

Do It Yourself Or Outsource

If you think you can do it all from writing website content to search engine optimization, you are wrong. It cannot be done, and you should not try doing it. Everyone tries to demonstrate multifaceted skill. In fact, some gurus encourage such behavior by recommending webmaster tools and resources. Some web companies offer tools to make website editing simple, and all webmasters should have a bit of html at their finger tips.

I find the tasks of managing cgi scripts, website design, search engine optimization, and all those other webmaster tasks tedious. Sure, some would suggest that if I have a site, I should know how to do what a webmaster must do. I say, "Give me a break." There's got to be a better way, but I have not found it. Of course, people claiming they can do it all will disagree. For the rest of us, there must be alternatives.

We need alternatives because it takes too long to learn the intricacies of running a website. That may not seem like a big deal. Just take the time, learn it, and do it. If a webmaster takes this tack, time will be shifted from what that webmaster does best to what that webmaster does poorly. Whenever you take time to do what you do not know, you will always use more time. This is what we call a learning curve, or it may just become a retrospective waste of time.

During the past few years, I have learned some html. CGI script installation, website design, and search engine optimization rob my time. There are better things for me to do. If my skills were in any of these categories, I would delight in doing them rather than finding them a drudgery.

If you have a website, you are a webmaster. Web mastering does not require you to know how to do every thing. Here are some basic suggestions to get it done.

1. Write articles

If you know how to write and have an instinct to write, then write! Thanks to Google, it's all about content, and it better be original content. Further, it better be focused on your website theme; what your site is all about. If you can write a little, write a lot; you'll get better at it. If you can't write, find a ghost writer, or locate a software program that helps you articulate your message.

2. Simplify your site design

My wife says, "Less means more." Flash multi-media, xml, e-commerce stores, images, audio, graphic design rack up the tasks and options for website design. Keep it simple. The best sales pitches (and we are all doing this to pitch something), are simple, clear, and convincing with a brief audio message. If you do it yourself, it will be easy; if you hire someone, it won't cost as much.

3. Outsource the difficult stuff.

If you can't do it, outsource it. Outsourcing is buzz-word of the day. Corporations do it, and Senators eschew it. Tom Friedman explains it (The World Is Flat); a Chief Technology Officer I know is exiting from it. He explains, "We tried. Outsourcing has cost us thousands. The work is delayed and sloppy. We are moving the work back on shore."

Finding someone reliable, whom you can trust challenges social skills. Take time to develop rapport with the technical person to whom you outsource work. Trace every referral and review all work. Use elance.com or scriptlance.com (or a similar site) that will manage payments. Even these sites can be risky. An acquaintance in India wrote to me, "We don't use referrals from these sites; we have been disappointed too often." Whether you outsource locally or overseas, know you better know the person and their skills before that first payment is made.

As a webmaster, I want to get it done right. What I can't do I want to pay someone a reasonable fee for the best results. Most of all, I wish to avoid distracting myself from what I do best.

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