

Net Results
Helping your business succeed online.
Published by nrichmedia (<http://www.nrichmedia.com>)

Volume 4, Issue 1 – January 2008

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Welcome

Happy New Year! Welcome to 2008. I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and that you're all geared up for a healthy and successful year.

This year sees the beginning of a sort of New Year's resolution of mine, which is actually a result of the survey we did a few months back. For those of you who partook (is that a word?) in the survey, you might remember one of the questions asked how often you'd like to see Net Results published. Well, the people have spoken and the vast majority favoured increasing the frequency of the newsletter to either monthly or bi-monthly. So, in order not to shock the readers' systems (and, admittedly so that I can go a little easy on myself), I've decided to go with the bi-monthly option for now. So that means you'll now be receiving this fine publication six times a year, rather than four. No more waiting an agonizing three months for the next issue. You'll see only two months pass – which will fly by – between editions.

So, now that I've made (and promise to keep!) my resolution, it's time for yours. If you haven't vowed to eat more healthfully, exercise more, or donate more to charity – or even if you have – here's a business-related resolution that probably applies to many of you: It's time to get that new or revised web site up and running. No more putting it off. Sure, there's always something else to do instead, but in this issue, we're going to talk about how to make things easier on yourself and still have a web presence if you currently have none or a better web site if your existing one isn't what you'd like it to be, but just can't seem to find the time to get to it.

Featured Article: The Realistic Web Site

Web sites, as with most marketing material, often get pushed to the bottom of the priority list for many businesses, especially small businesses or sole practitioners. The reasons we tell ourselves for not working on a new site or updating our existing one are numerous: too busy, too expensive, too lazy, writer's block, not enough time to do it just perfectly, and so on. All of these excuses may seem valid, but you have to look at it from the other perspective: Am I losing potential business by not having my web site up (or up-to-date)?

Nowadays it's pretty much expected that every business, regardless of its size, will have its own web site. More and more people all the time search the Internet for a service or product they're interested in purchasing. And if you don't have a web site, those people are not going to find your business, period.

Even if your business does have a web site, if it looks like a dog's breakfast and/or is completely outdated (either in its design and/or its content), people may find the site, but probably will not be overly impressed and likely will keep searching for someone who appears to be more professional.

So, you have to ask yourself, "Can I afford not to have a web site (or update my existing one)?"

All too often I hear people say that they're planning to get their new site up and running soon and two years later, having not done anything on it, are repeating the same mantra. It's true, we're all busy and no one's got time for anything these days (I swear someone lowered the number of hours in the day when we weren't looking!). But, you'll find that if you really want to do something, you'll find a way to get it done, trust me.

Okay, pep talk over. Let's talk about realistic options and steps you can take to actually get your web site done.

1. Set aside some time. Whatever works for you, just book either one chunk of time when you won't be distracted (a week off of work, a long weekend, etc.) when you can get everything done that you need to or schedule a regular weekly time slot to work on your site and stick to that time no matter what, until it's finished. For example, I use every Tuesday morning to work on my marketing (and sometimes administration). When I first thought about taking that time, I was terrified that I'd be taking up some of my valuable "real work" time. But, the truth is, marketing is real work that needs to be done and, for me, if I don't stick to my Tuesday morning routine, it'll just pile up until it's out of control. Perhaps for you, one evening a week (or a week off of work) might work better. Only you know what will work for you. Just plan it and stay with it until you've accomplished what you set out to do.

2. Something – anything – is better than nothing. If you currently have no web site at all, getting a new site up might seem extremely daunting. Just like when you decide to tackle

cleaning out the garage. But if you look at the task in stages, rather than one huge project, it seems much more manageable and you can start to see results – no matter how small they may seem – fairly quickly.

Even if you're at Square One with your web site – i.e., you got nada – take the few minutes required to decide on a domain name (e.g., yourname.com), register that name, and get the hosting for the site set up. If this sounds Greek to you (unless you are Greek), you can even hire someone (including yours truly) to do this for you. Having this out of the way at least gives you a canvas to paint on, so to speak.

The next small step should be to have some sort of “coming soon” and/or contact information single page up under your domain name. This serves the dual purpose of (a) letting visitors to your site see that you exist and know how to contact you and (b) speeds up the process of getting your site indexed by the search engines (Google, etc.), while you work on your “real” web site. And, notice you haven't specified a date when that site will be ready, so nobody will hold you to having it done by then.

This starting-off stage should probably not take more than an hour of your or your web developer's time to set up. And then you'll at least have something so that if you want to get your business cards done, with your new web site and email address on them, you can, knowing those now exist in cyberspace.

3. Prioritize. If it's unrealistic for you to get the full web site that you'd like online fairly soon, perhaps – while still working on getting all of it done (see #1, above) – you can get something up or updated.

Maybe, instead of posting a new 10-page site, for the time being you can really only finish off five pages. If getting the second five is going to hold up the production for a significant amount of time, it probably would make sense to put up the first five and finish the rest off when you can.

Or, if your existing site is badly outdated both in the design and content departments, but you really don't have time to tackle both, which of the two is more in need of being done right now? If getting the re-design process underway isn't going to happen for a while, maybe you should at least fix up the old out-of-date photos and contact information and add in the recent news releases in the meantime? Or, conversely, if you've got months of work to do on the content, but the site's design is turning people away, it might make sense to update the look first, while working on revising the content.

Although it's usually easier to do a full re-vamp in one fell swoop, it just might not be realistic for you to do so in a timely manner. Again, any improvement is better than no improvement. Even when you have “finished” your web site completely, it should always be a work in progress – adding new content and tweaking what's there.

4. Hire quality professionals. You don't have to do everything on your own. Not only on your web site, but also in life in general. My favourite analogy is that, sure, you may be

able to cut your own hair, but are the time and energy that you spend on doing so really worth the uneven bowl cut you end up with? Might you have been better off spending the \$30 to have a professional hair stylist cut your hair and use your own time to do what you do best and get paid for?

There are professionals (I happen to know a couple ;) who can help you out with the writing, design, development, search engine optimization, and marketing of your web site so that you don't need to spend hours learning how to do it all yourself (and spend the money on the software). Naturally you'll need to be involved in the process, but weigh the value of the time you'll be using to determine just how much involvement you'll want to have. Repairing your car on your own (if you have never done so) might (I repeat, might) save you money on mechanic's bills, but how much could you have been earning had you used that same time doing the work you specialize in?

So, to sum up... Yes, of course we'd all like to be able to quickly put together an amazing and effective web site. But, unless you've got a big enough block of time that you can dedicate to working on your site until it's completely done, you need to be realistic. Do, without question, make getting the site done a priority and schedule the time to work on it. And get done what you can in steps and reasonable sized chunks in order to keep the flow moving along. Finally, don't be shy about hiring professionals to ease the burden – of both time and learning – on yourself.

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About nrichmedia
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nrichmedia creates innovative and unique web sites and other multimedia for ethical and socially responsible businesses and organizations. We also offer green web hosting, web site maintenance, CD-ROM production, and more.

nrichmedia was founded by Nathaniel Richman in 2000. Nathaniel graduated from the Vancouver Film School with a Certificate of Recommendation in Multimedia Studies in 1997 and has been working in the web design and new media industry ever since. He previously received a Bachelor of Mathematics degree (Honours Actuarial Science) from the University of Waterloo and worked in the pension consulting industry.

Nathaniel works with other designers and programmers, according to the needs of the project, to provide the client with the most professionally designed web site and other marketing material as possible.

"Nathaniel is amazing!

When I decided to go into full-time private practice, I knew I needed a website. But because I am not very computer-savvy or artistic, I worried that I might not be able to convey what I wanted to a designer.

Nathaniel was able to put my fears to rest by listening to me, acting on what I suggested, and sharing his opinions with me. He made as many changes as I needed with grace and ease, making the whole experience a pleasure for me. I really enjoyed his dry sense of humour as well!

Nathaniel is a brilliant and talented designer, and I feel very grateful to have been able to work with him. I can't recommend him highly enough – thanks, Nathaniel, for making this so much fun for me!"

- Candace Plator, Registered Clinical Counsellor (www.candaceplator.com)

To learn more about nrichmedia's services, view our online portfolio, and read glowing testimonials from many satisfied clients, please visit <http://www.nrichmedia.com>.

Green Web Hosting

nrichmedia is pleased to be offering green web hosting services. Our standard package includes 200MB of disk space (usually more than most small to medium sized businesses require), email and webmail accounts, web statistics, and more.

What makes our web hosting green?

1. Our hosting is shared on powerful, energy efficient servers so the amount of electricity we use is minimized. We maintain our own dedicated environment within these servers and have full control over performance and security.
2. The electricity used by the servers comes from hydropower, which, although not ideal, is one of the more environmentally friendly means of power generation.
3. We've purchased wind power certificates to offset the amount of electricity that we do use. Wind power is, of course, a natural, clean, and abundant energy source with little or no negative impact on the environment.

To sign up for or switch to nrichmedia's green web hosting, please email sales@nrichmedia.com for information on pricing and getting started.

Recent Articles on nrichmedia.com

Check out the Articles section on nrichmedia's web site, at <http://www.nrichmedia.com/articles.htm>. We hope you find the postings to be a valuable resource on environmental issues and social responsibility.

Recent articles include:

[Purposeful Pursuits: Navigational Tips for Managers Charting Their Company's Social Commitments](http://www.nrichmedia.com/article-purposeful_pursuits-102007.htm) (by Paul Klein of Impakt Corporation)
(http://www.nrichmedia.com/article-purposeful_pursuits-102007.htm)

[10 Simple Steps to Green Your Office](http://www.nrichmedia.com/article-green_office-16102007.htm) (co-authored with Melanie Pazdzierski)
(http://www.nrichmedia.com/article-green_office-16102007.htm)

Web Site Design and Promotion Blog

For plenty of tips and tricks on designing, marketing, and promoting your web site, have a look at <http://www.websitedesignandpromotion.com>, a blog co-authored by nrichmedia and Juliet Austin. Feel free to place a comment on any of the posts there. It's an easy way to get a link to your site, which can increase your exposure and help your site's search engine rankings.

Charitable Causes

nrichmedia donates 5% of proceeds on all projects of \$500 and above to charitable organizations. We are pleased to have supported and continue to support several worthy causes. To see a list of the organizations we support, please visit <http://www.nrichmedia.com/causes.htm>.

Archives

To view previous editions of Net Results, visit <http://www.nrichmedia.com/archives.htm>.

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