn the basics just so you have a working knowledge of how the web page is put together.

RESOURCES

Online:

There are plenty of good online resources that give you the basic (and advanced) codes for your web building pleasure. Here are just a few:

(The Complete Resource for All Web Builders)
reallybig.com

(Absolute Resource, from webbie to webmeister)
www2.southwind.net/~miked/resource.html

(CNET's web building resource)

<http://builder.cnet.com/>

(The compendium of HTML elements)
<http://www.htmlcompendium.org/>

Internet 201- Design and Tech Tips for the Web
(<http://www.powerdesign.com/201/>)

DJ Quad's Ultimate HTML Site
(<http://www.quadzilla.com/>)

Web Publishing Online Resource
(<http://www.ashaland.com/webpub/>)

Writing HTML, A tutorial for creating WWW pages.
(<http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/tut/about.html>)

A Beginner's Guide to HTML
(<http://www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/General/Internet/WWW/HTMLPrimer.html>)

HTML Quick Reference
(http://www.cc.ukans.edu/~acs/docs/other/HTML_quick.shtml)

The Bare Bones Guide to HTML
(<http://www.werbach.com/barebones/>)

Webnovice
(<http://www.webnovice.com/>)

How Do They Do That with HTML? Answers for the Novice or Expert
(<http://www.nashville.net/~carl/htmlguide/index.html>)

Crash course on writing documents for the Web
(http://www.zdnet.com/pcweek/eamonn/crash_course.html)

HTML by Example
(<http://www.dcn.davis.ca.us/~csandvig/ip/example.html>)

Introduction to HTML
(<http://www.utoronto.ca/webdocs/HTMLdocs/NewHTML/htmlindex.html>)

My First Web Site
(<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~rogg/weblinks.htm>)

Top Ten Mistakes in Web Design
(<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9605.html>)

Bad Design Features
(<http://www.ratz.com/featuresbad.html>)

Top Ten Ways To Tell If You Have A Sucky Home Page

(<http://jeffglover.com/sucky.html>)

Good and Bad Web Designs

(<http://home.nycap.rr.com/webdesign/>)

Books:

There are also enough books about web building to sink a battleship. Personally I prefer the ones that entertain while educating (kind of like Public TV), which means I go for the Dummies and/or Idiots guides to web stuff. I know what you're probably thinking about me right now, so I'll wait while you go ahead and make up your own joke.

Classes:

Community colleges, local computer stores, universities and private companies are all offering classes that will help you get started in getting your message onto the World Wide Web. A bit of basic detective work should suffice.

Students:

Speaking of colleges and universities, there are a variety of young, starving students who will design your web site for basically the cost of a bologna sandwich. Okay, that's not true, but there are kids out there who can help you, teach you, hold you by the hand, and get your site up and running. Investigate.

Public Broadcasting:

As time goes on, NETA will hopefully expand the amount of information available to stations. PBS already offers a variety of places to turn for help, including:

- A monthly Web Developers online chat. Web folks (just like you) discuss everything from design, new technologies, surveys, and everything else web-related. These are friendly folks who are good to know. As of this writing, the contact person is Shelley Santora at PBS. The chat happens the first Wednesday of every month, usually around 1:00pm ET. (www.pbs.org/.producers/chat/index.html)
- PBS has an Online Producers Toolbox (www.pbs.org/.producers) which offers lots of information and links to many online references.

A final last word from a friend and fellow webmaster...

NEVER USE BLINKING TEXT.....

See you online.