Qnet Web Site Design and Development Process

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QNET INFORMATION SERVICES (Qnet) is a full service technology solutions provider and value added reseller (VAR) offering managed services and technical consulting, applications development, web design, and hosting services. Founded in 1999, Qnet is a privately held Certified MBE corporation with headquarters in Dallas Texas. Qnet is recognized as a leader in providing managed services to local, state, and federal government agencies, and in 2005, was recognized by the Dallas Morning News as one of the top IT solutions companies in the region. Qnet was also recognized in the fourth quarter 2009 edition Minority Business News (MBNUSA) magazine as one of the top 400 national minority enterprises. Qnet specializes in the development and implementation of technologies – specifically in the automation of web solutions and the management of technology infrastructures.

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There are numerous steps in the web site design and development process. From gathering initial information, to the creation of your web site, and finally the maintenance to keep your web site up to date and current.

The processes Qnet use to design your site are as follow:

1. Information Gathering
2. Planning
3. Design
4. Development
5. Testing and Delivery
6. Maintenance

Phase One: Information Gathering

The first step in designing a successful web site is to gather information. Many things need to be taken into consideration when the look and feel of your site is created.

This first step is actually the most important one, as it involves a solid understanding of the customer it is created for. **It involves a good understanding of** *you* the customer – what your business goals and desires are, and how the web can be utilized to help you achieve those goals.

It is important for Qnet to start off by asking a lot of questions to help understand your business and your needs in a web site.

Certain things to consider are:

- **Purpose**
  What is the purpose of the site? Do you want to provide information, promote a service, sell a product… ?

- **Goals**
  What do you hope to accomplish by building this web site? Two of the more common goals are either to make money or share information.
- **Target Audience**
  Is there a specific group of people that will help you reach your goals? It is helpful to picture the "ideal" person you want to visit your web site. Consider their age, sex or interests – this will later help determine the best design style for your site.
- **Content**
  What kind of information will the target audience be looking for on your site? Are they looking for specific information, a particular product or service, online ordering…?

Phase Two: Planning

Using the information gathered from phase one, it is time to put together a plan for your web site. This is the point where a site map is developed.

The site map is a list of all main topic areas of the site, as well as sub-topics, if applicable. This serves as a guide as to what content will be on the site, and is essential to developing a consistent, easy to understand navigational system. The end-user of the web site – aka your customer – must be kept in mind when designing your site. These are, after all, the people who will be learning about your service or buying your product. A good user interface creates an easy to navigate web site, and is the basis for this.

During the planning phase, your web designer will also help you decide what technologies should be implemented. Elements such as interactive forms, ecommerce, flash, etc. are discussed when planning your web site.

Phase Three: Design

Drawing from the information gathered up to this point, it's time to determine the look and feel of your site.

Target audience is one of the key factors taken into consideration. A site aimed at teenagers, for example, will look much different than one meant for a financial institution. As part of the design phase, it is also important to incorporate elements such as the company logo or colors to help strengthen the identity of your company on the web site.

Our web designer will create one or more prototype designs for your web site. This is typically a .jpg image of what the final design will look like. Often times the customer will be sent an email with the mock-ups for your web site. After we have a good prototype the customer like , we take it a step further by giving you access to a secure area of the website meant for customers to view work in progress.

Qnet designers will allow you to view your project throughout the design and development stages. The most important reason for this is that it gives you the opportunity to express your

likes and dislikes on the site design in advance so that we can create the look you want and save time in redesign.

In this phase, communication between both customer and designer is crucial to ensure that the final web site will match your needs and taste. It is important that customer work closely with our designer, exchanging ideas, until customer arrive at the final design for your web site.

Then development can begin…

Phase Four: Development

The developmental stage is the point where the web site itself is created. At this time, our web designer will take all of the individual graphic elements from the prototype and use them to create the actual, functional site.

This is typically done by first developing the home page, followed by a "shell" for the interior pages. The shell serves as a template for the content pages of your site, as it contains the main navigational structure for the web site. Once the shell has been created, your designer will take your content and distribute it throughout the site, in the appropriate areas.

Elements such as interactive contact forms, flash animations or ecommerce shopping carts are implemented and made functional during this phase, as well.

This entire time, our designer should continue to make work in-progress web site available to you for viewing, so that you can suggest any additional changes or corrections you would like to have done.

On the technical front, a successful web site requires an understanding of front-end web development. This involves writing valid XHTML / CSS code that complies to current web standards, maximizing functionality, as well as accessibility for as large an audience as possible.

This is tested in the next phase…

Phase Five: Testing and Delivery

At this point, our web designer will attend to the final details and test your web site. We will test things such as the complete functionality of forms or other scripts, as well last testing for last minute compatibility issues (viewing differences between different web browsers), ensuring that your web site is optimized to be viewed properly in the most recent browser versions.

Qnet web designers are well versed in current standards for web site design and development. The basic technologies currently used are XHTML and CSS (Cascading Style Sheets). As part of testing, our designer should check to be sure that all of the code written for your web site validates. Valid code means that your site meets the current web development standards – this is helpful when checking for issues such as cross-browser compatibility as mentioned above.

Once the customer give final approval, it is time to deliver the site. An FTP (File Transfer Protocol) program is used to upload the web site files to your server. Qnet offer domain name registration and web hosting services as well. Once these accounts have been setup, and your web site uploaded to the server, the site should be put through one last run-through. This is just precautionary, to confirm that all files have been uploaded correctly, and that the site continues to be fully functional.

This marks the official launch of your site, as it is now viewable to the public.

Phase Six: Maintenance

Although the development of your web site is complete, Qnet will provide ongoing maintenance for changes you may need to the content. One way to bring repeat visitors to your site is to offer new content or products on a regular basis. Qnet will be more than happy to continue working together with you, to update the information on your web site. Qnet offer maintenance packages at reduced rates, based on how often you anticipate making changes or additions to your web site.

If you prefer to be more hands on, and update your own content, Qnet provides a CMS (Content Management System) that can be implemented to your web site. This is something that would be decided upon during the Planning stage. With a CMS, Qnet will utilize online software to develop a database driven site for you.

A web site driven by a CMS gives you the ability to edit the content areas of the web site yourself. You are given access to a back-end administrative area, where you can use an online text editor (similar to a mini version of Microsoft Word). You'll be able to edit existing content and add new pages and content yourself. It's really up to the customer as far as how comfortable they feel as far as updating their own web site. Some customers prefer to have all the control so that they can make updates to their own web site the minute they decide to do so. Others prefer to hand off the web site entirely, as they have enough tasks on-hand that are more important for them to handle directly. Qnet is flexible to the customer preference.

Qnet can take over the web site maintenance for you – one less thing for you to do is always a good thing in these busy times!

Other maintenance type items include SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and SES (Search Engine Submission). This is the optimization of you web site with elements such as title, description and keyword tags which help your web site achieve higher rankings in the search engines. The previously mentioned code validation is something that plays a vital role in SEO, as well.

There are a lot of details involved in optimizing and submitting your web site to the search engines – Qnet have the experiences and in house staff to provide this service for you.