Internet Terminology

Below is a very basic glossary for people who are relatively new to the internet and unfamiliar with the various terms that are used. Understanding what someone in the industry is saying to you will make your life a LOT easier.

ACCESSIBILITY Relates to web design/coding standards and refers to how easy it is for everyone to use your website, including people who are visually impaired or in any way physically handicapped, or limited by older or less common computers and software.

ADDRESS BAR The white bar towards the top of your computer screen. It will normally have something typed in it that starts with "http://" This is where you type in the address of a website that you want to visit.

ASCII American Standard Code for Information Interchange. A code that represents English characters as numbers, ranging from 0 to 127. Commonly used by computers and browsers, ASCII codes make it possible to transfer data from one computer to another computer (like a server). In terms of transferring data from a computer to a server (called "uploading"), you would need to use either ASCII or Binary, depending on the type of file being transferred.

ASP A coding language that is compatible with Windows servers. Normally used for increased functionality on a website or to work with a database. It works in conjunction with html and html variants.

BACKLINKS Links from other websites to yours. Used to increase a site's popularity with search engines and to get more people to visit your site.

BANDWIDTH It may help if you read "traffic" first, but very simply, bandwidth relates to how much a resource is used. An analogy would be a freeway. The wider the freeway, the more traffic (users) it can handle. The narrower it is, the less people can use it at once (without problems). When a website gets a lot of visitors, it will use a lot of bandwidth.

BCC Means "Blind Carbon Copy". An email feature. If you send someone a BCC email, their email address will not show in the "to" field.

BETA A term used for software that is in a "live" testing phase. People can use it but can expect some hiccups.

BINARY A numbering system that consists of only two numbers, 0 and 1. Everything that you type or input into a computer is converted into binary - a unique combination of the zeros and ones. Screens and printers then convert this binary code back into what you inputted. When uploading (transferring) information (files) from a computer to a server, certain files need to be transferred as binary in order to be correctly interpreted and rendered. The alternative to binary for uploading is ASCII.

BLOG An online journal or diary and a very popular current method of sharing your thoughts with the world. It is also very popular as a marketing tool.

BOUNCE When you send an email to someone and it comes straight back to you with an error message, it is said to have bounced. It's like the internet version of "return to sender" except it is a computer or piece of software automatically sending it back to you, not a person. Emails can bounce for many reasons. The most common are: you made a spelling or typing error in the address, making the address invalid; the person you are sending to no longer has that email address; the person you are sending to has let their mailbox become too full to accept new emails; a piece of software on the receiving end thinks that your email is spam or that it includes a virus and sends it back to you.

BROADBAND Relates to a type of internet connection. When someone says they have a broadband connection it means they are connecting using a service that provides greater speed. ADSL is one example of a broadband connection. It also often means greater reliability because you will not experience as many timeouts and also because more people can use a broadband connection at the same time without it causing "traffic congestion" (which slows everything up - just as it does when you are driving on a busy road).

BROWSER When you visit a website, you are seeing it on a browser. Websites look very different in reality to what you see when you visit it. Everything is in fact encoded. A browser is the piece of software that decodes everything so that what you see is an attractive page rather than a lot of coding. Most people use the Microsoft Internet Explorer browser, which comes with all Windows software. If you look at the top right of your screen right now, just under the "X" you will see a little picture. This picture tells you what browser you are using. If the picture is a wavy square with smaller squares in red, green, blue and yellow, you are using IE (Internet Explorer). If it is something different, then you probably know all this already.

BROWSER WINDOW The browser is the type of software you use to view things on the internet (see above) - the browser window is the actual screen that the software displays everything on. If someone tells you to open a browser window, they are telling you to activate your browser so that an internet window opens up on your computer. You normally do this by clicking on an icon on your computer screen or task bar (at the bottom of your screen).

BROWSING Going to different websites on the internet and looking around. A bit like window shopping, but on the internet instead of in a mall. Think of going into a bookshop and browsing. It's the same thing. - Taking a casual look around for anything that may be of interest.

CACHE Every time you do anything on your computer, it stores this in memory so that the next time you try to do the same thing, it happens quicker than having to wait from scratch. The place where it stores all this is called the "cache". The irony is that if your cache gets too full, it in fact makes your computer work a lot slower. It's a good idea to empty your cache regularly to keep your computer working optimally.

CATCHALL This refers to an email folder that will catch any and all emails sent to your domain, even if there is no such address there. For example, you only have one email address on your domain, which is joe@joescafe.co .uk. Now if someone sends an email to pete@joescafe.co .uk, the catchall will accept this email and store it, even though the address is invalid. Catchall's used to be a great idea in case someone spelled you name incorrectly - you would still get the email. However, these days it's a bad idea to use a catchall because spammers target these ferociously and you will end up collecting loads of junk that will either swamp your inbox or cause your mailbox to become so full that legitimate emails bounce.

CC Means "Carbon Copy". An email feature. Use this to send a copy of an email to one or many other people at the same time that you are sending it to the main recipient/s.

CHAT In the context of the internet "chat" is a feature that allows users from all over the globe to communicate in real time or almost real time. Conventional chat is communication via typing which then appears on the recipient's screen. This is done via a piece of software that exists on a server. In some cases you need to install complimentary software onto your own computer as well. Complete chat communities exist that allow people to join in on general conversations with many other users at the same time or with a single person at a time. These "meeting places" are referred to as "chat rooms". One on one chat can also take place privately by using a piece of software on your computer called a messenger. This has to be especially downloaded and installed from a website that uses this technology. Some of the more common, advanced chat facilities are provided by yahoo, msn and icq.

CMS "Content Management System". A dynamic website that is normally database driven and which enables the owner/user to manage the content of their own website (make changes) without needing to know any coding at all.

CODE Nothing that you see on the internet is what it appears to be. Everything is coded in one way or another to achieve the exact look, layout and functions. There are different types of code and coding languages that are used to develop websites as well as all computer programmes and software.

CONNECTION This is what gets you going on the internet. Just like you cannot make a phone call without a telephone service provider to give you the use of their cables or towers, you cannot connect to the internet without an internet service provider to give you a connection to the internet. You get different types of connection: dial-up, ISDN, ADSL and wireless. Depending on the type of connection you choose, who you get your connection through and many other factors, you could end up with a slow or fast connection and a reliable or unreliable connection. However, not all connections are equal and no connection is necessarily the same from one day to the next or even one hour to the next. This is because of all the factors that can influence it. Some of these are: the equipment that your provider is using, the technical maintenance that they do, the software that they use, how busy the internet is at any given time, your physical location, the weather and even the condition of all of these things somewhere on the other side of the world.

CONVERSION A marketing term that refers to how many website visitors convert to buyers. If 1 out of every hundred visitors to a site end up buying something, there is a 1:100 (or 1%) conversion rate. Ultimately this is what website marketing is all about because it is pointless getting thousands of visitors if none are buying your product, your services, your ideas or whatever it is you are selling (every website is selling something, even if the only payment is an ego-boost to the site owner).

COOKIE A small piece of information that certain websites store on your computer when you visit them. Cookies are normally harmless and the reasons for using them vary. Sometimes it is to make sure that their website loads quickly when you next visit, by drawing the saved information from your own computer rather than from the website itself. Another use is to track visitors to see how often they come, what they do when they come and other information to help with marketing. Cookies are also used to track visits from other websites, especially when the site you are visiting is paying the other site for advertising space or needs to pay a referral fee to the originating website. A cookie can also be used to check when you last visited and, if any changes since then, to force your browser to refresh so that you see the latest information. The downside of cookies is that after you have visited a lot of sites with a lot of graphics, your computer will begin to get bogged down with all of this in its memory. It's therefore a good idea to regularly clear the cookies from your computer.

DATABASE DRIVEN With a normal static website, the information that you see is on the page itself. It does not change unless someone manually edits the page. On a database driven website, the information is not stored on the page, but in a database. Every time someone visits a particular page, the information is drawn from the database in order to display it on the page. Information can

therefore be easily cross-referenced and the same information applied in many different ways, using formulas and different variables.

DIRECTORY or SEARCH ENGINE DIRECTORY Much like the Yellow pages, a directory is a place where information about hundreds, thousands and millions of websites is stored to allow people to easily and quickly find information and/or resources. Yahoo is an example of a search engine directory and, closer to home, Ananzi is another.

DOMAIN A domain is a person or organisation's unique space on the internet. In layman's terms, it is commonly used to mean the name of your website.

DOMAIN NAME A domain is identified by the number assigned to its unique space. To make it easier to use however, the number is given the name of your choice an this name is assigned to the number. In this way, people do not need to remember the number (IP) in order to visit a website, but can use the easier-to-remember domain name.

DOMAIN REGISTRATION In the same way that you have to register a business name, so you need to register a domain name. Only once it is registered do you have the ability to assign it to a specific number so that it has an actual location on the internet. A domain name registration is normally only valid for one year, at the end of which it has to be renewed for you to continue using it. Some domain names must be registered for 2 years minimum, like those ending with .co.uk.

DOWNLOAD When you transfer information from a website or server to your computer, this is called downloading. Collecting email is therefore a download, as is saving a document from the internet to your computer or installing a software programme directly from the internet. Every time that you visit a website you are also downloading, because the information is passing from the server to your computer and often saved there without you even knowing (see "cookies"). This becomes quite important if you are using something like ADSL to connect to the internet, where you have a limit on bandwidth because you use bandwidth every time you download anything. The bigger the download, the greater the bandwidth that you are using.

EMAIL The internet equivalent to post and mail, email is an encoded message that is sent instantly to someone else's computer. It is however a "best attempt" facility and not foolproof, largely because of the complexity of the internet itself and the vast number of things that can cause the process to stall or fail.

EMAIL CLIENT The software programme that you use in order to send and receive email from your computer. All computers with Windows installed come with 2 email clients to choose from: Outlook and Outlook Express. Most people use one of these.

EMBED To make something appear to be an integral part of a website, although it may exist in a total different place.

FREEWARE Software that is made available at no cost whatsoever. Often includes advertising for the provider and is sometimes used to entice a user to purchase the unbranded version with no advertising. Freeware from an unknown or questionable source should be avoided as these programmes can contain viruses or adware (see "adware" above)

FTP CLIENT The software programme that you use to upload your website to a host server.

GIF A type of file used for images, especially animated graphics and line-drawn images (as opposed to photographs). A .gif image can be saved with a transparent background, making it ideal for graphic

overlays.

HOST / HOSTING In order for you to have an email address or a website, a computer somewhere, with all the necessary software, has to provide you with 3 things: an IP (domain) address, physical space to store the information and bandwidth that accommodates the flow of information that is taking place on your behalf. The company that provides you with these facilities is your host and you will pay them a fee for hosting your site and or email address.

HTML Hyper Text Markup Language. This is the base language that s used for creating websites. Common uses of the term are, "html coding" and "html website". A website created in pure html is also referred to as a static website. In other words, it does not interact with the visitor other than in the most basic ways. It stores no data and can not return data other than what is consistently on the page itself. Emails that use different fonts, colours, borders, backgrounds and graphics are also generally coded in html, with the alternative being plain text.

HTTP HyperText Transfer Protocol. This is a method used to transfer information on the internet and normally precedes the "description" of the actual resource being accessed and transferred. For example, web sites and web pages are one type of resource, identified by their domain name (www.domain.co .uk).

IE Internet Explorer. The most commonly used internet browser in use, largely because it comes with Windows software and is the automatic default browser for any Windows user. The default can be changed to a different type of browser.

IP or IP ADDRESS Internet Protocol. Very simply, the IP address refers to the actual number that a web address name translates to. (also see "domain"). The IP number is the real address.

ISP Internet Service Provider. The organisation that provides you with internet access (connection) and related services is your ISP.

JAVASCRIPT Coding languages used to achieve effects and functions on websites that normal html and its variants cannot achieve. These bits of coding (or scripts) are normally embedded into a web page and will automatically activate as soon as someone arrives on the page. Please note that JavaScript is distinctly different to Java.

JPG A type of file used for images, especially photographs. Images used on web pages work best as jpg or gif.

KEYWORD or KEY PHRASE An internet marketing term that refers to the main topics or subjects of your web pages in relation to how people would phrase them when searching for your products or services on the internet. For example, your topic may be "Quantifiable Analysis of the Strategic Business Model" but the average person searching for your exact information may simply search for "planning business strategies". Your key phrases are at the core of any website marketing strategy and needs to relate to your target market's thinking rather than your own.

LAN Local Area Network. A method of connecting a small network of computers to each other. Using LAN enables file sharing amongst different computers and the ability to connect multiple computers to the internet using the same connection.

LINK The internet is made up of millions of resources and computers that all link to each other. One type of link (verb) is a link (noun). This is a small snippet of code that creates an area on a web page that can be clicked on. Once clicked on, the person will be taken to the resource that the piece of

code linked to. This is how users on the internet can move from one web page or website to another and download documents, programmes or files. To link to something means to host this piece of code that will take the person to the resource that you are linking to. To have a link from a website means that someone else is hosting this piece of code that will bring people to your website or resource.

MAILSERVER (Also see "server"). A mail server is a computer that distributes email. Simplest is to think of it as an internet version of your local post office.

META TAG Included in the head section of an html web page and is visible to search engines but not human visitors. Meta tags provide information about a webpage, like the topic (title), keywords, description and also instructions to search engine robots and visitor browsers.

OPERATING SYSTEM The type of software that you use to run a computer is the operating system.

OPTIMISE Has two possible meanings in web design. The first is website/page optimisation. This relates to how the page is structured (both code and content) with regard to search engines. A well optimised website is search engine friendly.

The second meaning relates to graphics and pictures that are used on websites. An optimised graphic is one that has been compressed as far as possible without sacrificing acceptable quality. This allows the image to load more quickly when someone visits a website.

PARKED DOMAIN A domain name that sits on the same server space as another. If someone types in the address of either the main domain or the parked domain, they will arrive at the same website.

PHP A programming language that is Linux based rather than Windows based. Normally used for increased functionality on a website or to work with a database. It works in conjunction with html and html variants and allows for functions to be run from the server rather than the visitor's browser.

PNG Portable Network Graphic files are image files that can be edited so that their background can be removed and they will remain transparent for and are therefore useful for things like the incorporation in thing such as logos.

PPC Pay Per Click. A common term in internet advertising where you purchase advertising space on someone's website, but instead of paying a flat monthly rate, you pay a small amount each time someone clicks on your advert - which is a link that takes them to your website. This "small amount" can however go quite high, depending on the deemed value of the link. This is a very simplified explanation, but the principle is that you ostensibly "pay for what you get", which is not entirely accurate. False clicks can in fact make this much more expensive than a fixed advertising cost.

PROPAGATION (Please first read about IP's and domains if you are not already familiar with those terms). When an IP is changed because you have started up a new website or moved your website from one hosting company to another, every nameserver across the entire internet globally has to update its records to know where to find you. This process is called propagation and can take up to 48 hours. Sometimes even longer. This is because nameservers do not all update at the same time, some update more frequently that others and sometimes a nameserver can have a problem for a while. This means that some people can see the site and others can't. Some emails will reach their destination and others won't. Once domain propagation is completed however, everything should work as normal.

RANKING Ranking is a term related to search engines. When someone searches for something using a search engine, the will receive pages and pages of results. Where a specific site appears in those

results is its ranking. There is a second meaning as well, more commonly used with regard to marketing and SEO and related specifically to Google. Each page of a website is given a ranking by Google, from 1-10. This ranking is the value that Google places on that particular page in relation to its subject matter and how relevant it is. The more relevant a page is believed to be the higher its ranking.

RECIPROCAL LINKS When website A links to website B and B links back to A and both link to the other on condition that they receive a link back, this is reciprocal linking. The principle is that if site A ever removes the link to site B, site B will remove its link to site A and vice versa. This is a (not great) tactic for gaining more links pointing to a website in the hope that Google will increase the site's ranking as a result.

ROOT In the context used here, this relates to website hosting. Often when you want to install a piece of software to work on (or run) your site, you will need "root access". This means that you have access to your hosting space at the highest level. To explain further: the information on the server is stored in different folders, arranged in a hierarchical order. The main folder in which all the other folders and sub-folders for your account are kept, is the root folder. If you go into your account on the server and can only see the main content folders, then you do not have root access.

SCRIPT A piece of code that creates or enables a specific function on a website. The possible uses are endless, as are the different types of scripts that can be used.

SEARCH ENGINE A programme that collects, stores, arranges and normally ranks the various resources available on the internet. It is most commonly on a website and used to find other websites - much like the yellow pages is used in the brick and mortar world.

SEARCH ENGINE FRIENDLY This relates to how well a site has been put together. A search engine friendly website is one that search engines can easily read and find all the links on AND which search engines "like" because it is properly optimised and not breaking any of their rules.

SEARCH ENGINE LISTING When someone searches for something using a search engine, all the sites that are listed in response to that search have a "search engine listing".

SEARCH ENGINE RANKING Different to a search engine listing because a listing means the site appears anywhere on the list. Ranking relates to exactly where on the list it appears. Closer to the top means it has a higher ranking. A critical consideration in having your website found on the internet.

SEARCH RESULT When someone searches for something using a search engine, the list of websites and links that the search engine responds with is the search result. The aim of any website is to appear high in the search result.

SEO Stands for "Search Engine Optimisation" and very simply refers to the practice of tweaking website coding and content to achieve the highest possible search engine ranking. SEO practitioners are people who specialise in this (or claim to).

SERVER A server is a computer that is used to house websites and provide a physical storage area for websites and emails. Without a server, your website would not be viewable to the world. Servers are normally provided by hosting companies who keep the servers in special premises, under special conditions and with permanent connections to the internet.

SHAREWARE Shareware is a piece of software that you can use free of charge for a set period. After that you have to buy it or pay a license fee in order for the software to keep working. There are

different types of shareware. With some you have limited use (not everything works) before you pay, with others you have full use but for a limited time. Some shareware has both limited use and limited time.

SITEMAP This is an index to all the content on a website. It is normally accessible from at least the front page of the site and is used for two purposes: to help people find what they are looking for on the site and to help search engines find all your links.

SPAM A somewhat controversial word which has different extremes of meaning to different people. Very simply, spam is junkmail, normally sent out in bulk and normally with no regard as to whether you want to receive it or not. Serious spammers will in fact use your protests as proof that you are seeing their emails and spam you even more.

STABLE RELEASE While BETA software is software that is in the final testing phases, a stable release is when the software has passed the beta testing phase and is considered safe for general use.

SUBDOMAIN A domain that is behind another, but totally seperate. Using sub-domains you can effectively have multiple "domains" on a single registered domain name and hosting account. A sub domain address would be written like: www.something-else.yourdomain.co .uk The "something-else" is the sub domain.

THE NET A shortened version of "The Internet". Refers to the entire network that exists worldwide, making communication and information accessible to anyone with a computer and connection.

TIMEOUT If you try to connect to any server on the internet - to view a website or collect email - and it takes too long, you will have a timeout. It purely means it has taken too long, so the process was aborted. This is often what has happened when you get an error while trying to send or receive email, or when you try to visit a website and instead get a page that tells you the site cannot be found. Often just trying again immediately fixes the problem.

TRAFFIC Much like the physical world, traffic refers to all the people and computers that are using a particular route at a given time or who access a specific resource. The number of visitors to a website, for example, is also referred to as traffic. Traffic is also often spoken about when it comes to hosting. If a host tells you that you are allowed X amount of traffic, they are telling you how much of the server resources you are allowed to use. This is also called "bandwidth". Please see the explanation of "bandwidth" for more information about "traffic" in the context of hosting.

TROJAN HORSE A type of virus (malicious code) that arrives posing as something harmless (or even desirable) and infects a computer by getting the user to activate it. It achieves this because it supposedly performs a function that the user wants - like install a piece of desirable software, open a presentation, show a picture, etc. while in fact it is activating itself. Trojan horses either do something harmful (like erase files) or open a backdoor to your computer so that someone else can get access to do something - like retrieve private information. A Trojan Horse can only infect a computer if the user invites it in by performing an action - clicking a link, opening an email attachment or downloading it from the internet.

UPLOAD For a website to be visible to the world, it has to be put on the server that is hosting it. This process is called uploading because you are literally loading your information, pages, pictures, etc. up onto the server.

URL Uniform Resource Locator. (Allows all resources on the internet to be located in a uniform manner). A URL is a website address that has all the pertinent information for finding the exact

location attached to it. http://www.web-inn.co .uk is this website's url and http://www.web-inn.co .uk/glossary.html is this exact page's url (notice the extra part after the .co .uk).

VIRUS A computer programme that reproduces itself and that is frequently malicious. The most common terms that are heard with regard to viruses are Worms (not really a virus, but often referred to as such) and Trojan Horses, because these are the most commonly experienced among the general internet population. A good firewall or anti-virus programme can offer protection from viruses as long as the programme is regularly updated and consistently used.

WEBMAIL Email that you can check from any computer anywhere in the world using software on a server.

WEB PAGE or PAGE Just one page rather than a complete website (see below). A page is not the same as, for example, the page in a book. The length is not limited by a fixed height and width, but by user-friendliness, good practice and practicality.

WEBSITE The actual website itself. The website is the content that dictates what people see and do when they go to your website address.

WEBSITE ADDRESS This is the location of your website and is normally typed as www.the-name-of-the website.co .uk

WINDOWS The most common type (make) of operating system.

WORM A type of virus (malicious code) that looks for security loopholes in a system and uses that to replicate itself. It then scans the internet for other computers that have the same flaw and spreads to them, often creating a new identity for itself in the process so that it evolves. Where a virus uses a host file to spread, a worm is imbedded in an actual document, like a Word or Excel document.

WWW World Wide Web. Another name for the internet.