1: Goal of Your Website

The first step is determining the goals of your website. Why do you want a website or need a redesign? Some typical reasons for establishing or updating a website are to:

Improve visibility and reputation of the company or organization
Develop a qualified list of potential customers
Sell goods or services online
Disseminate information / educate people
Build relationships with customers or members
Encourage potential customers to contact you to complete a sale
Make available product information and price lists to distributors
Make available product information and price lists to customers
Offer customer service, technical support, other online services
Build brand awareness
Encourage site visitors to take action on some issue or program

2: Define Your Audience

Who are your target audiences for this website? (Include information regarding demographics, technical capabilities, geographical location, etc.) Rank each audience in order of importance.

What is it they would like to see on your site? What information can you provide them? What are they looking for? What will they expect your site to do for them? On which sites do these target viewers currently spend their Internet time?

Present customers
Present distributors
Potential new customers
Potential new distributors

3: Determine The Content

Where will the content for this website project come from? Is it existing, or will it have to be written? How much of the content will need to be regularly updated? Who will perform content updates?

Typical pages found on a website can be:

Home Page | Services or Products | Company Info (About Us) | FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)
What's New? | Contact us | Links-Resources | Response-Order form

4: Look At Other Sites for Inspiration

Look at other sites for inspiration, especially your competition.

Which websites have you seen that you feel are particularly effective?
Which websites have you seen that are visually pleasing?
Which websites have you seen that are not visually pleasing?

5: Determine Activities and Features on your site

It's a proven fact that the more your visitors interact with your web site, the more comfortable they become. And the more comfortable they become, the more likely they are to make purchases. Determine what kind of activities you want your customers to be able to do on your website.

Are your customers asking you if you have a website? Are your customers local, national or international? Do you want to set up an e-commerce site where potential customers can learn about and purchase your products? Do you want a billboard site with information about your company and where potential customers can go to purchase your products? Do you want to gather information about your customers in order to market to them directly?

Some common activities and features are:

- [ ] Shopping
- [ ] Registration
- [ ] Company document
- [ ] Requesting information
- [ ] Searching a database
- [ ] Uploading files
- [ ] Downloading files
- [ ] Discussion forums

- [ ] Run a contest
- [ ] Conduct an online survey
- [ ] Online Forms
- [ ] Message Boards
- [ ] Photo Galleries
- [ ] Polls
- [ ] Inventory Management
- [ ] Archive of Information

6: Budget Requirements

Website projects typically start at two thousand dollars and go up from thered depending on the complexity and size of the site you would like. In addition to the cost of designing and developing your site, you need to consider these additional costs:

Domain name registration | Site hosting | Site maintenance

7: Time line

When do you want your website to be live on the Internet? Consider doing a phased-in approach to your website. Have a small site built first, learn how to drive traffic to the site and then add more activities and features to your site to keep visitors coming back. Budget for updates to the site and set a time line for these updates.

8: Where To Start (Agency, Independent, or DIY)

Once you decide to get started, it's time to decide who will build it.

You most likely have a brother-in-law or friend that says he can build you a website but the final output is usually less than optimal in design, user experience and function and you can forget about people finding your business on Google.

Agencies will get you to the end results you are looking for but bring your check book. Agency fees run about $200-$250 an hour so your website will cost double what you would pay using an independent Consultant.

5 reasons customers love an Independent Design Consultant.

Personable: Expect more than a secretary on the phone with face to face design consulting services.

Expertise: 15 years in the industry with an extensive array of skills so you have one expert for your print, web and digital needs.

Convenience: As a independent consultant I meet you where you work and on your time-frame.

Affordable: Why pay 2-3 times as much in agency fees when you can get this kind of specialized one-on-one service from a professional. Rates run about $100 an hour for a true professional.

Quality: With hundreds of satisfied clients I have a proven success rate, making your project a smooth process from start to finish.