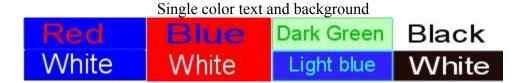# Web Site Design Outline

The Internet (the Web) is like a modern version of the "Yellow Pages". The web lets you make a much larger presence than the Yellow pages but the idea is the same. New customers look on the web to see if you're "real" and find out more about you. Your web site should tell them about you, your business, your 'products' and how to contact you. Many customers want to check out your web site these days before they will buy from you or hire you.

Web sites can serve many purposes. One of the biggest is reducing phone calls by providing information online. Businesses can use documents on their web sites to provide product details and brochures. A 'Contact' page usually list your phone number, address, and store hours of operation. Maps show people where to find you. Calendars can tell when you will be at events or shows. Musicians can provide music online so people can hear what they sound like. Photo galleries and slideshows provide images of people, products and events. Database are used to provide lists of products and other things that are searchable and sortable.

The page layout and graphic design depends on the intended audience. Business web sites are expected to look fairly organized and provide product info while musician's sites can be 'wilder' and more entertaining. One of the more important issues is choosing colors that provide adequate contrast. Blue, Red and Purple together may be artful but they cause eyestrain when you try to read the text. Here are graphics to demonstrate good and bad combinations of colors.

Single color text and background

Single color text over multicolored background

Fancier things can be done with graphics but that is both a benefit and a problem. If your info needs to be found by Google and other search engines, then it needs to be in text format because the search engines can not read graphic images. They also cannot read text embedded in Flash files.

Web site planning begins with an outline of the pages you think you want, a Table of Contents. This outline becomes the 'navigation' section that is normally included on every page on the site. A small site with less than 10 pages will frequently have all of the pages listed in the 'navigation' section. Larger site may have subsections listed under the major headings.

Here are two typical outline / navigation lists:

Business Site Navigation	Musician's Site Navigation
- Home - Products - Documents / Info / FAQ - Special Skills / Capabilities - Links - About Us (history) - Contact	- Home - Bio - Photo Gallery - Shows / Calendar - Music - Links - Contact

The information for these pages is normally provided by you or your business. Re-doing a web site that already has all the information available can take as little as 3 days. Building a new site when the information still has to be gathered can take weeks.

It is not unusual for your outline to get changed in the process of creating the content for them. In general, you should avoid redundant and empty pages. If you have only one product or service and the info about it and your contact info fits on just one page, you should consider having just a one page web site.

Many service businesses require only 4 pages. One to describe the service, a contact page, a photo gallery or some other way to show your results, and an 'About' page. The 'About' page is often a history of you and your business that provides reassurance to your customers that you know what you are doing.

If you have thousands of products and want to sell online, then you have gone way past a 'basic web site'. Your web site becomes your business and requires the same amount of organization that any similar store would have.

Note that creating a web site is only the beginning. Although web sites function similar to advertising pages, they are not just static images. Web sites are an active electronic process that happens every time someone looks at your site. People use web browsers such as Microsoft Edge, Firefox, Apple Safari, and Google Chrome. These browsers connect to the servers that host your web site. Someone has to make sure the servers and connections stay 'up' and are secure.

It is actually fairly rare that problems occur. Your site should be designed to be safe and there are people at the hosting companies whose job is it to keep your files secure. But they often have thousands of web sites to watch over. You should check your web site frequently and know who to call if there is a problem.

The next two pages go over the content that is needed for the different pages in a web site.

Business Navigation sections:

Home page

The Home page is the introduction to your web site. It tells a little about you and invites the viewers to look around. Some sites use a 'splash' page that has no purpose other than to be a 'door' to the site. I don't recommend that. People browsing the Internet are impatient people. Your home page should feature basic info and immediate navigation to all the major pages.

Products page

If you have a small number of simple products, they can all be displayed on this page. If you have more products or your products require more info for each one, this page should be an index to separate product pages, maybe even separate product categories.

Documents / Info / FAQ

This section provides extra information. It can be general information about materials or products or info about special uses and applications. FAQ stands for "Frequently Asked Questions". This is where you answer those questions so that people won't call you on the phone and ask them.

Special Skills / Capabilities

This page is for you to tell how your business is better than other similar businesses. Tell them if you have special skills and / or equipment that others don't have.

Links

This page is to link to web sites that are important to you in some way. Some people want to skip this page but it is important to have links that show you are part of the community. Examples are professional and social organizations that you belong to, possibly special material suppliers that enhance your products, or special customers that use your products in ways that make you look good.

About Us (history)

Here you get to tell people about yourself and your company. Customers do want to know who they are dealing with. History shows stability and experience, education, and qualifications inspire confidence.

Contact

Here you list all acceptable ways to contact your business. Phone and fax numbers, email addresses, and postal addresses. Customers like to be able to contact specific persons so the employees who are responsible for different departments should be listed if that is acceptable. If you have a store location where customers can come visit you, then a map and directions should be included along with your hours of operation.

Musicians Navigation sections:

Home page

The Home page is the introduction to your web site. It tells a little about you and invites the viewers to look around. Some sites use a 'splash' page that has no purpose other than to be a 'door' to the site. I don't recommend that. People browsing the Internet are impatient people. Your home page should feature some basic info and immediate navigation to all the major pages.

Bio

Here you get to tell your fans about yourself. They want to feel that they know you and know what you have done and where you have been. They would probably like all the dirt on you but that's generally not a good idea.

Photo Gallery

This page is for pictures of you in performance and out in the world. This goes along with your Bio to tell your fans about you. If you feature others in your performances, they like to see their own pics too.

Shows / Calendar

This tells people where and when to come see you. Include event name, date, time, location, and cover charge if any. You can also include a phone number for the venue and a link to their web site.

Music

This is where you put music clips for people to listen and tunes that they can download. Also include links to the sites and places where they can buy your music.

Links

This page is to link to web sites that are important to you in some way. Some people want to skip this page but it is important to have links that show you are part of the community. Examples are professional and social organizations that you belong to and to other musicians that you perform with and to the clubs that you frequently perform at.

Contact

Here you list all acceptable ways to contact you. Phone and fax numbers, email addresses, and postal addresses. Make sure you put a 'booking' contact here so people who want to hire you to play know who to contact.

Thanks for reading this. You can see my work at http://www.dibsplace.com/webdev/ and contact me by email at dmeweb@dibsplace.com .