

Blogs offer a wealth of features familiar to website users but are also flexible, affordable and easy to manage.

Websites were once an essential tool for getting a presence on the internet but have a complicated structure, which made them difficult to manage without specialist skill. New software means blog sites can offer a similar look to websites while being easy to manage by someone with no website experience.

With limited tuition, a novice can: Update entries, add pages, insert a newsletter, mediate and publish comments from members, keep an accurate diary of events, display selected photos, exhibit annual reports and accounts in text or PDF.

Access

A blog can be viewed by anyone who finds it, like a website, or can have some pages accessible to specific users only, with a password.

Blog sites are immediately recognised by search engines like *Google*, eliminating the 3-6 months delay website text takes to be effectively linked in. This is especially useful if you are trying to be found on a wide array of search criteria.

It is possible to make any page available for users to make comments that are either published or sent to a moderator. This means a group discussing a development or maintenance plan can talk among themselves on the page without lengthy meetings. The topic and areas to consider are posted on the blog, a date for a decision set and anyone involved in the decision-making process is e-mailed the access code and the discussion begins. Access to the discussions can be as open or closed as required.

Communication

Anyone involved in an organisation, with computer access, can be involved in blog discussions. Some of these will be casual comments; at other times they will be significant discussions about key decisions and at others possibly arranging an annual event.

Blogs offer the facility to set up an RSS feed. This means that anyone who registers to get the feeds from the site will get an e-mail as soon as a change is made to the site they're interested in.

Security

Blog sites can contain a mixture of pages with different security settings. Individual pages can be either publicly available, like HOME, CONTACT and the page for Annual Reports, or password protected for discussions of sensitive topics like development plans, photos and newsletters.

Blog site costs

The great advantage of a blog site is that it can be simple to maintain. Once your site has been created, if you have an administrator who is comfortable with the technology and want to add a few posts for information, connect PDFs of important documents and have open discussions, the site building and training will give you all you need for under £700.

If you don't have consistent administrative help, are uncomfortable with internet technology or have little time to play with, monthly maintenance support may suit you better than the staff training.



Set up of blog site: £450

The site is suitable for small/medium organisations that want to make the most of a blog site as soon as possible, while maintaining room to grow.

The package comprises of pointing a domain name to a site with:

- ✓ Home page
- ✓ Contact page with Find Us mapping
- ✓ Newsletter page with archive facility
- ✓ A link to one events photo album – hosted by Flickr unless otherwise requested
- ✓ Links to sister/parent/favoured organisations
- ✓ Accounts and Annual report pages which can contain PDFs
- ✓ A discussion forum for appointed users



2 x 2hrs training: £200

Training covers site maintenance and updates. 1st session in person, 2nd session by phone.



Maintenance of basic site: £100 pcm.

Maintenance involves uploading new posts to existing pages; updating images to be displayed; changing passwords as required; adding new pages as required; up loading and integrating PDFs of annual reports, accounts etc. For an average (of 1.5 hours a month. Time can be pre-allocated to busy periods, for example, 3 months before the accounts and annual even are held, notice can be made that all maintenance time is stored to be used then. This cannot be done retrospectively. There is no contract period for site maintenance so it can be started at any time and cancelled with just one month's notice.

If either additional site work is requested or the volume of changes needed exceeds the monthly time, charges will be calculated at the hourly rate or by complete day, subject to prior agreement.



Additional options

If you want your site to be more interactive for users, be frequently updated and changed, or include more detailed or comprehensive information, there are some extra options to consider.

Moderating a discussion forum.

Discussion pages are usually used to save time in meetings. They can be open for a limited period to discuss specific issues like matters for the AGM or a particular problem in any area of the organisation. Discussions are held through the site in an open text field, like an e-mail message, which allows anyone with access to the page to send a comment. A moderator will receive all the comments and check that they meet the organisation's standards of content, and make them live on the site at an agreed time. These live updates can be made any time but are usually daily or weekly.

A moderated discussion allows members to consider their contribution before responding, keeps a written record of all communication on a particular topic and, by using an external moderator, ensures the posts are made live at regular intervals while maintaining complete impartiality in all discussions.

Costs for moderation are charged by the hour. Expenses can be kept down by limiting the frequency comments are uploaded, agreeing a certain period for the discussion to be live and password protecting discussions to be accessed only the people necessary. Changes to all these parameters can be made at any time.

Creating text for the site.

All costs covered are for text already written Any text required for the site can be written to the length and style required. Copywriting is charged at the hourly rate. For sizable and ongoing work, a project cost can be discussed.

To keep costs of copywriting down, it is wise to agree a final outline for the text required and identify one person who can discuss the organisation's requirements to be the point of contact.

Creating a slideshow for the site.

Any images of annual events, opening of buildings or important visual information can be incorporated into a slideshow. These slide shows are then uploaded to an external site

where they can still be kept private, and then attached into the blog site. Audio of speeches or copyright free music can also be added to slideshows.

Costs for slideshows depend on the amount of images and audio to be included and the complexity of presentation and text to be added. For up to 30 images with audio to fit (requiring no editing) the costs to create and embed a slideshow into a site will be around £200.

Creating a short film for the site.

Film footage can also be edited and integrated into the site and is charged at a daily rate of £350. The costs will vary on the amount of footage provided and the level of editing required. For example, one hour of footage with audio to be cut into one minute can take around a day. Encoding and uploading then embedding into the site will be an additional 1/2 day. It is worth bearing in mind that because this is intricate and time-consuming work, costs can be significant. As a result, to ensure satisfaction, all project costs will be discussed and agreed in full before the work is begun.

Logo adjustment and creation

Logos can be adjusted to respond to a change in the organisation or reflect a merger. New logos can also be created. Image design is charged per hour and includes a design direction meeting or discussion as required.

Site hosting

Hosting for your blog site is available on a UK server for £5 per month and can be added to a monthly maintenance payment or paid 12 months in advance.

For all work not individually quoted:

-  **The hourly rate is £65.00**
-  **The daily rate is £350.00**
-  **Half days are £200.00**