



By Chris Haught

# Go Daddy Go!

The internet is constantly evolving, and now anyone can easily set up a website.

So you finally decided it was time for a website, went to GoDaddy, bought a domain and—now what? Did you create a few pages and then post it on an online forum and ask for feedback? Still trying to wing it on your own? Just like with social media, think before you post!

Today's consumers are very internet savvy, and many can easily spot either a boilerplate site or insincere content. Hard to navigate? *I'm outta here!* There are several scenarios that happen on the internet regularly. You've probably seen them all...

## The business owner who wears all the hats:

How often do we preach to homeowners the importance of hiring a professional to paint their home, yet we try to handle one of the most complex and important parts of our business ourselves! If you are willing to spend countless hours keeping up with the latest SEO (Search Engine Optimization) strategies and learning how to create content that is meaningful to your customers, good for you! Creating your own content can be rewarding—if you take the time to do it correctly.

## Hired the lazy web designer

So you found a web designer who offers to create a website for you for only \$199. Does this sound like the "Paint one room for \$99" special? Chances are he is just going to use boilerplate templates or worse, copy content from other sites.

## The content thief

This guy is the worst. He creates a website and copy/pastes full articles from other websites and blogs. He thinks it is OK to use this content because it is on the internet, when he is really trying to add rank to his site using someone else's work, or is just plain lazy!

*If you just said "oops, that's me!" here's how to get around it...*

## If you wear all the hats make sure they fit

If you are trying to do your own website, carefully

examine your reasons why. Do you enjoy writing and are fairly proficient at it? Do you enjoy learning how to create an optimized site?

Lets face it, most of our time is probably better spent in the more directly profitable aspects of our business. If you want to do it yourself, there are options:

- Join a forum that caters to the subject where you can ask questions when you get stuck
- Use tutorials—*Blogging Your Passion* is one example of this for Wordpress users.
- Consider hiring parts of it out as I'll explain below.
- Use a platform that is user friendly, like Wordpress. Don't try and learn coding!
- Look at tons of other sites to get an idea of how it should flow.

## Pass the hat by hiring it out

Ask around for a recommendation. Look for some websites in your area and try to find a local designer. Ask them specifically what they will do for the price. For example, will SEO and content writing be included? How many pages will you get?

Will you be able to add content timely? Google devours fresh content; websites are not a set and forget tool anymore! There are several areas that you can assign to another party. below are some companies dedicated the contracting field that I have experience with and can recommend:

- *SEO*. Many companies offer to do optimization, try *Seo Bulldog* at [seobulldog.com](http://seobulldog.com).
- *Content writing*. You can hire a content writer like *Tess Wittler*, who specializes in writing for the construction industry, at [tesswittler.com](http://tesswittler.com).
- *Website design*. *Darren Slaughter*, at [darrenslaught.com](http://darrenslaught.com), creates sites especially for contractors.
- *All in one?* *Footbridge Media* at [footbridgemed.com](http://footbridgemed.com) specializes in contractor marketing.

## Thou shalt not steal content

The "content thief" often copies and pastes full articles onto a site without giving credit to the original source. You may think it is great until you get a notice from your host that you have copyrighted content on your site and they are going to suspend your account. Or worse, the content is not written with your business

and target market in mind.

This one is my personal pet peeve. As the webmaster of several sites and as a creator and curator of content, I spend a lot of time trying to write informative and helpful articles. I certainly don't consider it flattery when someone imitates or copies my work and displays it as their own. I recently had this happen to one of my sites and it was a very time consuming task to get the offending content removed. As we are creating content, we should abide by the same high standards we do in our contracting business.

### When is it OK to use someone else's content?

What if you find some really good content that you would like to share with your readers? If you have read my blog, you can see that I do this all the time in several ways:

- Ask the author for a guest post on your blog.
- Post an excerpt (less than 20%) of the article with a link to original.

- Write your own post about the topic and cite the original post.

### When someone does rustle your work

You can use a service such as copyscape.com to see if your content is being used without permission. You may find others are using your content. Are they giving you credit and sharing the info in a way that benefits consumers? And is that in any way beneficial to you—or harmful?

Google may see it as duplicate content, and since Google only shows the “best” results in a search, you may see your content on someone else's site rank and yours disappears. If you do find someone has copied your work, you can file a DMCA (Digital Millennium Copyright Act) Notice of infringement with the host to have the content removed, but that is a topic for another column! Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

*More at bloggingpainters.com.*



By Barbara Walsh

## Contractor Websites Don't Have to Cost A Lot.

In today's technologically competitive world you need a website for your business. Long gone are the days of going to the Yellow Pages to find service providers. Today's customers are searching the Internet for local companies they want to do business with. If your business doesn't have a website, or has one but it can't be found in an Internet search, you are losing potential customers to your competition.

If you've been waiting to build a website because you're concerned it will cost a lot or may be too difficult for your level of computer skills, then I have some suggestions to help. Sure, many web designers will charge exorbitant prices to build a website, but you can find many affordable solutions to this.

### 1) Build it yourself.

Yes, you or someone on your staff can design a



**“With a little patience, time, and skill, you can build a website for your company for under \$200.”**

website for your business. With today’s website building templates you can build a site with no coding experience. You will need to commit some time and have average computer skills. First, you need to find a hosting company. You may have heard of Hostmonster, Blue Host, Go Daddy and many others.

For a yearly fee, (approx. \$150/year, which will include some security features), you will have access to a dashboard where you can choose the type of website you will build and the company will place all the files on their server.

The dashboard will give you the ability to access files and open email accounts using your URL. Shop around, compare prices, and read about customer service. Some hosting companies will offer great customer service when you run into difficulties—which you will!

Once you pay your yearly hosting and URL fee, you will choose a web builder. I recommend WordPress. WordPress websites are the most widely used website builder in the country. The reason it is so popular is that it provides many different free templates to choose from, plus for a small upgrade charge, you can purchase a premium template which will give added features. WordPress sites are also SEO friendly. They have search engine optimization features build into their template coding helping to enable your website to be found in search.

With a little patience, time, and skill you can build a website for your company for under \$200. Keep in mind, just because you build it, doesn’t mean they will come. You need to have a basic knowledge of website design and SEO in order for people to easily navigate your site and for the search engines to index your site for various keywords and phrases.

Your goal is to be found on Page 1 under keywords and phrases in your industry, and for your local market. Read more about SEO by visiting, [www.bloggingpainters.com](http://www.bloggingpainters.com), type Barbara Walsh in the search box and read my article called “SEO for painting contractors, what is it and why do I need it.”

## **2) Hire a website design company or marketing agency.**

Shop around and do your homework. Prices vary greatly among website designers as does their level of skill. Ask friends or do a little research looking at competitors sites, often near the bottom of the home page you will find details of the website template and perhaps the company that built it.

Generally, for between \$500 and \$1,000 you should be able to have a basic website built with search engine optimization strategies built in. Remember though, once your site is built it needs to continually be maintained, as you want people to return frequently in search of new content. Maintenance means adding this content by either adopting a blog to your site or continually adding new pages, keeping keywords and phrases in mind.

Sitemaps can to be submitted on a regular basis (ideally you should do this weekly) to the major search engines so they will index your site and find new content. Your site will still be found without submitting sitemaps, but I recommend it for search engines to index your content more frequently.

Many web design companies and marketing agencies will maintain



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your website or teach someone on your staff what needs to be done. A secretary, office assistant or marketing professional can be placed in charge of your website.

### A few final thoughts on website building.

Don't believe the advertisements for free websites. I have not yet found anything that is truly free. You will find any free site builders have additional add-ons for almost everything that you need to have a successful website. They'll upcharge you for more than three pages, a custom URL (otherwise your URL will point to them also), SEO capabilities, ability to add photos, and the list goes on. Again, I would recommend a beginner to build a website using WordPress, it will include everything you need, plus if you purchase a "premium" template (generally under \$50) you will have access to support.

### Marketing your website.

Now that you have a website get the word out! Tell all your coworkers, vendors and customers. Place your website URL on all printed materials such as business cards, flyers, brochures, t-shirts, hats and vehicles. Link your website to other Internet activity you might have like business listings, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. Also, make certain your website lists all your social media icons and include sharing button. Continuous cross-promotion is the key to getting the word out and increasing SEO "juice".



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