HOW DO I GET MY WEBSITE STARTED?

- <u>DEFINE YOUR WEBSITE PROJECT</u>
  - What is your website's purpose?
  - What are you trying to achieve with the website?
  - What Domain Name will you use?
  - Will you be using eCommerce on your site?
  - What information is most critical to include?
  - How often do you intend to update content?
  - How many pages will your website have?

- <u>PRE-DESIGN INFORMATION COLLECTION</u>
  - Develop basic content notes for each page.
  - Gather photos, graphics, and logos.
  - Gather video, or links to video.
  - Gather Customer Comments and Recommendations.

- <u>ASSIGN AN IN-HOUSE WEBMASTER</u>
  - This person will be the primary project lead and will work closely with the Website Design Consultant that you hire. Internally, the Webmaster should have access to all of the personnel/departments that will have input into the website. All of the information gathered up to this point should be given to this Webmaster.

- <u>HIRE A WEBSITE DESIGN CONSULTANT</u>
  - Obviously, this is a VERY important step. Hopefully, you are going to forge a long term relationship with the consultant you employ. I recommend that you go with somebody local to your area primarily because it allows for face-to-face interaction. This will significantly improve their understanding of your company and your ability to monitor the work they are doing.

- <u>DETAILED WEBSITE DESIGN</u>
  - At this point, you will sit down with the Website Design Consultant that you have hired and begin working out the

detailed look and feel of your website. You will need to choose color schemes, fonts, create formats for consistent display of information, decide on placement of graphics and logos, and make some final decisions about how your website will actually be developed (IE. HTML, WordPress, etc.).

- <u>WEB PAGE(S) CREATION</u>
  - Now it is time for the Website Design Consultant you hired to put together the first draft of your website. Hopefully, with all of your planning and pre-design work, your consultant will have a good idea of what your vision for your website is and they will be able to get close to the mark with this first draft. Your consultant should also be building in the appropriate SEO keywords and META Tags as the web pages get created.

- <u>TESTING AND DEBUGGING THE WEBSITE</u>
  - Once your consultant has the first draft ready, it's time to sit down and review what you have up to this point, and see how close to the mark it is. Don't be surprised if you suddenly see all sorts of other potential for your website, other pages you "completely forgot about", and new pages that this first look will inspire you to think of. This is a normal part of the website development process. Work closely with your consultant during this phase and you will quickly get to your finished product.

- <u>GO LIVE AND MARKET YOUR WEBSITE</u>
  - Once your website looks and functions the way you want it to and has the content setup properly, it's time to take your website live. Now people can "surf the web to your website"! But is that it? NO! You need to market your website… you need to get it out there so that people can find it when they search for your keywords. You will need to submit your website to at least some of the major search engine out there, like Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc. There are many products and services out there that can assist you

with this process by having you enter important information about your website 1 time, and then the service adds your site information to all of those search engines at once.

- UPDATE CONTENT
  - Your website should NEVER become stagnant! You will need to change your content from time to time to keep it fresh and to keep you visitors engaged. Updating the content contained in your website is a very important step in keeping your search engine rating and to improve that rating. Websites that have the same content forever begin to drop in rankings because they are looked at as abandoned sites or a site that is no longer pertinent.