WEBSITE PLATFORMS AND DOMAIN NAME SELECTION

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Speaker: Don Hill

WHAT KIND OF WEBSITE DO YOU NEED?

Custom coded?

Content Management System (CMS)?

Custom Coding

- Hand-coded sites are built from scratch and fully customizable to specifications.
- Programming
- Graphic design
- Database development
- Stylesheet control (CSS)

Custom Coding Pros

- You can work with a coder and graphic artist to truly create an original site that isn't "cookie cutter" and "run of the mill."

- Hosting tends to be cheaper depending on how dynamic (database driven) the site is.

Custom Coding Cons

- You need a good coder who is reliable and flexible if you have high-maintenance tastes.

- Can be much more expensive than other options because the site is built from scratch. But, this depends on whom you hire.

- While hosting is cheaper, it can run up much higher with added necessities such as security certificates, database needs, etc.

- While your son, niece, cousin, etc. may be able to build a simple site for you, if they aren't a trained and experienced webmaster, you will likely get what you paid for.

Content Management System (CMS)

- A content management system is software that keeps track of every piece of content on your Website; much like your local public library keeps track of books and stores them.

- Content can be simple text, photos, music, video, documents, or just about anything you can think of.

- A major advantage of using a CMS is that it requires little technical skill or knowledge to manage. Since the CMS manages all your content, you don't have to.

CMS Pros

- Quick learning curve,
- Easy to use, pre-built templates,
- Shopping carts usually pre-configured,
- Security usually addressed,
- Can often add "widgets" or "modules" to further enhance the site's capabilities such as calendars, photo display tools, e-marketing blast tools, contact forms, and more.

CMS Cons

- Lack of true and total customization,
- Coding lends itself to cyber-attacks so the system may need to be upgraded often (some CMS's will do this automatically while others require you to do it),
- Templates may not be to your liking,
- Can be more expensive option for hosting and/or services

Top 3 CMS for Photographers

- www.zenfolio.com
- Fees:
  - 2 Week Free Trial
  - $25/year for Basic package
  - $50/year for Unlimited Package
  - $100/year for Premium package
  - $250/year for Premium Business package

Top 3 CMS for Photographers

- www.smugmug.com

SmugMug

- Fees:
  - 2 Week Free Trial
  - $40/year for Basic package
  - $60/year for Power package
  - $150/year for Pro package

Top 3 CMS for Photographers

- www.photoshelter.com
- Fees:
  - $1 for 2 Week Trial
  - $9.99/month for Basic package
  - $29.99/month for Standard package
  - $49.99/month for Pro package

CMS Comparison

Product	SmugMug	Zenfolio	Photoshelter
Sell Photos to make a profit?	Yes, you keep 85% of the Profit above SmugMug's minimum prices	Yes - You keep 88% to 96% of the profit depending on product type (prints compared to digital downloads)	Yes, you keep 90-93% of the profit
Customizable Galleries?	Yes, fully customizable galleries from many styles pre-made, and the ability to import your own CSS style sheets and change just about anything you want.	Somewhat customizable, including logo, about me page, photographer photo, and 7 different styles of homepage. Can modify text colors and styles. Cannot arrange layouts or modify any CSS.	Yes, nine great looking template layouts, all with a very professional look and feel. Or, completely customize the layout of both the homepage and gallery pages with your own CSS.
Replace Site logo with your own?	Yes, including custom headers and footers.	Yes, you can replace the name and basic info, as well as add your logo in various places. Cannot fully modify header or footer.	Yes, add your own logo, and customize header and footer.
SEO Features	Some SEO features, you can modify page title and footer info if you know how.	Zenfolio has good assistance with SEO on your site. For your homepage, and each gallery, you can specify the title and description, as well as other SEO based fields throughout the site.	Yes, great SEO features show you exactly where and what to do to rank well in search engines. Includes a great guide on how to optimize your account for SEO (photographers SEO cookbook), plus an SEO tool to check your site against known benchmarks and provide recommendations.
Social features	Yes, very good social features. Easy integration with Facebook, twitter, and many other social bookmarking sites like reddit and digg. Users can comment on your photos, and send links to friends. RSS feeds available. Create cool custom badges and slideshows for sharing.	Easy export to Facebook and twitter on every photo or gallery! RSS feeds and easy ways to share links with friends.	Yes, the best array of features PSR has ever seen! Easily publish your photos on 280+ social networking and bookmarking sites of your choice. RSS feeds and embedded slideshows, as well as an embeddable search box for external sites that is really cool.
Disk Space, Max Size of Photo Upload	Unlimited Storage and bandwidth. Photo size up to 24 megabytes.	Unlimited Storage and Bandwidth with unlimited and premium plans. 12 MB photo upload limit except with premium, 24 MB limit.	Storage and bandwidth depend on account type, from 10-100 Gig storage and 5-50 Gig bandwidth a month.

Product	SmugMug	Zenfolio	Photoshelter
File Types	JPEG, GIF, PNG (RAW, TIFF, PSD with SmugVault at extra cost)	JPEG, TIFF, PNG, GIF	Any photo file type, including RAW and PSD, is allowable
Sell Photo Books and other gifts?	Yes, wide selection. Two photo fulfillment labs to choose from.	Yes, wide Selection.	Yes, wide Selection.
Add Videos?	Yes, up to 10 minutes in HD quality (up to 512 megabytes max size). 10 minutes of DVD for Power users, no HD. Basic users get no video.	No	No
Sell Digital Downloads?	Yes, multiple sizes with different license terms available.	Yes, multiple sizes with different license terms available.	Yes, multiple sizes with different license terms available.
Customize Domain Name?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Watermarks and copyright protection	Yes, but you must supply a PNG watermark before uploading photos to a gallery. Can only watermark pictures as you upload, cannot change or add them after the fact. Right click protect your photos to prevent visitors from saving a copy.	Yes, very nice watermark manager with 4 defaults to choose from, or create your own. Can apply to photos instantly, or easily remove them. Right click protect your photos to prevent visitors from saving a copy.	Yes, very nice watermark manager with ability to add text or photo watermarks. Right click protect your photos to prevent visitors from saving a copy.
Geotagging capabilities	Automatically accesses Geotag info, or manually geotag your photos to see them on a map.	None	None
Keywords and Search	Add keywords to any photos. Search box only searches photos on your site so you can sell more. Smart galleries can automatically upload keyword tagged photos to galleries.	Yes, keyword tags your photos. Search can be allowed to be publicly searchable. You can limit certain specific items unsearchable. Integrates with Google Analytics.	Yes, keyword tags your photos and search from your homepage, gallery pages, or even an external site of your choice.
Privacy	Can password protect galleries or just hide them so you need the link in order to view.	Can password protect galleries.	Can password protect galleries or hide them.
4x6 | 8x10 | Postcard Wholesale Prices	4x6 - $.19 to $.38 based on finish. Color correction included free. 8x10 - $1.99+ Postcard - $12.95 per 20	4x6 - $.19 for value prints (no color correction), .29 for normal prints 8x10 - $1.99+ Postcard - $5.40 per 12	4x6 - $.19 for value prints (no color correction), .29 for normal prints 8x10 - $1.99+ Postcard - $5.40 per 12
Cost (per year)	$149.95/yearly Pro Account	$50 (Unlimited Storage, but cannot sell pictures) $100 Premium (Sell Pictures no storage limit)	$9.99/mo. Basic (10G storage, 5G bandwidth, can sell photos for an extra $50 one-time fee) $29.99/mo. Standard (35G storage, 10G bandwidth, free to sell photos) $49.99/mo. Professional (100G storage, 50G bandwidth, free to sell photos)

Other Content Management Systems (open source = free)

- Drupal
  - used to build everything from personal blogs to enterprise applications. Thousands of add-on modules and designs let you build any site you can imagine. Drupal is free, flexible, robust and constantly being improved by hundreds of thousands of passionate people from all over the world.
- Joomla!
  - is an award-winning content management system (CMS), which enables you to build Web sites and powerful online applications. Many aspects, including its ease-of-use and extensibility, have made Joomla the most popular Web site software available. Best of all, Joomla is an open source solution that is freely available to everyone.
- WordPress
  - started as just a blogging system, but has evolved to be used as full content management system and so much more through the thousands of plugins, widgets, and themes, WordPress is limited only by your imagination.

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ABOUT DOMAIN NAMES

- Domain Name Services (DNS) & Companies
- Domain Name Considerations

Domain Name Services

- Choosing a domain name for a new project can be a little daunting.

- All the good names are gone. Once you find something acceptable, you'll have to be sure you can live with it for a long time. And, what about the implications for SEO?

- Word of mouth is becoming more and more important on the web.

DNS Companies

- There are numerous domain name services available. The differences between them tend to be customer service, interface ease-of-use, price plans, and reputation.
- My experience is with:
  - GoDaddy.com
  - NetworkSolutions.com
  - Dotster.com
  - Register.com

*I've not had problems with any of them. My favorite is Dotster but GoDaddy has given me **great customer service** when I called.*

Choosing a Domain Name

When setting up your website one of the most important aspects will be to choose a domain name. It's that domain name that will stick with you for the lifetime of your site. You can change the template, change the purpose of the site, fire a designer, hire a designer, but you just cannot change that domain name (unless you scrap it and do a redirect). Finding an available domain name that you like and that is appropriate for the purpose of your site is complicated.

Here are a few things to think about when choosing a domain name:

6 Important Considerations in Choosing a Good Domain Name. *Source: www.wisdump.com/webmastering/6-important-considerations-in-choosing-a-good-domain-name*

1. Match the domain name to actual name of your site

- One of the easiest and best alternatives is to get a domain name that matches the actual name of your site. It's a duh statement but so many people forget to match the site.
- You will increase your branding as well as make it easy for visitors to remember the name of your site.
- The worst thing that can happen is if people fall head over heels for your site but cannot find it again simply because the domain name is not the same as the name of your site.
- For example if you have a bakery site, don't call it StubbornNelly.com. No one will have a clue what your theme is. Call it, TastyPastry.com, or even Anne Cookies around the corner.com.

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2. Keep it short – and Keep it Simple Stupid (KISS)

- Keeping the domain name short is a challenge if you are looking for a .com domain as all three and four letter words are already taken. Yep, and all standard English words are gone too (designer.com, awesome.com).

- Coming up with a name that is short will be easier to remember and pass along by word of mouth. But remember, a domain name should however not be kept short just for the sake of keeping it short.

- Do not use acronyms as a url if they look bad as an acronym. Think of all those failed websites because people did not see different words as one word. Like don't come up Patterns, Octagons and Other Pics and give it POOP.com. That's a failed domain name.

- Some great short named domains:
  - IBM.com (why call it international business machines)
  - digg.com (i dig you, you dig me)
  - Match.com (find a matching partner)

6 Important Considerations in Choosing a Good Domain Name. *Source: www.wisdump.com/webmastering/6-important-considerations-in-choosing-a-good-domain-name*

3. Use keywords

- Optimizing your domain name for search engines is a big help. In using one or two of your single most important keywords you will have better chances of getting a higher rank on the search results, thus increasing traffic.

- This will not be easy, as most "natural" names already are taken. Combine an important keyword then with something secondary.

- These sites came up with great names:
  - GraphicDesignBlog.com
  - TutorialMagazine.com

6 Important Considerations in Choosing a Good Domain Name. *Source: www.wisdump.com/webmastering/6-important-considerations-in-choosing-a-good-domain-name*

4. Describe your site

- Your domain name is an excellent way of describing what your site is all about. Say for example that you manage a site about fishing.

- Your domain name should in some way describe that fishing is exactly what your visitors will find on the site. Again, fishing is a major keyword of your site, so exploit it with a well picked domain name.

6 Important Considerations in Choosing a Good Domain Name. *Source: www.wisdump.com/webmastering/6-important-considerations-in-choosing-a-good-domain-name*

5. Avoid confusion

- In general, domain names are not expensive.
- Register domains with misspellings of your original domain if you want to make sure you catch most type in domain traffic. Redirect those misspelled domains to the main website.
- This is a great for sites that use hard to spell words or need to protect their brand identity.
- Examples:
  - Google.com
  - Googel.com
  - Gogle.com

6 Important Considerations in Choosing a Good Domain Name. *Source: www.wisdump.com/webmastering/6-important-considerations-in-choosing-a-good-domain-name*

6. Consider alternative domain extensions

- If it is impossible to find a good domain name with the prefix .com you might want to consider using an alternative domain extension.

- Many countries have opened up their country code top level domain for international registration. This is perhaps your chance to create the perfect domain hack.

- Examples:
  - Del.icio.us
  - Ma.tt
  - Designm.ag

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Domain Name Selection (*in summary*)

- Picking a domain name will take time, energy and some creativity from your side but it's worth it in the end.
- The last tip is to **checkout recently expired domain names at snapnames.com** – many names will be awful or cost a fortune, but once in a while you will be able find a real gem at a reasonable fee.

Good luck on finding the domain of your dreams!

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Questions?

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