



Your Website Coach



Put Your Pictures On a Diet – 12/1/07

What is more annoying than trying to view an e-newsletter and being forced to wait *minutes* while the embedded images download? I'll tell you what – seeing that the images for which you waited so long are distorted and grainy. This annoyance also applies to those who've bravely committed themselves to creating their own web presence but have no understanding of the components that make a good website. One major component is aesthetics and a poorly displayed photo takes away from a site (as well as e-newsletters and other applications) that is otherwise pretty good in content.

How is it that a quality photo becomes a wreck when it is stuffed into an application? The answer is that it gets "stuffed" into an application. In most cases, the original photo is directly downloaded from a camera. These photos are generally large in size (2200 x 1600 pixels) and high in resolution (150 dpi or more). Applications like website templates and e-newsletter templates that allow you to insert images; will simply ask you for the name and location of the photo and then shove all of those pixels into the predetermined slot. They don't give you the ability to scale down the image size by reducing its height and width AND maintaining the aspect ratio. Not maintaining the aspect ratio results in the distorted effect. These applications also don't allow you to optimize the photo so it doesn't "weigh" as much; i.e. 44K vs. 1.2MB. Stuffing a 1.2 MB image into a small slot will result in a grainy picture.

So what to do? Find an image processing tool that will allow you to do 2 things: reduce the "h x w" dimensions of a photo and optimize the photo. Any imaging tool like Fireworks and PaintShop Pro will do these 2 basic things but they are not free. However, there are packages out there that ARE free and the one I investigated is Free Serif Software (www.freeserifsoftware.com). This is an imaging application that is similar to Photoshop which means it can do some pretty neat things. Most of you won't ever use them, but it's nice to know that you can soup up your image if you want to do that. I've downloaded this software and done a test run on it and I am impressed. It will certainly size and optimize your photos as well as get rid of red eye, sharpen focus, create a negative and many more features. You are now armed with the information and tools you need to make your e-newsletter and website a more pleasant viewing experience for the rest of us.

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