

Upper Rocky Mountain Region Service Committee Web Site Analysis and Feasibility Information

As the web servant for both the Rocky Mountain Forum and Colorado Regional Service Committee, I have been asked by your RDA Tommy O to prepare a report about what is involved in setting-up a web site. Unfortunately I am unavailable to be at your RSC in Rock Springs, so I hope my report will be informative and not too technical. I can be reached at (720) 480-2103 for questions as you consider this issue or by e-mail at: don.tilleman@donnot.com, for follow-up questions and concerns.

**Submitted In Loving Service,
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CO Regional Delegate Alternate**

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I Introduction

As the number of addicts that have Internet access increases, the use of e-mail, on-line forums and web sites to facilitate communication and disseminate information becomes a necessity rather than a luxury for regional service committees. This report is being prepared for the RDA of the Upper Mountain Region of Narcotics Anonymous to outline the options, analyze the costs and benefits of each option. It is my hope to provide the committee with enough information to make an informed decision about whether they wish to pursue an on-line presence project at this level of service.

The major benefits of having an online presence are the ability of all addicts in the region to have a central resource to find information and a single point of accountability for contacting the RSC. Although it would be nice, an on-line presence cannot be considered a replacement for the more traditional methods of communication, but a desirable adjunct to postal mail, telephone and face-to face communication. My experience as the web servant of the Colorado Regional Service Committee, has been that the professional community and addicts in isolation are the most likely to contact our committee through our web site and the frustration they have in reaching someone has been greatly reduced.

The major downfall has been finding addicts that have the necessary skills to create and maintain the web site and the willingness to be accountable to answering e-mails in a timely fashion. However, we find this same problem in all of our service efforts at all levels and hopefully the time is coming when we have more addicts willing to serve than service opportunities.

II What is needed

A Domain Name

1. Why

The Internet is actually a bunch of documents posted at numerical "IP" addresses, for example the domain nacolorado.org is actually hosted at: 66.235.192.26, as human beings it is very difficult for us to remember strings of digits to find a document. The internet therefore has a system call Uniform Resource Locators (URLs for the geeks amongst you) that allow humans to read and remember various documents and images posted at different locations on a vast network spanning the entire globe. Domain names are the 'glue' that allows humans and computers to quickly locate documents, images and applications across the Internet. Domain names are maintained by several entities under the supervision of ICANN (Internet Corporation For Assigned Names and Numbers), and were originally set-up in a hierarchy that allowed the user to quickly determine what kind of organization was providing the documents. The .org domains were intended for non-profits, .com for commercial organizations, .edu for schools, and .gov for governments. This standard is no longer strictly adhered to and throughout the fellowship one may find Regional and Area Service Committees web sites ending in either .com or .org.

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2. How

a. Choose a Name

The first decision an organization must make is to decide what they want to be called on the Internet. In most cases the shorter the domain name the easier it is for people to remember and type.

i). Some Suggestions

upperrockymountainna.net

AVAILABLE

upperrockymountainna.org

AVAILABLE

urmcna.com

AVAILABLE

urmcna.net

AVAILABLE

urmcna.org

AVAILABLE

b. Choose A Domain Registrar

Doing business with a domain registrar is like doing business with anyone else, there are good reputable ones and there are shady ones. All of them provide a service for fee that varies in quality and terms and conditions. Some of the more reputable ones are GoDaddy.com, Network Solutions and 000domains.com. I will go present each of the options in the next section.

c. Some terms that will help in making the decision

Domain Forwarding

-- The ability to have more than one domain name pointed to a single website for example URMENA.net, URMENA.com, and URMENA.org all resolve to a single website – 3 domains one website.

Domain Parking

-- A website placeholder until the web site is set-up on it's permanent home.

Email Forwarding

-- The ability to route e-mails sent to the domain to another e-mail box for example e-mail sent to webservant.urmcna.org sent to an e-mail box an_addict@yahoo.com.

DNS Management

-- The ability to change where the domain is located without waiting for postal mail to be processed.

Ownership Changes

-- Selling the domain name to another organization without hassles

Domain Locking

-- Prevents Bad guys from stealing your domain name.

Domain Privacy

-- Keeps the registry e-mail information private reducing the amount of spam to contact e-mail provided in the registry information.

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3. Cost options

a. **Network Solutions**

The original domain registrar and often a very difficult company to deal with when issues arise. I personally have had many problems in the past with this registrar in regards to unsolicited e-mail, domain transfers and renewals. Technical support available via telephone and e-mail, telephone support incurs no long-distance charges.

i). Annual fee – 24.99 per year (3 year contract required)

Payment by credit card only.

ii). Available Services Included:

Domain Parking
DNS Management
Unlimited Ownership Changes
Domain Protection

b. **GoDaddy**

Spends a great deal of money on print and media (Super Bowl commercials this year) advertising. Member of the Better Business Bureau and has satisfied all customer complaints to the satisfaction of the BBB. Technical support available by phone and e-mail although long hold times on long-distance are the norm.

i). Annual fee – 8.95 per year (multi-year discounts available)

Payment by checks, credit cards, Paypal and wire transfers.

ii). Available Services Included:

Domain Forwarding
Domain Parking
Email Forwarding
DNS Management
Unlimited Ownership Changes
Domain Locking
Domain Privacy

c. **000domains**

Spends no money on advertising relies on word-of mouth. **I use this registrar for my personal and business domains** and have had absolutely no problems requiring technical support. In my experience the fastest domain set-up I have ever seen – domains are active within 2 hours of placing an order.

i). Annual fee – 13.50 per year (multi-year discounts available)

Payment by credit card only

ii). Available Services Included:

Domain Forwarding
Domain Parking
Email Forwarding
DNS Management
Unlimited Ownership Changes

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Domain Locking

d. **Other Domain Name Registrars**

The list above is by no means a complete list of the companies offering this service. I have presented these examples based on my experience and there may be other companies who offer comparable services at a reduced price. I am in no way affiliated with any of the companies listed above and any relationship with the companies above has been noted.

B Web Hosting Company

1. The 'Free' Solution

A search on google will bring up 46,200,000 results about free web-hosting companies. Many of these are reputable and may provide a low cost solution for web hosting. I will focus this discussion on two of the more popular ones GeoCities and Angelfire.

a. Benefits

i). Free – no cost to set-up and maintain a web site

ii). Online web site editing tools included

iii). Domain Forwarding allowed, but will display site as something.angelfire.com or something.geo-cities.com etc.

iv). Extensive help files for the novice web designer

b. Costs

i). Advertising displayed on web site with no control about which ads are displayed (a advertisement for a narcotic being offered by a pharmaceutical company, or ad for a on-line casino may be displayed)

ii). Limited web space (Angelfire 20MB, GeoCities 15MB)

A simple web page is generally requires less than 25 KB of storage space so a quick rule of thumb is 1MB = 1000 KB, so a 1 MB web site could have approximately 400 pages of text only pages. Small images that have optimized for the web are generally 50 KB or less.

For example the nacolorado web site is currently using 32 MB of storage space.

iii). Limited Bandwidth

The free web hosts often limit the number of times a page can be displayed, by setting how much bandwidth a site may use in a month.

When your bandwidth is consumed for the month your web site is inaccessible to future visitors until next month

Bandwidth is the size of the files and images that is used to display a page. For example a simple web page that contains 10KB of text and two 50KB images would take 110KB of bandwidth to be displayed each time it is viewed (Angelfire 1GB, GeoCities 3 GB per month)

1 GB = approximately 1000 MB

For example the nacolorado web site used 402.5 MB in April 2005.

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iv). One e-mail address

an_addict@free_web_hosting.com

v). Limited ability to design or customize pages outside of the site templates offered

vi). No database provided for storing e-mail addresses or providing some of the functionality that many web users are used to.

2. Hosted Solutions

The expense of paying for a web hosting provider is often a solution because of the freedom that it gives the organization to create interactive web sites that are easy to navigate and have the features that many users expect as standard.

a. Benefits

i). No Advertising

ii). 'Unlimited Space and Bandwidth'

Well not unlimited but well beyond any current needs of either the Rocky Mountain Forum or CRSCNA web sites.

iii). Advanced web site design options

iv). Back-end database

v). 100 or more e-mail addresses

trusted_servant@urmcna.org

vi). Web-based design tools and tutorials

vii). Free telephone and e-mail technical support

b. Costs

Okay here is where your eyes will glaze over. The following chart is just a quick comparison of a very limited number

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Comparison Chart

Web Hosting Provider	Monthly Cost	Payment Options	Storage Space/ Bandwidth	Database / web feature add-ons
Ipowerweb****	\$7.95 +\$0.00 set-up annual	Check or credit card	2 GB / 40 GB	MySQL/ cgi, perl, php
GoDaddy	\$7.96 +\$0.00 set-up annual contract	Check, Credit card, Wire Transfer or PayPal	2 GB / 100 GB	MySql or MS SQL / php, perl, .asp, .net
Network Solutions Advanced Package	\$13.30 + \$0.00 set-up fee annual contract	Credit card	2 GB / 20GB	MySql or MS SQL / php, perl, .asp, .net
Yahoo! Professional Standard Package	\$19.95 + \$25.00 set-up fee annual contract	Credit card	4 GB/ 75GB	MySQL/ cgi, perl, php
AngelFire	\$14.95 + \$15.00 set-up fee annual contract	Credit card	150 MB / 30 GB	None - cgi

All of these providers offer FREE domain name registration with the purchase of a web-hosting package

All of these providers require payment for entire contract period up-front, to get the quoted prices

All of these providers offer multi-year contract discounts

******* Please Note *******

I use IPOWEEB as a web hosting service for my personal web site (<http://www.donnot.com>), my employer's website (<http://www.pine1nc.com>), several client web sites as well as the Rocky Mountain Forum and the CRSCNA web sites. I do not get any financial consideration for recommending them as a service.

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C Trusted Servant

The most important part of this discussion but perhaps the most overlooked is who is going to create and maintain your web site. Professional companies can charge up to \$500 per hour for design and \$100 per hour for maintenance and there are many organizations that opt for this slick, professional option. In my humble opinion this is a waste of the 7th tradition funds forwarded by our member groups, so the question is finding an addict who already possesses the skills and has the willingness to serve in this capacity. Or has the willingness to learn the skills from an experienced web developer and serve in this position.

1. Local Talent

a. Benefits

The trusted servant will already be a member of the Upper Rocky Mountain Region so will have an understanding about what the addicts and groups in the region expect from the web site. Also this addict should be able to commit to attending the RSC meetings when and where they are scheduled per the Upper Rocky Mountain Region guidelines. This provides a single point of accountability to the addicts of the region.

b. Costs

If the trusted servant has to learn the ropes of web design there may be a few errors as they learn about how the various web browsers display web pages. Also this addict will need to have their own computer and the ability to access the internet preferably through a high-speed connection, although I did web design on dial-up for many years, so it is possible for it to be done.

2. 'Farming' it out

a. Benefits

The addict for hire in these regards will already have the skill set available for quick implementation of the regional website and will have the necessary tools to create and maintain the website.

b. Costs

This addict will probably not be a member of the Upper Rocky Mountain Region and may not share the same vision as the RSC. The 'hired gun' may not be available or willing to travel to RSC meetings and the single point of accountability to the addicts of the Upper Rocky Mountain Region will exist at the RSC only.

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III Conclusion

As noted above there are many costs and different options to consider when setting up a web site for a region of Narcotics Anonymous. Some of the issues I have not discussed but also should be considered is how such a project can be reconciled within the 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts of service. As a web servant for two service bodies I find balancing the need of our members against those of the public in general and the professional community often creates situations that are not explicitly addressed by our spiritual principles. Below is the an excerpt of the web servant guidelines as written for the Colorado Regional Service Committee:

1. The CRSCNA Web Servant is responsible for the dissemination of information via the World Wide Web for the CRSCNA. As a result, this servant must carefully balance the needs of several groups: The addict seeking NA for the first time or coming back from a relapse -- by providing accurate and timely information as to meetings and what exactly Narcotics Anonymous is and is not. The CRSCNA Web Servant through the information presented on the website and e-mail communication must make this group feel both comfortable and welcome in approaching our fellowship.

- **The professional – by providing a resource to the professional to feel comfortable referring their clients to our fellowship.**
- **Members of the fellowship both in the Colorado region and worldwide – by providing timely and accurate meeting information, information and discussion of the current issues facing the Colorado fellowship and timely and accurate information about the activities being sponsored by the CRSCNA (workshops, regional assemblies, service committee meetings and CRCNA activities).**
- **The Service bodies comprising the Colorado Region – by providing the minutes and information about the work the CRSCNA is currently engaged in.**

2. Other qualifications, duties, and responsibilities include:

3. The ability to take suggestions and work with various NA service bodies in the entire service structure.

4. Strong knowledge and experience with writing html.

5. A familiarity with WSC guidelines for Public Information and Online Presence.

6. A working knowledge of the current copyright and intellectual property issues.

7. Some knowledge or the desire to learn: JavaScript, Cascading StyleSheets, high-level scripting languages (e.g. php, perl), MySQL databases, evolving World Wide Web Consortium Standards for web pages and Web Accessibility Initiative standards.

8. Acts as a resource to the Colorado Region fellowship for web related issues (online presence and content advising).

9. Maintains the CRSCNA Website.

10. Maintains the Regional Meeting List.

11. Coordinates the member area web servants and assists in their efforts to maintain their Area websites as needed.

12. Provides assistance to the CRCNA Convention Information & Web site committee as needed.

13. Answers or forwards all e-mail sent to nacolorado@nacolorado.org

14. Acts as a liaison between the CSRCNA and other NA service bodies with regards to on-line presence, electronically submitted requests and online copyright and intellectual property issues.