

The cost of a website.

How much should I budget for my site?

Even though Web design firms have been around for ten years (or more) now, there's still a wide range in price...and in the value you'll receive. This is due in part to the fact that Web sites can be created by big ad agencies, boutique design firms, college students looking for beer money, and even small business owners using free or nearly-free software available on the Web. Consider that the price of a home can range from tens of thousands of dollars for a starter home in some areas to ten of millions of dollars for a mansion somewhere else. In other words, there's a wide range in pricing because there's a wide range in the quality and sophistication of Web sites

The price of your Web site will vary depending on:

- the size or number of pages,
- the complexity of the site and the amount of interactivity, such as database driven pages, or e-commerce,
- the talent and experience of the company designing your site.

As with most things in life, you get what you pay for.

Keep in mind that your Web site, if built correctly, is an investment, not an expense.

Many companies find they save money by providing information on their Web site that previously had tied up their receptionists or call centers. Other companies save thousands of dollars a year in printing and mailing costs by going "virtual;" sending out their newsletters and reports through email or downloads. Many companies increase the business they're doing by opening their doors 24/7 through an e-commerce solution.

The important thing to keep in mind is that the expenses for a Web site don't end at launch. Some people refer to the law of thirds:

- one third goes to the launch of the site (design, development, etc.)
- one third goes to marketing (Search Engine Optimization, email marketing, blogs, etc.)
- and one third is earmarked for updates and maintenance (changes to your site, updating information, hosting, etc.)

Every Web site will differ in terms of cost and needs, but the law of thirds is a good marker to go by. If you consider that the average life of a Web site is three years (before a major revamp is due) you can figure to spend about as much on both marketing and updates as you did on developing your site.

It's important to have money left in your Web budget after your site launches.

No Hollywood studio would consider spending tens of millions of dollars creating a film and then not support it with millions more in advertising. And most movies are only around for a few weeks! Your Web site needs to last a lot longer, and frequent updates and marketing will help you achieve this goal.

How will my site be kept up-to-date?

Launching your site signifies the beginning of your Web site, not the end.

Every successful Web site requires ongoing updates and changes to keep the site fresh and relevant to its audience.

Even if your Web site isn't the kind that will require visitors to return time and again, stale content—such as Coming Soon events that have long past and Valentine Day Specials that appear in June—will convince visitors that your Web site isn't relevant and there's no one minding the store.