

Joining the 21st Century of Business

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First, WWW is not an acronym for World War with an extra "W" because the key was stuck, nor does it mean "What Women Want", although it could. Some of you reading this may wonder, "Who doesn't know that WWW means "World Wide Web?" For people active in rural communities, the WWW may not be as integral a part of your daily business... at least yet.

The WWW is a worldwide communications and information tool that has become as essential to business today as the telephone. If you're in the tourism industry and not already using the WWW or research, promotion, or communication then you're operating in an era gone "Bye-bye". Okay, let's put it into tourism terms... "You've missed the boat, plane, car, RV, and train." Furthermore, you can be assured your prospective long-haul or international visitor won't be taking any of these modes of transportation to get to your tourism business, nor may they be taking your business seriously.

You might ask yourself "Why not?" You've done your part. You've purchased advertising, printed brochures and distributed them, erected signs and billboards, and listed your business with local tourism and business associations. "Isn't that enough?"

Well, when the WWW first became available to business, it was as optional to doing business, as a tie is to a suit... it's a good thing to have if you want to make a good impression. Just as fax machines became a cost of doing business once people got over the fear of them and learned that it wasn't necessary to spell 'facsimile' that just 'fax' would do, being connected to the WWW with an e-mail address is also now a requirement. This doesn't mean that you can get rid of your fax machine, no siree.

The WWW is a necessary tool to business, especially in tourism. The WWW can add to the effectiveness and bottom line of your business, by increasing sales and even saving money on things such as advertising and research.

SETTING UP YOUR WWW ACCESS TIPS

Monthly user fees to access the WWW apply permitting you to send and receive mail, research various websites as well as to access free services 24 / 7 / 365. If you want to have a website, then there are monthly web-hosting fees, as well as design and maintenance fees if you need to hire someone to create your website.

Costs for web design vary depending on the complexity of the website being created, the skills of the designer, number of graphics, and whether you require them to do maintenance and regular updates. Today, most computer savvy users are able to design and maintain their own websites through user-friendly software such as Microsoft Word's FrontPage. Monthly maintenance charges by web designers are virtually unheard of at this time of the industry (but were once the norm), and are generally unqualified extra fees that you shouldn't incur. You should also be able to get from the designer on disk, at little or no extra charge, all your web files.

In Vancouver, unlimited access to the WWW on a regular telephone line is \$20 per month. Higher speed, cable access is available at an average of \$50 per month. So for a minimum of \$120 per year (a relatively small cost) the tourism industry will recognize your business and be able to contact it for information or bookings.

If you're going to use the web as a marketing tool, for \$20 per month you can rent unlimited access website space of 10 MB. This site size will satisfy the needs of most small businesses, provided pictures are kept to a reasonable size.

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