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21 easy steps to setting up a website for your club or association cost effectively

Version 1.1

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21 easy steps to setting up a club or association website cost effectively

1 Executive Summary

This report has been written in a very casual style. I have tried to steer away from technical language or “geek speak” so as not to frighten you off.

Setting up a website for your club or association is not a difficult or onerous task... once you know how. What a pearl of wisdom you say! But really, it's not hard. There are lots of tools to help and there are lots of people out there who will literally trip over themselves to tell you what they know.

I started writing this because a club that I am a member of, embarked on the same process. I realised that there must be so many other people out there wanting to do the same thing. My club is lucky in that there are a couple of us with some website knowledge. But then I thought *imagine if you knew nothing?* Where would you start?

The biggest hurdle with clubs and associations is that there is precious little money to spare for these sorts of projects. And yet the irony is, a club or association can benefit greatly from having a website. A club is a community of people interested in the same thing or things. The web has tremendous power for bringing communities of people together. So the benefits are there... you just need to do it as cheaply as possible.

All right, whilst we are talking money now, the next pressing question is probably, “But how much will it cost?”. As you can imagine, this is difficult to answer because it depends what you want. However, I think you can get yourself started for something between \$US 0 (zero) and \$US 1000. It will all depend on what skills or tools you have internal to your club or association and what you will need to purchase. It will also depend on how sophisticated you want to get. The cheapest way would be to get a club member to create one page in Microsoft Word (or similar) save it as HTML (the language of the web) and beam it up to a free web-hosting service. I know I wouldn't really be happy with that solution so whilst it's cheap, it probably won't add much value to your club or association. On the other hand, you can get really sophisticated, spend lots of money, and end up with over-kill. So I have targeted what I think (remember everything in here is just my opinion) at somewhere in-between but still towards the lower end.

I've split everything into 21 easy steps. You can argue that the order isn't necessarily the way you'd do it. Fine. Re-order as appropriate. You might also argue that you don't need to do all the steps. Fine. Don't. Remember, this is just my method. My aim was to cover as many of the elements that I could think of.

Well, I've just about run out of things to say in the summary. Basically... have fun. Oh, also, if you do find this information useful, please send me a few dollars (and maybe a postcard) as outlined at the start. It will certainly help to make this effort all worthwhile.

2 Outline of steps

The following outlines the 21 easy steps:

- 1) Review Internet skills of club/association
- 2) Get a committee together.
- 3) Define target audience of site
- 4) Define purpose of site
- 5) Define who is going to maintain the site and how
- 6) Define roles within the committee
- 7) Decide on domain name and register
- 8) Find a hosting provider
- 9) Define page hierarchy for phase 1 of website (the smaller and more focussed, the better).
- 10) Sort out web design
- 11) Review and purchase a content management tool
- 12) Perform any necessary training for the committee
- 13) Obtain content for pages and add into website
- 14) Sort out an email address for your website
- 15) Get content checked for accuracy
- 16) Document the website.
- 17) Go "live"
- 18) Register the site within search engines
- 19) Publicise the website through club/association promotional material, etc.
- 20) Keep the documentation up-to-date and follow it.
- 21) Maintain website on a regular basis.

3 OK so we know the steps ... but what do you mean?

I have tried to keep the explanation of each of the steps short and sharp. And I have also customised them to suit a club or association website. Yes – some of you will have differing opinions to those I present. That's fine too.

3.1 Review Internet skills of club/association

So your club or association thinks it needs a website and you don't know where to begin? The first step is to review your Internet skills within your club or association.

There are two sides to this.

- 1) You need to look at the computer and Internet browsing skills of your members. Ie. If hardly anyone has a computer or access to the Internet and your main purpose of the site is to give your members better access to information then you're probably a little ahead of your time. Ie. Don't bother going any further. Building a website in this case will be a waste of time and energy.
- 2) The other side to look at is what Internet development skills exist with your club or association. If none exist, don't panic. This maybe why you are reading this report. Yes – things will be a little easier if you have some skills but don't let that drag you down.

The best way to find out what skills do exist is to perform a “quick and dirty” survey of your club members. Attachment 1 is a draft survey which has some questions that you might like to ask.

Once you've got your members to fill out the surveys, you obviously need to collate the results.

3.2 Get a committee together

Most club or associations perform work through committees. This is really no different from working groups or teams within government or business. Basically you need to get a group of enthusiastic people to make your website work and to bring it to fruition. Also make sure that you get a variety of people on your committee. It's useful to have at least one person who has hardly touched a computer (because they always ask good questions). If you are lucky and you have someone with some graphics experience – great! Also, someone should be really good with words. And you can't go wrong if you have a computer person too. However, don't panic if you don't match all of these criteria.

I recommend trying to keep your committee to about four or five people. If you have too many more, it will be difficult to make decisions. If you have too few people, you don't have the variety of input.

3.3 Define target audience of site

I'm a stickler for doing things right. This means planning. I can hear a few groans but believe me, a little planning at the start goes a long way.

Like most projects, it's worth defining who your target audience is. With a club or association website it might be:

- Your existing members;
- Or potential members; or maybe
- Other clubs with similar interests, etc.

Whatever it is, make sure you write it down and keep referring back to it. For example, when you are designing your site, say to yourself, "Will this design be appealing to our target audience?". It's also very possible that you'll have more than one target audience.

3.4 Define purpose of site

Going hand in hand with target audience is the purpose of the website. Why do you want a website? What is it going to achieve? Will it get visited? Etc. Purposes might include:

- Keep members informed with club/association events;
- Encourage new members to join the club or association;
- Provide a repository for club documents. Eg. Minutes of meetings, agendas, etc.;
or
- Provide contact details of club members, etc.

More than likely, you are going to have more than one purpose. That's fine too.

3.5 Define who is going to maintain the site and how

Okay – more groans. But it is important to work out how the site is going to be maintained. Because if it **isn't** going to be **maintained** you might as well **not** even bother to **create one**. How many websites have you visited that are out-of-date? What do you think of them? Most web gurus associate websites with newspapers. How likely are you to read a newspaper that is a month old, a week old or even a few days old? Websites are similar.

You have a couple of options... centralise or de-centralise the update process.

When you centralise the process, this basically means giving one person the responsibility of updating the website. If you de-centralise the process, it means you will be getting different people to update different parts of the site.

My opinion is to go for the de-centralised option if you have the right tool/s. The minute you place all the updating responsibility onto one person's shoulders is the minute the

website fails because it won't get updated. Anyway, now, there are cheap tools out there to help with the de-centralised update process.

3.6 Define roles within the committee

If you try to put all the work onto one or two people, the website probably won't get built or will take a long time. Also, not everyone is good at everything. You need to discover what talents exist within your committee (hopefully step 1 will have told you this information) and then you need to allocate roles. You don't have to be hard and fast about this. You can even swap roles around down the track if you have some good reasons. One person can also have many roles. In some cases, you can have more than one person occupying a role. I guess it's a matter of using common sense. For example, it makes sense that you'll have more than one person creating content but you'll probably only have one content editor to make sure the style flows.

Sidebar: I hear a few of you from the side saying "But what is 'content'?". Basically, any information you put in your website is 'content'. There's a saying out there that "Content is King". That is, if you have excellent content, you'll have an excellent website site (even if your design is a bit bland).

Some examples of roles include:

- Graphic designer (if you are doing the design yourself)
- Content creator
- Editor
- Programmer (if required... you probably won't need one of these for a small, basic site)
- Chairperson / project manager
- Internet expert
- Website updater

You may also nominate someone to create content who isn't even on the committee. For example, if you wish to have club minutes of meetings, etc. placed on your website and your club secretary isn't on the committee, then it makes sense to obtain that content from the club secretary.

Attachment 2 is a form which might help you define the roles and responsibilities for your club or association website.

3.7 Decide on domain name and register

Now I can hear a few of you saying... "But what's a domain name?". Essentially, a domain name is a unique address for your website. It is how people will find you on the web. For example, **club.com** is a domain name. Often though, you see a www at the

front of a domain name such as www.club.com. www is a sort of de-facto standard for websites. Whilst it's not necessary, many choose to use it as it stands for "World Wide Web". The www part of the domain name also has a technical meaning but it's really quite irrelevant in this instance. Whilst it's not necessary, most websites have opted to use it.

The .com part of the domain name refers to the purpose of the organisation or entity. .com is for commerce, .asn is for association, .org is for organisation, .net is for network, .edu is for educational institution, etc. (Note that some countries use .co instead of .com for commercial organisations.) You need to consider what you will use. Often, clubs or associations will elect to use either a .asn or a .org address. No one is likely to get upset as to which you use these days and often your decision will be driven by what is available.

Often, a domain name ends in a two letter country code such as .us or .au. This is a country code. The major exception is where there is no country identified such as our example: www.club.com. The Internet originated out of the United States where it wasn't/isn't mandatory to include a country code in the domain name. You used to be able to say that a website ending in a country code, originates from within that country. I think that was the general reason for it. However, these days, you can not be assured that a .com domain name does in fact represent a US organisation (similarly with any other country code suffix). Anyone technically, can host any domain, anywhere. However, some countries do force certain restrictions. For example, to get a .com.au domain name, you need to present a valid business or company number to the registering authority.

You might also ask how long your name part of the domain can be? Currently, it can be made up of a maximum of 63 characters. A domain name can be constructed out of letters, numbers and hyphens.

So your first decisions are going to be:

1. Do we need a domain name? My personal opinion is that all websites should have a domain name. It has the flexibility of being portable. For example, if you change hosting provider, and you have a domain name, the changeover will be transparent to everyone who visits your website. If you don't, and you change from one hosting provider to another, you will have to go through the process of telling everyone (and the search engines) what your new address is. If you don't have your own domain name, it's like moving house. For example, your www.oldhost.com/clubname address changes to www.newhost.com/clubname and it becomes a right pain. Of course, your hosting fees are likely to be cheaper if you don't have a domain name but I think all the other benefits of having a domain name outweigh this.
2. Will we use a country code in our domain name? I would recommend you do unless your club or association has members globally and/or it is cheaper (and isn't important) to go with a different country code or no country code at all. To find out a country's code, visit:

http://www.apnic.org/info/reference/lookup_codes.html

3. What organisation are you going to use? Eg. .asn, .org, .com, etc. Before answering this question, it may pay you to decide on where you are hosting your website (see the next question) as this may influence your decision. In addition to the traditional top-level organisational domains mentioned above, some new ones

have been proposed including: .aero, .biz, .coop, .info, .museum, .name and .pro. These are expected to become operational in late 2001.

All right, we understand all of that, but how do we choose our actual name? Well, try the obvious things. What is your club called? Can you have clubname.asn? In order to answer this, you need to check what names are available through the Internet domain name registers. Try the following registers:

[Domain Direct](#)

[Catalog.com](#)

[Internet Names Worldwide](#)

[Register.com](#)

If you can't register your country domain name with the above services, try searching on "domain name" register and your country code (eg. .uk) in the search engines to find a suitable registrar.

3.8 Find a hosting provider

A hosting provider (or host provider) is a business who can host your website so that it can be accessed via your domain name on the Internet.

Sometimes, it's better to decide on your hosting provider before deciding on your domain name because you may be able to get a package deal. But it may be limited to say .com and .org domains.

It's not easy finding a suitable hosting provider. You need to consider what is important to your club or association and then prioritise these points. For example, price may be the most important factor. If price is important, then consider packages that give you "free hosting" if you register your domain name with them.

Alternatively, access speed may be important. The difficult thing here is comparing access speeds. It's almost impossible. One hosting provider can say they have the best connection into the "Internet backbone" however, if they have overloaded servers and/or thousands of websites (or websites that get a lot of Internet traffic) this will negate the benefit of big connections speeds. You can assume that a local hosting provider is more likely to give faster access to your members if they all reside in the same local area. Eg. If all your members exist within your capital city and you host your website in your capital city, then you can probably assume your website is going to be accessed faster by your members than if you hosted the website on the other side of the world.

There are many, many other factors to consider but my bet is that for a club or association, price is going to be the most important factor. Fractions of seconds different in terms of access speed will take the back seat if price is the critical factor.

As such, I'm going to "throw" all my eggs in one basket and recommend:

[Catalog.com](#)

regardless of where in the world you are located. Currently, they are offering “Free hosting forever” if you register your domain name with them. The worse case scenario is that catalog.com go “bust” in which case, you simply transfer your domain to another host provider. Your major loss (if this were ever to occur) is just time and inconvenience because the cost of registering your domain with catalog.com is cheaper or comparable to many other places.

As always, there is a catch with the above. With their “free” package, you get limited functionality (although it’s more than enough in my opinion for most small websites) and you are also limited to a “Unix” host system. If you are fond of “NT”, then you can still use catalog.com, it will just cost you.

And if you don’t know what the heck “Unix” or “NT” is then you probably don’t have to worry about which type of host provider you choose.

If you don’t like catalog.com or you simply want to research some others, then visit one of the following sites to see what others are available:

<http://www.hostindex.com/>

<http://webhosts.thelist.com/>

Sidebar: Some of you may wish to set up a “shop” to sell club or other merchandise. Whilst you can usually pay your hosting provider a bit more to give you access to a “virtual shopping cart”, there is actually a great “free” solution that I use at:

<http://www.mals-e.com>

Mal Stewart runs the cart. If you really like it, you can pay him a small fee and become a premium member. He also has a couple of other income generating streams which help him provide the basic service (which is fantastic) for “free”.

3.9 Define page hierarchy for phase 1 of website

Designing and creating a website is the first stop to what becomes an ongoing job. In the web world, we give the various “iterations” of websites a name such as Phase 1, Phase 2, etc. These phases are distinct from general updates and are assigned to any stages of considerable development.

When beginning a Phase 1 website, you could be forgiven for wanting to include a million things. But the reality is that if you try to do that, you will never finish and the site will never be launched. So I recommend you sit down with your website committee and undergo a “brainstorming” session. Get someone to “scribe” (document all the ideas) and basically just have one big fun session. Put anything and everything down. Once you’ve exhausted all your ideas, you then need to take everything, synthesise it (ie. Get rid of duplicates, etc.) and assign priorities. So mark a 1 next to the most important item, 2 next to the second most important item and so on. Then re-visit your purpose and website audience and make sure these priorities make sense when matched with you most important ideas. If not, simply adjust them until you are happy. It’s important to remember to keep your website information focussed. Visitors will not want to plough through

unnecessary information. Most people just scan websites so get ready to “cut or drop information” rather than “add information”.

The next step is to work out just how many of these ideas will form part of your Phase 1 website. I’d recommend a maximum of ten elements or something close to that.

Web development is iterative. So just bite off enough for you to chew. When you’ve swallowed all of that, you can always go back for “dessert”. “Dessert” will form the basis of Phase 2.

Once you’ve worked out what topics you’ll have in Phase 1, you need to figure out your navigation scheme. Navigation is basically the method by which your website visitors will find the information from your website that they require. A good place to find out about navigation and design techniques is to visit:

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20000109.html>

or sift through Jacob Nielsen’s AlertBox for similar interesting information:

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/>

Remember... keep it simple. People should always be able to reach the information that they require within one or two clicks. Don’t inundate your visitor with a million buttons from the home page. Keep it to less than eight with a preference for about six.

Sidebar: Oh yeah – I nearly forgot. If you want a really great place to find out about everything related to design, navigation, site elements, content, etc., try:

<http://info.med.yale.edu/caim/manual/>

A fairly common Phase 1 hierarchy (and navigation scheme) for a club or association website goes something like this (but don’t forget to check out your counterparts or opposition on the Internet to get ideas from what they have done):

Home (Top level)

- └ About Us (Second level)
- └ Committees
- └ News / Events
- └ Membership
- └ FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)
- └ Links
- └ Contacts

└ Members Only

Some other information that you might like to include (even if they are just text links):

- A disclaimer
- A copyright notice
- Search page

3.9.1 Disclaimer

I won't give you advice on what should be in a disclaimer. I suggest you check out other similar sites on the Internet and see what they have done and if you feel that this is really important, speak to a lawyer.

3.9.2 Copyright

There are two sides to copyright...

- 1) Where have you got your information? If it's from copyrighted sources, make sure you have permission to use it on your website. The general rule of thumb is that the author or artist, etc. has sole copyright in something (whether it be written word, design, art, etc.) unless they have specifically signed it over to another party. They can still hold copyright and give you permission to use whatever it is they have created. For instance, I have copyright in this report but for a fee, I offer you the right to read the information.
- 2) Who is allowed to use your website, for what purposes and how can that information be stored? I.e. What rules are you going to impose on your website visitors?

Once again, if you want a hard and fast copyright statement, speak to a lawyer.

3.9.3 Search facility

The easiest and cheapest way to provide a search facility in your website is to use a third-party tool. This saves you a lot of time in worrying about how to install "cgi programs" etc. But the downside maybe that you have to accept advertising from the search engine service or accept the placement of the service's logo on your website. The current search engine service that I recommend is:

<http://www.picosearch.com/>

You can see it in use at my website: <http://www.cybecom.com.au>

Alternatively, if you use a website tool like Microsoft FrontPage, it will have a search "Bot" that you can include in your website. Refer to your tool's documentation for information about search facilities that it may provide.

These are just ideas. Mix and match, add or delete. If you want to see some examples of club or association websites, check out the list in Attachment 3.

3.10 But what about our web design?

OK – so you’ve ploughed through 9 steps and we still haven’t come to the web design. Remember I said that planning is important. And everything we’ve been through so far has been absolutely vital.

Here we are now. Before I give you some options into how to come up with a web design, I’ll impart a few pearls of wisdom. Even if you don’t create the design yourselves, use these pearls to direct whoever does. Of course you can disagree with me.

- 1) Colours display differently on different computers. Just because a colour combination looks great on your computer does not mean it will look great on someone else’s computer. Test your colour combination on different computers by getting club members to check your test site out.
- 2) Use contrasting colours for background versus text. The most common background is plain white. So make sure your text is a dark colour such as black, navy blue, etc. if using a white background. Likewise, if using a dark background, make sure you are using light colours for your text.
- 3) Be careful of using green and red – many people are colour blind and if you are trying to use them to differentiate between things, colour blind people will not pick up on your point.
- 4) Don’t use backgrounds with watermarks, textures, photos, etc. It’s nigh on impossible to read text on picture backgrounds
- 5) Don’t get carried away using a million graphics, photos, fonts, font sizes, etc. Simple is best. Arial is probably the most popular web font.

Did I mention that really good website on site design, etc? Check it out at:

<http://info.med.yale.edu/caim/manual/>

So just how do you come up with a web design? I guess you have several options:

3.10.1 Do it yourself

Unless you have a graphic designer or someone with some artistic flair, this is probably not a good option.

3.10.2 Use a professional design theme or template

There are many tools out there that can help you put a website together. Tools like Microsoft FrontPage, Macromedia Dreamweaver, etc. all have template-based systems with a variety of design themes from which to choose. If you have access to one of these tools, then try using a theme from within it.

You can also access themes or web templates off the Internet for “free”. Usually there is a little catch like asking you to link back to their site, etc. Try visiting:

<http://www.freewebtemplates.com/>

to get some examples. I had a quick browse and there’s some great, professionally designed themes. They also have links off to other free template sites.

3.10.3 Copy the design from a website you like

Sure you can do this, but believe it or not, even website themes are copyrighted. So if you copy one without any changes, in effect, you are breaching someone’s copyright or intellectual property. However, if you were to copy a design you like and modify it, then, depending on the amount of modification, you may or may not be safe. To check out some really cool websites, visit:

<http://www.coolhomepages.com/>

3.10.4 Pay someone to come up with a design

Sometimes this is the easiest and best thing. If you don’t have any design flair (or access to professional templates) then believe me, your site is going to be what we in Australia call “A dog’s breakfast”. In short... a mess. You can probably get a graphic design student from your local college to come up with something for a couple of hundred dollars. Of course, you can pay more. It really depends on your budget.

If you are paying someone, you may wish to get them to come up with a couple of designs and then choose the one you prefer.

3.11 Review and purchase a content management tool (and web editing software)

As already mentioned, I’m a big fan of getting many people to keep the website up-to-date. Now I don’t mean that each person can update all of the site (but if this is what you want then by all means, go for it. Just remember that it might get difficult to keep track of changes, etc.). What I mean is that different people get nominated to update different sections of the website. And then, in conjunction with this, you have some update rules. Eg. People should try to update their section of the website as new information comes to hand, but everyone should look at their part of the website at least once-a-month and initiate any necessary changes immediately.

So what’s a content management tool? Basically it’s a system through which you can easily update, modify or create new website content (information) without having to be a techno guru. If you know how to use a word processor, then you should be able to use a content management tool. There are different levels of sophistication in content management tools. They range from \$0 through to several million. Obviously, you get what you pay for (to a certain extent).

Sidebar: Not all content management tools allow you to create brand new content easily – particularly the cheaper ones. So this will probably mean that you still need to use a website editing tool like Microsoft FrontPage or Macromedia Dreamweaver just **to create your initial site** (and maybe to create any new pages in the future). Whilst these tools are fairly easy to learn and you don't need to be a techno-guru, it is probably better to get one person to create the initial content using such a tool. That way you don't all have to buy the tool (if no one has access to one) and learn it. If you do have access to someone who is experienced in using these sorts of tools, nominate them to create the initial site. Once you've got your basic site and design sorted, you can then load it to your hosting provider and use a content management tool (and your various content updaters) to keep it updated.

Generally, there are two types of website editing tools: HTML editors or WYSIWYG ones. HTML is the coding behind web pages. Generally HTML editors require you to get intimate with coding. If you don't want to, don't use that type of tool. WYSIWYG stands for "What You See Is What You Get". These tools are supposed to work a bit like a word processor so you can see on the screen as you work, how your page/s will look without worrying about the coding. Some tools allow you to do both. Keep this in mind when selecting a tool. If you wish to find out what tools you can use to create the initial website (assuming your chosen content management tool doesn't allow this) visit:

<http://www.download.com> and search for HTML Editors

<http://www.coolpage.com/cpg.html> (you can purchase this for less than \$US 50)

Many of the content management tools need to be installed on your website. This usually means you need a) access to a "cgi-bin" from your hosting provider and b) knowledge of installing programs on web hosts. If all of this is foreign to you, or your hosting provider does not allow "cgi scripts" or you just can't be bothered installing programs, I recommend you use:

<http://www.omniedit.com/>

It works remotely and doesn't need any installation at all. Prices start at a couple of hundred \$US per year plus an installation fee and then increase from there depending on your needs. All updaters need access to is the Internet. Nothing needs to be installed on their machine. So an updater could perform their function at work, at the local library, in an Internet café or on holiday. They are truly mobile.

If you have access to someone who knows what a "cgi-bin" is and your hosting provider allows you to install your own scripts, then you could look at other options such as:

<http://www.iexp.com/products/fastpage/>

<http://www.flypage.com/>

<http://www.ephox.com/product/default.asp>

Other alternatives include all content updaters purchasing a copy of a website tool like FrontPage or Macromedia Dreamweaver and then utilising the distributed authoring systems within them (but everyone who is updating must use the same tool). But the cost

of this could be something like \$US 100 per copy. And then, each updater has to have access to a computer on which to load the software. Also, how do you handle people who are part of the update process who leave the club or association?

3.12 Perform any necessary training for the committee

No matter how easy the content management tool is or whatever system you use, the fact is that you still require a basic knowledge of computers and the Internet if you intend to participate in the update process. If you use something like the Omniedit system mentioned in the previous section then the training necessary will be minimal. Hopefully, one member of your committee should be nominated to familiarise themselves with the tool/s that you have chosen and then perform training for the content updaters. If you've chosen a simple tool like Omniedit, then your training might take 10 minutes. Anything more technical could take hours or days.

3.13 Obtain content for pages and add into website

So you have your design, you know what tools you are using and the relevant people have been trained (or at least familiarised themselves with everything). The next step is to obtain the content for your Phase 1 topics. The best way to do this is nominate one or more people to be in charge of developing content. Don't forget to use other people within your club or association if it makes sense. I.e. With content development, don't limit yourself to just those on your committee.

Make sure you allocate a deadline for the content. Also make sure you have a project manager who is responsible for explaining requests (and following up) to people both inside and outside the committee.

Also, even though I suggested a de-centralised method for updating the website, you can nominate one person to actually take the content from the various sources when the site is first created and add it into the Phase 1 website. This will simply speed up the initial website creation.

Once again, check out Attachment 2 for an example table outlining roles and responsibilities. If you created such a table earlier, review it and update as appropriate.

Sidebar: When you create a website and then start updating it, the issue of being able to retreat to an older version (rollback) may come up. Or, you might foresee that you don't want updates to occur instantly. That is, you want an approval process to occur in-between. These issues can be resolved in different ways:

- 1) Your content management tool may provide some sort of rollback option. Check this out.
- 2) You should always, always keep backups of your site. Don't rely on your hosting provider. If you are using a tool like FrontPage or Dreamweaver, you should just copy the whole website directory to a disk once in a while. Eg. Every month. If you are using an online tool like Omniedit and you don't have a technical person who can use an FTP program (File Transfer Protocol) to perform a similar operation from your web host, use the tried and true "right mouse click and Save As option" in your web browser. Eg. Visit every page of your website, right mouse click and then depending on your browser, select the Save As or similar option to save that web page to your disk.

- 3) Use what we call a “staging area”. That is, set up a directory on your website like: <http://www.ourclub.com/test>. Put a password on this directory and only ever make updates to the staging area first, then get them checked by the editor and then find some way of “copying across” these updates to your “live” website. Don’t retype them as you bring in the chance of typographical error and thus negate the purpose of having an editor.

I understand that the information contained within this sidebar may be a little more technical than the rest of the report. I also understand that it is not explained in step-by-step instructions. To do this, would result in several pages. But hopefully, it provides you with enough information at least to give you an idea of some of the long-term maintenance issues you need to consider, implement, document and follow. If you think you need to implement one or more of them, and you don’t have the necessary expertise on your committee to help, find someone who can. It might be one of your members’ brothers or great uncles or whomever.

When you first start creating your website, it’s probably a good idea to do it behind a passworded area so that people browsing out there on the Internet don’t accidentally stumble across your work-in-progress site. If the consequences of this occurring results in a “Oh big deal” feeling then don’t concern yourselves with passwording the site.

3.14 Sort out an email address for your website

Whenever you purchase website hosting, you will receive one or more email addresses to go along with this hosting. Some web hosts will provide a web-based system for you to collect email from that address. Others will provide you with a mechanism to forward any mail received to someone’s personal email address. Of course, if your web host doesn’t provide you with a web-based email package, you could always set up a “free” one with someone like Yahoo (refer to <http://mail.yahoo.com/>) and then forward your website email to that address. This means you don’t have to mix up club or association email with your personal or work email. In addition, it allows you to nominate more than one person on your committee (or in your club) to be the “email responder”.

Setting up email addresses will be different depending on your web host. But most web hosts provide easy to follow instructions for this sort of thing so look out for them.

3.15 Get content checked for accuracy

When you defined roles and responsibilities, you would or should have nominated a committee member to take on the editorial role. It will be this person’s responsibility to check the website for consistency and to suggest any changes in grammar or style to the person who added in the content.

The editor should also periodically check the website when it has gone “live” to make sure that style still flows consistently. If it doesn’t, they should contact the person responsible for that particular content and get them to modify appropriately.

3.16 Document the website.

I hear more groans. Well I don’t expect you to write “War and Peace”. One page of instructions is better than none. Most of the information, you will have already documented as you worked through this checklist. I.e. The documentation should state

who you are, what the purpose of your website is and who your target audience is. It should document your committee and the ongoing roles and responsibilities. For example, Who is responsible for updating what pages and most importantly, when? It should describe your change processes and your backup systems. It should also explain how often your web committee meets and when your next planned stage of development will occur.

It should contain details of your web host, when your domain name will expire, costs (one off and ongoing) and anything else, you think is important.

With documentation, you have to imagine what a group of people would require to keep the site going should your whole committee just disappear. People come and go in clubs, associations, organisations and life. Documentation makes it easier for the next person to slip into your shoes and do your job.

3.17 Go "live"

OK – I hear you say "But what do you mean by go "live". You keep mentioning it but what is it?"

Computer talk for bringing a new computer system online for the first time is called "going live". So when you are happy that all your content is clean and tidy, that there are no spelling mistakes or typographical errors, that the website looks nice and behaves well in the various browsers (at least check how it operates in both Netscape and Microsoft Internet Explorer), and your club and associated protocols have been followed, then you can "switch it on".

Of course, "going live" loses its appeal if it was always "live". That is, if you didn't create it behind a passworded area. However, you can at least say to yourselves, our site is now "live".

3.18 Register the site within search engines

If you are really keen to get your site listed within the search engines, etc. (depending on what your purpose is) you can utilise some of the automated systems that will submit it to the 'Top 10' or whatever search indexes or engines. Some of them will do it for "free". Some will expect a payment. Usually, you will have to provide an email address. I would suggest using a fake email address otherwise you'll end up with a pile of junk email. It's probably easier if you just go to Yahoo's directory page on this submission services and pick some from there.

[Yahoo's search submission page](#)

Yes you can pay money to have your site submitted to heaps of places, but you really need to decide whether it's worth it or not. Once again, you have to think back to what your purpose is. If it's merely to keep your members up-to-date with information, then search engine listings are probably not necessary so long as you make sure all your members know what your web address is.

But if you are expecting a lot of traffic generally from out there in web land, then submit to the search engines, etc. These days, you can even pay to get listed in the top few results

by purchasing common search terms (in some search facilities), advertising banners or premium placements. In terms of search terms, if your club is all about diecast car collecting, you could pay a search engine to list you at the top of all searches for “diecast car“. Payment is usually based on so many cents per display or \$X per thousand displays. You set up an account and top it up with credits once it runs out or gets close to running out.

Also, many search engines will give you the option of paying a once-off fee of about \$US 200 to speed up the standard listing process. Instead of waiting up to 8 weeks to be indexed, your site will be listed in days.

3.19 Publicise the website

There are all sorts of ways to publicise your website (should you so choose). As well as online methods such as listing in search engines mentioned above, there are offline methods as well. Put your web address on any club or association literature. Get it printed on t-shirts. Put it on any banners or signs you have. Include it in any brochures, advertisements, etc. Hold a launch party, etc.

Check out the following website for other ideas on website promotion:

<http://www.wilsonweb.com/marketing/>

3.20 Keep the documentation up-to-date and follow it.

Make sure you read your documentation and update it as you go along. Not much point documenting your website maintenance password and then never updating it in the documentation. What would happen if you changed it a month ago, didn't update your documentation with the new one and then left your club or association?

Also, follow the documentation. Refer back to it when you undergo more development phases. Make sure any future updates match your website's purpose and target audience.

3.21 Maintain website on a regular basis.

Once again, make sure you update your website and that your content experts are doing their jobs periodically.

Every now and then, touch base with your club or association members and find out what they think of the website, whether they are using it and what other content you could add to make it a more valuable site to visit.

Also keep your promotional efforts going if it makes sense.

I'll finish off somewhere near where I started... remember, “What good is a newspaper that is a month old, a week old or even a few days old?”. Keep your website up-to-date.

4 Attachments

4.1 Attachment 1 – Draft survey of Internet skills

The following survey is to help us determine whether club / association members are using the Internet and have any technical Internet skills too.

Please tick the best answer for you.

- 1) Do you have access to the Internet? Yes No
- 2) If so, is this: At home At work Both or Other . _____?
- 3) If you don't have access to the Internet, are you expecting to in the future?
Less than 6 months 6 -12 months One day Never
- 4) If you do have access, roughly how many hours a week do you use it?
Less than 5 5-10 Greater than 10
- 5) How would you rate your skill at using the Internet?
None Low Average Advanced
- 6) Do you have an email address? Yes No
- 7) If so, what is it? _____
- 8) Do you have any graphic design experience? Yes No
- 9) Do you know how to use a computer graphics program? Yes No
- 10) Have you ever built a web page? Yes No
- 11) If you have built a web page, how would you rate it (if you've built more than one, think about your last web page)?
Terrible Mediocre Not Bad Fantastic
- 12) Would you be interested in participating on a website committee for our club / association?
Yes No

4.2 Attachment 2 - Roles and responsibilities

The following is just an example. Edit it as necessary. Also, these roles can be allocated to people on your committee, in your club or association or externally. For example, someone's best friend might not be a member of the club but might be a great graphic designer and more than happy to help with your website.

Role	Responsibility	Whom	When
Graphic designer	Website design	Insert person's name	Set a date
Website editor	Ongoing editorial role	:	Ongoing
Internet expert	Helping out with any technical queries	:	Ongoing
Programmer	May not yet need but define later if necessary	:	
Content expert 1	The About Us section ie. Fill this in once you know what content you require	:	Set a date
Content expert 2	Club Events section. See above.	:	Set a date
:		:	:
:		:	:
Project manager	Chairing the website committee and making sure all work is performed, etc.	:	Ongoing
Website updater 1	Fill this in once you know what content you require. For example, this person may be responsible for keeping the About Us section up-to-date	:	Set a forced frequency for when pages should be checked. Eg. At least once a month so the first of every month. Updates should also occur on an ad hoc nature.
Website updater 2	See above	:	:
Trainer	Training committee in the use of chosen website tools and also to train club members once website has gone "live".	:	:
:		:	:
:		:	:

4.3 Attachment 3 – Other club or association websites

I did a quick search and came up with the following club or association websites. Now I'm not giving you an opinion as to whether they are good or not. I'll leave that up to you. Always remember that you can learn a lot by critiquing what other people have done.

<http://www.lionsclubs.org/> - Lions Clubs International

<http://www.arsenal.co.uk/> - Arsenal Football Club

<http://www.fremantlefc.com.au/flash.htm> - Fremantle Dockers Football

<http://www.aesthetica.com/ukmx5/> - UK MX-5 Owners Club

<http://www.clubtiger.com/> - Tiger Woods Official Fan Club

<http://www.garfield.com/> - Garfield's Official Fan Club

<http://harrypotter.warnerbros.com/web/index.jsp> - Harry Potter Club

<http://www.porscheclub.com/> - Porsche Owners Club

<http://www.ababasketball.net.au/> - Australian Basketball Association.

<http://www.rotary.org/> - Rotary International

<http://www.manutd.com/> - Manchester United Official Club Website

<http://www.crca.asn.au/> - the Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) Association of Australia.

<http://titan.glo.be/bea.rabe/sihome.html> - Soroptimist International

<http://www.australiancollectors.com.au/> - Australian Collectors Association

<http://www.wisewomen.org.nz/> - WISE Women Network

<http://www.acetennis.com.au/> - New South Wales Tennis Association

<http://www.ywca.org/> - YWCA

<http://www.kentcountycricket.co.uk/> - Kent County Cricket Club

5 Glossary

I decided that there was no point in re-inventing the wheel. There are millions of glossaries out there on the Internet. So if you are confused about a term used in this report, look it up at:

<http://www.whatis.com>