

WEBSITE OPTIONS & TIPS FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

How to Setup & Operate a Website for Photographers

Northern Virginia Photographic Society

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TABLE OF CONTENT

2

1. WHY HAVE A WEBSITE
2. KEY TECHNICAL CONCEPTS
3. TIPS FOR A GOOD WEBSITE
4. COMPARING WEBSITE SERVICES
5. EMAIL DOMAIN ASSOCIATION
6. A WORD ABOUT WORDPRESS
7. WEB BUILDER REVIEWS
8. FREE TRIAL PERIOD
9. PROOFING SERVICES & OPTIONS
10. INTERVIEW WITH A PRO
11. PHOTO SHARING OPTIONS

WHY HAVE A WEBSITE

What are the benefits

WHY HAVE A WEBSITE

4

- ▶ Showcase your photos to friends, family, NVPS members, etc.
- ▶ Sell prints
- ▶ Increase your credibility with potential galleries and clients
- ▶ Impress your children and/or grandchildren that you're tech savvy
- ▶ Make other NVPS photographers envious

KEY TECHNICAL CONCEPTS

Becoming a better consumer

KEY TECHNICAL CONCEPTS

6

▶ **Domain Name**

- ▶ Your address on the internet (e.g., www.nvps.org)

▶ **Internet Protocol (IP) Address**

- ▶ A numerical label assigned to your internet assessable device (e.g., computer, smartphone, etc.)
- ▶ IP addresses are needed to participate in a computer network, like the World Wide Internet

▶ **Domain Name Registrar**

- ▶ A service where you register your domain name with the Internet Corporation of Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)
 - ▶ Examples include [NameCheap](http://NameCheap.com), Name.com, GoDaddy, etc.
- ▶ Many web hosting services offer this service

KEY TECHNICAL CONCEPTS

7

▶ **Content Management System (CMS)**

- ▶ A program/tool that allows you to build and update a website without having to know coding language

▶ **Web Hosting Service**

- ▶ A service that allows you to post a website on the internet using their servers

▶ **Web Builder Service**

- ▶ A web hosting company that provides a CMS integrated into their system, which the company manages and updates

▶ **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**

- ▶ Phrases and words that you add to your site make it easier for people to find you through an internet search engine, like Google

TIPS FOR A GOOD WEBSITE

Less is sometimes best

TIPS FOR A GOOD WEBSITE

9

▶ **Know your target audience and goals**

▶ Audience examples

- ▶ Fellow photographers, potential clients, nature lovers, etc.

▶ Goal examples

- ▶ Displaying your art, selling prints, gaining new clients, etc.

▶ **Organize your portfolio**

- ▶ Organize your photos, and use simple and intuitive labels

▶ **Limit the number of photos**

- ▶ Be extremely selective on what you share; less is best
- ▶ Your photograph website is not a dumping ground for your photos out of camera

TIPS FOR A GOOD WEBSITE

10

- ▶ **Include contact information**

- ▶ **Keep it up-to-date**

- ▶ Your website should get a new look/theme every 3 to 4 years
 - ▶ Many of the web builder services provide numerous themes, making it a fairly easy process to update
- ▶ Contact information
- ▶ Changing/mixing up your photos/portfolio

- ▶ **No automatic audio/music**

- ▶ Never, ever add music that starts when someone visits your website

- ▶ **Clean minimal look**

- ▶ Consider a dark background to make your photos stand out, but it really depends on your photos
- ▶ Avoid unique color choices that will distract the viewer from your work

COMPARING WEB SERVICES

Beauty vs. Functionality vs. Options

COMPARING WEB SERVICES

12

▶ CMS

- ▶ Is it easy to use; drop and plug in features

▶ Themes

- ▶ Do they display your photos without distracting the viewer from your photos
- ▶ Are they interactive
 - ▶ Many people prefer websites that are interactive, such as when you click on a photo it automatically enlarges for better viewing

▶ Cost

- ▶ A good web builder service is **approximately \$150 a year or less**
 - ▶ A custom built websites may cost any where from [\\$1,000 to \\$10,000](#)

▶ Simplicity

- ▶ Never judge a website by it's cover; the backend/CMS are what is important
- ▶ It should be intuitive and easy to use in order to build and update your website

▶ Blogging

- ▶ Number of web builder services offer a blog page
 - ▶ Makes it easy for fans/clients to follow you automatically through an RSS reader, Facebook, etc.

COMPARING WEB SERVICES

13

▶ HTML5

- ▶ Most smartphones and tablets use this coding language for viewing websites, which was pushed by Apple. The benefit of this code is that video and audio are supported natively without using a third party software, like Adobe Flash.

▶ Mobile version of your site

- ▶ More and more people are using their phones and tablets to access the internet, so consider a service that includes an automatic mobile version of your site

▶ Storage

- ▶ Unless you plan to use your website as a cloud backup of your photos (expensive) and/or for delivering photos to you clients, this should not be a high priority
 - ▶ Most web builder services limit the size of the photo you can upload for viewing

▶ SEO

- ▶ If you're looking to gain attention or build clients then this can be extremely important

▶ Domain name customization

- ▶ Many web builder services include a free domain name, usually the name will be associated with the company's domain name
 - ▶ Example: **www.tamistieger.zenfolio.com**
- ▶ Usually you have to pay extra to get a custom domain name, and some web hosting services will require that you get the domain name from a **domain name registrar**/service.

COMPARING WEB SERVICES

14

▶ **E-Commerce**

- ▶ Designed to make monetary transactions easier on yourself and your client
- ▶ Not all web builder services includes E-Commerce, but most “Proofing” online services do
 - ▶ Very few offer downloadable photo sales
- ▶ Most, if not all, include transaction fees
 - ▶ Anywhere from 3% to 15% for every time someone makes a transaction on your site

▶ **Print lab fulfillment**

- ▶ Some web builder services have a formal relationship with a lab
- ▶ Some photographers like to add a separate print service
 - ▶ Example: FotoMoto.com is a service you can add to your site to allow guest/clients to buy your photos from Bay Photo Labs

▶ **Email address associated with your unique domain name**

- ▶ Example: www.nvps.org, and your email is [\[name\]@nvps.org](mailto:[name]@nvps.org)

EMAIL DOMAIN ASSOCIATION

How to get a email address with you
website's domain name

EMAIL DOMAIN NAME ASSOCIATION

16

▶ **Can give you a more professional appearance**

- ▶ As opposed to having an @yahoo.com or @gmail.com in your email address
- ▶ If you need free and great email service/account, go with GMAIL

▶ **Not offered by most web builder services**

- ▶ Web hosting services that do offer an account might not always be the best option as far as accessibility, reliability, storage, and services for handling your emails

▶ **Where to get one**

- ▶ **Google Apps** is by far the best option available
 - ▶ \$5 to \$10 a month
 - ▶ Includes Gmail (domain name), Drive, Calendar, and other Google features
- ▶ **Zoho Mail** is a very popular option
 - ▶ Free to a certain level
 - ▶ Doesn't really have the same services and power as Google Apps

WORDPRESS

It's popular, inexpensive, been around forever, but is a good option for portfolios?

A WORD ABOUT WORDPRESS

18

- ▶ WordPress is an open source platform
 - ▶ Great if you know how to or like coding, but not great if you're looking for something simple and easy to build and manage
- ▶ WordPress has a lot of tools and plug-ins
 - ▶ However, most are not reliable, and some developers will charge you and/or not provide automatic updates to their plug-ins
- ▶ Was not really designed with a portfolio in mind
- ▶ Learning curve is much steeper than the newer web builder services
- ▶ WordPress's CMS/backend does not reflect what your website looks "live"
- ▶ Customer support is lacking, unless you want to pay someone or look through their endless help forums
- ▶ Can end up costing you more time and money
 - ▶ When you consider you will have to buy a domain name, pay for a visual theme developed by someone, and if you want good quality plug-ins
- ▶ Summary
 - ▶ PC/Android vs. Apple
 - ▶ Reddit.com topic on this issue...

Sites like 4ormat and Squarespace, simplify the entire process for you. Everything just works. You have your own site, you install wordpress and a theme. The theme you use works great now, but in six months breaks due to an update in wordpress. The developer is MIA. Your website is broken. These portfolio hosting sites have complete control over their entire CMS.

WEBSITE BUILDER REVIEW

Finally!

SQUARESPACE

20

▶ Pros

- ▶ The most beautiful interactive themes out there (clean and minimalistic)
- ▶ Amazing automatic mobile version of your site
- ▶ Incredible job at handling your photos as far as layout and design
- ▶ Unique domain name included with their basic package
- ▶ Great SEO features
- ▶ Best automatic mobile conversion of your website

▶ Cons

- ▶ E-Commerce features not really designed for selling photos
- ▶ No print lab association

▶ Similar

- ▶ Format.com

▶ Examples ([link](#))

- ▶ www.squarespace.com/templates
- ▶ www.donfloodphoto.com
- ▶ www.chrislangfordphotography.com

▶ Pros

- ▶ Designed for photographers
- ▶ Selling prints and print products (e.g., cups with your photo on it) made easy
- ▶ Print lab association, with several great options (Mpix Pro, Mpix, Millers, and more)
- ▶ Numerous website themes
- ▶ Client proofing site/feature included

▶ Cons

- ▶ Themes are not as polished as Squarespace and others
- ▶ CMS is not as user friendly as Squarespace or Weebly
- ▶ SEO is not as good as others

▶ Similar

- ▶ PhotoShelter
- ▶ SmugMug

▶ Examples ([link](#))

- ▶ www.tamistieger.zenfolio.com
- ▶ www.jarrodmarshall.com
- ▶ www.thinkjamesphoto.com

FORMAT.COM (formally 4ORMAT.COM)

22

▶ **Pros**

- ▶ Very similar to Squarespace in design and price
- ▶ Great mobile automatic sites

▶ **Cons**

- ▶ No E-Commerce option
- ▶ Does not handle photos as well as Squarespace and others
- ▶ Fairly new, limited reviews

▶ **Similar**

- ▶ Squarespace

▶ **Examples ([link](#))**

- ▶ www.alhigginsphotography.com
- ▶ dannyst.4ormat.com/#0
- ▶ www.mindo-c.com

SMUGMUG

23

▶ Pros

- ▶ Print lab association (EZ Prints, Bay Photo, Loxely, and WHCC)
- ▶ Easy for clients/fans to order prints and other related products
- ▶ Unlimited storage space
- ▶ Lots of themes options
- ▶ Great for those who use SmugMug for sharing/delivery photos
- ▶ Lightroom Plugin allows direct upload

▶ Cons

- ▶ CMS is not user friendly
- ▶ Backend is confusing (e.g., too many options, layers, not intuitive, etc.)
- ▶ Expensive compared to other options if you want E-Commerce and access to better labs
- ▶ \$250/year for Pro Account + 15% charge for profit sales

▶ Similar

- ▶ PhotoShelter
- ▶ Zenfolio

▶ Examples ([link](#))

- ▶ vonwong.smugmug.com
- ▶ scottkelby.smugmug.com
- ▶ hancockphoto.smugmug.com

WEEBLY

24

▶ Pros

- ▶ SUPER EASY to use CMS
- ▶ Easy to manage blog
- ▶ Can change themes without having to retype content
- ▶ Option to buy nicer themes designed by third parties for photography
- ▶ One of the cheapest option

▶ Cons

- ▶ Not designed for photography or portfolios in mind
- ▶ Themes are just average; not as impressive as others

▶ Similar

- ▶ WIX.com

▶ Examples ([link](#))

- ▶ www.magnoliavisualarts.com/index.html

PHOTOSHELTER

25

▶ Pros

- ▶ Designed for pro full-time photographers
- ▶ Does about everything, including providing client management tools
- ▶ Amazing responsive themes similar to Squarespace

▶ Cons

- ▶ CMS is not the easiest to use
- ▶ One of the most expensive, but you get a lot of tools and options
- ▶ SEO not as solid as others

▶ Similar

- ▶ SmugMug
- ▶ Zenfolio

▶ Examples ([link](#))

- ▶ www.coreyrich.com
- ▶ portfolio.joemcnally.com
- ▶ www.robindmoore.com

FREE TRIAL PERIOD

26

- ▶ **Most web builder services offer a free trial period!**
 - ▶ Take your time and try out some of your favorites
- ▶ **Test considerations**
 - ▶ Review the CMS
 - ▶ See how they handle your photos as far as uploading and displaying
 - ▶ Look through their customer support section
 - ▶ See if they have videos, which can be really useful
 - ▶ SEO will not be an option during a test since it takes time for Google and other search engines to analyze your site

PROOFING & SHARING SERVICES

Why and how they can assist

PROOFING SERVICES

28

- ▶ **Proofing sites allows you to share proofs and/or the final images to your client**
 - ▶ They handle your **E-commerce** needs (i.e., money transition, digital download sells, and **print sell/orders**)
 - ▶ Most are associated with a print lab
- ▶ **Why go with a third party service separate from my website?**
 - ▶ Not all web builder services offer client delivery/proofing services
 - ▶ Gives you more options as far as labs and payment
- ▶ **For a review of the best options, check out [PetaPixel review](#) from Sept 2014, but here are a couple that are popular:**
 - ▶ [Pixieset](#)
 - ▶ [PASS](#)
 - ▶ [Shootproof](#)
 - ▶ SmugMug
 - ▶ Zenfolio
 - ▶ PhotoSelter

PHOTO SHARING OPTIONS

29

- ▶ **Want share photos beyond a website? Here are some affordable and easy online services:**
 - ▶ DropBox
 - ▶ Flickr
 - ▶ 500px
 - ▶ SmugMug

WHAT DOES A PRO HAVE TO SAY?

An Interview

AN INTERVIEW WITH A PRO

31

- ▶ **Aimee Custis**, a blogger for **Greater Greater Washington**; Communication Director for the **Coalition for Smarter Growth**; and **wedding photographer**, had the following to say when asked what she uses and why
 - ▶ I picked **Squarespace** because as a web professional by day, I knew that a lot of platforms -- like say, WordPress -- aren't really designed for visual-presentation-first. Among the more photographer-friendly sites, I picked Squarespace (over Zenfolio in particular) because it gives me tons of control and options without being difficult to use, and I really like the drag-and-drop interface on the back end. Plus, the templates are all just really really clean, and I can customize fonts, colors, sizes, etc., all without paying any extra premium money.
 - ▶ I went with **Zenfolio** for proofing for a couple of reasons. When I was looking for a service, Pixieset and PASS weren't really available, or at least as advanced as they are now, and I really wanted something that had a not-Smugmug-horribly-ugly-miserable user interface (both client-facing and on the back end). I also wanted a proofing platform that handled prints purchasing for me -- and at the time I was looking, Zenfolio was the best available. I find Pixieset and PASS both have more lovely client interfaces, but they don't have all the purchasing features that Zenfolio has, and right now, I can't be bothered to switch over.
- ▶ **www.aimeecustis.com**

THANK YOU

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