

PART 1 | Creating a site
by SLAVA APEL

Setting up a web-to-print site. Step by step guide

I AM A BIG fan of amazing-looking websites. There are many components and a lot of planning that goes into making such a website, especially a site that is enabled for web-to-print functions. So, here is a building process and the architecture you can follow to get amazing results.

GREAT PLANNING Planning to build a website for your print shop, is like planning to build your own print shop. You need to pick a name, pick your look and feel, pick your products and service, pick information you would like to display, pick a method for customers to contact you and finally pick a purpose that you want your website to fulfill.

KINDS OF WEB-TO-PRINT WEBSITES

Generally, web-to-print websites offer a few basic approaches. Clients can ask for a quote, upload their files for printing; they can order static items available on your site; or they can order from a templated menu of offerings such as direct mail, and marketing material. One of the first decisions you will make is "What do you want your website to do?"

The U.S.-based [PIA](#), in its Web-to-Print Primer, offers four general web-to-print business models for printers to consider:

- Print procurement
- Marketing/brand management
- Document management
- Workflow automation

PRINT PROCUREMENT

Print procurement sites are like digital storefronts for your business. Anyone, including consumers, can log on, get a quote, upload their own files, or order from pre-built online templates for such things as business cards, postcards, calendars etc., before paying.

MARKETING WEBSITES

These are basically customer branded websites for companies, in which customers can order templated or original material. The customer can have his own ordering interface, with his brand, images, office locations and ordering specs. A large corporation with regional offices is a good candidate.



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DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT These are simple ordering sites that allow ordering materials already warehoused by a printer easily without dealing with a CSR.

WORKFLOW AUTOMATION These sites do not sell anything directly, but contain tools to help facilitate the printer/client relationship, such as handling JDF job tickets, soft proofing and client approval.

SERVICES What services and functions will your website contain? Here are some to think about

- Order entry
- Job quoting
- Design templates
- Products menu
- Database linking
- Asset management
- Warehousing
- Brand management
- Proofing
- Proofreading
- Mailing and fulfillment
- Approval processes
- Billing process for credit cards
- Job tracking
- Mailing list management
- Shipping instructions

AMAZING WEBSITE NAME Are you going to name your website after your company name, like XYZ lithographers limited dot com, or are you going to make it advertisement friendly, like AmazingPrint.com? This first decision could influence the rest of the building and planning process. By registering an effective domain name, you can help people remember you—Amazon.com—or forget you—XYZbookstorewithmany titles.com. Words like amazing, free, now, easy are great for helping customers remember your name. Great/cheap places to register domain names are www.1and1.com, www.godaddy.com, www.domainsatcost.ca.

AMAZING DESIGN What is your website going to look like? Here are just some of the general options you need to think about:

- Flash-based with lots of animation, or static
- Pull content from other resources
- Your product offerings
- Whitepapers
- Templates

- Information for graphic designers or customers
- Password protected areas
- Contact information
- Ordering capabilities
- Online quoting
- Videos
- Live support functionality
- A search box
- Ability to collect customer's information
- Privacy information
- Terms of use
- Prompt users to bookmark
- Blogs, forums, photo
- Frequently asked question (FAQ) section
- Polling capability
- A speaking character
- Easy way to connect to social bookmarking sites like www.twitter.com, www.stumbleupon.com, www.delicious.com.

I don't recommend installing every bell and whistle, but you can pick and choose what you think your customer would want to see.

EASY TO READ TYPE According to Wichita University Usability study from 2000, there are five rules to follow for easy-to-read type:

1. Use 10 point or larger font. Captions, names of form fields, "fine print" copyright and legal, and possibly some chart content and tech specs can be smaller.
2. No matter what type-size, text should never run more than 52 to 60 characters across the screen.
3. Pick a font that you see used widely online by high traffic sites.
4. Use Web-safe fonts.
5. With the possible exception of a one-line headline, all your text should be flush left and not centered.
6. Your headline should be significantly larger in type size and possibly bolder than the rest of the copy on the page.

CONTENT THAT PEOPLE CAN REBROADCAST OR LINK TO A May 2006 study by Yahoo! & OMD, showed that the Internet is almost more trusted as a shopping information source than both TV and magazines combined: 54% Internet, vs. 34% magazines and 23% TV. If you publish relevant content and prove that your website is a valuable resource, your customers will bookmark you, pass on your

website to their friends, and blog about it.

TESTIMONIALS Do you have a happy customer list? 65% of consumers actively seek customer product reviews according to a November 2, 2007, study by PowerReviews. 78% of "social researchers" group spend more than 10 minutes reading customer reviews. Adding testimonials, seals of security and press are very important to your image and for customer to be comfortable with you.

PARTNERSHIPS Reputation goes both ways. Not only sites that are linking to you, but also websites that you promote from your websites. If your website is a dead end, without giving visitors a way to get out and visit other places they are not going to like it as much. Link to other great resources for information about colour reproduction, paper stocks, templates, industry magazines, online galleries, maps, events in your area and any other information that's close to what you are trying to do on your website, all to be helpful to your visitors.

AWARDS Post your industry awards (as many as you can), thank-you letters for donations, participation in events, speaking engagements, sponsored events. Link to stories that you have appeared in. Promote your BBB seal, your security certificate and any association badges.

CALL TO ACTION Not every customer wants to buy on the spot, as all they may want to do among other things is get a sample, price quote, a call back, download a template, download a whitepaper or watch a video. Each one of these things are defined processes that are, in the web master and web marketing world called "action items". Once you define the action items for your website, you can streamline the path to those actions to make sure that customers are presented with the easiest path to "act," with no distractions, unrelated images, annoyances, circular navigations, multiple forms or hard-to-read type.

TRACKING On your website you should be tracking everything: new visitors, repeat visitors, average stay, average path taken, bounce pages, orders, submissions, repeat orders, amount spent and so much more. If you are tracking that information, you will know exactly what to do and what not to do every time you make mod-

ifications to your website. By placing a male instead of female picture on your website, you will see your conversion rates change; by adding additional functionality, you may get customers to spend more money per visit at your website, but you can only know for sure if you have been tracking that information.


You may start advertising online and expect the new traffic to bring in sales, but I highly recommend before doing so, knowing what your “call to action” is, what your performance rate of the website is and what your “closing” ratios are. All of the above can only be known with proper tracking software and techniques. Not all tracking software packages are equal, and in most cases, you do what you pay for.

OPTIMAL LOOK AND FEEL OF YOUR WEBSITE Your internal graphic designer has been taught how to design for print, in CMYK spaces instead of limited RGB spaces. They have been taught that file for-

mats like JPG and Gifs are enemies of print due to poor reproduction, but yet these are the best formats for optimizing websites for speed.

Yes, designers can adapt to a web design style with some retraining, but I would also recommend you speak to a consultant that knows the entire life cycle of the customer online. Everything from web design, to ordering, to marketing, to post sale marketing to information tracking, to defining calls to action, to recommending best online design technologies. No one employee knows everything that would make a website successful. If they did, they would not be employed, they would just have their own websites selling print!

AMAZING EXPERIENCE Why did I use the word amazing in this guide? Simple. There are millions and millions of websites out there, and thousands spring up daily. Your website has to stand out, has to get noticed, and has to be different. If you

keep amazing in sight, you will end up with something that you can be proud of. If you ask of your web designer to give you a website, he will do it to the best of his abilities. If you ask him to give you an Amazing website, he will go above and beyond his best. 

Slava Apel, CEO of Amazing Print Corp is a frequent speaker and contributor on topics of Web to Print, Search Engine Marketing and Search Engine Positioning. To find out more about Slava's web to print company, visit www.amazingprint.com or contact him at 1-800-355-4498 xt. 224 or follow on twitter at www.twitter.com/slavaapel

Coming up next week: 25 secrets you need to know about Search Engine Optimization