

Article I

The Value Of A Website

It seems these days “*everyone*” is telling you we must have a website.

Before rushing ahead to build one, explore some of the pro’s and con’s of a website. Maintaining a website can be an expensive venture but also provide excellent service to your membership as well as the general public.

The basic questions to start with, who are we building a website for and what will they likely want to know.

Point 1 – Who are we building a website for?

Your website presents information that is accessible anytime, from anywhere, by anyone. Your audience is not just your membership, but also potential new members, and the general public looking for information.

For your membership, your primary audience, consider what they want to know or be able to do late at night or on the weekend, for example:

- Health benefit questions and forms,
- New potential jobs coming up,
- Dues paid to questions, (*See comments under confidential member data*)

Your other audiences are there for different reasons, for example:

- A list of contacts,
- The types of work the union does,
- Apprentice application forms and process,

Point 2 – What will they likely want to know?

Now that you have defined for what audience you want to develop content,

a few suggestions on the development:

- Keep the web pages simple with few graphics, they slow down the page loading process,
- Make sure all page links actually work,
- Keep the contacts list up-to-date,
- Keep the content changing. Some ways to do this include a photo gallery, current issues of newsletters, lists of new apprentices and new jobs,
- Who at the local will be maintaining the webpage content,
- With the requirement to change the content, means the local’s business agents will need to write new content.

Having confidential member data on the website?

If you plan to have live member data on your website, there are very serious aspects to consider, just a few are:

- Have this portion of the site password protected, with each member assigned their own unique access code,
- For this portion of the site, program in a Secure Socket Layer (SSL), SSL encrypts the information as it travels the internet between the web site and the users’ computer,
- Build in user tracking and attempted login’s. You will then be able to block out site abusers,
- Hire a reputable firm to “audit” or try to break into the secured portion.