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COMPUTE
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COMPUTING DOC'S SURVIVAL GUIDE #4 – ACQUIRING A WEB SITE

OVERVIEW

So you'd like to have a place on the Information Superhighway? Here are some facts and figures that may help your planning.

STEP ONE: DOMAIN OR SUB-DOMAIN?

Do you want the address (URL) of your web site to be of the form:

<http://www.mydomain.com>

or will you be happy enough with an address such as:

<http://www.somebodyelse.com/mysubdomain>

Your domain name can end with “.org” or “.net” instead of “.com” if that is appropriate. If you would like to buy your own domain name, you can purchase it from Network Solutions at:

<http://www.networksolutions.com>

The cost is \$35 per year; the first two years must be paid for at the outset (\$70).

STEP TWO: WHO WILL HOST YOUR WEB SITE?

Whether or not you own your own domain name, your web site must reside on a computer connected to the Internet. It is possible to use one of your own computers as a *web server* but most of us have our web sites on someone else's computer. A possible choice is to use your ISP, who will usually provide for a personal web site for no additional charge. It is also possible to obtain free web site hosting, usually at the cost of banner ads appearing on your web pages. One such option for businesses is found at:

<http://www.hypermart.net>

If you upgrade your web site to “ad-free” status at HyperMart, it will cost you \$99 per year.

STEP THREE: WHAT ABOUT CONTENT?

So far you have an address and a location for your web site. Now you need a design and an implementation so that your web site has content. You can do this yourself in the same way that you can build an addition on your house yourself. You can find plenty of books and web sites that describe how web pages are created. In some cases you create the web pages right on the web site; in other cases, you create the web pages on your own computer and transfer them to your web site with ftp. Especially for businesses, another option is to hire a web site designer such as **Computing Doc**. You can expect a moderate-sized web site such as:

<http://www.DanielsOnBroadway.com>

to cost around \$600. In any case, it is your web site so you should take responsibility for its accuracy and its style.

STEP FOUR: WILL ANYBODY STOP BY?

Just because you have a beautiful, exciting, and useful web site, you can't expect anybody to know about it or come by to look at it. There are two major strategies to use to promote your web site: search engines and directories. You should use both approaches to make your web site popular and maybe profitable. You can try to get your web site listed by various search engines by yourself or by means of a web site promotion service such as:

<http://www.submit-it.com/>

Using a service is usually more effective, but will cost you somewhere around \$150 per year to get listed by hundreds of search engines. For a business, you should also get a link to your web site from your chamber of commerce (around \$50 per year) and from some major directory in your area (around \$20 per month). You need to think carefully about how people will find you. Will they search for a keyword such as “portrait”, or will they more likely search regionally?

STEP FIVE: MONITORING AND MAINTAINING YOUR WEB SITE

There are tools available for keeping track of how many people are accessing your web site and how they get there. You might be able to obtain these tools free from the host of your site. Keep your web site accurate and up-to-date. Periodically, check your links to make sure that they are still valid. Ask others to evaluate your web site and take heed of their criticisms.