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Writings MAG

April 2012

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PRIZES

**TECHNOLOGY
SPECIAL**

Your EBOOK

Write it. Make it. Sell it!

- ✓ Make social networking work for you
- ✓ Software to make your writing life easier
- ✓ Build your website and boost your traffic

Creative writing ideas

A short story
in a weekend?
How *you* can do it

HOW TO:

**Sell your writing
to businesses**

Including

WRITERS' NEWS

News you can use!



**Cathy
Kelly**

*"1,000 words a day
would be wonderful.
If I do 300 I'm delighted."*

Create a successful writing website

Where do you start with building a professional presence online? Web entrepreneur **Paula Wynne** has some ideas to get you started.

Every author, writer, aspiring novelist, poet and even journal keepers should have a highly visible web profile with their own website – or they need their head read. Sorry... but it's true! In today's fast-and-furious cyber-age the world is getting smaller as the internet weaves an invisible social and business web around us. Any writer who believes that they will one day be a published author must learn about web visibility and how to build a following where their readers are able to have some kind of personal contact with them.

Emerging and new writers need to create a readership, which will help them get published. It's a superb way of introducing agents and publishers to you and your material, and if you can create a platform of followers, readers and interest groups, you will be more valuable to a publisher one day. This resonates with my own story: I established a business platform with my business sites, iHubbub and Remote Employment, which leveraged my proposal to publishers and led to me being commissioned to write both my books. I aim to do the same for my novels. A large platform or fan-base along with a skilfully crafted novel could result in writing dreams – a published novel.

Let's spend some time looking at the nuts and bolts of how you can create a pretty damn hot website that will intrigue your readers and entice a publisher to rap on your door after your query lands on their mat. To help you choose the different options presented to you, we'll break each down into: Skill Level, Time Needed, Tools Required and Pros and Cons.

Let's get started.

Free v blog v paid

A free site is pretty self-explanatory while a bespoke site is completely tailored to your needs. Bespoke sites can be expensive and time-consuming to build and costs can run into tens of thousands very easily. 'Instant Sites' or 'Hosted Online Solutions' offer off-the-shelf websites that have already been developed and provide you with the software at a reduced cost with only brand changes to be made. Some give you templates to choose from with easy layout options and away you go. On the other hand a blog is a great way of getting online in a flash and features a wide range of options to get online really quickly.

WordPress blogs

WordPress.com offers a free service, which gets you started in minutes. You can choose various templates and, just by clicking on them, you will get a preview to see how your

Skill Level: Beginner

Time Needed: An afternoon

Tools Required: An inkling of web awareness

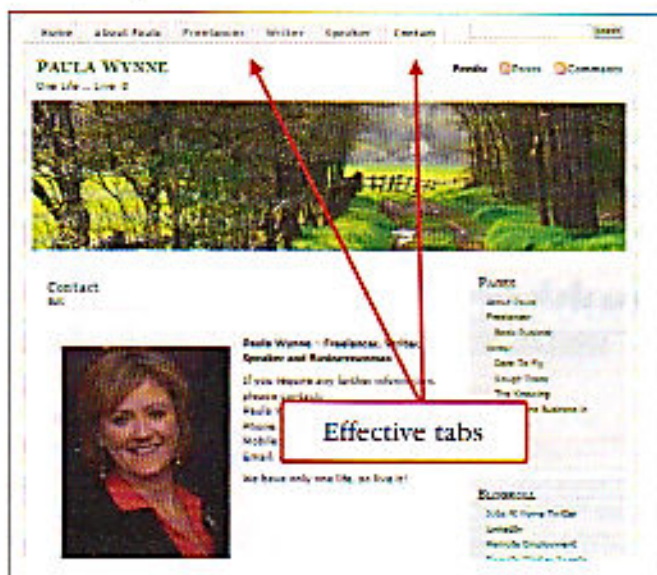
Pros:

- Easy to get online
- Variety of templates to choose
- Many widgets and gadgets available

Cons:

- May have steep learning curve

www.wordpress.com



I liked the tabs on this Wordpress blog template, which is called Misty Look by Sadish because it looked so similar to a normal website.

WordPress.org v Wordpress.com

WordPress is also an Open Source project. It enables you to use it for anything from your cat's home page to a Fortune 500 website without paying a license fee. WordPress.org is completely customisable and can be used for almost anything. WordPress.com lets you get started with a new and free WordPress-based blog in seconds, but varies in several ways and is less flexible than the WordPress.org you download, install and host yourself.

WordPress.org is an ideal starting block and if you hang in there you should have a working website that can be updated and maintained through an admin section. However, because it was initially designed as a blogging system, adding commonly used website features, such as e-commerce, user permissions and workflow queues can be

Drupal

Drupal is an open source project, which means there are hundreds of people, and most of them experienced developers, all over the world working on the software so you get the benefit of their experience and expertise for free.

Along with a full Content Managed System (CMS) it offers a broad range of features and services including user administration, publishing workflow, discussion boards, news aggregation, metadata for optimisation and XML publishing for content sharing purposes.

Tens of thousands of people and organisations have used Drupal to power scores of different web sites. For example, Drupal has been successfully used on high profile sites such as The White House, London Gov, Nasa, Economist, MTV, BBC Magazines, Greenpeace and iHubbub.

It is perfectly suited to community and membership sites, with many social features built in. It has an API, meaning it can play ball with other applications and websites, such as Twitter and Facebook. It has a massive community of dedicated friendly developers, who create and maintain literally thousands of extensions, which will cover just about any requirement you could ever dream up.

Skill Level: Advanced

Time Needed: Depending on how far you want to go and believe me, the sky is the limit.

Tools Required: A Drupal developer (<http://ihubbub.com/drupal-developers>) or suitcase full of patience and determination to teach yourself.



Customising a Drupal site can lead to a great looking site, especially if you want to build a writing platform and engage your followers.

Drupal Gardens

Drupal is perhaps the most complex CMS available, but it is without question the most powerful and flexible. The downside is that it may have quite a steep learning curve because it uses a fundamentally different approach to website architecture.

With this in mind, take a good look at Drupal Gardens: www.drupalgardens.com, which takes all the clout and expertise of their development team and hands it over to the novice in an easy, drag and drop online hosting facility. Using Drupal itself may be overkill if you only need a small web

building a writing platform. Thus Drupal Gardens is a perfect option to start small and grow big with Drupal.

Skill Level: Beginner

Time Needed: An afternoon

Tools Required: Nifty mouse to drag and drop ... oh, and a good partner who will massage a sore hand after all your playing!

Pros:

- Robust and secure platform
- No up-scaling problems – you can go from a small site to large traffic magnet, without issues
- Flexibility – it can do just about anything you can imagine
- Powerful user permission system
- Integration with other sites and applications
- If you're not techie Joomla, Wordpress and other alternatives may seem daunting so start with Drupal Gardens

Cons:

- Drupal is made by programmers, not designers - it will do just about anything you want, but it may look standard and not branded to your specs so you may need some bespoke work done by a developer.

www.drupal.org and www.drupalgardens.co.uk

Joomla

Joomla is another award-winning (CMS), which enables you to build websites and powerful online applications. Many aspects, including its ease-of-use and extensibility, have made Joomla one of the most popular choices for website software. Best of all, Joomla is another open source solution that is freely available to everyone.

This is an ideal solution if you don't have time and money to spend on a website. Out of the box it should provide everything you want to get a professional looking business website up and running in days. It expands reasonably well up to a certain size, but if you need more features it can become more expensive to develop.

Skill Level: Beginner to Advanced

Time Needed: A few days to get a basic site

Tools Required: Depending on your level of ability you may need some development help

Pros:

- Robust and secure platform
- Flexibility - it can do just about anything you can imagine
- Powerful user permission system

Cons:

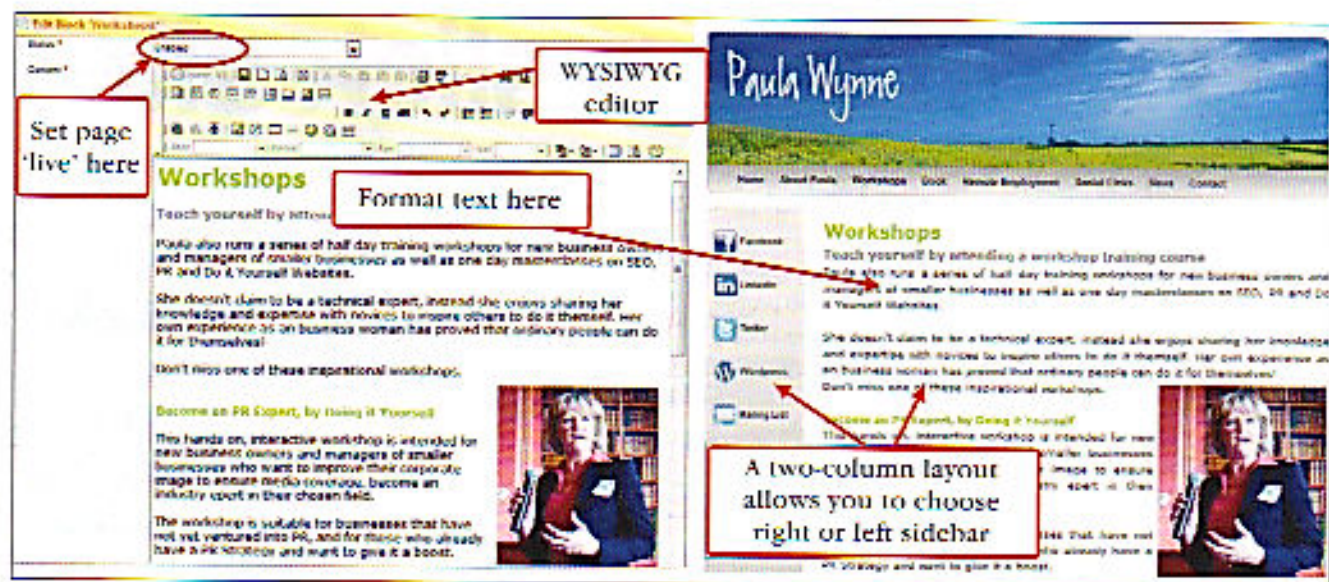
- May also be a tough learning curve
- Some templates are not out-of-the-box websites so explore extensively before deciding

www.joomla.org

Moonfruit

Moonfruit is another great piece of kit that can get anyone up and running in a morning or afternoon. If you want to change text, you simply click on it and change it. If you want to move an image, just haul it across the page, or drag the corners to change its size.

There is no technology to learn, no techie code, no form



There is a little box called 'View My Site' and each time you make a change you can click this to see the changes on the live site.

Moonfruit is available as both a free and a paid-for service with the free version of Moonfruit having some restricted features. Subscription-based Moonfruit packs are available at different prices. None of the templates on offer will show ads or carry Moonfruit branding, so the site is completely yours. I created a Moonfruit website on a Saturday afternoon.

Skill Level: Beginner

Time Needed: An afternoon will see your new writing site up and running

Tools Required: A bit of drag and drop

Pros:

- Easy-to-grasp platform
- Flexibility with huge range of playful goodies and gadgets
- Host of great looking templates

Cons:

- Be careful to choose the right template – once chosen you CANNOT change it
- May need to upgrade and pay if you want many images

www.moonfruit.com



Moonfruit has an editing facility and enables you to add metadata so Google can find your site.

Website Software

There are various software packages available for purchase,

compare the different packages to be certain it will suit your requirements. Once bought and tested, you can't simply return it because you can't use it.

Instant sites

Google the word 'instant site' or 'pay monthly website' and see the plethora of links that come up. Selecting one is entirely your choice. However, I would suggest that you can afford to be choosy. Look at their own website and see what kind of image they are portraying and hunt through all their templates to find something that matches your ideas for your own author's brand. My own personal site (www.paulawynne.com) was created through Lucent Vision's Pay Monthly Sites.

www.lucentvision.co.uk

Summary

Whether you are an established author promoting your books to a wider audience or a new writer peddling manuscripts to publishers and agents, having your own site will take your profile to the next level. With the internet being used by so many people to complete transactions or to find out information, you really cannot afford not to have a highly visible internet presence.

First and foremost, make sure you own the domain and the IP and html code if you build your own site through a developer. If you find something you like be sure they offer a CMS system to manage your data and content – this is vital because you can't afford to pay each time you want to upload a blog or post an article.

There are a number of different options open to you, from a simple blog, to a freebie or cheapo thingy-majig or a fancy-dancy specially built site. Before I found a publisher for my first book, *Create A Successful Website*, I set up a blog and then moved to an instant site. Whichever you choose, go for simplicity and accessibility and take all the free trials. Most importantly, play, play, play! User experience, as the development boys say, will make or break your decision when choosing a web platform. The subject of free versus paid sites is covered extensively in *Create A Successful Website*, along with other important subjects to help you do