

Your web presence for a business is more than just a website. It includes Social Media such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, review sites like Yelp or CitySearch and much more. However, at the core of all this is usually a website, the home base your customers and clients will return. Unlike Social Media, it's a something that you control completely. For most businesses it is their most valuable asset. For that reason, business owners should at least know something about how you create, publish and host a website. That is this week's topic. Let's go over what you need to do this week and some important points.

This week you will be reading Chapter 2 of the Electronic Commerce

Technology Infrastructure: The Internet and the World Wide Web

After reading take the Chapter 2 Quiz on Blackboard

Through this week's reading in your textbook you will learn:

- About the origin, growth, and current structure of the Internet
- How packet-switched networks are combined to form the Internet
- How Internet, e-mail, and Web protocols work
- About Internet addressing and how Web domain names are constructed
- About the history and use of markup languages on the Web
- How HTML tags and links work
- About the cost and performance of Internet connections technologies
- About Internet2 and the Semantic Web

This is all valuable information. Pay special attention to the sections about how smartphones and tablets are taking over, Web domain names, markup languages, how HTML tags and links work. Coming soon to a computer near you will be the semantic web, while the Internet of Things is soon to be a part of our cars, offices, homes and even our refrigerators. You need to be aware of these technologies since it will be opening many new opportunities for you in the very near future -- especially with the advent of the driverless car.

But let's put our feet back on the ground. Right now in this class the focus of this week's assignment is on learning about the technologies used to create your e-commerce site. Two of the basic technologies used for nearly all websites today are Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS).

Make sure you take a look at the two videos I provided, especially the one about Tim Berners Lee and HTML. They both provide a nice intro to HTML.

Now I would like to show you a practical example of HTML and CSS at work. Before we do, please keep in mind this is not an HTML class, so our exploration will be at a very high level. If you want to become a web developer, we have a number of other courses to help you.

A good way to see HTML at work is to look at the source code for a page. Let's take a look at one of the most popular e-commerce sites in the world – Zappos. <http://www.zappos.com/>

To see HTML in action simply right click on the page and select "View Page Source". This particular site has a lot of interactivity so it includes a lot of JavaScript, so you can see this is an important thing for a web developer to learn.

But let's see what HTML and CSS are doing. Let's find where the text Shop Women's is located. I'm selecting Cntl+F and using a text search. Here you can see tags surrounding the text. This tag, the href tag is used to make a clickable link. H4 makes the text into a 4th level headline. Class="z-hd-beanie" pulls display information from the stylesheet. Let's find the stylesheet and see if we can find z-hd-beanie. I'm entering stylesheet in search. Now I'm going to click on the link. Wow, this is a very complex stylesheet. Let's see if z-hd-beanie is here. Yup, there it is. I'm sure for all you who are not web developers this is a little overwhelming. But the point of showing you this is so you can see the relationship between what's on the screen and code that controls what we see.

Ultimately the best way to learn about the power of HTML and CSS is to try it out. Let's do that now. Luckily there's a fantastic resource to learn HTML and other scripting languages used on the web, the w3schools web site. It's run by the folks that actually create the standards for HTML and CSS, the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). One of it's founders is the father of HTML, none other than, Tim Berners Lee.

Let's take a look at this week's assignment. It's in two parts.

1. An exploration of website creation technologies
2. Select the method you would use to create an e-commerce for your business

Exploration of website building technologies

Part 1: Exploration of Website Creation Technologies

Steps:

1. Create a new Word Doc and call it TechExploration_[lastname]
2. Visit <http://www.w3schools.com/html/default.asp>
3. Across the top you will see HTML, CSS, Javascript, SQL, PHP, Bootstrap. Open each and read the Introduction.
4. Select Tutorials. Open several of these that interest you and find out what they are.
5. If you are unfamiliar with HTML and CSS do the following:
 - a. Pick 5 tutorials for HTML and 5 for CSS and do them
 - b. Document the completed tutorials by taking screen shots of what you created
 - c. Paste the screen shots in the Word Document
6. If you are already familiar with HTML and CSS do the following:
 - a. Pick two tutorial categories you want to learn more about
 - b. Do 5 of the tutorials for each category
 - c. Document the completed tutorials by taking screen shots of what you created
 - d. Paste the screen shots in the Word Document
7. Write a one paragraph reflection on what you learned
8. Attach the Word Doc to the post and submit

Now that you know about the basic unpinning of websites, when it comes to the creation of e-commerce sites you basically have three choices:

- Build it from scratch using Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) and other scripting languages and code
- Use a Content Management System (CMS) such as Word Press, Drupal, Joomla and others
- Or, use a Web Builder such as Wix, Weebly, or SquareSpace

What are the pros and cons? Let's outline them:

If you build from scratch here are the pros:

- If you can do-it-yourself, the costs are low since you only pay for hosting
- You will have total control over the look, feel and interactivity of your site
- HTML sites are more secure
- You have more control over the SEO aspects of web design
- Other coding languages can be easily integrated to add features and improve usability
- There are a lot of tools like Dreamweaver you can use to help you develop your site

Here are the cons:

- Most people don't have time to master all the skills needed to create today's dynamic, data driven websites
- Sites now need to be responsive to different platforms such as home computers, tablets and smartphones, which adds to their complexity to create
- Building sites from scratch can be very tedious
- Hiring a web designer/developer can be expensive
- Sites can quickly become obsolete if you don't keep up with latest changes in technology. For instance, the HTML is now transitioning from HTML 4 to HTML5.

If you use a CMS here are the advantages:

- A CMS is easy to install and some web hosts already have them installed for you
- You can manage your site from an admin panel from nearly any computer, meaning there's no technical knowledge required
- It's easy for a team to contribute to creating content using a CMS
- Many CMS such as WordPress, Drupal <https://www.drupal.org/> and Joomla <https://www.joomla.org/> are free. However, you will need to pay for hosting, and may need to pay for templates and specialized add-ons
- There are many add-ons you can use to extend your site's functionality. For instance, there are currently 46,445 plugins available at WordPress.org <https://wordpress.org/plugins/>
- Using different functions and add-ons you can make your site SEO friendly
- Most CMS solutions have robust analytics built in
- Most CMS solutions are responsive, that is, they automatically adjust to all platforms

Here are the CMS cons:

- Even though no technical knowledge is needed, you might need to be somewhat technically minded to install and use a CMS
- Even though you absolutely need to know coding, it really helps if you know something about HTML, CSS and PHP to get the most out of your CMS. Having a copy of Dreamweaver can help with this.
- CMS based sites are less secure than HTML sites. Consult with your web host to adjust for this.
- CMS sites can run slower than HTML sites due to using many more lines of code
- Sometimes the options are overwhelming. For instance, there are currently 46,445 plugins available at WordPress.org <https://wordpress.org/plugins/>
- Even though there are numerous templates available CMS sites tend to have a cookie-cutter look

Web Builder Pros

- Quick and easy to use. Visual page editors. Drag and drop elements. No coding at all.
- Good for small businesses that don't need large websites
- Hosting is included
- Shopping carts and some SEO are included.

Web Builder Cons

- More expensive. Higher monthly fees.
- Cookie cutter interfaces
- Much less flexible than other solutions. Few add-ons available.
- Can't download site and move to another host

After reviewing the Pros and Cons of each website creation method what is best for you in your current circumstances?

Part 2: My Website Creation Method

Steps:

1. Create a new section for your document titled:
Part 2: My E-commerce Site Method
2. Copy the set of questions below for your chosen e-commerce site method
Note: I have provided resources to help you, but you should also do your own research.
3. Upload the document into the Web Building Assignment on Canvas

If you choose building your site from scratch:

- Why did you choose to build your site from scratch?
- Which web hosting service would you use? Why?
 - <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2424725,00.asp>
- Would you build the site yourself, use a template or hire help? Explain.
- Which technologies would you use? Why?
 - <http://www.comentum.com/guide-to-web-application-development.html>

- List all resources used to research your answers

If you choose to use a CMS:

- Why did you choose a CMS?
- Would you use Drupal, Joomla, WordPress or something else? Why?
- <https://support.rackspace.com/how-to/cms-comparison-drupal-joomla-and-wordpress/>
- What web hosting service would you use? Why?
- <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2479353,00.asp>
- Would you create your own theme, purchase one, or try to use a free one?
 - Do some research and about themes for your chosen CMS and share what you found.
- Name some add-ons or plugins that you would use? Why?
- List all resources used to research your answers

If you choose a Website Builder:

- Why did you choose a Website Builder?
- What is the difference between a Website Builder and an E-Commerce Online Store Builder? Include the differences in services and price.
 - <http://www.websitebuilderexpert.com/website-builders-comparison-chart/>
 - <http://www.websitebuilderexpert.com/e-commerce-online-store-builders-comparison-chart/>
- Which Website Builder or E-Commerce Builder would you choose? Why?
- What additional services would you use, such as Newsletter Creator, E-Mail integration, customization services, Integrated Payment Processors, or something else? Why?
- List all resources used to research your answers