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PERSONAL WEB SITE VALUE

Personal Web sites are playing an increasingly important role in our careers. Individuals and employers are depending on them more frequently for hiring decisions. People who've invested time and effort creating interesting Web sites have a distinct advantage because they expose their capabilities in a unique way.

I gained insight about personal Web sites after reading an article about their benefits. I investigated online and discovered a few industry professionals had created Web sites. I reached out to a few of them to understand their experience and ask for advice.

As a result, I determined building a personal Web site would be an investment in my future. It would provide me with a unique opportunity to organize my career portfolio and help prepare for the next stage of my career in a demanding and competitive environment. It could be the item in my cover letter that distinguished me from my peers. It would allow potential employers to see my resume in a way paper couldn't portray. It would describe my job experiences through visual exposure and my communication skills through samples of my written work.

My first decision was whether to build my personal Web site myself or hire a professional. I learned to build a Web site through an introductory Web site-building course at a local library. I had built a simple Web site for my hockey team that included season stats and a few team photos. I needed more information before I could make the final decision about a personal Web site.

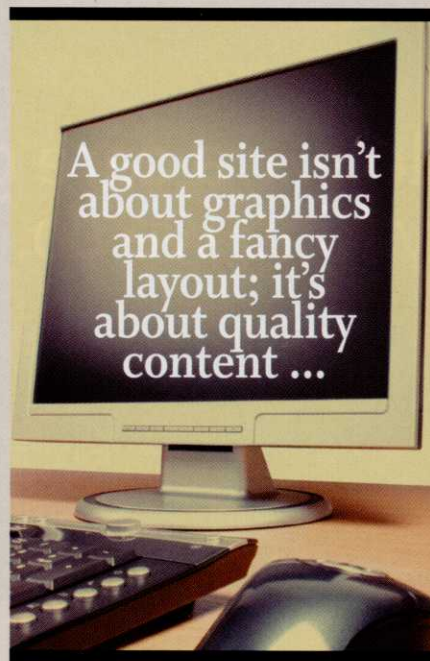
There are three common costs associated with a personal Web site.

- Buying a domain name (www.your-name.com), which costs about \$10 a year.
- Hosting a site (placing it live on the Internet), which starts at about \$10 per month.
- Producing words and graphics specifi-

cally for the Internet.

Also, there are many tools available to help build a personal Web site. Choosing the right tools is a matter of personal preference.

- Common software such as Dreamweaver or Microsoft Frontpage ensures better compatibility with browsers such as Internet Explorer and Firefox.
- Internet programs at www.geocities.com and www.godaddy.com are available for free download and require no technical knowledge. Both offer free, easy-to-use templates, images, colors and navigation



buttons. You also can define your Web site manually, upload your own images and choose from their extensive font collection, enabling you to create eye-catching headings and quick navigation.

- Software stores also sell good, basic Web site-building programs for a small cost.

I spent many hours searching the Internet, reviewing other Web sites to piece together what I envisioned for mine. I

spent many hours building the content of the Web site I envisioned. I gathered my articles I was most proud of, plus various photos from golf course projects that demonstrated my extensive experience. I updated my resume to include all my most recent experiences, and I wrote a biography explaining how and why I came to work in the golf industry.

In the end, I decided that with the personal Web site I envisioned I'd need to engage a professional for help. I found a Web site designer who was willing to take my ideas and help me create the site I wanted. A professionally created Web site can be built for as little as \$700, depending on what you're looking for.

Explore your options and see what best fits your time and budget. The cost and energy will be well worth it. Following the initial cost of using the professional Web site designer, my Web site, www.tavishorton.com, costs me \$10 a month. I paid my hosting fees for the entire year in advance and received a small discount.

There are two other items to consider in this process. No matter where you host your Web site or which Internet program you use to build it, always avoid vendor lock-in. Ensure you can move your Web site easily without hassle to any other Web hosting provider. Finally, copyright your site by adding the following to the bottom of each page: "Copyright 2008, by Your Name. All rights reserved."

Remember, creating a Web site is a simple task that can be intimidating because of the time involved and options available. Whether you choose to create a Web site yourself or hire a professional, creating a good one requires a lot of time and effort. A good site isn't about graphics and a fancy layout; it's about quality content, which many people are likely to find useful. A willingness to invest time in learning and experimentation will help, too.

I enjoyed the time I spent building my first personal Web site. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me through my Web site. I would be happy to answer your questions. **GCI**