

MEYER ACCOUNTING & TAX LLC

PROJECT REPORT

FOR A NEW COMPANY WEBSITE

CERA WHITE
FALL SEMESTER 2012

PROJECT REPORT

FOR A NEW COMPANY WEBSITE

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STATEMENT OF SCOPE

The purpose of this project is to design a new company website for Meyer Accounting & Tax, located in Kearney, Missouri. The new website will feature a completely new layout and design which will better suit the current needs of the business, primarily the need to expand other services and appeal to new clients. The project will commence in August 2012, and a working prototype is to be completed for approval no later than November 31, 2012. The website should be finished, fully functional, and hosted by January 1, 2013.

The reason for this project is that the company's current website is outdated, not user-friendly, focused only on one aspect of their business, and does not appeal to younger generations. A complete redesign of the website is necessary to fix these issues and to meet the company's current business needs. The new website will utilize current website design methodologies to improve the look, feel, and organization of the site to make it more accessible and user-friendly. Specifically, a main feature of the redesign will make all content accessible with one or two clicks, without unnecessary content pages that merely redirect to other pages without offering new content. The new layout will feature new pages and information that will be used to expand the company's payroll, accounting, and other services for business clients. It will also include features to appeal to a younger market, which the company wishes to expand into in order to keep up with the number of tax clients lost annually due to retirement. These features include a sleeker layout with pictures and updated graphics, a link to allow visitors to "like" the company's Facebook page, and a page for company newsletters.

The estimated cost of this project is \$100.00, amount negotiable based on additional labor hours required, to be paid by Meyer Accounting & Tax. This includes a new website which will be online and fully functional by the start of 2013. This also includes finding a place to host the site. It does not include maintenance or hosting charges, which are expected to cost approximately

\$10.00 per month. The employer, Meyer Accounting & Tax, is responsible for all costs associated with hosting the website.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish	Revision
Gather Requirements	10 days	8/23/12	9/5/12	
System Analysis	5 days	9/6/12	9/12/12	
Risk Assessment	5 days	9/13/12	9/19/12	
System Design	15 days	9/20/12	10/10/12	10/16/12
Create Layout	20 days	10/11/12	11/7/12	11/20/12
Add Content	10 days	11/8/12	11/20/12	12/4/12
Get Feedback	3 days	11/21/12	11/23/12	12/16/12
Make Revisions	7 days	11/27/12	12/5/12	12/27/12
Final Evaluation	5 days	12/6/12	12/12/12	1/8/13
Post Online	2 days	12/13/12	12/14/12	1/13/13

LIST OF REQUIREMENTS

REQUIREMENTS GATHERED FROM JOLIE, RECEPTIONIST, 8/7/2012:

- Current, clean site with appealing colors based on company logo
- Tax checklist link titled “What do I need to bring?”
- Section for “Quick Links” like “Where’s my refund?”
- Graphics not larger than 100kb
- Links page with pertinent info like “How will Obamacare affect...?”
- Change main site URL to www.meyeraccounting.com

REQUIREMENTS GATHERED FROM SHERYL, SUPERVISOR, 8/14/2012:

- Website must be online by beginning of January 2013
- Host on new server

- Link to company's Facebook page (Meyer Accounting & Tax LLC)
- Contact page with options to sign up for newsletter or ask a question
 - Entries sent directly to Sheryl's e-mail address

REQUIREMENTS GATHERED FROM SHERYL, SUPERVISOR, 9/4/2012:

- "Accepting new clients" and "Special pricing for businesses who start payroll services with us until..." featured on homepage
- Links to Payroll Services and Accounting Services in navigation menu
- List QuickBooks Help and Payroll Help
 - Mention reasonable rates, but no specific prices
- Section to check your refund for Federal, Missouri, and Kansas
- Keep link to file taxes online on homepage
- Expanded Staff page with pictures
- Categorize navigation menu into Individual Services and Business Services
- Section for newsletters – PDF and e-mail sign-up
- Business Hours section on homepage
- "Why Choose Us" section on homepage

REVIEW OF OPTIONS

LEAVE WEBSITE AS-IS

- Basic, static website layout created in 2004.
- Hosted by House Party Web Productions, which specializes in single-page "flyer" websites for small businesses.
- Meyer Accounting & Tax pays for monthly domain fees.

Pros

- Will not incur any additional costs. No additional resources, time, or training needed.

Cons

- Does not meet current business needs, particularly the need to attract more long-term accounting and payroll clients.
- Outdated and cannot be easily changed. Must go through House Party Web Productions to make changes to the site.

HOST ON PERSONAL SERVER

- Company has a business class package with Fair Point Communications, as well as a personal server physically accessible in the office. Runs Windows Server 2008(?)
- Would probably need to hire an IT specialist to keep the website up and running 24/7.
- A remote back-up system (perhaps multiple) would be needed in case of local power failure or problems with the server.

Pros

- Would not need to pay an additional monthly fee for web hosting.
- The site would be accessible and could be easily changed.

Cons

- Server is unreliable and has been vulnerable to viruses in the past.
- Connection may not be very fast or stable.
- Significant additional costs would be incurred in order to keep the website up and running with proper back-ups in case of problems.

HOST WITH **FAIR POINT COMMUNICATIONS** (CURRENT ISP)

- Fair Point Communications has a separate web hosting service for businesses.
- Basic plan is \$9.95 a month. Includes 6GB of storage and a 192GB web transfer limit. “Bandwidth-on-demand.”
- All plans include 24/7 Network Monitoring, but basic plan does not include Secure Shell (SSH) or Website Security features.
- Technical support available through phone or e-mail from ISP.
- File Restore service is included with all plans. 99.9% target uptime guarantee.

Pros

- Domain names are cheap, easy to set up, and provide an extensive list of options.
- They make it very easy to transfer a domain name.
- Any problems can be forwarded to the hosting company, which takes care of all the servers.

Cons

- Limited storage and bandwidth.
- Have to pay extra for basic security features, and no mention of regular backup schedule.

THIRD-PARTY HOST: **GODADDY.COM**

- International hosting company.
- “Best” plan is \$7.64 a month. Includes 150GB of storage and unlimited websites and bandwidth.
- All plans include 24/7 phone and e-mail support. Support is outsourced.
- Multiple secure data centers with backups created daily. 99.9% uptime guarantee.
- Can purchase Premium DNS for an additional \$2.99/mo to “resolve common issues that prevent people from accessing your site, improving your overall performance, availability, and security.” Increases uptime guarantee to 99.999% with service credit available if it doesn’t meet this standard.

Pros

- Domain names are cheap, easy to set up, and provide an extensive list of options.
- Any problems can be forwarded to the hosting company, which takes care of all the servers and keeps regular backups.

Cons

- GoDaddy has been criticized for questionable practices in the past and has had issues with heightened hacking activity.
- There are consumer reports of technical support not being up to par in terms of expertise.
- When a server does go down, it may be down for a long time, leaving the site inaccessible for several hours.

THIRD-PARTY HOST: **1AND1.COM**

- International hosting company.
- “Best” plan is \$6.99 a month (current special offer is \$3.49/mo for the first 12 months). Includes unlimited storage, websites, and bandwidth.
- All plans include 24/7 phone and e-mail support, along with access to an internal support forum. Support is outsourced.
- Daily server backups. Includes dual hosting, which is where data is stored simultaneously in two separate locations. 99.99% uptime guarantee.

Pros

- Domain names are cheap, easy to set up, and provide an extensive list of options.
- Any problems can be forwarded to the hosting company, which takes care of all the servers and keeps regular backups.

Cons

- Consumer reports indicate poor technical support.
- Have had lots of problems with e-mails and service outages, despite the uptime guarantee, and may not respond to problems quickly.

THIRD-PARTY HOST: **BLUE VIRTUAL**

- Local hosting company in the Kansas City area.
- Basic plan is \$9.95 a month. Includes 250MB of storage and 25GB of bandwidth. Can purchase additional storage (\$5/mo for 50MB) and bandwidth (\$2/mo for 1GB). No setup fee.
- Technical support available by phone or submitting a ticket online.
- Full backups are made weekly and backups of new/changed data made nightly. 99.5% uptime guarantee with exceptions regarding external factors that are outside Blue Virtual’s control. Will replace faulty equipment on their end within 48 hours.

Pros

- Any problems can be forwarded to the hosting company, which takes care of all the servers and keeps regular backups.
- Local company, so personal attention and better customer support is more likely.
- Can increase storage and bandwidth as needed without upgrading to a new plan.

Cons

- Limited storage and bandwidth

RECOMMENDATIONS

After reviewing several different hosting options, focusing on the criteria of cost, storage and bandwidth, level of support, and stability and uptime, I have determined the two options I believe would be best. I would recommend hosting either with **Fair Point Communications** or **Blue Virtual**, both of which have similarly priced plans, offer better customer service than the international hosting companies listed, and yet offer all of the advantages of hosting with a third-party service that takes care of the servers and creating backups. The two are closely tied, but my **first place recommendation** is to host the website with the company's current internet service provider, **Fair Point Communications**, which has a separate web hosting service for businesses. Because the company already has an account with them, it may make the transfer process easier, and the basic plan provides more storage and bandwidth than the comparable plan at my **second choice, Blue Virtual**. **Fair Point** also has a slightly better uptime guarantee, though there is no indication of how they arrived at this number.

However, one feature that might make the plan with **Blue Virtual** more desirable is the ability to increase web storage capacity and bandwidth without needing to upgrade to a new plan. There is also the issue of **Fair Point's** web transfer limit versus **Blue Virtual's** bandwidth limit. A small bandwidth will make it difficult for people to connect to the site and may make it load slowly, but a small web transfer limit may result in your site being temporarily shut down if you exceed that limit. Since both limits are set so high, however, there shouldn't be a problem either way. For the most part, I would recommend either of these solutions. Leaving the website as it is now could mean missing out on a significant business opportunity; hosting the website on your personal server would take a lot of extra time and would cost more in labor and technological charges than any of the other options; and hosting with an international hosting company like **GoDaddy** or **1and1** may be cheaper, but it comes with a lot of setbacks regarding customer service (or lack thereof). Therefore, the two best options are clearly to host with either **Fair Point Communications** or **Blue Virtual**.

The options described and recommended above were reviewed by the client. They tentatively chose to host the website with **Fair Point Communications**, their current internet service provider, provided that Fair Point does not require a set length contract as it does with other services.



Figure 1.1: “Before” version by House Party Web Productions



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Meyer Accounting & Tax prefers to take a proactive vs. reactive approach to tax services. Identifying key tax planning opportunities that minimize both your current and future tax liabilities. Since 1990 we've been providing full service tax preparation service and accounting resources, and over the years have expanded into retirement, education, debt elimination and more.

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- Thursday 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM
- Friday 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM
- Saturday By Appointment
- Sunday By Appointment

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Meyer Accounting's first priority is working with every individual to specifically access their needs and find a customized solution.

We always offer a **FREE** initial consultation to determine how we may help you reach your financial goals and objectives.



ADDRESS & PHONE

Meyer Accounting & Tax LLC
205 N Jefferson
Kearney, MO 64060
Phone: (816) 628-4258
Mobile: (816) 804-0461
Fax: (816) 902-4250
E-mail: taxhelp4less@kc.rr.com

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