

Chapter Web Site Tips

Now that you have chartered an ITNS chapter, you may want to consider creating a chapter web site. A web site can help you to showcase your chapter events, communicate with your members and provide easily accessible information about your chapter to your members.

Basic Terms

Here are some basic terms you'll need to know.

- A **web site** is a collection of pages linked together and stored or **hosted** on a server / computer so that it can be viewed on the Internet.
- The **home page** or index page of a web site is usually what you see when you first type in a URL in the address field of your browser.
- **URL** stands for "uniform resource locator" or your web address. It is the specific and unique address of the web page on the server. Some people register with a **Domain Name Service (DNS)** such as www.networksolutions.com to get a domain name for their visitors to use.

Web Hosting

If you are unable to use hosting services at your hospital, transplant center or University, many companies offer free hosting services, free site builders and other great services but you must agree to display their ad on your web site. In addition, some services make you buy something, like a domain name, to get free hosting; this is generally unnecessary since there are many good services that provide free hosting without charging anything.

Key reasons to pay for a hosting service include avoidance of ad displays, extra storage space for large projects and catalog or credit card processing. Each service provides 15 to 20 megabytes (MB) of space for all your pages, graphics and photos (each page will probably take about 50 kilobytes). Site builders and page templates are also offered. Each service will provide detailed step-by-step instructions on how to build your web site using their tools.

Page Titles

Make your titles relevant to your audience and purpose by using keywords that you know they will search for. The home page should always be titled "index.htm"

Objective of Web Content

Determine the kind of service or information you want to provide through your site. Your web site should provide easily accessible information to your members, future

members, other chapters and the general public. Your site should always contain information about your chapter activities and a list of current officers.

Prepare your copy in MS Word (without formatting) or other document ahead of time and make edits there. This will help to avoid typos and will provide you with a safe copy. Make sure that when you save your document, you save it as a "text", "plain text" or "text only" document. Otherwise it will not be read properly by a web browser. You may need to modify your copy to fit your web site template.

Suggestions for chapter web site content:

- Minutes of regular board meetings
- Items the Board wants publicized
- Schedule of meetings, events, dinners
- Newsletter
- Officer names and contact numbers
- Chapter educational grant information and application
- Duties of Board members
- Photos of recent events
- Membership application
- Link to the international ITNS home page
- History of chapter
- Link for contact person and RSVP to meetings / events

When deciding to create a chapter web site, look at other pages on the Internet to gather ideas for your own site. Keep in mind that your web site is a reflection of ITNS and the nursing transplant profession. You will not need to include any information that is already available on the international ITNS web site. Instead, just provide a link to www.itns.org. Discuss your content at your chapter board meetings and update your site frequently.

Graphics

Large photos and graphics will load slowly for end users. Use smaller graphics and save all graphics in JPG or GIF formats.

Links

On the same Word document, you'll want to record any links that you will need. Give the link a name that you will display and the actual URL. One of the links should always be "contact us" and another link should be to "www.itns.org".

Custom Web Development

If you are interested in customizing and advancing your web site further, you may want to consider hiring a professional. Otherwise, you may need to learn the following:

- Dreamweaver – high end web development software application (expensive, and long learning curve, used by professional web developers)
- HTML coding / language that instructs the web page
- Photoshop – high end professional graphics software application (expensive, and long learning curve, used by professional graphic designers)
- Search Engine Optimization - web development techniques used to get a web site listed and ranked high in Search Engine Results

Resources

The Internet provides hundreds of web tools that can be extremely helpful to you in developing your own site. A good resource for developing and hosting web sites is Google, Yahoo, and / or Network Solutions.

Web Site Maintenance

Determine if there is someone in the chapter who has some experience with creating web pages. The site should be updated on a monthly basis, or when information becomes available or outdated. This task should be assigned to someone as part of his or her chapter duties.

A chapter web site can really enhance communication within your chapter and throughout our organization. Please consider developing a web site as your chapter continues to grow.