



## Your Website Coach



### ***DIY: Getting Started – 10/26/06***

Recently, I was approached by a business owner, Sandy, who needs to build her own website because she just did not have the budget to contract a web developer. I support her in this effort because I've always been an advocate of having a web presence, no matter *how* it got out there. At least you'll have **entered** the global marketplace. Of course, I'm also making the assumption that upon publishing your first website, you are already working on improvements to what you just built.

Sandy wanted advice on how to get started in building her website. She didn't need to know how to register a domain name or find a web host, she needed to know how to start **building** her website. So I'm devoting this space to outlining the preparation and execution of creating your web presence.

**Learn the basics of HTML.** HTML is the language used to create static web pages. It's easy to use, but only when you understand the rules. Even if you're using a tool to build your website, things will go wrong and you must understand HTML to fix them. You can choose to take classes offered through community colleges or adult education classes, or you can purchase books for beginners in HTML. The "...for Dummies" and "...for Idiots" books are really well written and can bring you up to speed quickly.

**Create a design for your layout and draw it out on paper.** It's far easier to map out what you want and try to duplicate it using your new tool, than sit at a machine and stare at it blankly in the hopes that an idea will spring forth. This also includes mapping out the hierarchy of pages in your site.

**Buy an HTML editor.** Buying a tool to help you sling that code will make your experience much sweeter! For the layperson, it's intuitive to build a site in FrontPage because the interface looks like and operates like Word, a program most of us use.

**Start building your site.** Armed with your new knowledge, just sit down and make that first keystroke. Don't expect to buzz right through this process if you've never done anything like this before. You're not only learning new tools, you're learning to think differently too.

Regarding web template packages, many web host companies offer templates that allow you to get started right away. However, it's been my experience that even the templates require some knowledge of HTML **if** you're going to be able to create anything even remotely close to that image you have in your mind. Remember, *that image is very important because it is your business.*

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