

Your Website

A website gives prospective clients the opportunity to preview your services 24 hours a day.

If you've never developed a website before – and relatively few people have – you won't have to spend a lot to do the job well. You may already have **Microsoft Front Page** or **Netscape Composer** (which comes free with the Netscape browser) installed on your computer. Both of those are relatively simple to use to create an attractive website.

Additionally, you will have to upload (send) the files to a server. The good news is that you don't have to be a computer genius to do this, either. You can use one of the many full-service companies that register your domain name (e.g., a name such as www.paulaplanner.com), host your website for a small monthly fee and submit it to search engines so clients can find you. They include:

Yahoo Web Hosting

<http://webhosting.yahoo.com/ps/wh/prod>

Network Solutions <http://www.netsol.com>

You can find out about other, similar companies by visiting Webhost Magazine's website. Webhost Magazine offers free, unbiased consumer reports on domain name registrars and web hosting companies. It also has a tutorial guide you can use to educate yourself about everything you need to know when it comes to the Internet and setting up a website.

Webhost Magazine Reviews

<http://www.webhostmagazine.com/bg/index.asp>

TIP: Avoid using free web hosting sites. They will bombard visitors to your site with pop-up ads that turn off prospective clients.

Here are a few tips for creating your website. To get additional ideas for your website, visit those of other event planners by doing an Internet search for event planners.

- Make it **visually attractive**. Clients will judge your taste and style by what they see on your site. If necessary, consider hiring a professional web designer.
- Include all the information your **brochure** contains, and consider adding some photos from your portfolio. To explain what is in the photos, you could include **captions**, or a summary of details, such as the location, guests, entertainment, menu, décor, etc.
- A nice addition is an **"About Us"** section, in which you can describe your experience, your philosophy and anything else you think will make your service attractive to clients.

- Add any **additional information** that you think will help sell your services (e.g. benefits of hiring an event planner, event planning tips you have written).
- Be sure it contains your **contact information**: e-mail address, phone and fax numbers, and your “snail mail” address (if you don’t want people to show up at your home office without an appointment, get a post office box).
- Mention if you offer a free consultation and be sure you **ask people to take action** (e.g. “Call today”).

Once you have created your website you want people to find it. Make sure you include your web address on your card and your brochure. You can even add it to your voice- mail message.

If you want new clients to find you, one way to get on the search engines is to go directly to each one and look for a link to submit your site. For example, if you go to Yahoo.com, at the bottom of the page you will find a link that says “How to suggest a site.” You can find others at:

Major Search Engines and Directories

<http://searchenginewatch.com/links/article.php/2156221>

Your web hosting company may offer a search engine submission service for an additional fee.

Should You Link to Vendors on Your Website?

Some vendors are happy to have you link to them on your website, and some event planners feel it adds credibility to their website to show they work with reputable vendors. However, this may actually result in less business for you — your expertise is in rounding up exactly what your clients want so they won’t have

to. You don’t want them to organize the event by themselves, do you?

You want people to call you and make appointments, not just work through your website. If they see another company’s logo and a link on your website, they may think that you are promoting that company’s goods over others, or that your salary comes from them.

While it’s okay to mention venues in the photos you include (for example: *Gala Dinner at the Yacht Club*) you should avoid linking to specific venues or vendors.

Whenever you publish photos of your clients – on your website or in print – be sure you have them sign a **model release form**, which gives you permission to use the images

in any of your promotional materials without remuneration. Most people are happy to have their image used in such a positive way, but there may be exceptions. Asking gives them the opportunity to say they'd rather not participate, which is fine. People are entitled to their privacy, and you'll find lots of others who'd like to help. Here is a sample of a model release form you can use:



Sample Model Release Form

I hereby give (insert your name) permission to use my photograph taken of me on (insert date) at (insert location) for promotional, on-line or commercial purposes. I am of legal age.

(Print Name)

(Signature)

(Date)

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