

Chapter 4 - The Internet and Telecommunications

Building Your Web Site

It is becoming increasingly popular to have your own WWW home site because clients and potential clients have access to it from anywhere in the world at anytime. If you build a web page, will anyone visit it? Maybe. Internet users will access your web page if it provides them value and meets their continuing needs. For example, if you have hypertext links to all of the legal caselaw and statute databases throughout the world, one can be assured that a great number of people will visit your site. If you are an authority on the impact of the 1st amendment on the Internet and provide updated materials on the subject, then a more select group will visit your site.

Your web site is a reflection of your firm and yourself. Consider it a firm brochure or other promotional literature. It reflects what clients, potential clients and other lawyers will think about your firm. Its reflection is similar to that when a client visits your office. If you are going to have a presence on the web invest the necessary money and involvement in creating the web site to reflect your firm image. Remember, people visiting your site will come away with an important first impression of your firm - make it count.

To construct a web site, you need:

1. Domain address;
2. Internet service provider (ISP);
3. Web server; and
4. Web site pages.

1. *Domain Address.* A domain address is the address on the web that identifies your web site. The address www.venerable.com is the WWW address for the Venerable Law Firm. You can obtain your own domain name or you can get one through an ISP. There is an initial fee of approximately \$15 and an annual recurring fee of approximately \$15 to maintain your domain name. Make a list of several names in case one is already taken. You can either get the name yourself through a service like Register4Less (<http://register4less.com/>) or you can have an ISP get the name for you.

Your own domain name also provides a permanent e-mail address for you. Even if you move to a different ISP, the domain name is yours and you do not have to change the address for

people sending you e-mail or listserv mailings. It also provides a permanent location for your law firm or other commercial activities.

2. *Internet Service Provider.* See the prior section entitled *Considerations for Choosing an ISP.*

3. *Web Server.* The web server is generally provided by your ISP host and is the location where your web site and pages will reside. Most ISP's generally provide a full range of web hosting services.

4. *Web Site Pages.* A WWW site is the entryway for existing and potential clients and others into your firm. The uniqueness of a web site and www pages lies in their multimedia graphical format and the ability to use hypertext linking in the design. HTML, or HyperText Markup Language, is the standard programming language used to construct web sites. This enables software such as Internet Explorer to view your constructed site. Hypertext WWW pages are interactive, automatically taking you to the exact information you want. This information can be in any format or be part of other applications.

Constructing Web Pages. The HTML programming language is "free" and does not require specific software to purchase before constructing a home page. However, there are a variety of software packages for sale and some are available for free, which makes it easier to construct your web pages.

Web pages are composed of plain ASCII text so a simple text editor will enable one to compose a web page. A web page is generally composed of a head and body element. The head element generally contains the title information, author and other information, which enables indexers and search engines to locate the page. If composing a page, remember that the head element is important for other users to locate your web page. Use common reflective terms for your page that are generally used in the industry. If you were designing a page for your law firm, it should contain information reflective of the type of law that you practice and not just your law firm's name.

The body element generally contains the textual body of the page. It can contain a number of formatting options and most importantly, embedded images or hyperlinks to other documents or web sites. Tags tell the browser the part of the web page that has been accessed. All tags are

enclosed in angle brackets (<>). There are three basic styles used in web documents:

- Logical style elements, which break the document into paragraphs, quotes and so on.
- Physical style elements enable the coder to use bold, underline, italic and other physical styles in your document.
- Content style elements provide the capability to enrich your web document by linking your document to graphics, lists, and other items.

The following sites on HTML provides important beginning information if you decide to program your own site.

- W3Schools (<http://www.w3schools.com/html/default.asp>)
- HTML Goodies (<http://www.htmlgoodies.com/primers/html/>)
- HTML Code Tutorial (<http://www.htmlcodetutorial.com/>)

An HTML editor works like a word processor, but provides the additional feature of converting the document into an HTML document ready for WWW publication. See a list of HTML products under the Web Authoring Software section.