national healthy marriage resource center

Marketing Your Healthy Marriages and Relationships Program on the Web

Having an inviting and user-friendly web site is an invaluable piece of marketing your program successfully.

Web sites serve as an invaluable component to the marketing strategy of any healthy marriage and relationship education program. You not only need to know how to develop your web site, but you also need be able to promote it in on-line, as well as in off-line settings. In addition to a web site, you can also utilize other on-line resources such as social networking sites to bring about awareness of your program and the services you provide.

> When selecting a name put in a few search engines (such as Google.com) to see what other services, programs, books, etc. have the same (or similar) name.

This tip sheet provides some basics for setting up and marketing a website for your healthy marriage program. The services and names used in this tip sheet are just examples and are not endorsed by the NHMRC or its funders.

Developing Your Web site

1) **Find a host.** There are numerous hosts to choose from to support your web page(s). GoDaddy.com is one of the most popular because it is relatively cheap and easy to use. Other popular hosts include: hostmysite.com, aplus.net, and hostgator.com.

2) **Find a name.** After selecting a host you will begin to search for site names by entering your preferred name into the field to check for availability. If your first choice is not available, you

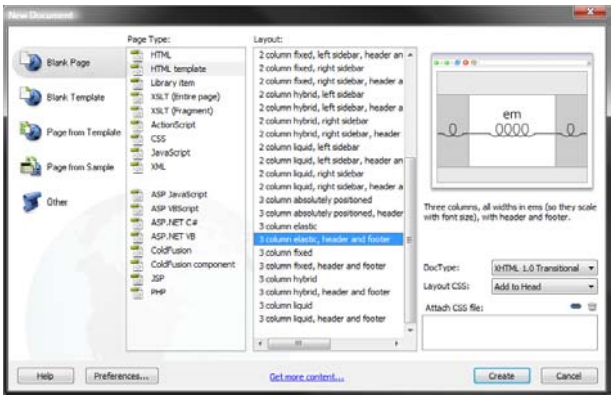
will have to continue your search until you find an alternative name that is appropriate and available. Try to keep it simple and concise so that people will remember it easily.

When selecting a name put in a few search engines (such as Google.com) to see what other services, programs, books, etc. have the same (or similar) name. You want to be sure that a cause or program that is incongruent with yours doesn't have a similar name. For example, if you operate a relationship education program targeted to high school girls and want to call it "Just For Girls" make sure there aren't any sites with that name that could lead your audience to an unfavorable site.

You will also need to determine how to end your site name. Possible endings include: .com, .biz, .org, or .net. Because web addresses ending in

".com" and ".org" are the most popular, they are also the most recommended. Originally, ".org" sites were intended for not-for-profit sites, but now are available to anyone. If you want to prevent another organization or company from using your web address with a different ending, you should purchase multiple endings (.com, .org, .net, etc.). Once you have selected a site name you will have to purchase the domain name and the hosting service. This cost varies by host site. For example, through GoDaddy.com, one year of a ".com" site service costs $9.99. Some hosts charge more to register a ".org" site. Subscriptions must be continued after a year to keep the web address. In addition to purchasing the domain name, you must also pay a monthly hosting fee. Host costs and features also vary by provider. Below are the current rates/options as of Fall 2009 for GoDaddy.com.

3) Build your website. In order to begin building your website content you will select an editor. In selecting web editor software What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG). More expensive WYSIWYGs such as Dreamweaver and Expression Web are also more in depth, but there are also some lower cost and easy to use options available such as Coffee Cup and WordPress. There are numerous benefits of using a WYSIWYG editor. Most have built in templates that allow you to easily add the information you want displayed, no HTML knowledge is necessary and you can manipulate and view your layout, content, etc. in a way that is very similar to the end product.



When writing content for your site, remember to structure it in a way that appeals to your audience. Be concise, eliminate clichés and jargon. Since most internet users scan multiple sites for the information they're looking for, make phrases simple and to-the-point. Less is more! Embed links to direct the audience to more specific information. Use a word or two within the text as your link instead of saying "click here". When deciding which words to link, keep in mind which words are likely used in searches and that clearly direct your audience to what they are seeking. Grab the audience's attention by incorporating charts, videos, examples, analogies and graphics.

4) Upload your website. The host

When writing content for your site, remember to structure it in a way that appeals to your audience. Be concise, eliminate clichés and jargon. Since most internet users scan multiple sites for the information they're looking for, make phrases simple and to-the-point. Less is more!

of your website should have an FTP (file transfer protocol) site that enables you to upload the pages you have created to your website. Once your site has been uploaded, you are now ready to promote it. Be sure to make regular updates to keep your pages looking fresh and up-to-date.

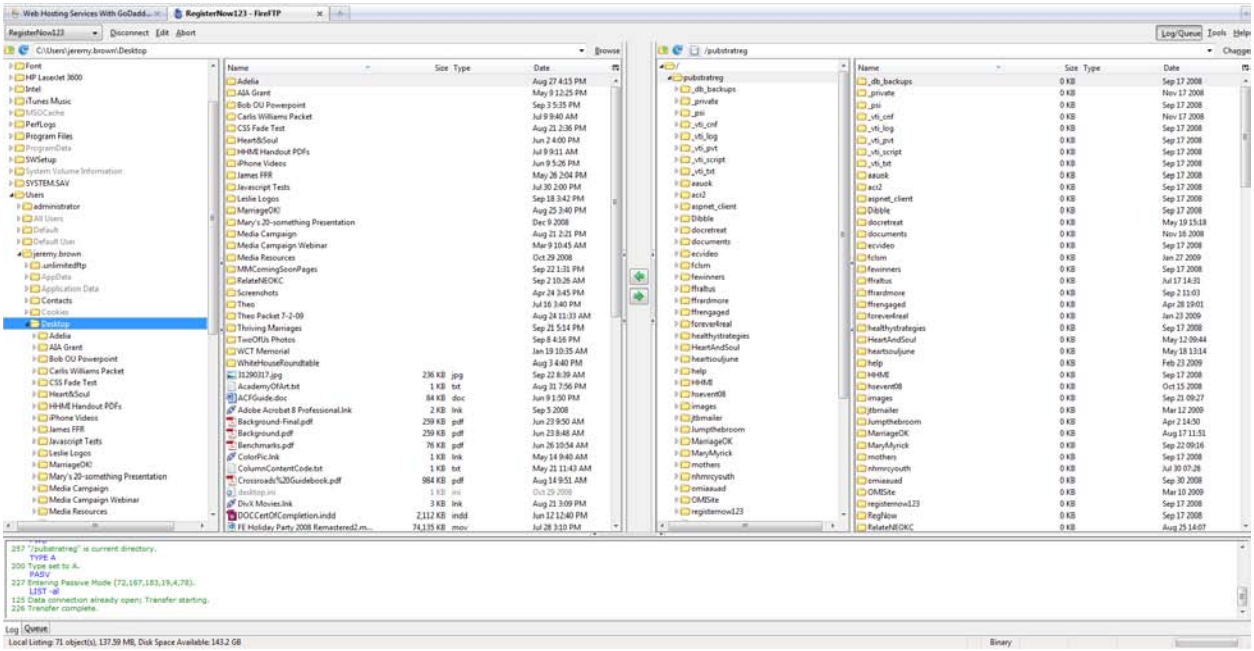
Marketing Your Web site On-line

1) **Use appropriate search words and phrases in the content of your site.** When developing your site, keep in mind that the content of your pages should include words that your target audience will be using in search engines (i.e. marriage, relationship, classes, education). This will ensure that your site is easily accessible.

2) **Have similar organizations link to your site.** You may want to reciprocate this favor through a link exchange, but be scrupulous about which sites you provide a link to. The more sites that provide a link to yours, the higher your "rating" on search engines like Google. When you search for something, usually the first few websites that appear on the list have the highest ranking. You can think of it as a popularity contest of sorts for your web site. Your site's ranking will directly impact its visibility and how quickly it is found in searches.

3) **Promote your web site online.** This can be done through networking sites, blogs, discussion forums, etc.

Utilizing Social Networking Sites: To advertise or increase interest in your web site, consider using online services, like *MySpace*, *Facebook* or *Twitter*. You can easily create a *MySpace* page that can be accessed by anyone who searches *MySpace* by name or a related topic (such as relationships, marriage, communication skills, etc.). You can request to "add to friends" any person or organization with a *MySpace* account



When developing your site, keep in mind that the content of your pages should include words that your target audience will be using in search engines (i.e. marriage, relationship, classes, education). This will ensure that your site is easily accessible.

to raise awareness and interest in your page. Over time, your network of "friends" will grow as more people access your page through either the search function or mutual friends' pages. Your program's web site link should be very noticeable so visitors can review it immediately. These networking sites serve as an added outlet to get your program noticed.

Don't forget to include your web site in all email communication, preferably in your email signature. Ensure that all staff members are doing this as well.

Marketing Your Web site Off-line

1) **Provide a link in all appropriate off-line places.** Add your web site URL to all organization letterheads, business cards, newsletters, etc. Marketing materials available to the public such as t-shirts, posters, and pens should also include the URL in visible print.

2) **Promote your web site off-line.** If your organization sends out hardcopy newsletters, be sure to announce when the site is launched, as well as major updates to the content.

3) **Educate your staff.** Make sure staff are aware of what information can be found on the site and where to locate it. This way they can confidently share any necessary information with the public when answering phone calls or discussing the program with friends, family and colleagues.

Marketing Your Web site to Men

A great way to appeal to men is to place an emphasis on problem-solving tools and successful outcomes. For instance, "solve problems and create solutions" and "see results" could be integrated into the content on your site to illustrate these concepts. Avoid using words about sharing feelings, couple time, and talking more. Rather, compare a marriage education program to an automotive "tune-up," or going to the gym for a workout, to indicate the *preventive* nature of the program. Finally, emphasize the importance of fathers and the association between a strong marriage and a good father. It might be a good idea to also include pictures of men on your site.

It is crucial for any organization to have on-line representation. This is especially true if you are targeting young adults or youth who seek most of their information through the internet. Creating a web site that is easily accessible through search engines and promoting it through social networking sites, will reach the public in a way that may be impossible otherwise. Marketing your site both on-line and off-line will ensure that your program is visible.

The National Healthy Marriage Resource Center would like to thank Kate Harrell and Sarah Byington of the Resource Center for their contributions to this tip sheet. This is a product of the NHMRC, led by co-directors Mary Myrick, APR and Jeanette Hercik, PhD, and project manager, Patrick Patterson, MSW, MPH.

Additional Resources:

http://webdesign.about.com/od/webhosting/a/aa092198.htm

http://www.coyotecommunications.com/webdevo/webmrkt.shtml