

Our Web Site Owner's Manual

Our decisions •
Our permanent record •



<http://>

Our Web Site

start here

Indispensable guide to the nuts and bolts
of a successful Web site for the
non-technical Webmaster

By Susan Crawford

Our Web Site Owner's Manual

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FIND LATEST ONLINE.

If the Internet is a “sickness,” then I (happily) never get beyond the contagious stage. I have an explorer’s curiosity to discover what’s new in this ever-changing organism. It is creatively unpredictable, unequivocally open, and unexpectedly relational.

The Internet can, also, be mercurial so you can continue to find the latest Webmaster developments in meaningful nuggets online at www.WebStrategiesThatClick.com (until the next Manual revision). Look for new practical tips, information about our next annual “That Was Easy” Web camp, order gear, check our workshop schedule, or share your feedback on our blog (also featuring discussions with guest bloggers).

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ALL THAT BEING SAID.

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Special Acknowledgements

To my clients -- I humbly bow to you for what you have taught me. Without you this book would not be possible.

To Tink, Mo, and Snitch -- who repeatedly pull me out of bouts of extended geekiness with laughter and easy forgiveness.

To Wile E and Happy -- who repeatedly pull me into joyful bouts of extended geekiness and regal with me.

To my editor, designer, and posse of reviewers -- for keeping me strong in purpose with their clarity of expression.



Experiences are passed along and reinforced
by the strength of the story you tell.”

-- Jerry Bader, MRPWebMedia



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How To Use This Manual

“Experience is generally something you get just after you need it.” --Anonymous

Printed on heavy, eraser-resistant paper, **THIS MANUAL IS MEANT TO BE WRITTEN IN!** Where else are you tracking and prioritizing your site’s workload? Where is the criteria you’ll use to evaluate a potential Web vendor? (Find a handy worksheet here, page 38). How are you staying in touch with the expectations your visitors are bringing to your site? How are you corralling all the information and decisions essential to managing your site? Help is in your hands. Think of this Manual as a Webmaster playbook -- a journal of sorts except this book, far from being blank, is loaded with help along every step. Designed as a long-term tool, some sections will be immediately useful to you while some topics, will mean more as your site/network/profile matures.

With a wide range of strategies, matching best practices and reusable templates, this Manual is an indispensable tool for both novice and seasoned Webmasters alike. No technical language or steep learning curves required.

This manual is for the:

- Small business owner or office manager turned Webmaster
- Artisan or consultant turned Webmaster
- Anyone turned Webmaster

This manual presents more than a dozen Web/Internet topics in three simple steps:

- Section first page = poses a subject with strategic questions and space to record answers
- Section second page = offers simple best practices on that subject, and
- Section third page = suggested worksheet, template, example, and/or checklist

Our Web Team

Team building brings together our stakeholders, management and staff/members to think about what is essential for our organization online. This allows the formation of a cohesive support group with a common vision for the long term. It allows each member to share their talents and contribute toward any problem solving. It takes advantage of collective strengths in understanding media and technology.

- Who should be invited to help this team building? _____
- What features or interactivity will be/is on our site? _____
- What talents/skills are needed to offer these things? _____
- What talents need to be represented on our team (database, Web writing, interface design, HTML)? _____

- What talents are not represented on our team? _____
- What talents/skills will be provided outside our team? _____
- What talents/skills need to be in our pool of candidates? _____
- How do we organize everyone as a team? _____
- Does everyone have the resources to succeed? _____
- How can we understand our different work styles? _____
- Who else needs to be invited to future team building? _____



Webmaster: _____

Design Lead: _____ contact: _____

Technology Lead: _____ contact: _____

Editor: _____ contact: _____

Advisor: _____ contact: _____

Our Vendors (cont'd)

Best Practices

- Habit #2 of Seven Habits of Highly Effective People says “begin with the end in mind.” The life span of any vendor relationship should be based on daily performance of a legitimate need. As a proactive manager, you also don’t want an ongoing expense without an end in sight. So, ask yourself now “When can we cut loose this vendor?”.
- You may want to present a complex project to several vendors at once and ask for a proposal. In this RFP (Request For Proposal) process, you give an overview of who you are and what you’re trying to achieve. With several responses, you can compare capabilities, expertise, and costs from a more informed perspective.
- Do not relinquish your site’s strategy to an outside vendor. Remain an engaged project manager with an active voice. Any vendor should work in partnership with you to recommend appropriate technology/services.
- If you have a firm deadline, a style guide or other requirements, clearly write compliance with these into any contract. (If you don’t have a style guide, include details such as all PhotoShop files must be PC-compatible and unflattened/layered at 300dpi; all video will be delivered in MPG; no photographs larger than 500k, etc.)
- To protect your intellectual property, your contract should describe all creations as work-for-hire with your organization retaining full rights. They are also responsible for obtaining appropriate rights for any photos or works-of-art they bring to the project (“for any use” and “into perpetuity”).
- Do not pay a full contract amount in advance but agree on a reasonable deposit (this is always negotiable) then make incremental payments against major work delivered and approved.
- Many of today’s “Web solutions” firms evolved as media/ad/marketing/print agency spin-offs. Consequently, you can expect a single-source firm may have a particular Web strength or two but, you shouldn’t expect them to deliver expertise across all Web disciplines (interactivity, optimization, tracking, etc.).
- Review all work delivered to ensure each piece meets your stated specifications (have your vendor archive all graphics, masters and native files to CD or DVD, too). There is a time for compromise, it’s called “later”.

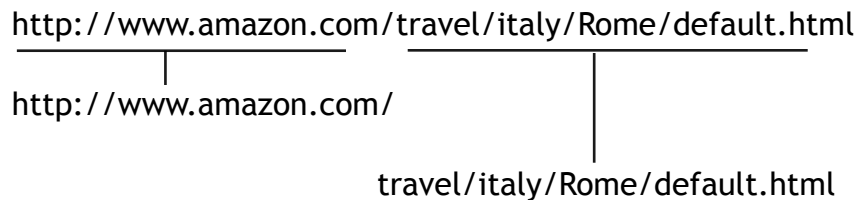
Appendix E: How to Read a Web URL

Every Web site has a unique URL address (a text name and unique number equivalent). The URL contains information about the method of access, the server to be accessed and the path of any file to be accessed. The chart below dissects an example Web address (and helps answer, “Does that need to be in caps?”):

1. What parts of a Web address are case-sensitive?

Here is our example:

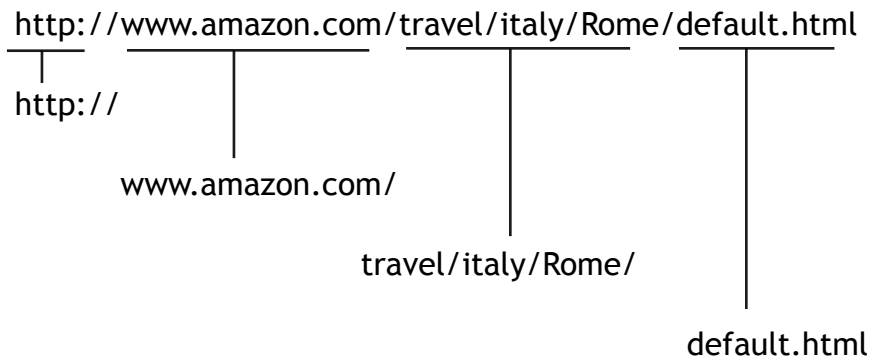
- NOT case sensitive
- VERY case sensitive



2. What are the parts/terms of a Web address/URL?

There are 4 parts. Using our example again:

- 1) protocol
- 2) machine address
- 3) path
- 4) file name



3. You may also hear the term “top-level domain” (this means .com, or .org, or .gov, etc.) and “second-level domain” (this is anything between www. and .com; in our example the “second-level domain” is the word “amazon.”)

"Oh, wow. I have several clients who will get real excited about this [owner's manual]." -- graphic designer

"You're tempted to work in this Manual in pencil, but the great strategies will make you switch to pen!" -- director of marketing

This Manual is a Webmaster tool that can immediately start working for you. It explains what a Webmaster does (versus a Web producer or a Web designer), and the best practices across fourteen Webmaster responsibilities. It is a record of what major strategies are in place, what Web services have been contracted, and all account log-ins. Armed with this manual, anyone can confidently take command of a Web site.

No technical language or steep learning curves.

Need a worksheet and tips for:

- building a new Web team?
- evaluating and selecting a new Web vendor?

This manual is for the:

- small business owner turned Webmaster
- office manager turned Webmaster
- anyone turned Webmaster

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"The book is a dynamo! I really like how it organizes Web decisions and vendor details I'm not good at tracking." -- public relations director



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