

Become an Activist Publisher – Get Your Ideas Out There!

This is a brief overview about how to quickly start a website and promote your idea, cause or event. As you have probably noticed, the World Wide Web has revolutionized communications, making it easier than ever to connect with and influence anyone with an internet connection. With the rise of blogging and social networking technology it has become even easier to start a new website, promote ideas, and connect with other interested parties.

There are a few simple steps to setting up a website and getting your ideas out there. This will necessarily be simplified, as I cannot go into every tech detail. There are now sufficient forums and guidebooks online that you should be able to connect all of the dots, assuming a basic level of computer savvy.

If you need inspiration or motivation, consider this: my mother, a 68 year-old grandmother, has been running a successful blog since September 2008, www.JoyfullyRetired.com. With over 230 posts and 1,400 comments, and a core readership (and growing), she has successfully navigated the necessary tech. If a grandmother with no previous web experience can do it, so can you.

Brainstorm a Name

Step one is deciding on a name. If you're not inherently creative, get some fun friends over, pop a bottle of your favorite adult beverage, and get a little wacky. Write down all the good names you can think of, trying not to be critical of anyone's weird idea. Spew a buckload of ideas. It can be helpful to have a fast internet connection available and someone checking www.godaddy.com (or similar web site registrar) to see if a domain name is taken or available. Occasionally some of the names GoDaddy recommends as similar might work. Not often, but occasionally. Some of the names that we brainstormed:

Localchicken.com
Locavorechicken.com
Locochicks.com
Locochooks.com
Sustainablehens.com
Chickenlocalization.com
Localeggs.com
Locoeggs.com
Locavoreggs.com
Sustainableeggs.com
Sustainablehenfood.com
Sustainablechickfood.com
Sustainablechicken.com

Obviously we went with www.sustainablechicken.com. Obviously a winner, and never fails to raise a chuckle (or is that a cluckle?) when we mention it to people. Chickens are naturally adorable and interesting, more so than just eggs or an abstract concept like localization. Don't underestimate the usefulness of a cute name! Teams and companies have mascots for a reason.

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Register the Name

I've been using www.godaddy.com for many years, but you could use any similar registrar. You might find the buxom babes and over-the-top Super Bowl ads not appealing to you and your demographic, but the prices are good and the site is fast and easy to use.



When you're purchasing a domain name, you'll have to go through many screens that offer a multitude of options, I decline all of these. I want the simple domain name (it costs \$9.99 for a year) without any other unnecessary baggage, add-ons or cost.

When you register your domain name it will be 'housed' at GoDaddy until you do something to change it. Let's do that next.

Set Up a Website

There are many ways to do this. You can set up a very simple website at GoDaddy.com. As a service to the world, I just took a minute to check it out. It is indeed very simple, a very basic site, and very inexpensive. That would be free. And worth it. As you can see, it's not much, and the GoDaddy ad is a bummer, so this isn't a viable option. Spend the time and get a real site.

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This is a free Starter Web Page courtesy of GoDaddy.com, Inc.



Christopher Peck is on the web!

www.christopherpeck.biz

Come visit me over at www.christopherpeck.com or at my company website: www.naturalinvesting.com

Email us at: christopher@naturalinvesting.com
Visit us at: <http://www.naturalinvesting.com>

707-758-0171

 Find a domain name:
www. .com

Domain Names -
\$9.99* /yr
Risk-Free Transfers -
\$6.99*
*Plus ICANN fee of 20 cents per domain name year.

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Let's get you set up on a real website, a website that you can easily use to update, upload and host content, and promote. You can host the website on the WordPress.com server (easiest option), or you can get your own server and host it there (more technically demanding). In this article I'll only be discussing how to host the website on the WordPress.com server, as it is by far the easiest option. If you outgrow their server (I'll discuss why you might below), let me know and I can guide you through the more technical steps of self hosting.

Use WordPress.com

Creating a blog on the wordpress.com server couldn't be easier. Check out this visual, doesn't it just look as dandy as can be? This site oozes usability. Just click the big blue button and follow it from there ...

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The screenshot shows the WordPress.com homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the WordPress logo and the text 'WORDPRESS.COM'. Below that, there are links for 'Home', 'Sign Up', 'Features', 'Blog', 'Our Story', and 'Advanced'. A large yellow banner in the center contains the text 'Express yourself. Start a blog.' and a blue 'Sign Up Now!' button. A white callout box with a black border points to the 'Sign Up Now!' button, containing the text 'Click here to start'. Below the banner, there's a statistics bar showing '212,881 BLOGGERS, 159,966 NEW POSTS, 39,560,225 WORDS TODAY.' and a 'Preferred Language: English' dropdown. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Already Hip?' with a login form, 'From our blog' with a list of recent posts, 'Hot Post' featuring a news article about Xiah Junsu's injury, 'Hot VIP Posts' and 'Hot Community Posts' with various news snippets, and 'Right Now in Tags' with a list of popular tags like 'Art', 'Books', 'Business', etc.

Going this route, you could have a basic website up and running in less than 10 minutes. I'm not exaggerating; it's that easy. The WordPress software is open source, with a dedicated cadre of geeks running and maintaining it. There are hundreds of people editing code, designing themes, and writing helpful plugins; it's so easy to post and publish Gutenberg's dust is spinning in his tomb. Their motto: Code is poetry. Gotta love it.

There are many **benefits to using WordPress.com:**

- It's free. *That's a price I love.*
- It's instantaneous. *You won't believe how fast until you try it.*
- There are dozens of lovely themes to wrap your content in. *A theme is the design or framework that your content is displayed within. Changing themes is as easy as changing your shirt.*
- Everything's integrated: statistics, spam protection, plugins, themes, upgrades. *You never have to venture out into the scary world of FTP servers, troublesome backups, or out-of-date software.*
- It's very user friendly. *If you spend much time on the computer, interacting with software, you know how important this is.*
- As many blogs as you'd like, with as many people, in almost every language, public or private, and did I mention it's free?

I know I sound like a commercial, it's easy to become a fan of this software.

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There are a few **downsides**:

- You online identity isn't as cool as you might like. Your domain name will be www.mycoolsite.wordpress.com. But for only \$10 a year you can stay on WordPress.com and upgrade to a cooler online identity, www.mycoolsite.com. *You could also "redirect" your shorter, cooler name to the wordpress.com address, most people will never notice.*
- WordPress.com has a limited number of themes, and you might like more options.
- WordPress.com limits the total amount of content per blog, so you might find yourself getting cramped after awhile.
- WordPress.com very occasionally posts ads on your site to non-logged in visitors.
- You cannot monetize your site using Google AdWords or affiliate ads.
- You can't use Google Analytics, the state of the art tracking and statistics program.

Most of these limitations you won't even notice for some time. My mother, when she'd reached about a hundred posts, started to need a little more elbow room. But you could go for years and never need to upgrade or move off of WordPress.com. So get out there and start making yourself heard!

When You're Ready for the Next Step

I host several WordPress blogs on my server. I use BlueHost.com, one of the servers the WordPress folks recommend. I've been using them for a couple years. I get unlimited domain names, unlimited data transfer, 24/7 support, though I've never had to use it. I can have up to 50 WordPress blogs, and an unlimited number of other websites. Self-expression is unlimited. It's very inexpensive, and I find it easy to use. But it is more technically challenging. It requires time and head scratching and a bit of geek energy.