

Why Build Websites for Republican Women Federations and Clubs? *Is it Really worth the effort?*

by Bettye Chambers



Read on line at: www.gfrw.org/Website2Article06.pdf

Websites and email are here to stay, so we might as well join the crowd, hop on the band wagon and ENJOY! There are tons of user friendly teaching materials and software out now that make the once difficult task very simple. It is not rocket science and many Republican women are more than qualified to get the job done.

Mushrooming number of web sites

According to many studies including a recent one by the Pew Research Center every year for the past 10 the number of people going on line to visit web sites and to use email has grown tremendously. In the 2004 election about 66% of our population used the internet. Polls indicate that number is expected to be at least 80 percent of our population by the 2008 elections. www.pewinternet.org/

Here are a few stats you should be aware of from Nathan Tabor of Act Media, Inc. Last year, more than 75 million Americans looked to the Internet for information about political parties and candidates. www.actmediainc.com

- 2/3 of the US population were internetusers in 2004
- 76% of whites, 74% of African-Americans and 65% of Hispanic Americans use the internet
- Internet users say they are spending more time online and less with other media
- 91% of Internet users between the ages of 18 and 64 send or read e-mail, and an even higher number of users ages 65 or older do the same

Almost every business known to mankind now has a web site as does every organization on the face of the earth — including volunteer organizations like our Republican Women groups. According to Pew Research, women are rapidly moving up to men in internet and email usage. So what does this mean for us? It's time to make building a professional web site a

top priority for your state federation and your unit clubs — if you have not already done so.

Why Should Republican Women have a Web Site??

1. It is expected in today's e-communication climate. Recent surveys show that over 80% of voters say they use the Internet to get information about candidates before casting their vote. The same is true for women searching for information about Republican women Federations and Clubs

2. It is an inexpensive and a very popular communication vehicle for attracting members and prospects. It is much less expensive than producing print newsletters.

3. It is a central location for everything which your members and visitors need to know about your Federation or RW Clubs — complete with contact information and future events.

4. It can be a colorful, attractive and attention getting format which tells the world that we Republican Women are on the cutting edge of technology as well as politics.

OK, so where do we start?

My Story: I have been asked to relate my personal story and give a brief road map which I followed to build Republican websites — **and have fun while doing it!**

After having created print newsletters for many years, it occurred to me in 2000 that these were just too expensive to produce with the high cost of paper, postage, ink, printing, etc. The handwriting was on the wall that websites and e-newsletters were the way to go. Following are the steps which I followed and which worked for me as a newcomer to web building.

My Steps to building a website:

STEP 1. I enrolled in an **adult evening class at a community college** which was labeled Web Design. The course description said that we would use MS FrontPage software which is one of the most popular packages on the market.



www.LindaHerren.net

However, after arriving at the class, we were informed that the instructor had decided to use the freebie, Yahoo GeoCities <http://geocities.yahoo.com/> which used a free web design program called Yahoo Site Builder. At least this forced me into the process, and I built my very first personal three page web site. This convinced me that it was not all that difficult, and I was hooked.

STEP 2. Move up to FrontPage 2000 web design software.

After a few months of using the free web design software and pre-made templates, I decided that I wanted more freedom to design my own pages. Therefore, I purchased the then latest version of FrontPage which cost about \$160. Today it is listed as \$199 on Microsoft's web site with upgrades for \$109. If you shop around, you can probably do better than this with rebates. I settled on this software since it is very highly rated for organizations and small businesses. Since then I have used FrontPage 2002 and now 2003. If you are experienced in using Word, you should have no serious problems picking up FrontPage.

www.microsoft.com/office/frontpage/prodinfo/default.mspx

STEP 3. Where do we go to learn how to use this new software?

While visiting a local Borders Book Store, I discovered that they had a very good and extensive Computer Book section. I settled on the following "how to" books which I used over a period of time:

- Microsoft Office FrontPage 2003 - Step by Step
- FrontPage 2003, the Missing Manual. Building Websites made easy by Jessica Mantaro, Pogue Press

These easy to follow books use color and photos to lead you step by step with easy instructions. You don't have to be an "expert" to use this software to build a website. Today, you do not even have to know how to use html code. (Hypertext Markup Language) FrontPage converts

your text to html for you.

STEP 4. Select a hosting company

O.k. I have created my web site, and it is on my hard drive. What is next??? Find a hosting company — someone who rents space on their servers where you can publish so everyone on the www can see your handiwork and read your message.

Hosting costs have come down tremendously in recent years, and there are zillions of companies out there competing for your business. Costs of \$7 to \$9 per month will get you more than ample disk storage space and bandwidth (transfer rate). Usually these low monthly fees will also include the small cost of your domain name. (Name of web site such as www.nfrw.org) So why not go for “free” web hosting since so many are advertised?

Disadvantages of Free Web Hosts

- Limited web page space
- Can't add interactive features (chat rooms, message boards, games, online ordering etc.)
- Search engines often ignore them A HUGE disadvantage!
- Your visitors may doubt your credibility
- May have banners and/or pop ads on your home page and/or all of your pages
- Long and hard-to-remember web address (instead of yourdomain.com)
- No guarantees of site availability and longevity
- Poor help and support - if any

Read more about web hosting at www.2createawebsite.com. These steps to creating a web site are very easy to follow and understand and include great tutorials.

I use **I-Power Webs** in Santa Monica, CA, for hosting most of my web sites since they came very highly recommended, they have great tech support 24-7, they are very patient with novices like me. The price includes free domain names, many free e-mail addresses, and a tremendous amount of storage space and bandwidth for a very low cost of \$7.95 per month. This includes 10,000 MB of storage space and 250 GB of transfer rate. This amount of space will allow for hundreds of web pages if we ever need that much space. www.ipowerweb.com/

Go to the following web sites to read about some highly rated hosting companies at reasonable rates:

• **Web Hosting Inspector** Web Hosting Inspector provides independent test results and information to assist consumers in selecting the right web site hosting provider and in making an educated buying decision.

www.webhostinginspector.com

• **Top-5-Web-Hosting.com** is an independent and free web hosting resource. They search the internet to find the best web hosting deals and get you the best value for your money which includes: customer service, server uptime, features and best technical support www.top-5-web-hosting.com/ Many of these highly ranked companies are very good and dependable. No matter what course you choose — free web sites, template sites, or create your own – I have found through trial and error that there are a few key things that you should keep in mind when building your website:

My Rules for developing website content and layout

Rule 1: Select a simple domain name and page names. Keep your domain name clean and simple like NFRW.org or GFRW.org. You can quickly determine if the name is available by going to www.register.com. For your Republican Women sites decide what pages you will need. Usually begin with five pages, and you can expand later.

- Welcome page
- About Us page
- Links/Resources page
- Upcoming Events page
- Contact Us page

See Mark Montini's great article in **Republican Woman Magazine** in 2002 about easy web site building:

www.ggrw.org/WebSite2Article06

Rule 2: Content is Critical !!

The more current and interesting news you have on your site, the more visitors will return. A web site that sits for months without updates is probably worse than no web site at all. It paints an image of a lazy and incompetent organization. I like to add a touch of humor when possible with a Republican joke and cartoon page. This tends to throw the humorless Dems off guard. See:

<http://ggrw.org/Light%20Side.htm>

Rule 3: Appearance

Appearance attracts the eye of visitors and

encourages them to read more. Just as design and layout is critical for print newsletters, so it is for websites. This can be accomplished with a vast array of free web graphics, appropriate colors and good layout. Keep animation to a minimum. On special patriotic pages, you may opt to include background music for special effects. See:

www.gagop9.org/VeteranTribute.htm

http://ggrw.org/Reagan_Tribute.htm

Rule 4: Ease of Navigation

A site that is difficult to navigate will not encourage repeat visits. Place your page links in easy view — top, bottom, or vertical left. At the top of very long pages, I like to list the topics on that page at the very top and then use bookmark links to instantly move to topic locations within that one long page. This serves to avoid a great deal of scrolling. Many people just do not like to scroll.

Rule 5: E-Newsletters

Develop an E-Newsletter to email to your membership, prospects, and other Republicans in your area. This e-newsletter can be done in HTML or PDF format. It is very easy to just create another web page for your e-news and then email your list inviting them to visit that page — such as

Please view our 9th District E-Elephant Ear at

http://gagop9.org/E-Ear_Oct_07.htm

Rule 6: E-Mail Lists

Build your Republican Women's email data base and keep it updated. Encourage your membership to add friends and family members who might like to receive this mailing. Also, include a form or link to a blank e-mail where viewers may sign up to receive e-news. This is an excellent way of reaching out to recruit new members. Most people do not visit websites until they receive an email pointing to the website with a live link so they can just “click here”. I still use Outlook or Outlook Express as my email client (software). The only email software and ISP that I could not recommend based upon years of unpleasant experiences is AOL. Kim Komando recommends the following: software specifically designed for large mailing lists. Majordomo, Mailman and Dada Mail. Their sites are, respectively:

www.greatcircle.com/majordomo/

<http://mailman.sourceforge.net/>

<http://mojo.skazat.com/>

Rule 7: Advertise your Web Site!

After your site is up and running, it is important that you advertise it at every opportunity. Place your website URL on all your business cards, your stationery, envelopes, newsletters, e-mail and e-newsletters. E-mail every Republican group in your area and inform them of your great new site!

Need someone else to build the pages?

If you do not want to take on the task of building your own pages, you might look for inexpensive help at your local high school, community college or universities. Check with the computer teachers or counselors since most schools have a few really talented students who sometimes do this on the side to earn money. You will be amazed at how much some of these young people know about building web sites.

Don't forget to look within your own clubs and federation since there are many Republican women who have great computer skills. There is also a large group of retirees who may have experience in computer work who are looking for volunteer jobs to keep them busy. After retiring from teaching, I fell into this category and jokingly say that I have finally found my true calling. Remember, we are never too old or too young to learn these wonderful new and easy skills. CAUTION! These are just my personal ideas which have worked for me. I am self-taught in the area of web building and far from an expert.

The purpose of all this is to communicate our conservative message to as many Republican women and future Republicans as possible. It is also an efficient communication tool of the 21st century for reaching out to help prepare qualified Republican women run for elected office. As the business ad says, "We lost the account because we did not have a web site." Don't lose those members because you do not have a website.

Note: Federation Presidents and Club Presidents, please let us hear from you concerning your experiences in website building — what worked for you and what did not. We would love to post some of your unique experiences (the good and the bad) to be shared with NFRW members. We are also building a list of recommended hosting and web design businesses which you have used and



would recommend. If you have a good hosting company or web designer who would like to be added to our resource list, please send it on to bcnole@bellsouth.net ASAP.

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NFRW Website Assistance Coordinator
Some of the Republican Websites which I have built and maintain:*

*www.ggrw.org - www.gagop9.org -
www.lindaherren.net - GA National
Committeewoman to the RNC
www.gagopnational08.org*

Congratulations to these states which already have web sites. This list has grown from 20 in 2002 to 34 in 2006.

1. Alabama – <http://www.afrw.org/>
2. Alaska – www.akfrw.org
3. Arizona – www.azfrw.org
4. Arkansas – www.afrw.net
5. California – www.cfrw.org
6. Colorado
7. Florida – www.ffrw.us
8. Georgia – www.gfrw.org
9. Illinois – <http://www.ifrw.org/>
10. Indiana – www.ifrw.net
11. Iowa - www.iowafrw.org
12. Kentucky – www.kfrw.net
13. Louisiana – <http://www.lfrw.com/>
14. Maine – <http://www.maineGOP.com/images/ME/mefrw.html>
15. Maryland – www.mfrw.org
16. Massachusetts FRW www.mafrw.org/
17. Minnesota – www.mngopwomen.com
18. Mississippi – www.msfrw.org
19. Missouri – www.mofrw.com
20. Nebraska – hometown.aol.com/nefrw
21. Nevada <http://www.nfrw.org/statefederations/nevada.htm>
22. New Jersey – www.njfrw.org
23. New York – www.nysfrw.com
24. North Carolina – www.ncfrw.com
25. Oklahoma – www.ofrwonline.org
26. Oregon – www.orgsites.com/or/oregonfrw
27. Pennsylvania – www.pcrw.org
28. South Carolina – <http://www.scfrw.org/>
29. South Dakota – www.sdfwr.org
30. Tennessee – www.tnfrw.org

31. Texas – www.tfrw.org
32. Virgin Islands
www.virepublicanwomen.com
33. Virginia – www.vfrw.org
34. Washington – www.wfrw.org

Resources - Websites:

Pew Research of Internet Usage:

How Women and Men Use the Internet 12/28/2005 www.pewinternet.org/

Congressional Internet Caucus Advisory Committee,

a diverse group of public interest, non profit and industry groups working to educate the Congress and the public about important Internet-related policy issues. www.netcaucus.org and www.netcaucus.org/statistics/

Website designers/hosting:

*Mark Montini of Georgia (formerly D.C.)
www.CampaignSecrets.com
www.campaignsitebuilder.com/
mmontini@campaignsecrets.com

Three Easy Steps to Building a website
by Mark Montini - Spring 2002
www.ggrw.org/WebSite2Article06

*TCV Media - Nathan Tabor of NC

336-416-7117
nathan@nathantabor.com The services are free – hosting and template
www.theconservativevoice.com/
<http://www.actmediainc.com/>

*SiteRider Communications of GA

Website Design, Hosting & Maintenance
www.siterider.com Gerry Sommers
gsommers@siterider.com 706 867-1470 -

Campaign Superstore. Campaign Superstore offers the very best value for Republican candidates and organizations that need a professional site that inspires voters to get on board, volunteer and contribute. www.campaignsuperstore.com/

Campaign Edge! Your headquarters for campaign technology. Start building your website today. www.campaignedge.com

* These have been in touch with us and are recommended in 2006.