

Web Site On A Budget

Is a web site worth the time and investment for a trucking company?

With all of the hype and information surrounding 'new economy' technology – web sites, shopping on-line etc. – many people have asked me about building an internet site. How much does a web site cost and what are the benefits?

These are all relevant questions which I'll try and answer. Please note that these are my own personal opinions: I'm not a true technical boffin or internet consultant, but I have gone through the process.

So why a web site? Trying to attract new business – particularly in the local papers and trade magazines – can be expensive. I thought the money would be better invested in something else. A web site is a good way to promote the company, provide regularly updated information to our

“a web site is a good way to sell the company, provide regularly updated information to customers and inform the general public”

customers and inform the general public. It's also relatively inexpensive to maintain. Our company has operated a web site for approximately two years (www.nolanstransport.com.au).

A major decision is whether to employ a web designer – which can cost thousands (depending on what you want) – or attempt to do-it-yourself. I chose the latter. To cut a long story short I used an “off the shelf” web developer's software program. There are many currently on the market, such as Microsoft Frontpage™, Claris™ and Adobe™. Product choice is personal. My advise is to pick an easy-to-use package for your own needs.

Of course, remembering most have tight budget constraints, cost is an important factor (see above panel). Web development programs can start from around \$70 and go upwards of

Let's have a look at the rough costings:

Action	Cost \$
Web site design software	\$160 (once off)
ISP	\$300 a year
Register domain name	\$140 (every two years)#

#not included if the internet service provider's free web space is used.

\$600 for more complex and professional versions. For a novice, the advanced software is probably not appropriate. Trial versions can often be downloaded from the internet for free; although documentation may be limited.

Lock yourself in your computer room for the day and do the tutorials and have a play around. You will definitely work it out. Better still, if you

available (officially, there may be limitations for companies).

If nothing else this is a great way to enter the land of the World Wide Web. We have had comments and enquiries from as far away as Canada and Belgium.

As for the question, has it increased business? The answer is probably not ... yet. Basically the site is there to promote the company's products and services, rather than sell something online.

Has it been worth it? My response is definitely. According to our web site statistics, we receive around 45 plus visits ('hits') a day – from all over the world.

When all is said and done – for the minimal cost involved and the full promotional opportunities afforded to any company who is on the net – I would say it is extremely beneficial. Web sites are a fantastic way to promote your business/company. It's also an opportunity to update your computer skills and, possibly, create a stepping stone to the future of internet commerce.

If this has whet your appetite and you want to get involved, *Truck Australia* and myself are offering to help a transport company go on-line. See *Delivery Notes* for full details.

have any staff that know how to use a computer, give it to them as a project!

Once you design your web site and everything has been tested, the next thing you need to be aware of is finding an Internet Service Provider (ISP) to 'host' the web site on their computer. Another important step is to apply for a domain name, which is the address where you to be found on the internet (for example www.yourcompanyname.com.au). It takes about two days to process. The ISP can register the domain name for you, but a “set-up fee” usually applies.

Although it means forgoing a unique personalised domain name, a cheaper option is to use the ISP's own computer space allocation to build a web site. Ask ISPs for details of how much free web space is

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