

Let's talk about your web site!

Thanks for your interest in web site design by Ellen Lebsock Design. Here is a brief introduction to the process, just to let you know what you can expect during the development of your site.

- Let me begin this introduction by sharing my philosophy

My business ethics come from the old school of mutual respect and service with a smile. I work fast and play fair. Working closely with my clients to meet their goals in a friendly yet professional manner means we will end up with a site we can both be proud of.

- Your web site will be a collaborative effort

It is important to establish mutual goals for the project. I know web design. You know your business. We need to merge those two elements so your web site grows into a reality you'll love. I believe it is my responsibility to educate my clients so they understand what they should expect of me and what will be expected of them.

- By following a few simple steps

We can both enjoy the experience of seeing your site evolve. In the end you'll be pleased and happy with the results. I guarantee it.

STEP 1: Let's get acquainted.

In our initial conversations I'll try to answer any questions you may have about my web site design service. I will ask you to tell me a little bit about your business and what it is that you hope to achieve with your web site. We'll talk about your target audience and current customers, and what products or services you'll be offering them. We'll discuss how many pages your site might require, and what features you'll want to include. Will you need a shopping cart or customer response forms?

I will also ask you to show me one or two web sites you find especially appealing; possibly in the way they are laid out, or the colors they use. Plan to show me design elements that you would like to emulate on your own

web site. Seeing sites that you enjoy visiting will give me a place to start in creating exactly the site you have in mind.

After our initial contacts I will prepare a quote for developing your web site. There will be no cost or obligation for my proposal.

If we communicated well and decide we can work together to create your web site, we will move on to:

Step 2: Get it in writing.

Site design and development cannot begin until you have signed a contract and paid a retainer fee. I'm sure you know how important it is for all parties involved in a business agreement to understand what is expected of them. A signed contract and retainer qualifies this as a business agreement and protects both of us.

A percentage of the total contract fee will be established as a non-refundable retainer before work begins. The full contract amount becomes due and payable when the web site "opens" on your server.

Step 3: www.yourdomain.com

Let's talk about your domain name for a minute. In my experience the old "kiss" rule applies here. You know the one: "Keep It Short & Simple". Make every effort to pick out a name that's memorable, but brief.

After you settle on www.yourdomain.com it must be registered. You will need to choose a company to handle your registration process and pay them directly for setting it up. Please be sure to keep accurate records of any information the registrar sends you. Write down the expiration date of your domain! You don't want to work for three years building a following, only to lose the domain name because you've forgotten when it expires! Your site will need to be placed on the server at a reputable hosting company. Your choice of a company to host www.yourdomain.com is just as important as choosing your designer. I will be happy to suggest hosting companies that offer the features you may need, together with excellent customer service.

If you decide to find a hosting service on your own, do your homework. There are many "cheap" hosting services out there, but before you sign up

with one, let's discuss what you will need for hosting your web site. Should it be on a Windows or Unix server, will you need a cgi-bin, etc? If you don't know, please ask me.

Check out customer service and tech support. Find out how often their servers go down. Try calling them. Do you spend hours on hold, listening to canned music? Do you ever get to talk to a real person? Are they courteous and helpful?

Please don't consider hosting your site on a "free" server. There is no such thing as a free ride. The cost to you will be flashing banners, pop up panels and other unsightly advertising gimmicks loaded onto your site automatically and instantly killing your credibility. The price for free hosting is too high! Doing your homework now will save you time and aggravations down the line.

Step 4: The sample site.

Once I have an idea of what you're looking for, I will create up to three sample site mock-ups for you to look at.

This is the time to decide on page layout, colors, site navigation, and so forth. Working together, we will develop a final design template to use in building your web site.

After the site template is exactly the way you want it, you will be asked to "sign off" on it, verifying you accept the design.

After you sign off on the design MAJOR changes to layout, navigation and /or graphics will be considered chargeable additions and are billed at my current hourly rate. For instance if, after signing off on the design, you add several pages, causing the navigation to be reconfigured on every page of the site, the changes and additions will be billed at the hourly rate.

Of course, if you only want to fix some text here and there, or move a graphic, there won't be additional charges. I only charge extra for major changes to the design. As I said before – I work fast and play fair.

Step 5: Your job!

Text: Text is one of the most important components of any web site. Text communicates what you want your visitors to know about you and your

business. Text is a key in getting your site listed in search engines once you're online. Before you begin writing your text, imagine yourself in the position of a visitor, a customer or a vendor, and then think about what you want from this web site. When you do this you can anticipate what people are really looking for when they visit your site.

Photographs and Graphics: Remember the old adage ...worth a thousand words? If you decide I'm to be the designer who'll develop your web site, I'll send you another brochure explaining all about getting your pictures to say volumes. The quality of your images will make or break your site.

Step 6: Is it finished yet?

In our initial discussions we will talk about your site's anticipated launch date. I will do everything in my power to meet reasonable deadlines and will plan with you what it will take to meet your launch date.

In order to meet our goals, I will need to have you send site contents such as text and photographs to me in a timely manner. Don't wait until a few days before your launch date to send the bulk of your material. Your site may not be ready in time! If it takes weeks to get the material to me after you have signed off on the design, please don't expect me to set aside another client's site to rush through yours. I schedule my time to give every client the personalized service they expect and deserve.

When your site is complete and you have "signed off" on the finished pages I will transfer the files to your server.

Are we finished now? No! Now we'll actively market your site and submit it to search engines.

Step 7: Promote it!

We've all seen the commercial where a new site opens online and 2 seconds later, the orders start pouring in. Wow! Instant millions! Trust me, it doesn't happen that way. That's just TV. In the "real world" it takes time and effort to promote your site.

Once your site is online I'll create a link to my site portfolio at nanaellen.com. I'll also submit it to top search engines "by hand". That means I'll go to the search engine's submittal page and provide them with the information required to review your web site. Some search engines use "real people" to review sites and some use "robots" to spider them. All

search engines have their own requirements for adding sites to the directories; and the requirements are constantly changing.

It could take several weeks to several months to get listed in top search engines. We'll get there, but don't expect results overnight!

Step 8: Maintenance of your site.

If your site will require frequent updates; adding new products, updating schedules or photographs, you may choose to hire me to maintain your site. Plans are available at my current hourly rate or you may decide to purchase an annual Web Site Support Contract. You can also opt to do it yourself - if you are willing to take the time to learn how.

If you choose to maintain the site yourself, I strongly recommend enrolling in a class at your local community college and/or studying on your own. Online tutorials are readily available and all good software contains a tutorial to teach you how to use it for making changes.

If you or someone else damages your code or the files in your FTP directory in the process of updating the site, I can repair them for you at my current hourly rate.

Step 9: Whew!

This sounds like a lot of work doesn't it? Having a successful online presence is a lot of work. If you are not committed to promoting your site, doing your homework, and keeping up with what is current on the net, you may not want to spend your money on a web site. A web site is a marketing tool. You have to be willing to learn how to use this tool to its best advantage.

My first objective during this process is to be able to communicate with you and determine your needs in order to build a site that looks great, functions well and has a good chance of being ranked well in search engines. My second objective is to educate you, the client, on what it takes to have a successful site. If you are committed to this endeavor and feel that my style of customer service is what you had in mind, let's go back to Step One !

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