

## TECHNOLOGY &amp; LAWYERS



WEBSITES

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## Getting and maintaining an inexpensive website

What does a website cost? The short answer is between \$600 and \$1,000 for the design and setup of a straightforward website. Maintenance costs depend on how frequently you need content changes. If you are adding primarily text content, maintenance usually costs less than \$100 per month.

There are four basic costs involved in setting up a website:

**1. Design:** The graphic layout of the site and the content navigation tools made by a web designer.

**2. Content management:** Making changes to the site, building new pages, and any updates made after the fact. Updates to the site let your visitors know you are current in your field. A monthly review is recommended.

**3. Domain registration:** This is the cost of having www.your-name.com, an easily memorized address. Usually this costs about \$8 to \$10 US a year. Longer terms are available.

**4. Hosting:** Your website and your domain need to reside on an outside server. The server "hosts" your content and makes it available on the Internet. This costs less if you buy a year or two at a time, but it can cost about \$8 US monthly or more depending on size and usage.

Independent lawyers and small firms don't need a lot of Internet space for their first website, so the smallest package offered by a server is more than enough. It can always be expanded as needed.

The two largest initial costs involved in getting your own website are design and content management. Hosting and domain registration are relatively modest monthly costs.

Many servers will offer you a discount on your hosting costs if you agree to pay for a year or more at one time rather than billing monthly.

Making periodic updates to your website is relatively inexpensive but necessary to freshen the site and entice internet traffic. Changes to text content such as additional articles and amendments to accomplishments can be done by e-mailing the new content to your web manager who can update the site remotely.

Effective website management is not just about cost savings, but there is no need to overspend on costly but ineffective features in order to be noticed on the internet.

Most people are probably paying too much for their websites. Between finding a good domain registration service, the right server, and the actual design or updates there's a lot of room for excessive spending.

Here are a few simple ways to control the costs of your website:

**1. Hire a good webmaster:** A good webmaster should include finding you a good deal on domain registration and hosting in a flat fee for building your site. Your webmaster will know what services are right for you and how to get the best service for the best

price. After years of dealing with registration and hosting it will take her a fraction of the time it would take you to set up your site. You can use the time more profitably working for your clients.

**2. Compare registration and hosting costs:** Your webmaster should give you some comparative prices for different services. For instance, the domain registrar I prefer to use is less expensive than a common pick by laypeople. I also usually look at two different hosting companies depending on my client's needs.

**3. Prepare your content ahead of time:** Having the text content for your website written and organized ahead of time is easy. Otherwise, your webmaster will bill you for time spent sorting through your unorganized files or even reproducing them in appropriate formats. One of the most difficult aspects is picking a colour scheme. Choose a colour in advance to save time. Even a paint chip from a paint store will be helpful.

**4. Get a recommendation:** If you like another lawyer's website,

ask about it and give your webmaster the address and a note of the key features that appeal to you. Ask her for sample sites to compare features before making final selections.

**5. Communicate through e-mail or telephone instead of in person when possible.** You can have most changes made to your existing website with just an e-mail or two. E-mails and telephone calls to clarify information save you and your webmaster time and money.

**6. Find a local webmaster:** If you have a question or a problem, having your webmaster nearby will make office visits much more prompt and convenient.

Websites are now inexpensive and relatively easy to maintain. If you cannot be found on the web, you are missing many opportunities.

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## How can RSS feeds help my marketing efforts?

RSS

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puter with an Internet connection and are ideal if you access the Internet when traveling.

**2. RSS readers** that you install as separate software applications on your computer. One advantage is that content can be downloaded and later viewed off-line, making this type of reader ideal for commuters or travelers with laptops.

**Marketing advantages over e-mail**

RSS has some distinct advantages over e-mail for marketing initiatives. Because RSS delivery is automated, it is easier for content providers to syndicate their content via RSS than via e-mail. Another advantage is that RSS content is usually delivered faster than e-mail, again because it is automated. With e-mail, frequent content delivery may not be practical for the author or desirable to you.

**What's in it for me?**

Now that you have read this article you may be asking, "How can I use it in my marketing programs, and what can

it do for me?" The quick answer is, "It all depends on what you want to accomplish." Think of RSS from the points of view of both a sender and a receiver. There is a wealth of marketing and business development knowledge available for you to learn from as a receiver. When you feel that you are in a position to broadcast either on your own or as a contributor to a specialized platform, RSS will deliver your message.

Technology is affecting the way we market. The printed firm brochure has had its day. A productive moment may be one that tosses around the notion of how your prospects and clients are integrating technology into their business lives. Why? Because many lawyers are doing just that and are slowly shifting the law firm marketing paradigm.

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