

Planning A Design

Developing an effective web site and producing an innovative design for print require careful thought and planning. Any efforts you put forth in the planning phase will be well worth it in terms of the ultimate success of your project. The planning phase in essence provides the foundation upon which all further efforts rest, including the actual design. Because of this, it is particularly important that you spend some time in the beginning thinking about your design as well as gathering materials to be included. Here are some things to consider: (Please keep in mind; the more you know of what you want and can email as a sort of design wish list, the better)

Look and Feel:

- Do you have a color scheme idea?
- Do you have a style in mind?
- What types of web sites do you particularly like? Why?
- Have you seen a web site which is similar in style to your imagined web site?
- What types of sites that you have seen online do you particularly dislike? Why?
- Would you like the style of your web site to closely match that of your printed materials?
- What is the general mood or tone which you are trying to set (i.e. humorous, hip & funky, serious & businesslike, warm & friendly, etc.)? *Note: don't worry if no ideas come to mind, Trinkler Production will create a style which reflects the "personality" of your business or organization, based on consultation with you and review of your existing materials.*

Graphic Elements:

- Do you have good quality graphics, images, or photographs which you would like included?
- Are they in digitized format? (*Please note: for an additional fee, Trinkler Production can digitize your existing graphics and photos.*)
- Do you have written permission from artists/photographers to use their artwork/photos on your web site?
- If you do not already have graphics and images, will you need custom graphics or photographs created for your site?
- Would you like to use royalty free or licensed artwork/photos on your site (such as clip art or stock photography)?
- Do you already have a business logo which you would like on your site?
- Do you want to include a recent photograph of yourself or other members of your organization?

Audience:

- Who will be your target audience?
- Can you define the age, sex, education level, income level, other interests, etc. of your typical customer or client?
- Do you know anything about your visitors' computer use (experience using the Internet, type of computer, typical modem speed, etc.)?
- Does your target audience have any special needs or requirements which must be considered in the design process?
- How will you allow feedback from your clients/customers?

Function of Site:

- What will be the main function(s) of your web site?
- Your web site can be used to:
 - Advertise you, your service, or your business
 - Sell your products
 - Educate and Inform
 - Communicate a message
 - Provide entertainment
 - Will it do some or all of these and to what degree?
- What would entice visitors to return to your site once they have visited it once?

Content:

- When a visitor comes to your web site, what will be the main things they will be seeking?
- What are the questions your customers/clients most frequently ask? (*This is usually the material that would be most beneficial to your web site visitors*)
- What will be the main content of your site?
- Can this content be easily divided into broad subject categories?
- Gather together your printed materials including newsletters, business cards, product brochures, press releases, etc. and review them for content which should be included.
- Here are some ideas for content you might include:
 - Information about you, your company/organization
 - Your company's mission statement, your philosophy
 - Background information such as biography or history of the company
 - What makes you or your company unique, or better than your competition (*what is your niche?*)
 - If you are selling products: prices, descriptions, and illustrations/photos of your product(s), warranties or guarantees, online discounts, testimonials, etc.
 - If you are providing a service, information about your experience, your accomplishments, the types of services provided, fees charged, testimonials, etc.
 - If you are providing information, clear instructions for accessing the information, sources, glossary of terms, etc.
 - If you will have a "Links" page, a list of other sites and reason(s) why you wish to include them.

Text:

- Do you have the text written already or will you need to write or rewrite your text specifically for the web site?
- Will you require the services of a copy writer or text editor?
Note: While it is strongly recommended that you (or someone within your company or organization) write your web site text, for an additional fee, Trinkler Production will write copy (based on printed materials) or edit text as needed.
- Some hints for text writing:
 - Think about the message you are trying to convey (the tone of the words)
 - Write for your intended audience
 - Check your spelling and grammar carefully.
 - Keep your thoughts organized, and the flow from one idea to the next logical.
 - Divide your text into bite-sized chunks with clear subject headings.
 - Be concise, unless your audience will be looking for details; if they will be looking for details, be specific.
 - Be honest - simply presenting your product, service or message and allowing people to decide for themselves how they will act often goes a long way.

Goals:

- Do you have specific goals in mind (*such as reducing phone traffic, increasing access to your calendar of events, selling a certain number of products, etc.*)?
- If you are selling products or services online, will an online catalog with contact information be sufficient? Or will you require an e-commerce solution (*such as online credit card processing, shopping cart, interactive order forms, PayPal, etc.*)?

Site Preparation:

- Will you need to register an Internet domain name? (*www.yourname.com*)
- Will you need to locate a suitable web site hosting service?
- Will you need to locate a service which can provide you with an e-commerce solution?
- Are you interested in researching the web sites of your competitors?
- Would you like to register your web site with the top search engines or will you be promoting your site exclusively through other means?
Note: For an additional fee, Trinkler Production can assist with any of these site preparation tasks, as needed.

Planning a Web Site “Make-over”

While it may be helpful for you to review the planning guidelines for New Web Sites (*above*), you will also have additional considerations, such as:

- What do you really like about your current web site?
- What do you want to change?
- Have you received suggestions from visitors to your site which you would like to implement?
- Are there specific questions visitors repeatedly ask, which indicate a lack of clarity in the site?
- Have you been receiving site reports that indicate certain web pages are not being viewed indicating that the page is hard to locate or not of interest to your audience?
- Are your site's pages slow to load?
- Does your site need specific new features such as Flash animation, a weekly updated calendar, online credit card processing, etc.?
- Does your site require navigational improvements so that all pages can be quickly accessed with minimal confusion?
- Would you like to update the overall look of your site with new graphics, buttons, and page layout?

CONSULTATION PHASE

Once you have reviewed and given some thought to the guidelines above, you will be in an excellent position to provide Trinkler Production with a clear picture of the design you would like. If you have read the planning guidelines above and feel stuck or overwhelmed, we can spend some time reviewing the key aspects to get a better idea of your plans. Essentially, you want to email Trinkler Production a wish list of as many things you know you want and don't want, like and dislike. Examples are great whether they are from your current material/site or a competitor's. You can email URL addresses (*www.yourcompetitor.com*) and mail us physical examples. Emailing back and forth usually works best for this correspondence because it allows us to be clear with each other more so than over the phone relay/interpretation games.

Initial Free Consultation:

When you contact Trinkler Production to discuss your design project and to learn how we can help you, your initial consultation is free (up to 1 hour of work). All services rendered after 1 hour of work will be billed at the appropriate rate listed on the Trinkler Production 2010 Price List. You will be notified of the conclusion of our initial 1 hour.

We will put together a project bid based on the information you have given, which will include the estimated total cost of your project and an estimated completion date. If the scope of your project is beyond our current abilities, we will let you know at the time of determination.

The length of time required to complete your project will depend on several factors. For example, the number of pages on your site, the number of graphic elements, whether custom graphic artistry is required, the complexity of your design, whether or not you are adding e-commerce to your site or require other non-design services, and of course, our current client schedule. Initially, I will be able to provide you with an estimated completion date only. Once we have reviewed your materials and more thoroughly assessed your design project, we will be able to give you a more accurate completion date.

The Trinkler Production 2010 Price List will provide detailed information on hourly and flat rate fees charged for each type of design service offered by Trinkler Production. Email Michael Trinkler at business@trinklerproduction.com with your wish list or call 913.908.4845 for an initial introductory conversation with Michael (Owner/Artist & Designer) or Christy (Owner/Business Manager).

Deposit:

Upon your approval of the initial bid, we will send you a package of materials to fill out, sign and return. Along with these materials, you will need to send a deposit equal to 50% of the estimated total cost of the project. This amount will be fully credited toward the final cost of your project. Because every project is different, your initial quote is an estimate only. Your approval, in most cases, will be required prior to proceeding with work which would increase the total cost of the project. Any adjustments to your initial quote will be reflected in your final invoice.

Communication:

We believe that listening to the needs and goals of our clients is the top priority. The designs we produce will be reflective of you, your products and/or services, and your company/organization and must therefore be produced according to your vision. While we believe in being creative, and we may have our own ideas for how to approach a particular design, this will never be at the expense of your dreams for your web site. At all phases of the process, your opinion matters to us. We believe that, through clear communication and teamwork, we will be able to produce a site which meets your highest expectations — a site which is distinctive, easy to navigate, and meets your goals outlined in the planning phase.

Communication regarding your project can be by email (tends to work best for clarity), by phone, or in person (if you are in the local area), and in the initial stages will involve a thorough review of your vision for the project.

Materials:

It is during this phase that you will need to send us all of your materials to be used on the site, such as:

- Written outline of major subject areas to be included and/or a list of specific goals to be accomplished URLs of sites you admire and/or competitors' sites (if applicable)
- Business logo
- Samples of printed brochures and materials (if a matching style is required)
- Any graphic elements, artwork, and/or photographs that Trinkler Production will not be producing or acquiring on your behalf
- Written text or other content to be included
- All other materials specific to your project
- Digitized materials can be submitted by e-mail.
- Graphics should be sent as attachments (JPEG or GIF format preferred) with a 2 MB total attachment limit.
- Text should be cut and pasted into the body of the e-mail.
- As all text formatting will be lost when inserting it onto a web page, you do not need to format it in any particular way.
- If you would like some text to be italic, bold, larger sized, indented, etc., you can mail a printed version of the text or email it via word document/Adobe PDF and I will be able to make those adjustments on the web page.
- Alternately, you can submit digitized materials on floppy disk, SuperDisk, CD, or DVD (in PC format).
- All non-digitized materials, such as sample brochures, typed or handwritten text, photographs, and artwork can be mailed (please insure any valuable materials sent through the mail), or, if you are local, delivered in person.

A Note About Your Materials:

- Please remember that, in order to avoid costly legal expenses for copyright infringement, you must supply Trinkler Production only with graphics, photographs, and images which you have written permission to use, and which do not infringe upon the rights of any person, company, or entity. If you would like to use licensed stock photographs, and/or graphics/photographs created especially for your web site by Trinkler Production, just let us know. We have competitive pricing available on these options. The same holds true for text — please write your own material (highly recommended), or hire Trinkler Production to do your copy writing.

SITE DEVELOPMENT PHASE

Design Proposal:

After reviewing all of your materials and considering your goals and ideas for the project, we will provide you with an overview of our design ideas via email unless printed mock-ups are required in which case we will send such materials by mail. We will also let you know if additional graphics, photographs, content or services might further enhance the project. At your option, these enhancements will be worked into the design.

Approval Process:

At each major stage of the project, your written approval will be required before proceeding further, so that we can both be assured that the project is going as expected. If at any stage additional services not outlined in the initial bid are required to meet your goals, we will notify you of the anticipated additional cost involved. In most cases, your approval of this cost increase will be required before proceeding with the additional services, or we will need to discuss alternate plans for your design which do not involve a cost increase. Please be aware that, while we will do our best to keep to our initial schedule, the requirement of additional services will usually delay your project's completion date. In order to avoid further delays, please respond promptly to these notifications.

The Work:

Once you have approved the design proposal, Trinkler Production goes into full production phase. Graphic designs for printed materials are created and are fitted in a composed layout. For web sites, custom photographs or graphics are created and edited (if required). Images are scanned if necessary and optimized (compressed) so that they load as quickly as possible on the screen. Text is formatted and inserted into the page layout. If copy writing or text editing services are required, these take place. Clip art and stock photography is located and optimized as needed. Page layouts are tested in different browsers to ensure that they display correctly. Pages are connected with links, and Meta tags are added so that search engines can locate and catalog your site.

Your Review:

At crucial stages of the design process, graphic designs will be emailed to you and at times printed proofs mailed to you while pages of your web site will be loaded onto a temporary and private online location for your review. Because changes made later in the process require both more time (and expense) to implement, your careful review of work in progress is essential. Check the content, layout, design, graphics, text, etc. to see if any changes need to be made. Once you have reviewed the work, your list of changes needs to be communicated to me (this is best done by email, so that nothing is overlooked). Once I receive your list of changes, I will contact you if I need any clarification, or simply go ahead and make the requested adjustments. This process will continue until all work is done, everything is fine-tuned to your specification, and your project is complete.

Project COMPLETION PHASE

Graphic Designs For Printed Materials:

Upon design completion, we will send you a final proof. If you are satisfied, we will email your invoice (full account of time) and expect full payment prior to you receiving a high-resolution electronic file on CD or DVD (PC format) by mail. At that point, you will be able to take this material to any printer for printing. Keep in mind, printers will always need to make slight color adjustments in their pre-press department as color management is always necessary when printing on different materials (different papers) and using different inks. This is typical and that is why you will receive a printed proof to take with you so your printer can match the colors. You are also more than welcome to ask Trinkler Production to act as a liaison on your behalf with any printer of your choosing. We can also find a printer for you.

Uploading Your Site:

Once your site is complete, a final invoice will be sent to you with any cost adjustments noted (and credit for your initial deposit). A full accounting of time spent on each type of service will be provided, and adjustments made for time over or under the initial estimated amounts. Once your final payment is received, Trinkler Production will upload the pages of your web site onto your host's server, where it will be ready for the public to view.

So that your site is ready for immediate upload, you will need to have a registered domain name and be signed up with a web host (see below for details). You may also want to give some thought to site promotion.

Domain Name Registration:

If you have not already researched and registered an Internet domain name, you can do this yourself at one of many online domain name registration sites (Trinkler Production recommends Homestead, godaddy or hostway for domain registration). For an additional fee, you can have Trinkler Production register an appropriate domain name (we use Homestead). Here are some things to keep in mind when choosing your domain name:

- All single words in the English dictionary have already been reserved with the .com, .org, and .net suffixes, so you'll need to get creative!
- You cannot include spaces in your name, and your name cannot begin with a hyphen (although it's okay to have a hyphen in the middle of the name).
- Numbers are okay.
- You may use only numbers, letters, and hyphens.
- It's a good idea to use lower case letters (the standard)
- You cannot exceed 23 characters in your domain name (plus the www. and the suffix).
- Try to think of something that is memorable, applies to the content of your site, is not easily confused with some other spelling, and does not infringe upon someone else's copyright or trademark.

Web Site Hosting:

Web hosts store the pages of your website on a server, so that your pages are visible round the clock and can be accessed by multiple users at the same time. Trinkler Production uses Homestead to host web sites. If you don't already have a web site host or server or would like to transfer your site, Trinkler Production can set you up through Homestead (see Trinkler Production 2010 Price List). They are affordable, reliable, and maintain quick page loading. They also provide a program for clients to use for simple do-it-yourself updates (ie. text). Otherwise, Trinkler Production offers maintenance on sites (once again see Trinkler Production 2010 Price List)

Promotion:

Once your web site is online, don't forget to promote it! For an additional fee, Trinkler Production can register your site with the top search engines (or, if you are feeling ambitious, you can do this yourself). Be sure to include your web site address on all of your promotional materials including your letterhead and business cards. You may want to send a promotional mailing to your clients announcing your new online presence.

An effective method of site promotion is to link your site to other web sites (and request a reciprocal link back to your site). Target web sites with a similar (and complementary purpose) and email the webmaster to see if they will link to your site. For example, if your site sells garden sculptures, you might want to link to sites which specialize in garden design (but don't sell their own garden sculptures). Also, do some research to locate sites which specialize in referrals to

your type of site, and ask to be added to their referral list (sometimes this involves a small fee).

SITE MAINTENANCE PHASE

By keeping your web site fresh, posting new information and updating the layout, design and graphics, you can help keep visitors coming back to your site. Trinkler Production can perform regular site maintenance services on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annual basis. You set the schedule based on your anticipated needs. If you need to periodically update an event calendar, post the next edition of your newsletter, change the prices or inventory in your e-store, update your contact information, or periodically update the text content or photographs on your site, then a web site maintenance plan is highly recommended. It's also a good idea to periodically check your web site to ensure that everything is still working as it should, to verify links, and to make any necessary corrections. Don't let your web site become a "cobweb!"