



Marketing Without Breaking the Bank

By Debbie Manning



It's a new year and new business era! While we are optimistic about an eventual turn around, we realize long term changes won't be immediate. Most of us deal daily with the effects of this slow

economy. While some businesses thrive in this type of environment, many small business owners are feeling effects in negative ways.

From the beginning of your business ventures, you have probably never adapted the philosophy of sitting back just to 'see what happens.' So why should you now? Here are some financial facts so you can plan your website marketing budget ... without breaking the bank. We tried to outline it in detail, so you know just where your money is going – and why!

The Financial Scoop on Websites

In this day and age, most businesses rely on websites as a tool to communicate with existing clients or as a marketing tool to attract new clients. But some small business people are still intimidated by even the thought of a website.

There are two main components to a website (from a cost perspective) – domain registration/hosting and design/maintenance.

The first thing you need is a domain name (such as www.debmanning.com). Generally registering a domain name incurs a yearly fee (commonly less than \$20). This cost is low enough so that people frequently get several (or many) domain names (a domain name is the same as a URL – technically it is a 'uniform resource locator'). Because the cost is inexpensive, we often recommend a few, including one containing your name (I have www.debmanningdesign.com also), and point them to your one "hosted" site.

Hosting is a requirement that often takes clients by surprise. Once a website is created, it doesn't just magically appear on the Internet. It has to be housed on a server, a computer that's on 24/7. There are many low-cost companies that provide both domain name registration



2009-2010 brides in Chicagoland should keep their eyes out for the first issue of *The Book of Gold*, offering thousands of dollars of savings from local wedding vendors such as *Maggiano's*, *Ditkas* ... and more. Proceeds from the sale of the book benefit the Susan G. Komen organization.

and hosting ...GoDaddy, Blue Host, Network Solutions to name a few. Hosting is usually an annual charge or a monthly fee, ranging from \$50/year and up. Once you're hosted, your web designer (or you) can upload website information that can be seen by anyone using the Internet.

Hosting costs tend to vary, based on the amount of space available for your site and benefits provided (email addresses, web design tools, website statistics, etc.). However, you can expect to find reliable service for less than \$20/month – often even under \$5/month.

These fees are independent of your actual design fees. However, check with your web designer for hosting companies that they think are reliable. In addition, they could have a partnership or a reseller program with a hosting source to provide discounted monthly fees – be sure you also explore these reduced fee options!

Design/maintenance is the next necessary element for your website. You now have an address (your URL) and a home (your host) for your site – now you need a site! We frequently ask clients to surf the Internet to provide us with websites that they like as a start to our design planning. We usually ask for marketing brochures and logos to further reinforce your branding and provide consistency in marketing.

We then take this information and produce an overall "look" for the site. This includes a color scheme, a navigation system, images, text, areas to highlight, etc. Establishing *WHAT* you want to say comes after we design the overall look.



Brush Supply Company initiates a website presence.



At www.debmanning.com, we provide a Flash presentation of a portfolio of our website designs, as well as direct links so visitors can view the sites live.

The size of the site most often determines the cost of the design – how many pages are involved? Are you selling on the site? E-commerce involves an additional cost because it interfaces with a shopping cart program. Common pages for sites that are structured like brochures are a home page, a page about you or the company, services you provide, a location page (occasionally), and how to contact you.

This is the beauty of the "web." Like a spider web, website pages continually evolve, link and weave information. Websites are always works in progress ... and they're easy to change and update. Unlike a printed brochure, you have no commitment to stay with an idea for a long period of time. If something doesn't work, you can try something else.

In our experience, most small business sites generally run \$600-\$900, taking less than 20 hours to complete. And when the site is done, we're always happy to continue to work with clients in providing updates (new product listings, changed addresses/services, etc.) whenever needed for a manageable hourly rate.

With more than 14 years of experience in graphic and web design, DebManning Design specializes in support services that will make your business excel. Call today to discuss your website or print ideas or visit www.debmanning.com to explore services we offer.

DebManning Design
630-668-0603 www.debmanning.com

Member Chicago Better Business Bureau, Wheaton Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Photoshop Professionals