



# StartSmart with eBC

## Helping You Succeed Online

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### **What is eBC?**

To help BC businesses remain competitive in our rapidly changing information economy, Western Economic Diversification, BC's Ministry of Small Business and Economic Development and the Leadership and Management Development Council of BC have created eBusiness Connection.

A BC-based not-for-profit e-business resource centre, eBC was created in response to the entrepreneurial community's demand for more and better e-business and e-commerce resources.

### **eBC Services**

We offer a unique and comprehensive collection of e-business information services to help BC's small businesses adapt to technological change, and maintain and grow their businesses.

#### **Online resources**

- ▶ Our Website, <http://www.e-bc.ca>, contains information, downloadable guides, case studies and links
- ▶ Our Blog, <http://www.ebizblog.ca>, features articles on upcoming seminars
- ▶ Our Solution Supplier Database, <http://www.ebizpages.ca>, contains eBC approved companies offering a variety of services designed specifically for small business.

#### **Office library and research center**

- ▶ Our office is located within Small Business BC and is open during regular office hours
- ▶ Conduct online business research
- ▶ Browse the in-house library
- ▶ Consult with our knowledgeable staff for more in-depth assistance.

#### **Seminars**

- ▶ Our information-packed e-business seminars are tailored to meet the needs of small businesses owners with an online presence.
- ▶ Our seminar formats include Brown Bag lunch series on Tuesday's at noon, evening seminars and Saturday seminars.

#### **Free 1 on 1 consultation**

- ▶ We provide one-on-one, private counseling by staff specially trained in various areas of e-business.

## Every Business Needs a Website

Electronic commerce or e-commerce refers to business transactions that happen online. That is, selling on the Internet. Electronic business or e-business refers to more than just selling online.

In Canada's private sector, more than 75% of businesses are estimated to be using the Internet to facilitate some aspect of their business. In fact, more than 62% of businesses in Western Canada operate a website.

### ***The Benefits of eBusiness***

E-Business is about utilizing Internet technologies -- such as email and online banking solutions, and more sophisticated systems such as web-based customer relationship management solutions — to provide superior customer service, streamline business processes, increase sales and reduce costs.

- **Consumer demand**

- ▶ Consumers demand information and businesses' websites are where more and more of them are finding that information.

- **Cost effective advertising**

- ▶ Dollar for dollar the web is the best place to advertise. Compared to traditional media such as TV, Radio and Yellow Pages a website:

- Information can be updated and added 24/7
- Accessed 24/7
- Multilingual
- Interactive
- Searchable

- **Levels the playing field**

- ▶ The Internet levels the playing field for small businesses. That is, it allows small business operators to compete on equal footing with larger businesses in the same industry.

- **Increase customer interaction**

- ▶ Email communications, website FAQs and auto-responders are examples of simple and cost effective electronic techniques that can help to improve communications between you and your clients/customers.

- **Increase brand awareness**

- ▶ Even if you are not considering selling online, having a website that promotes your business, provides contact information, and outlines your unique value proposition — that is, the unique collection of benefits attributed to your product or service which create value for your customers or clients -- will simply increase your reach and value in the marketplace, and make it easier for your potential clients/customers to find you.

## Start With a Domain Name

What's in a name? Plenty, especially if you are marketing or selling online. A domain name provides an online identity and contact point for your business or organization. Marketers are so aware of the monetary value attached to names and their use on the Internet, domain name buying and selling has become a business in itself; some coveted domain names have been sold for more than a million dollars.

Choosing an appropriate yet available name is no easy task in a saturated market -- world-wide, registered domain names near 5 billion and counting. Therefore, choosing the right domain name means balancing availability with brand recognition and user appeal.

- **What is a Domain Name?**
  - ▶ A domain name is a unique alpha-numeric address used to identify and locate a specific computer on the internet.
  
- **What is a Domain Name extension?**
  - ▶ A domain name extension is what appears after the domain name, ex: [www.e-bc.ca](http://www.e-bc.ca) -- .ca is the extension. Choosing your extension is just as important as deciding on a domain name
  
- **Choosing a name**
  - ▶ On the Internet, short, easy to remember names that relate to your core business work best. Nevertheless, simple, very short domains are often unavailable so, unless your company or product name is unique, you may have to create a two-word combination.
  
  - ▶ **Use your business name**  
When choosing a name, keep in mind that you are not restricted to your registered business name. Therefore, although you may want to choose a name that contains all or part of your company name, alternately you may want to use the name of a product or service that you offer.
  
  - ▶ **.com or .ca?**  
Should you register a generic top level domain (dot-com) or a country code top level domain (dot-ca)? This all depends on the market for your product or service. If you are selling strictly to Canadians, or if being known as Canadian is an important feature of your product or service, then you are better off with a dot-ca domain.
  
  - ▶ **Hard to Misspell**  
If people can misspell something, they will. The longer and more complex your domain name, the harder it is for your customers to type it in correctly. Many of them can't type well to start with, so to type in a long name may lose you lots of business.
  
  - ▶ **Easy to Say**

Say your prospective domain name out loud to listen to its sounds. See if your tongue gets twisted around any syllables.

► **Domain Name Tools**

Several tools can help you in the process of coming up with a company name or a domain name -- most of them owned by domain registrars to attract business.

**DNwiz** ([www.dnwiz.com](http://www.dnwiz.com)) is a wizard that allows two sets of keywords.

**The Domain Name Generator** ([www.domain-generator.net](http://www.domain-generator.net)) can generate utterly random names and can combine up to 5 keywords and check availability of each resulting domain.

**DomainFellow.com** ([www.domainfellow.com](http://www.domainfellow.com)) lets you start with a keyword and then adds up to 1,000 popular prefixes or suffixes to that word. For each combination you can see which domains are available and which have been taken.

**NameBoy** ([www.nameboy.com](http://www.nameboy.com)) is one of the oldest and best. You enter a primary and a secondary word to work with, select the type of site you have, and whether or not you want to turn on the hyphenation and rhyming features.

**Random Word Generator**

(<http://watchout4snakes.com/creativitytools/RandomWord/RandomWordPlus.aspx>) Generates a random word with parameters supplied by the user. Good for empty vessel naming.

🔦 **Searching availability**

- Only when you have developed a number of possible company (or product) names, should you begin the domain name search. The reason is that so many good domain names are already taken, and you may be influenced to only use what is left over.

🔦 **Domain Name Registrar**

- An organization or company authorized by its respective government or by ICANN (the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) to provide domain name registration services. [www.icann.org](http://www.icann.org)
- .ca domains are regulated by the Canadian Internet Registration Authority [www.cira.ca](http://www.cira.ca)
- There are many different registrars you can choose from such as:

▪ <b>Network Solutions:</b>	<a href="http://www.networksolutions.com">www.networksolutions.com</a>
▪ <b>Register.com:</b>	<a href="http://www.register.com">www.register.com</a>
▪ <b>Net Nation:</b>	<a href="http://www.netnation.com">www.netnation.com</a>
▪ <b>Webnames.ca</b>	<a href="http://www.webnames.ca">www.webnames.ca</a>
▪ <b>Domain People</b>	<a href="http://www.domainpeople.com">www.domainpeople.com</a>

Visit [www.ebizpages.ca](http://www.ebizpages.ca) to find more domain registration companies.

🔦 **Prices & Competition**

- ▶ The cost to register a domain name depends on which company you decided to go with, on average it will cost about \$10 - \$30 for a *one year* subscription.
- ▶ Competition between registrars is strong and as such prices and services vary greatly.

🔦 **Registering: What to know**

Registering your domain name is simple and easy. You can do it online or by phone.

▶ **Length of term**

It is suggested that you register your domain name for 3-5 years to ensure you maintain the name and the registration cost is less expensive over a longer period of time.

▶ **Renewal**

Time and time again companies forget to renew their domain names and are left with non working Web sites and email systems. Do not let this happen. Renewal is simple. You can call your registrar or log on to their website to re-register and pay.

▶ **Put it in your name**

If you instruct an individual or company to register your domain name on your behalf ensure that it is registered to you. If it is not registered in your name then you will not be able to make changes to it.

▶ **Portability**

You may switch your domain name registrar at any time and the registration period for the domain name registration will not be changed or lost. The old registrar is permitted to charge you an administrative fee, which cannot exceed \$20.00 irrespective of the number of registrations you may have.

▶ **Protect your identity**

Every time you register a domain name, your personal contact information is available on the Internet for anyone to see, including spammers, identity thieves, or telemarketers. Always use a **WhoisProtector** when registering a domain name.

🔦 **Your email address**

- ▶ All domain names come with an email address
- ▶ A common mistake is to register a domain but use a personal email address.

## Your Website: Think, Launch and Grow

### 4 options

Once you've taken care of the basics, you need to decide how you will design and build your website. Below are the four main ways to get a website up and running for your business.

#### ▶ **DIY**

The least expensive (but probably most time consuming) option is to design and build a website yourself. The cost-savings of the do-it-yourself option may be outweighed by the time required to design and build your own site. If you are a novice with computers, this is time that may be better spent doing what you do best – building and growing your business

#### ▶ **A friend**

Very similar to the DIY solution, hiring a friend can be a very cost effective method of building a website. They may not have the required design, development or Internet marketing skills and you may have to hire other individuals to ensure all your project needs are met.

#### ▶ **A student**

Hiring a student can be a cost-effective option for a small business owner on a budget. A skilled, enthusiastic student can design and build you a basic website, and can advise you on search engine optimization and other Internet marketing techniques. The cost of the hiring a student depends on the nature of the relationship.

#### ▶ **A professional**

Consider your needs: Not all website design firms have the same skills or the same areas of expertise. Make sure that the designer you choose has the necessary knowledge and skills to meet your needs.

Ask to see previous work: This is the best way to assess their skills. But don't let yourself be fooled by appearances. In the Web world, looks can be deceiving. The user-friendliness of a site is often more important than its design.

### Before you sign the contract

- ▶ Get 3 references
- ▶ Contact by telephone
  - Ask "would you hire this company again?"

### What is the most important thing?

- ▶ Content, content, content
- ▶ Length of development effected by delivery of content

### CMS: Take control of your site

A CMS, or Content Management System, is a web application used for managing websites and web content. A CMS supports the creation, management, distribution and publishing of information. It also may provide the ability to manage the structure of the site, the appearance of the published pages, and the navigation provided to the users.

CMS provides you with a simple, non-technical way of updating your content. This is typically (but not always) done via a web-based interface that works much like Word does.

Just point-and-click, type in the new words, and hit save. Your site is instantly updated. Equally easy is adding new pages, deleting old ones, or restructuring the site to match your new business model. You can now concentrate on the content, not the technology.

## Hosting Your Website

Choosing a hosting company and appropriate hosting package is usually a decision that is made in consultation with your web developer. After all, they know what tools and technologies have been used to create the website and what the requirements are for hosting. Some things to think about when choosing a host:

### What features do I need?

- ▶ Amount of storage space on the server (size of website)
- ▶ Amount of transfer/bandwidth – how many users will be interacting with my website and how big are the files they will transfer?
- ▶ Technologies that are installed on the server – there are two major types of hosting packages: Windows and Linux/Apache hosting – and there are a lot of different programming languages that may need to be installed for certain websites (eg. php, pear, perl, asp, .NET Framework, mysql, etc)
- ▶ What is the average downtime of the server?

### Where will I Host?

- ▶ You can host anywhere in the world
- ▶ US and UK have the largest companies and cheapest hosting but also the most intrusive/disruptive legal issues.

### Put it in YOUR NAME!

- ▶ Even if your web developer sets it up for you, make sure the hosting account is registered under your business name (like everything else related to your website).

## ***Useful Links***

### **eBusiness Connection**

<http://www.e-bc.ca>

### **Ebiz.enable**

<http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/epic/internet/inee-ef.nsf/en/Home>

### **eBizBlog**

<http://www.ebizblog.ca>

### **eBizPages**

<http://www.ebizpages.ca>

### **Small Business Computing**

<http://www.smallbusinesscomputing.com>

### **Canadian e-Business Initiative**

<http://www.cebi.ca>

## **Please Note**

eBusiness Connection strives to ensure the accuracy of the information in its guides however policies, procedures, costs and other items mentioned within this guide are subject to change. The responsibility for verification of this information rests solely with the reader.