



By Barbara Walsh

Contractor Websites Don't Have to Cost A Lot.

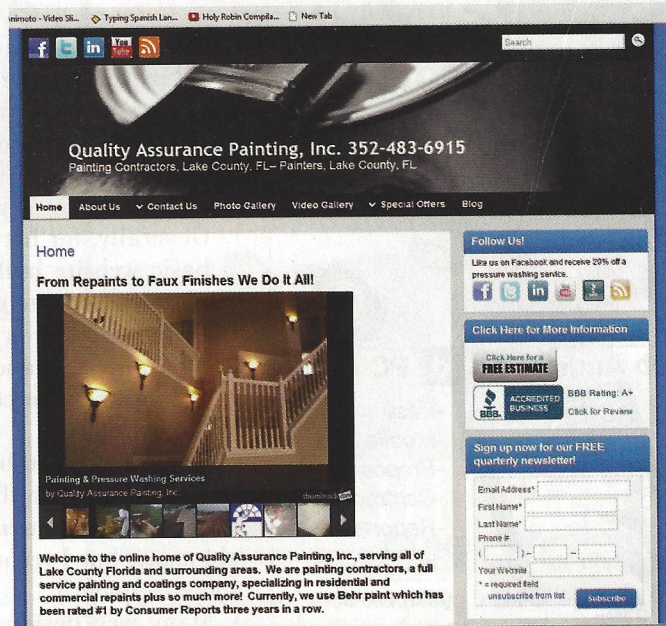
In today's technologically competitive world you need a website for your business. Long gone are the days of going to

the Yellow Pages to find service providers. Today's customers are searching the Internet for local companies they want to do business with. If your business doesn't have a website, or has one but it can't be found in an Internet search, you are losing potential customers to your competition.

If you've been waiting to build a website because you're concerned it will cost a lot or may be too difficult for your level of computer skills, then I have some suggestions to help. Sure, many web designers will charge exorbitant prices to build a website, but you can find many affordable solutions to this.

1) Build it yourself.

Yes, you or someone on your staff can design a



**“With a little
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website for your business. With today’s website building templates you can build a site with no coding experience. You will need to commit some time and have average computer skills. First, you need to find a hosting company. You may have heard of Hostmonster, Blue Host, Go Daddy and many others.

For a yearly fee, (approx. \$150/year, which will include some security features), you will have access to a dashboard where you can choose the type of website you will build and the company will place all the files on their server.

The dashboard will give you the ability to access files and open email accounts using your URL. Shop around, compare prices, and read about customer service. Some hosting companies will offer great customer service when you run into difficulties—which you will!

Once you pay your yearly hosting and URL fee, you will choose a web builder. I recommend WordPress. WordPress websites are the most widely used website builder in the country. The reason it is so popular is that it provides many different free templates to choose from, plus for a small upgrade charge, you can purchase a premium template which will give added features. WordPress sites are also SEO friendly. They have search engine optimization features build into their template coding helping to enable your website to be found in search.

With a little patience, time, and skill you can build a website for your company for under \$200. Keep in mind, just because you build it, doesn’t mean they will come. You need to have a basic knowledge of website design and SEO in order for people to easily navigate your site and for the search engines to index your site for various keywords and phrases.

Your goal is to be found on Page 1 under keywords and phrases in your industry, and for your local market. Read more about SEO by visiting, www.bloggingpainters.com, type Barbara Walsh in the search box and read my article called “SEO for painting contractors, what is it and why do I need it.”

2) Hire a website design company or marketing agency.

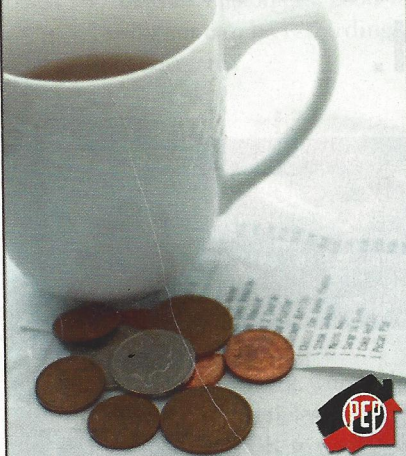
Shop around and do your homework. Prices vary greatly among website designers as does their level of skill. Ask friends or do a little research looking at competitors sites, often near the bottom of the home page you will find details of the website template and perhaps the company that built it.

Generally, for between \$500 and \$1,000 you should be able to have a basic website built with search engine optimization strategies built in. Remember though, once your site is built it needs to continually be maintained, as you want people to return frequently in search of new content. Maintenance means adding this content by either adopting a blog to your site or continually adding new pages, keeping keywords and phrases in mind.

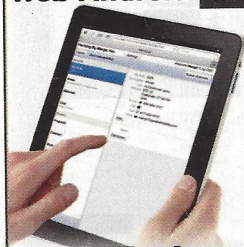
Sitemaps can be submitted on a regular basis (ideally you should do this weekly) to the major search engines so they will index your site and find new content. Your site will still be found without submitting sitemaps, but I recommend it for search engines to index your content more frequently.

Many web design companies and marketing agencies will maintain

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your website or teach someone on your staff what needs to be done. A secretary, office assistant or marketing professional can be placed in charge of your website.

A few final thoughts on website building.

Don't believe the advertisements for free websites. I have not yet found anything that is truly free. You will find any free site builders have additional add-ons for almost everything that you need to have a successful website. They'll upcharge you for more than three pages, a custom URL (otherwise your URL will point to them also), SEO capabilities, ability to add photos, and the list goes on. Again, I would recommend a beginner to build a website using WordPress, it will include everything you need, plus if you purchase a "premium" template (generally under \$50) you will have access to support.

Marketing your website.

Now that you have a website get the word out! Tell all your coworkers, vendors and customers. Place your website URL on all printed materials such as business cards, flyers, brochures, t-shirts, hats and vehicles. Link your website to other Internet activity you might have like business listings, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. Also, make certain your website lists all your social media icons and include sharing button. Continuous cross-promotion is the key to getting the word out and increasing SEO "juice".



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