

Whether you have 5 members or 800 members, communication is vital to your organization's success.

Today we are going to run you through a crash course on the who, what, where, when, and why's of effective website design and maintenance.

The first thing you need is the who. Who is going to be responsible for obtaining the information? Who is going to design the site? And MOST importantly who is going to maintain it? Not just this year, but in future years? Some organizations have rewritten their constitution and bylaws to include a web chair as an officer, some make it a committee person, and some require an already established officer to take on the responsibility.

A website is a commitment. It often serves as your first impression to prospective members. Current members tend to utilize their organization's website to find out the latest information on events, scholarships, service opportunities, etc., so maintenance is a MUST. We do not tell you this to deter you from using a website as a means of communication, more so as a cautionary note for your "who".

OK, now you have the who. Next, you need the what. Before you can figure out what kind of site you need, you need to figure out what kinds of information you are going to offer on your site.

The most important things that should be on EVERY Organization site include:

- Chapter/Organization and College Names
- A link to your college
- A link to International and Regional websites (For Phi Theta Kappans)
- Contact information

The rest is really up to you; however, we suggest adding things like:

- A calendar of events
- Photos
- Newsletters
- Minutes and
- Scholarships

Check out other Organizations Websites for ideas. They are your best resource. We have included several pages of links for you to research when you get back home. Now, not all of these sites practice good design, but if you are looking for what KINDS of things to add, they are a great resource.

Before we move on, we want to highlight a few things regarding what you are putting on your site. Remember to keep the information concise. Think about sites you have visited. What do you like/dislike? Keep things professional. You can add fun and flavor, but not every one finds humor in the same things you do.

Text. Your font should be easy to read and is generally around 12 points in size, except for headings and subheadings. Don't use underlines except under links. People automatically assume underlined text is a link. Only use 1 or two different font types.

Graphics. Graphics get their own slide because they are the one thing web designers tend to overuse. On that note, flashing and moving objects are great, but can get annoying very quickly use them sparingly. Also try to optimize your graphic for web use to cut down on the time it takes visitors to your site to upload your pictures. If you want to utilize a web album, try to find another site that will host your pictures for free. My favorite is myphotoalbum.com. This frees up space on your server and is very easy to use for you and your members.

Colors. Don't make your sight glaringly hard on the eyes. Try playing with darker or lighter shades of colors, NOT brighter. Also only, use 3 to 4 colors max. Any more gets very distracting.

White space, blue space, grey space, etc. Leave some space. Your website is not a collage. Don't try to fill every nook and cranny with something.

Lastly, use consistency. If you use 12 point Ariel font in blue shade #000033 for most of your text then do it for all of it. Keep your Navigation either the same or similar on every page. You get the idea.

A Website Evaluation Rubric has been included with your handouts to provide you with yet another resource to determine the usability and effectiveness of your website. Selecting a one on the hand out gives your site 1 point in that area, a two would give 2 points, etc.

Now for the where. This is a biggy. Unfortunately, I can't give you the answer to this question. BUT we can give you a list of really cool places to check out and see if they fit your needs and/or wants. Each Organization will have a different level of ability when it comes to designing a site. We have included sites that are virtually "WYSIWYG" to some hosts that actually require some extensive programming language knowledge. As an Organization, you will need to determine what you think will work best for you. I will say that basic html coding is pretty easy to pick up and use.

General Sites

- Google Sites - <http://sites.google.com/>
- Geocities - <http://www.geocities.com>
- Angelfire - <http://www.angelfire.com> – need to have a little more advanced knowledge of html or website development
- Multiply – <http://www.multiply.com> – cross between myspace and a website
- Webs – <http://www.webs.com> – WYSIWYG Site
- GoDaddy - https://www.godaddy.com/gdshop/hosting/shared.asp?app_hdr=&ci=5652 – Paid Hosting link

Smaller Organizations

- Blogger – <http://www.blogger.com> – Better for smaller groups
- Yahoo Groups - <http://groups.yahoo.com/start> - better for smaller organizations

Social Networks

- Bebo - <http://www.bebo.com> – Myspace like
- Myspace – <http://www.myspace.com>
- Facebook – <http://www.facebook.com>

Ok, we aren't giving you this information and sending you off into the great world of cyberspace alone. We just recognize that every organization's website needs are going to be a little different. So before you leave make sure you grab one of our business cards and contact us when you are ready to start building. We will help you decide the best "Where" for your organization.

So for the "When." When and Why tend to go hand in hand. The sooner the better. Start small and work your way up to grand. That is how we started. By building a website you can cut Organization costs almost immediately. Think of

the money you currently spend in printing, copies, and mailings. Another reason to get a site up is the ability to reach a broader audience, not only within your organization, but within the Regional and International spectrum.

You work hard each year at being a successful Organization. Share this with others so that other organizations can learn what events have or have not worked for you.