

# Best Practices Series

Compiled by Members of the AKC Delegate Companion Events Committee

## Issue: People now obtain information through Websites, Facebook and other Social Media

Websites have been around for over 20 years now, making Yellow Page advertising obsolete. Additionally, many Not-For-Profit Training Clubs are in direct competition with For-Profit Training Businesses.

## Response: Develop a Club Website

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If your Club does not already have a website, there are several steps to be considered: Domain Name, Website Content, Website Host, and Website Builder. Should your Club decide to have a professional build your website, research all of the costs involved, especially when making changes.

### Domain Name

Selecting your Domain Name requires a lot of thought. Google your proposed name to see if any other business/organization is already using that or a similar one. Once selected, you need to register your Domain Name. There are domain registering services that will charge a fee; registration can be for one or multiple years. Some web hosting sites will register your domain name for you. Be sure to understand your options for obtaining, registering, and paying for your Domain Name. Most non-profit groups use the TLD designation “.org”. TLD stands for TopLevel Domain. Some of the free web hosts will use their name as the TLD.

### Website Content

Gather the types of Club Information you would like to see on your website. Will your site be used mainly to promote your Club's Shows/Trials, Training Classes, Membership Meetings, and Community Events? Will you also have a Members Only Page for Club/Board Minutes and Treasurer Reports? Will you want the capacity for online Class registration, PayPal usage, and/or allow website visitors to e-mail you directly? Develop a Club Committee comprised of those Members who will be responsible for your website content, and subsequent updates. Periodically, check to see that any links are in working order.

## Website Host

Search the web and look at various websites - especially for Dog Clubs that are similar to yours. Check at the bottom of their home page, and see if there is something like "Powered by Breederoo", or "Powered by Weebly".

If you find a Website that you like, e-mail the webmaster, and ask if they are happy with their website. Ask if it was easy to create; also ask about the ease of maintaining and updating. If asked, they may also tell you the cost. Google the web hosting service, and check out their website for additional information. Go to [www.webhostingfreereviews.com](http://www.webhostingfreereviews.com) for free reviews on web hosting sites. Check out the free web hosting sites. Some are VERY good, but others get "paid" by banners and pop-up ads on your website. You have no control over these ads, and some might not be to your liking. Some free websites make it difficult to transfer to another web hosting site...so you would have to start all over again in building your website. Also, they might not offer much technical support. Some might also own your domain name, so you would have to develop another name.

## Website Builder

Since most of us are not website designers, or experienced in using HTML code, choosing a website builder is very important. Many website hosts supply a website builder for free, some even will install the builder for you. Some builders are easier to use than others, some have quite a few templates to choose from, and some provide PayPal capability. Some of the website builders can even get you up and running in several hours....using their drag n drop website builders. Again, do your homework when selecting a website builder

## Conclusion

Determine how much time and money your Club has to implement and maintain a website. Assuming limited budgets, and that most Club members are not versed in HTML, there are definitely web hosting sites that would be a good fit for your Club. Exercise due diligence in researching a website host, selecting a domain name, and a website builder. Talk to friends about their Club's website, its ease of use, cost, and maintainability. Implement your website in stages. Upon completion, promote your Club's website by announcing it to all of your friends via Facebook, and your e-mail lists.