

The £6 website in 11 easy steps

**Do you think that you can't afford a web presence?
There will be no more excuses once you've heard about
the latest solution from Google, says Judy Jenner**



Judy A. Jenner MBA is a German and Spanish translator in Las Vegas. She runs Twin Translations with her twin sister, Dagmar, who works from Vienna. A former in-house translation department manager, Judy is a veteran of Spanish-language media, e-commerce and localisation as well as a seasoned IT, business, and legal translator. She serves as the Vice President of the Nevada Interpreters and Translators Association and is a frequent speaker on marketing topics.

TOOLS YOU WILL NEED

- Computer
- Credit card
- Time: 1 hour or more
- Money: \$10 (£6.25) a year

As language professionals in the 21st century, most of our professional lives happens online, and it's more paramount than ever that we have an online presence. There is no doubt that not having a solid website can result in less business. You certainly can't measure the negative, that is, you simply don't know how many people are not contacting you because they cannot find you online, but the number is probably quite significant.

Until now, having a professional website created and maintained had been a daunting task. As small business owners, we all have to be money-savvy and certainly don't want to invest critical funds in what can be perceived as a non-critical activity (which in reality it is not). Throughout the years, colleagues have cited many reasons for their lack of a web presence, including lack of HTML skills, limited budget, being too busy, not knowing a good web designer, and so on.

Now, thanks to our friends at Google, we are running out of excuses as to why we do not have a website. There's no more need to

find a web guru, no more investing in a serious-looking website, no more endless meetings with the designer trying to figure out what you want and how much this will cost, and no more exorbitant hosting fees. You've heard correctly: this is cheap, quick, and good, which sounds almost too good to be true. It's not – read on.

A note before we get started: there is a lot to say in favour of professional web designers, as described in detail in *ITI Bulletin's* cover story of September 2008. They are usually fantastic web professionals with a vast amount of experience and the expertise to help you develop a solid web presence. As small business owners, we like to support other small professional services organisations, and if you can afford to spend a few hundred pounds, euros or dollars, you might want to consider hiring a professional IT expert. However, if you are on a limited budget, you can create a website yourself, host it, register the URL, publish it, maintain it and update it; all for \$10 (£6.25 at current exchange rates) a year. No special skills are required – if you can

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maintain a LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter page, you can build your own website. I promise: you will never have to touch the HTML code if you don't want to. Ready to get started?

11 steps to your website

1 Get started. Watch the user-friendly video tutorial, courtesy of Google: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fD-4FRTzxl>.

2 Join the Google family. In order to use any of the free Google services, you will need a Google account, which is also free. If you already have an existing Gmail account, you can log in using that information. If you don't have one, go here: <https://www.google.com/accounts/ServiceLogin?continue=http%3A%2F%2Fsites.google.com%2F&service=jotspot>.

3 Get Google Apps: This is a suite of applications that is also free of charge, and it includes Google Sites, which lets you create your own website. The Google Apps Standard edition, which you will be using, is free, but the domain name is \$10 (£6.25) a year (get out your wallet). The user-friendly interface will let you check if your desired domain name is available. <http://www.google.com/apps/intl/en/group/index.html>. If the URL you want is not available, Google will suggest alternatives. This is a quick, painless, three-step process, after which you will be ready to start building your page. Google also has a handy blog dedicated exclusively to Google Sites and its applications. It contains helpful tips about how best to get the tools to work for you. <http://googleapps.blogspot.com>.

4 Choose your URL (website address). You need to put some serious thought into choosing your URL. The best way to do this is to hold a brainstorming session, either just you or you and a friend/business partner/significant other who knows your business well. What kind of message do you want to be sending to your customers? How can you be memorable? Have you already registered and incorporated a business? If yes, then you should use that URL, unless you want to rename and rebrand your company. Try to come up with a non-generic URL that people can remember. For instance, www.spanishtranslator.com

is too generic. On the other hand, www.spanishwizards.com or www.portugueseworld.com might be better options. Think of yourself as a customer: if you were looking for translation services, what kind of URLs would appeal to you? You should convey that you are competent, creative and professional. Also, make sure that your URL isn't too long. Remember that this is what you will be putting on your business cards, on your marketing materials and all your other promotional papers. Hence, www.spanishtranslationwizardsfromspain.com is too long. You wouldn't be able to fit it on a regular-sized business card. Think short and sweet.

5 Choose your email address.

Keep it simple. Email addresses such as home@xyz.com, office@xyz.com, info@xyz.com and quotes@xyz.com are good choices. In addition, any combination of your name is fine, too, either first name, last name, or both. Avoid making your company sound bigger than it is, for instance sales@xyz.com or marketing@xyz.com. There's no reason to speak in the plural if there is only one person in the company. It's also deceiving to potential customers to give the illusion of a bigger size. A small company is just fine, and it's just as valid as a large company. As a matter of fact, companies on the business-to-business level often actually enjoy working with smaller companies, as they like the personal contact, quicker turn-around and lack of needless corporate red tape.

6 Write the content of the site.

Before you get into creating the actual site, you should decide how many sections you want to have and write the copy for them. While you can certainly do this while you are creating the actual pages, it makes the process speedier and more streamlined if you know which sections you will have. For most translators, having sections such as About, Contact, Background, Services, Rates, Clients, Testimonials and Blog is a good idea. Write whichever sections you want to start out with. You can keep on building upon what you have already created at any point in the future.

7 Choose the colours, theme, and layout. Google Sites is template-

based, which means that all you have to do is plug content into pre-defined templates, analogous to Facebook and LinkedIn. You can slightly adapt the layout, but it is not highly customisable. You will not have a top-of-the-line website, but it will be nice and clean, with an easy navigation and layout. In terms of colour and font: keep it simple. Dark font on a light background makes for easiest readability. Google offers a variety of backgrounds, and you can always change and update it (you can find this option under more actions/manage sites/colours and fonts as well as themes).

8 Use a good picture. While you don't need to have an image by a professional photographer, you should get a professional-looking picture. Whether this includes a trip to a photographer's studio, bartering with a photographer friend of yours, or simply getting your significant

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other to take a picture of you against a neutral background is up to you. This is not the place to use holiday pictures with your sunglasses on your head. Try to get a headshot that you can use frequently – on your website, on your marketing materials, on your business cards if you choose, and on your online profiles.

9 It's live! Your pages (and any changes and updates) will be live immediately after you hit the 'save' button. However, remember that the internet is a very big place, so don't worry about people finding your site when it's not quite ready. The reality is that you can almost be completely certain that no one will find your site unless you direct them to it. Take your time to fully create your site before you announce it. Allow yourself a few days (or weeks) to build the content and play around with the colours and backgrounds. The most important thing to remember is that nothing you do on your site is irreversible. This is what I used to tell my team when I led the translation department in a large e-commerce

company: it's not going to be published in the *Times* tomorrow and be in print forever. If you find a typo, fix it. If you don't like your layout next week, change it. A caveat: if you alter your site too often, it might get confusing to repeat customers, for instance, if you change the colour scheme every few months. Try to keep the changes more to the content and less to the layout, unless you want to announce a website redesign, and honestly, you probably have more pressing things to do than that.

10 Spread the word. Now the real work starts. Having a website is a fantastic start, but it can only lead to business if potential customers can find it. The art of basic search engine optimisation will be addressed in a future article, but to get you started, send out an email announcing your website to all your friends, colleagues, and clients. Look through your contacts and your address books, both virtual and paper, and send out a quick email about your new venture. This is your first step in making it known that you have a website: telling everyone you know and asking them to tell their contacts, hence building by word of mouth.

11 Add new and fresh content to it. In general, a website indexes higher in search results and folks are more interested in it if it regularly features new content. There are several sections to which you can potentially add new items on a regular basis. The clients section would be a good option. In addition, you could create a section with 'speaking engagements', where you post any presentations that you have given, or a section on 'professional development', where you list the conferences you have attended or the ones you have presented at.

And that's it

By following these straightforward steps, you should be well on your way to creating a good-looking business website, all without spending more than £7 and a few hours of your time. Think of your web presence this way: if you only get one client all year and a £100 project, you will already have recouped your very small investment. No more excuses: do it. Close this magazine, turn on your computer and get started. 