START YOUR
BLOG OR WEBSITE
TODAY

Resources for People Too Busy to Learn Programming or Design

TOM WOODS

Contents

Introduction

If you're reading this eBook, chances are you already have reasons of your own for starting a blog or website. (We'll distinguish between the two in chapter 1.) But for the sake of completeness, let's run through a few functions a website can play in your life, both personally and professionally. You may discover one you hadn't thought of before.

Perhaps your website is a labor of love, dedicated to an area of interest you happen to enjoy very much, know a lot about, and/or want to disseminate to the public.

Or maybe you have something to sell, and/or you want your business to have an online presence, the benefits of which are numerous and obvious.

Or you want a site that will show off your talents, skills, or portfolio, either to potential customers or potential employers.

These are probably the most common reasons that people decide they want a website. But let me add a couple others, that most people overlook.

The first is what has been called a business card site. The purpose of such a site is to position yourself within your field. Very few people do this, so you will stand out.

You use a business card site to make a reputation for yourself as an expert. Discuss and review books and significant articles related to your field, report on any important conferences you happen to attend – things like this. It is never too early to start your business card site – well before you're even employed in the field, if possible. You keep up with related developments, and in the process make a name for yourself.

A site like that both makes it less likely that you'll be laid off – you're doing something very significant that no other employee took the initiative to do, after all – and you also position yourself for better employment should you hit a ceiling in terms of promotion in your present employment.

You can position yourself even better if you also produce what we might call a promotion site. As one authority puts it:

> People love to see their names in print. This is especially true of senior managers. If there is a website out there that has their names in front of the general public, senior managers are not going to want to fire the person who has this website. They know that, as soon as the operator of the website is no longer with the company, he will probably shut down the website. Senior managers want to see their names in print. They want to hear what great things they are doing. They want to believe that other people are reading about them, even when other people probably have never found the website. They know that people inside the company probably visit the website from time to time, and they like positive stories.

The promotion website caters to senior managers and heads of departments. These are the people you want on your side for as long as you are inside the company.

Likewise, there are many reasons you might want to start a blog. You may want to become part of the national conversation on a particular issue or on, say, political issues in general. You may want to sway public opinion in your direction. You may want to get things off your chest. You may simply want to improve your own writing, and regular writing, especially short pieces subject to public scrutiny, are the single best exercise you can perform to improve your writing.

Allow me to elaborate on this for a moment, since it's at the very crux of my case for why practically everyone should be blogging. Becoming a good writer is difficult, and it's a talent very few people possess. You will never have reason to regret cultivating your writing skills. To the contrary, you will always find ways for your writing ability to pay dividends, whether personally or professionally.

Your writing should be as concise as you can make it. Novices have no idea how unnecessarily wordy their writing is. A skilled editor can teach you how to identify and eliminate unnecessary words, but most people don't have access to such a mentor. So start a blog, and force yourself not to exceed, say, 200 to 250 words per post. You will teach yourself how to write smartly and concisely in no time.

These are all good reasons for you to have a website and/or a blog. Getting started, though, is the most daunting hurdle for most would-be site owners. You know you can do it, but you don't know what steps one, two, and three are. And getting you over that hurdle – and offering you some further tips to give you a successful online experience – is precisely why I wrote this eBook. I hope you'll agree, after reading what follows, that it wasn't so difficult after all.

Whatever your motivation for making a home for yourself online, I think what follows will be helpful to you. I've written it to be a quick, easy, step-by-step guide to starting that website or blog – and, where possible, I've included special discount links and codes to help you do so on a budget that makes sense for you.

Good luck, and happy reading!

Disclosure: Some of the links in this book are affiliate links, which means I earn a small commission if you decide to purchase something. But with a handful of exceptions that I include for the sake of completeness, these are all services that I use myself, as you'll be able to see, and I am convinced they will provide you with great value as you establish yourself online.

Getting Started

Let's start with the basics.

Blog or Website?

There's no reason you have to choose, of course. You can have both, as I do. It depends on what you want to do.

If what you want is a presence online where people can find about you, your background, your writing, your portfolio, or whatever, and you don't intend to add additional content on a regular basis that you'd want showcased in a prominent place, a simple website should do the trick.

On the other hand, if what you want is a place where you can add content on a regular basis, where that regular content will be immediately visible when a visitor arrives, and are satisfied with a simple page introducing yourself and providing some background, then a blog is for you.

Eventually you may want to combine the two: a site where you feature your work, or whatever it is you want to showcase, along with information about yourself, and so on, along with the capabilities of a blog, where you can post items regularly. But don't bite off more than you can chew. Maybe start with one and add the other.

In this chapter I'll review some basic terms and offer some recommendations to get you started. Much of what follows in this chapter applies to people who want to start blogs in particular, but everyone needs a hosting company, the topic covered in the next section. (In the next chapter I'll introduce additional resources that will help people who want full-fledged websites.)

Where Do I Start?

The first thing you need is a name for your site – a domain name. Without a domain name, you'd have to tell people to visit you at something hideous like 123.456.789.123/tomwoods. A domain name, on the other hand, can be recalled easily.

This can be tricky, since most of the names you might want, at least with a .com suffix, are likely to be taken already. You can certainly go the .net route, or adopt still other, less common suffixes, but don't rule out .com too hastily. It's possible to be creative with your site name and come up with a .com domain that hasn't yet been taken.

In fact, a number of sites can help you brainstorm for an available .com domain that works for you. Free services like BustAName.com, LeanDomainSearch.com, and NameBoy.com, to mention just a few, will take one or more keywords you'd like in your domain name and will give you a lengthy list of available domain names, which you

would probably not have thought of on your own, that incorporate the keyword(s) you specified.

You can buy your domain name through a company like GoDaddy, and in many cases you can get a domain name as a bonus when you sign up with your hosting company (see below).

Your Next Step: Choosing a Hosting Company

Once you've decided on a domain name, you'll need a hosting company. We might compare your domain name to your physical address – it's where people can find you. And like your physical address in the real world, you can't just occupy a location without paying. Your Internet address needs to be leased.

Your website is composed of a number of files. They need to reside on a computer somewhere so that other people – your site visitors – can see them. These computers are known as *servers*, and your hosting company owns them.

If you're just getting started, you can get by just fine with companies like Bluehost or HostGator. If you go with Bluehost, which I use for my TomWoodsHomeschool.com website, then tomwoods.com/blue gets you a special discount. If you choose HostGator, which I use for my LibertyClassroom.com site, use promo code TOMWOODS (in capital letters, and all one word) at checkout to get your first month of hosting for just one cent.

Eventually, as your traffic figures grow larger, you may want to switch to the company I use for my primary site, TomWoods.com, which is WP Engine. They're pricier than these other companies, but you get what you pay for, and as your visitor numbers climb, you'll want the benefits of top-notch support, lightning-fast loading speeds, and overall reliability. That's why I use it myself. I keep an eye on WP Engine coupons for you, so if you'd like to give them a try, be sure to check out my WP Engine coupon page first.

From No Blog to Blog in Five Minutes

If I were to describe every little step involved in setting up your blog, I'd drive you crazy. It's like tying your shoes: if I just show you how to do it, it's much easier than if I try to describe it.

That's why I made a special video walking you through how to go from having no blog to having a blog. Click on tomwoods.com/demo for a step-by-step walkthrough. You can have your blog and be posting your first post within – no joke – five minutes!

You'll be using WordPress for your blog. It's easy to use. In the video above, I show you how to write a post and publish it on your blog using WordPress. If you're familiar with standard word processing software like Microsoft Word, you'll find WordPress a breeze.

Your Blog Is Up and Running! Here Are Your Next Steps

Now that you've watched that video and followed the directions, here are a few more tips for you, whether you wind up creating a full-feature website or stick with a simple blog.

Let's start with the easiest first: prevent comment spam. If you skip this step, the comments on your blog posts will include obnoxious advertisements and other forms of spam. Fortunately, it's not difficult to deal with this problem: you activate Akismet, a plugin that is automatically included with WordPress. It's not difficult to activate, but if you need help, this video will walk you through the steps.

Second, prepare your About page. This is very important. This page will get a lot of clicks. When people wind up on your site – because they've clicked through to one of your posts, say – they're going to be curious about who you are. What should you include? Think about what you would want to know about someone whose writing you are encountering for the first time, and you'll know what belongs on your About page.

Third, create a sitemap. This makes it easier for the search engines to find the various pages on your blog. The easiest way to do this is with the Google XML Sitemap plugin. According to the description, this plugin "will generate a special XML sitemap which will help search engines like Google, Bing, Yahoo and Ask.com to better index your blog. With such a sitemap, it's much easier for the crawlers to see the complete structure of your site and retrieve it more efficiently."

In case you're worried that this will be complicated, it isn't. First, download the plugin, by clicking on the download button at http://wordpress.org/plugins/google-sitemap-generator/. Then, on your WordPress dashboard (the page you see when you sign in as the administrator of your blog) click on Plugins and then Add New. Type Google XML Sitemap in the search box, then click to install now and then to "activate plugin."

After activation, you'll be taken back to the plugins page on your dashboard. From there, find Google XML Sitemap and click Settings. You will be informed that your sitemap has not yet been generated. So click *build it*. And then you're done! Time for the next step.

And that is: submit your site to Google and Bing. This is so these important search engines can find you, and your site can turn up in people's search results. Again, a video is far easier than a text-based explanation for a task like this, so click here for just such a video.

Actually, there is one more thing. It's not strictly necessary, but I think it would be silly not to do it. Sign up for the Amazon affiliate program. Then, anytime you mention a book, or to any product available on Amazon, you can link to it with a special link that identifies your site as the source if anyone should click on it. And if someone does, then

you get a commission from Amazon *on that person's entire order*, not just the item you linked to. It costs nothing to join, so by all means click here and do it.

One More Thing – Why You Don't Want to Go the "Free" Route

Let me add that you could avoid paying the few dollars a month to a hosting company and pay absolutely nothing, by starting your blog through WordPress.com (which is not quite the same thing as the WordPress I mentioned above, which is WordPress.org), since it offers free hosting. But although that's tempting, here's why you don't want to do it.

(1) You can't choose your own plugins. A "plugin" gives you a particular kind of functionality – like a shopping cart for sites with something to sell, or social media sharing capability, or helpful add-ons like OptinSkin that make signing up for your email list easy and attractive.

(2) No advertising is allowed. You could bring in a modest amount of money via advertising if WordPress.com didn't have this policy, but it does. You can join the WordPress.com advertising program – but only if your site traffic is high enough.

(3) WordPress.com controls your domain. If you are declared to be in violation of the WordPress.com Terms of Service – which, let's face it, nobody reads – you can be shut down permanently, with none of your content returned. You don't want that.

(4) You can build your brand far more credibly with your own domain name. You don't want yourblog.wordpress.com as the place you're sending people.

Spend a few bucks with Bluehost or any of the other hosting companies mentioned in this chapter, and get your own site on your own terms.

Get Your Website Designed, But Don't Learn Design

As I noted at the beginning, this is not a book about web design. For the purposes of this short eBook, I'm going to assume you don't want to learn how to program and design websites. If you do, there are plenty of resources both online and in print form that can teach you how to do it. But if you're like me, you don't want to, any more than you'd want to install your own roof or build your own microwave oven.

Use a Site Builder

If the idea of creating your own site from scratch doesn't appeal to you – and as I've said, it certainly doesn't appeal to me – but you don't want the expense of hiring a designer, you can use a number of services that offer a wide variety of templates you can use to create a website for yourself without having to know any coding. You can find a whole bunch of these, including Wix, SquareSpace, and SiteBuilder.

Let me say a brief word about Weebly, which *PC* magazine considers the best site of its kind. Although I've always used a designer to create my websites (see below), I've heard very positive things about Weebly. It's very easy to use. It's designed for people who don't specialize in this area. Its smartphone apps allow you to edit your site on the go.

As of this printing, you can find well over 100 attractive templates at Weebly, and a variety of subscription plans. If you sign up for a free account, your domain name will look like sitename.weebly.com. This is pretty unsightly and makes you look not particularly credible, so it's surely worth the four smackers per month for at least the Starter account.

In 2013, Weebly added ecommerce capability, meaning you can create an online store with Weebly now. Adding and editing products is easy and intuitive. For a store of modest size, Weebly's ecommerce functionality is more than adequate. For larger companies, Shopify – which specializes in ecommerce – is your best bet.

Or Hire a Designer

Most people can use a website builder like Weebly and get exactly the site they need at a reasonable price. They do not need to hire an expensive web designer. Most websites require essentially the same handful of basic features, and these can be provided via the various templates available through a website builder.

On the other hand, if you need a lot of customization – that is, you need features on your site that are unconventional, and that you couldn't design on your own or with a website builder – then it's time to find a designer.

In my own case, I first became serious about my website back in 2009. I wanted something sleek, attractive, and effective. And boy, did I get it. I got a beautiful site that did everything I wanted, and I got it for a great price.

How did I do it? Through sheer luck. A friend happened to know a local college student who was outstanding at both design and programming – not an especially common combination. I was flabbergasted at how nice my site looked.

But here was the problem: he was a college student. If I needed something fixed or tweaked, I couldn't get a hold of him. (If only Elance, the freelancer website I'll tell you about in chapter 5, had been around in those days!) For years afterward, when later web consultants needed various credentials for my site or information about the domain name registration, it was a struggle to get them. If I had known more about websites in those days, I would have asked for all of this when the site was produced, but I didn't, and the result was a terrific inconvenience. The low price just wasn't worth the headaches.

As with anything else, so in web design: you get what you pay for. For the most recent iteration of TomWoods.com, I used a company called Studio 1 Design. They are, in fact, quite reasonably priced. Check out the site they designed for me for yourself: the home page, the books page (featuring a PayPal shopping cart), my blog, and my podcast. I needed a bunch of specific things: the shopping cart; an attractive home page that conveyed all the things I do but without being cluttered; podcast pages with a podcast player, subscription buttons, a YouTube button, a transcript button, and other features; a contact page; and more.

Studio 1 Design did everything I asked for, never lost their patience with me, and produced a fantastic final product. If you'd like to try them out, they've agreed to give my readers 10% off any design project if you use this special link: Studio1Design.com/woods.

Chapter 3
Your Mailing List: How to Keep Them Coming Back

Most people will visit your site once and never return. But you want them to return. How can you draw them back? By having them join your mailing list. You can then send out an occasional email newsletter, complete with links to what you've been producing on your site in recent days and weeks, and they just may click and pay you another visit.

It's not difficult to integrate a newsletter signup into your site. For an example, go to TomWoods.com and look at the top of the page. There's a strip of text that says you will receive a free eBook if you sign up for notifications from me. Then there's a button that says NOTIFY ME! Click on that, and a box comes up. That attractive box, complete with an image of the cover of the eBook you'll be sent, does indeed pop right up. How did I create that box? Using LeadPages, which offers this feature. I'll tell you more about LeadPages in the next chapter, in which I discuss landing pages.

I do a lot of public speaking. But no matter how good the impression you make on your audience, it's hard to get them to remember to visit your website the following day. So I take advantage of the fact that practically everyone has a cell phone, and I say: get my free eBook along with my weekly letter by texting the word LIBERTY to 33444. Now, instead of having (if I'm lucky) five percent of that audience visit my site, it's conceivable that a solid quarter to a third will sign up for my free eBook and newsletter right then and there.

How do I do that? Using LeadDigits, another feature available on LeadPages.

I also have a newsletter signup box beneath every blog post and podcast episode. Click here and scroll down for an example. How did I generate these boxes? Using a great plugin called OptInSkin, which has worked wonders in building my email list.

I suggest inserting an OptinSkin box at the end of every blog post, as well as a smaller box on your About page. People who are curious enough about you to click on your About page in the first place may likewise be interested in learning still more about your work by subscribing to your newsletter, so an opt-in box definitely belongs there.

A similar plugin is OptInMonster. I haven't used it, but I like the features it can boast. One thing in particular that impresses me is that it can sense, based on cursor movement, when a visitor is about to leave your site, and at that moment an opt-in popup appears, to try to get that visitor to sign up for your mailing list (and, if applicable, receive your bonus gift, like a free eBook) before departing.

But remember, people receive a lot of e-mail, and they receive so much e-mail they don't want, that they are going to have to be persuaded to sign up for a newsletter. That's why it's best, if not absolutely indispensable, for you to be able to offer them something tangible in exchange for that e-mail address. As I've noted in this chapter, I myself give

away a free eBook, a common premium to entice visitors to join a mailing list. Elsewhere in this chapter I describe an easy way to produce such an eBook.

There are two mail e-mail marketing companies that most website owners with e-mail lists use to accumulate and manage those e-mail addresses, as well as draft and send out newsletters to that list of addresses. The first is Mailchimp, which is what I have used for years for The Tom Woods Letter. If you're just starting out, you'll appreciate one feature of Mailchimp in particular: until your mailing list reaches 2000 addresses, Mailchimp is absolutely free.

Mailchimp comes with a number of built-in templates you can use for your newsletter. Pat Flynn of SmartPassiveIncome.com, on the other hand, has been very successful with the most basic newsletter imaginable: he sends out a text-only email – no graphics, no bells and whistles, no special fonts – to his 75,000 subscribers. The quality of his content compensates for its uninspired presentation. In other words, you may not have to devote much time to presentation if your content is really outstanding.

I myself wanted a customized template for my newsletter. I wanted every issue to include a header featuring my logo, some news items (which are sometimes just blog posts I've published since the previous issue of the newsletter), a calendar of my events, and then summaries of and links to my recent podcast episodes. I also wanted a couple of nice graphics linking to my pay sites. As usual, I used Studio 1 Design. (Remember, they give my readers 10% off all design projects through this special link.) Click here to see an example of my newsletter.

The other service is Aweber. I have not used Aweber, but I know plenty of people who have, and they swear by it. If you're new to all this, the fact that Mailchimp is free until your list reaches 2000 names may well be the deciding factor for you, but you may want to check out both links and investigate them for yourself.

Synergy

I myself host a weekday podcast, The Tom Woods Show. As one way of promoting the show, I give away free eBooks. I create these eBooks from transcripts of some of my episodes. I find transcripts with a theme in common, and I collect those transcripts into an eBook. For example, I picked out 14 episodes featuring especially important topics and packaged the transcripts into a book called *14 Hard Questions for Libertarians – Answered*. (For the transcripts themselves, I hired relatively inexpensive transcriptionists via Fiverr.com and Elance.com.)

If you (virtually) flip through that book, you discover something. At the end of each transcript there's a link to subscribe to my podcast on iTunes and Stitcher, the two most popular podcast delivery systems. The appendices of that eBook promote my premium services, like Liberty Classroom and the Ron Paul Curriculum. They also promote *Real Dissent*, my latest book. That book, in turn, promotes the show – one section of the book contains transcripts of some of my most interesting episodes.

It's this kind of synergy, in which much of what you do involves cross-promotion of other things you do, that can get you serious traction online.

eBooks the Easy Way

Chances are, you don't have a podcast and transcripts. But once you start your blog, and produce content for it regularly, before you know it you have more than enough material for an eBook. Remember that eBooks – especially the free kind – can vary widely in length, and can be much shorter than traditional books. You're giving this book away, after all, so no one is in a position to complain that your book isn't longer.

You then use the eBook to draw more people to your email list. You tell them: sign up for my newsletter and receive this free eBook! It's easy to set up your email list so that it sends links to free eBooks in a welcome email to anyone who signs up for the list.

Of course, a book needs a cover. Unless you have a graphic design background, you should outsource this task. For a book you're giving away, it's silly to spend too much on a cover. And you don't have to. For my *14 Hard Questions* book, I did a search for eBook cover design at Fiverr.com and found a whole bunch of designers who do quality work inexpensively. As of this printing, you can have a quite serviceable cover designed for five dollars, as I did.

For an extra five dollars, you can generally get a 3D version of your book cover, with your book standing at an angle and looking like a real book with a spine. I recommend buying this, too, because the 3D image, while not usable in your book itself, will look very sharp in your promotional material for the book. Click here to see what I mean.

Should you build up enough of an audience and have enough content that producing an eBook (and/or a physical book) *for sale* begins to seem like a plausible option for you, I have some additional advice. When it comes to selling a digital product like an eBook, you have two main choices. You can go with Amazon, which is what I do, and produce a book for the Kindle. It will be sold in the Kindle store, and you'll have the advantage and the prestige, such as it is, of being easily found in the most recognizable book market in the world.

There are drawbacks to this approach, though to my mind not big enough to make me abandon Amazon. First, you'll keep only 70% of the revenue from each sale. This is not a problem, as far as I'm concerned, because the traditional author royalty for a physical book released by a mainstream publisher is a paltry 15%, and even that rate kicks in only after you've sold 10,000 copies. To have the Amazon name behind you, with its ease of use, excellent reputation, and longtime familiarity to nearly everyone online, is certainly worth a 30% cut.

Second, if you decide to sell your book through Amazon's Kindle Store, you won't have the option of giving away free copies. To give the book away to someone you will

actually have to purchase a copy through the Kindle Store. When the recipient claims the book, you will receive your royalty. So you'll wind up paying, on net, 30% of the book's price to give a copy away.

Your other option is to sell your eBook directly, without going through Amazon, by using gumroad.com. With gumroad.com you receive 95% of the purchase price, as opposed to the 70% you'd earn with Amazon. Also, you're perfectly at liberty to give copies away to select people.

I still prefer Amazon, though, because (1) it's so much more familiar to most people, (2) most potential buyers already have their payment information on file with Amazon, so ordering is fast and easy, and (3) justified or not, the availability of your product through a well-known and respected company like Amazon makes both you and your product seem more legitimate.

An Irresistible Digression: Audiobooks

Here's still further advice. If you do wind up producing an eBook and/or a physical book as a way of promoting (and also monetizing) your blog or website, go ahead and record an audiobook as well if you have the voice for it and can read smoothly and without stumbling.

Here's why. There are three ways you can earn money with an audiobook when you submit it through ACX, the Amazon company that deals in audiobooks.

(1) The first and most obvious is, of course, via royalties. The royalty schedule with Audible is a bit obscure, but the royalty payment can be as high as 40% of the list price – which, again by traditional publishing standards, is quite high.

(2) Second, Audible has an affiliate program you can use on your website. Of course, you can become an Audible affiliate even if you haven't narrated your own audiobook, but the program will bring in much more revenue for you if you can pitch your own book, narrated by you (readers love to hear authors read their own books), through their program.

It works like this. Audible.com gives away a free audiobook for people who sign up for a free 30-day trial of their site. If they cancel before the 30 days are up, they can still keep the free audiobook. If they continue with their subscription, depending on their subscription level they are entitled to one or more audiobooks per month, for a monthly fee.

When you sign up for Audible's affiliate program, you are assigned a special link you can use to promote Audible. When you then say, hey, everyone, get my audiobook, read by me, for free with your 30-day trial at Audible.com, your readers will be clicking on a link that identifies you as the source of that click. If a reader goes on to sign up for the free audiobook, you get five dollars – even if the person winds up canceling and never

buying anything from Audible, and even if it wasn't even your book the person wound up choosing as the freebie. Audible is paying you for leads. They're willing to roll the dice that enough people will become paying customers to make it worthwhile to pay you five dollars for everyone who signs up for a free trial. If the person goes on to continue with a paid Audible membership, you earn ten dollars.

There's an even more generous [program for podcasters](): get fifteen dollars every time someone downloads the initial free audiobook, whether or not that person ever becomes a paid member of Audible.

(3) Still another way to earn money via your audiobook is the little-known ACX bounty program. If your book is the first title an Audible customer *pays for* (as opposed to getting for free), ACX will pay you $50. It's not easy to promote this to your readers ("Make sure my book is the first one you pay for as an Audible subscriber" is pretty awkward), so treat it as bonus money that will bring a smile to your face when you happen to earn it.

Of course, you'll want to read the ACX guidelines for preparing audiobooks. Once I finished recording the audiobook version of *Real Dissent*, my 2014 book, I decided that rather than try to figure out all the technical ins and outs of preparing an audiobook for submission to ACX, I'd pay a visit to trusty old [Elance.com]() (see chapter 5) and have an expert just do it for me. I have a freelancer from Greece who does a lot of my audio work, and it turns out he has prepared many audiobooks to meet the ACX specifications. I had it back within 24 hours, all ready to go.

Landing Pages

Suppose you're at a public event, or you're on the radio or a podcast, and you want to promote your upcoming webinar, or your free eBook, or your event. You can certainly send people to the home page of your website, and the more persistent ones may well find the webinar, or whatever it is, from that page. But others won't quite know what to do, and will wander off.

A lot of companies make this mistake: they send people directly to the company home page when promoting a specific event, product, webinar, or whatever. Don't make people have to figure out where they should go, or navigate the many options, graphics, tabs, and links that are generally found on a home page.

That's why, for promotions like these, you want special pages called landing pages. A landing page is a page on your site, or even a separate site entirely, on which you've eliminated everything except the particular offer or opt-in form you want people to see for whatever it is you're trying to promote. If it's a webinar, the signup box is front and center, alongside some basic information about your event. In other words, no distractions.

You can use landing pages to promote all kinds of things: a new product launch, a free eBook, a newsletter signup, an event, a webinar, and more.

Here's an example of a landing page I created myself, for a book I wrote in 2014: RealDissent.com.

I could have released that book without a landing page, it's true. But the fact that it had a dedicated landing page made the book's publication seem like an *event*. Furthermore, note the benefits to me of this page:

- by promising an excerpt from the book, I collect email addresses for my mailing list;
- the page quickly and effectively portrays me as a reliable source;
- I direct people to my affiliate link for the Audible podcast affiliate program I mentioned earlier in this book;
- the case for buying the book is made very clear, by means of a video, testimonials, background about me, and more.

To produce that page, I used LeadPages, a wonderful site offering a whole suite of services I bet you'll find useful. Primarily it helps you create landing pages that convert – that is, landing pages that turn visitors into signups, customers, and so on – without having to know anything about web design.

I've used LeadPages to promote the book *Real Dissent*, as you've seen, but I've also used it to promote the very eBook you are reading right now, and I also intend to use it to

help launch a new podcast later this year – I'll have a landing page with some teaser text and a newsletter signup option for people who want to be notified as soon as the new show is ready.

As I note elsewhere in this book, LeadPages also gives me the option to let people sign up for my newsletter from their mobile phones. People who text the word LIBERTY to 33444 are added to my email list and receive my free *14 Hard Questions* eBook. This is a very effective way to build your list.

LeadPages, in short, is indispensable to me for a variety of reasons, and has been one of my secret weapons in developing my online presence. You should certainly check it out for yourself.

Need Help? Here's Where to Turn

Chances are, now and again you'll need help with something related to your site. It could be adding some functionality, or removing some stubborn noise from an audio recording, or designing a simple graphic for some purpose. Let me introduce you to a few sites that have so dramatically simplified my life.

The first is [Fiverr.com](#). You'll be amazed at the services you'll find at this site, offered in five-dollar increments. If you want a logo, or a book cover, or social media graphics, or just about anything design related, Fiverr.com has what you need.

The second is [Elance.com](#). I've worked with people from the United States, the U.K., Greece, India, Japan, and doubtless other places as well, through Elance. And it couldn't be easier. You simply describe your job, and before you know it, freelancers and companies from around the world will be bidding on the opportunity to do it for you. It's free to post your job. For $25, Elance gives you the option to feature your job listing, which makes it likely to be seen by more people, but I've always received more than enough offers without having to spend the $25.

[WP Curve](#) isn't freelancers, but it is another excellent service I myself use when I need help. Specifically, for $79 per month, you can get unlimited WordPress support and small jobs done. This is a fantastic deal, especially when you consider how much it would cost to hire people per job every time you needed help, not to mention the time you'd spend searching for someone who could lend a hand. With WP Curve, you can have the confidence of knowing that there's always someone there to help.

What initially made me decide to sign up for WP Curve was a problem I was having with the Contact page of my website: people would submit messages and inquiries through that page, but they weren't being emailed to me as they were supposed to. I submitted the job to WP Curve, and within a few hours the problem had been solved. The peace of mind alone makes the monthly fee worth every penny.

Summary of Resources Discussed in this Book

So you don't have to flip through searching for anything, I've reproduced the major services (along with discounts) I recommend in this book to get you up and running.

Naming Your Site
You may have the perfect name that isn't already taken, but you may not. I mentioned several helpful brainstorming sites:

BustAName.com
LeanDomainSearch.com
NameBoy.com

Web Hosting
Bluehost. I use Bluehost for TomWoodsHomeschool.com. Use this link for special discount pricing. And click here for my brief, step-by-step video guiding you through the signup process and producing your first blog post.

HostGator. I use HostGator for LibertyClassroom.com. Use coupon code TOMWOODS (all caps, all one word) at checkout to get your first month of hosting for one cent.

WP Engine. What I use for TomWoods.com, the most heavily trafficked of my sites. For me it's been by far the best. Visit my WP Engine coupon code page – tomwoods.com/enginecoupons – to save money.

Web Design
Use a Site Builder. Weebly is considered the best by many reliable reviewers, but SquareSpace and Wix are worthy competitors.

Hire a Web Designer. If the standard templates don't float your boat or give you the particular functionality you need, go with a web designer. I use Studio 1 Design. Take 10% off any design project, whether a website or anything else, when you use this special link: Studio1Design.com/woods.

Email Marketing Services
Mailchimp. This is what I use. It's free if your list has 2000 or fewer email addresses. My list is in the five figures, but Mailchimp is still price competitive even then.

Aweber. Aweber is the other major provider that can maintain your email list. I have not used it myself, but its clients swear by it.

Grow Your List!
OptinSkin is what I use to get more signups for my newsletter. OptInMonster is another option, with interesting features I discuss in chapter 3.

Get Help
[Fiverr](). On a budget, and need a freelancer to help you with a logo, other graphic design, editing services, website help, or pretty much anything else you can think of? Then Fiverr.com, which I swear by, is for you.

[Elance](). For more advanced projects, or if your budget is a bit bigger, check out Elance, which I have used dozens of times with great results.

[WP Curve](). Need someone on standby to address any issues and problems that may arise with your site, but you're not a millionaire? Then WP Curve gives you all the peace of mind, and outstanding service, you need. I myself am a happy customer. Remember to check out my regularly updated [WP Curve coupon code page]() to save yourself some money.

Good luck!