

## **Establishing a web presence**

These are a few hasty notes for communities wanting to get a web presence. These days there are many opportunities other than a full web site, depending on your needs.

### **FIRST**

Think about some basic questions:

- Who will use the site?  
*- group members, community at large, council, stakeholders, others?*
- What do they want to see?  
*Many web sites are designed “the wrong way round”: the owners only think of all the things they want to put on the site. Rather, think about the site from the users’ perspective: why would they come to the site? what do they want to find out about?*
- Who will keep the site fresh and up to date?  
*Sites with old information are actually counter-productive. Someone will need to keep adding information to the site to keep it current.*
- How will your group promote and use the site?  
*Once you’ve got the site up and running, you need to promote the site, especially to the people you think are going to be users. You need to constantly remind your community group the site is there – in your regular emails, newsletters. Put things on the site they need to refer to, such as calendars of upcoming events.*

*Use the local press for other groups of interest, and the local community at large! Make sure any stories include a link to your web site.*

*Don’t forget to let relevant organizations know your web site exists – encourage linking from their pages to yours. From the local council web page, and from Coastcare, etc.*

### **SECOND**

What sort of things do you want to do? There are many free services on the Internet, and some of these can be cross-linked. Depending on what you want to do, you may not need to start by setting up a web page at all. Start small, and grow!

Some on-line collaboration facilities:

#### **Blogs**

A blog is a web site where entries are written in chronological order and usually displayed in reverse chronological order – a sort of on-line diary. Usually you can include photos and links along with text.

There are many free blog services on the web. Look at:

blogspot: [www.blogspot.com](http://www.blogspot.com)

wordpress: [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com)

(there many more!)

Within the blog site you create a “blog space”, giving it a name that reflects your organization (eg cottlesloecoastcare ). You then give the pages your own “look and feel” using simple tools, and allow selected people to add new blogs. People can comment on the blogs, which is a good way to get feedback.

### **Wiki's**

A **wiki** is computer software that allows users to easily create, edit and link web pages. Wikis are often used to create collaborative and community websites. The most well-known is wikipedia. Again, it is usually easy to add images and links.

Like the blog sites, you create your own wiki space and customise its look and feel. You can control who can change the pages.

There are several free wiki services:

pbwiki: [www.pbwiki.com](http://www.pbwiki.com)

wikia: [www.wikia.com](http://www.wikia.com)

Also keep an eye out for Google's wiki – rumoured to be launching soon.

For a full list, see wikipedia! [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison\\_of\\_wiki\\_farms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_wiki_farms)

### **Document sharing**

If you want so collaboratively develop documents, but don't want to set up a wiki, look at Google's on-line documents (GoogleDocs) at <http://docs.google.com>

The facilities are free, and mean that your group's documents are stored in one place, and can be seen and shared easily amongst the group.

The main drawback is that everyone has to have a (free) Google account and user name.

There are other tools for sharing things like photos (flickr [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com) ), videos (You-tube [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) ). You can assign a tag unique to your group, so that as people upload photos they can assign it your tag. They offer facilities to see all photos with the tag.

### **Social networks**

A social network service focuses on the building and verifying of online social networks for communities of people who share interests and activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. Usually, anyone can join, so you can gain “friends” from anywhere: it expands your community.

Not so much a central organizing and communication focus, as just a place where people of like minds (or interested in addressing common issues) can discuss and share information.

Several free services available:

Ning: [www.ning.com](http://www.ning.com)

MySpace: [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

See [wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites) for a full list:

## **A SIMPLE WEB SITE**

If you want to set up a simple web site and “learn” about web sites, you can use Google’s page creation tools: <http://pages.google.com>

It has simple editing facilities, and a number of templates. You can upload images, and include links.

It is free. You must have a Google account (free) to create and edit the site, and only the creator can alter anything (but you could share the account details). The web site created has name created by google: for example, if your Google account is *somewherecoastcare*, and your page is called *Home*, the site’s address will look like <http://somewherecoastcare.googlepages.com/home>

## **IF YOU STILL WANT YOUR OWN WEB SITE!**

To get started, you need a few things:

1. A domain name and a web service provider
2. Someone who can develop the web site
3. A good idea of what you want the site to do
4. People to develop the site content

### **1. Web Service Provider**

There are many web service providers out there – and some of them seem to charge very high prices!

For most local groups, you should be able to get a provider to host a web site for around \$150-\$180 per year.

Two that offer basic facilities include:

ODSOL: [www.odsol.com](http://www.odsol.com) - US\$6.95 per month (about \$120 per year)

Dreamhost: [www.dreamhost.com](http://www.dreamhost.com) - US\$5.95 per month

Most service providers also provide domain name registration. To register a domain name costs about US\$10 (from the above providers), and it is best to take out the registration for at least three years. Note: the person to whom it is registered will receive an email before the domain name is about to expire. If you don’t renew it, it will expire, and your web site will stop working. Getting a domain name is quite simple.

Note: Getting an Australian domain (ending in .au) is significantly more expensive.

Your service provider will usually also provide you with email services (group lists, email redirecting, etc).

### **2. Website developer**

The best option is to have a computer geek amongst your community group, who will do it for free!

Getting a web site established by a professional group can be expensive (depending on how simple you want your web site to be). Charges are around \$60 per hour, and it can take between 50 and 200 hours to set up a web site (design, develop site, build content, test, refine). Also depends on the amount of graphics you have on the site.

It's better to go for a simple web site, and keep the content fresh, rather than a complex web site that you can't update easily and so the content gets stale.

Make sure someone in your group is able to update the site content once it is established! It will not work if you have to submit changes to a third party each time you want to update the site.

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October 2007