

So Your Club Needs a Website

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Is your club looking for a free web host that will support PDF files, a newsletter and photographs?

Google search “free web hosting” and hundreds of possibilities appear. Familiar sites such as Yahoo and Geosites offer “free” web space, but do not permit the uploading of large PDF files, and, the “cost” of these and most other “free” web hosting services is unwanted banners, pop-ups, advertising and web based programs that can be less than user-friendly.

Those editors of camera club newsletters that are members of Photo Editors Yahoo News Group, have shared ideas on the subject with several relatively low cost web hosting sites used by members of the group. Three of these include www.inet7.com at \$20.00 per month; www.site5.com for \$5.00 per month; and www.nearlyfreespeech.net which offers to move an existing site to theirs for twenty-five cents. Charges are then calculated for space utilized on the site. For example, one gigabyte of data transfers (more commonly known as bandwidth), would cost \$1.00 per month. Disk storage space comes in at an affordable \$0.01 per megabyte per month.

There are indeed low cost web hosting services. However, as with anything, read and understand the fine print before making any financial commitments to a web hosting service.

For clubs not on a strict budget, there are reputable web hosting services available starting as low as \$45.00 per year. When researching these services, do not be afraid to ask if they would offer discounts to small clubs. It never hurts to ask!

Yes, a Free Site

And now for the prize answer to the burning question—yes, Virginia, there is a totally FREE web hosting service available that has no pop-ups, will support photographs in both still and slide show format, has ample storage

space (500MB) for large PDF files, offers a free business e-mail address, has a professional appearance and is very user-friendly. In fact, the site is so user-friendly, that it requires no previous web design experience to create a beautiful, interesting and informative website in just a few minutes.

Kudos to Hazel Meredith, President of the Huntington (Connecticut) Photographic Society (HPS) and a member of the PSA Photo Editor’s Group, for suggesting Microsoft Live Basics® – a totally free and very user-friendly web hosting service found at <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/officelive/FX101465131033.aspx>.

Microsoft Live Basics® allows the user to create organizational, business or individual websites. Hazel used Microsoft Live Basics® to create a personal web page www.MeredithImages.com, while the author of this article created a club web page www.chascocameraclub.com. Whether for personal or club use, creating a website with Microsoft Live Basics® is a great way to publicize information to existing members and to introduce a club to potential new members.

Before clicking “Sign up now” on the Microsoft Live Basics® introduction page, take some time to learn more about the free program. Check out the Frequently Asked Questions section as there may be information posted to assist in deciding if Microsoft Live Basics® is a suitable choice based on desired needs.

Once the decision is made, creating a website through Microsoft Live Basics® is very easy. Selecting a domain name is an important first step. In this author’s case, “chascocameraclub” was chosen as the domain name. Most domain names depict the name of the business, club, organization, or individual.

The set-up process continues through a few administrative screens such as creating a Windows Live ID, providing contact information, and entering credit card information. Yes, even though the

site is totally free, Microsoft® needs to validate that every customer using the site is a legitimate entity. This is a necessary security feature. As quoted from the Microsoft Office Live® site: “Requiring a valid credit card is intended to decrease the likelihood that malicious users will sign up.”

Website Design and Management via the Member Center Home Page are the next steps in creating professional looking web pages. Knowing basic computer skills utilized in any word processing or desktop design program is all one needs to know in order to create a great website!

Using the Site Designer feature, choose the style, theme, color and font. Personalize pages by adding a header or footer, or upload the club’s logo. Use the Page Editor feature to add images, tables, hyperlinks, slideshows, and even local weather and stock market reports. Additional features, similar to Microsoft Word® and Microsoft Publisher®, are very easy to use.

Upload photos or graphics to the Image Gallery and PDF or other document files to the Document Gallery to easily add to the web pages. Manage page location within the website through the Navigation feature while modifying page settings or viewing page statistics via the Page Properties feature.

Along with the free website comes a free business e-mail and inbox. Create a “Contact Us” page within the website to allow online visitors to ask for more information or to leave comments.

Each of the design and page management features and e-mail inbox are accessible from the Member Center Home Page of Microsoft Office Live®. One very convenient location, one very user-friendly program at one very terrific price—FREE! 🍷

The author is the editor of the newsletter for the Chasco Camera Club

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