

# COMMUNITY WEBSITE TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

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## News is news...publish it.

*Short & Sweet Tips From A Hyperlocal Blogger...no experience necessary.*

Stop thinking about it. Just do it. Your community desperately needs you now.

Build something that your Grandmother would be proud of.

Every time you decide to quit, expect a small burst of success.

Do not use a free blog. Always own your content.

Go to Wordpress.com. Start an account.

Use Wordpress on your website. Pay for your monthly hosting. Less than \$10 per month.

Start with a free Wordpress theme. There are thousands available.

Buy a domain name with your community in the url. Ex. MonroeScoop.com, DavidsonNews.net

Consider hiring a Webmaster to help set up your site initially.

Determine if you want to be a publisher or web designer. It's hard to be both.

Have an e-mail address with your domain name. Ex. [steve@monroescoop.com](mailto:steve@monroescoop.com). Do not use [steve654789@yahoo.com](mailto:steve654789@yahoo.com).

Consider a logo for branding purposes.

Business cards. Hand them out at every opportunity.

Learn the basics of internet language (html). Buy one of those "Dummies" books.

Google is the only search engine to ever concern yourself with.

Start a Google Analytics account. It's free.

Apply for a Google AdSense account. It's free. You make money if someone clicks a google ad.

Never, never, never click your own Google ads. You will be banned by Google.

In the beginning, just write, write, write.

Visit other hyperlocal sites regularly. Determine your own style.

Identify local bloggers and nicely ask for a link or mention.

Moderate and approve all comments on your site.

Establish a "Contact Page".

Establish a "Submit News" page.

Establish a "Community Calendar" page. (Google offers a free calendar widget)

**Beginner Scenario:** (Hypothetical Town)

If you are starting a site in Harmony, Kansas in the County of Freemont, alternate one of these phrases in every article. Google likes this.

- Harmony, Kansas
- Harmony, KS
- Freemont County, Kansas
- Freemont County, KS

Call or email local agencies and asked to be placed on their e-mail distribution for press releases.

Publish community related press releases.

Thank every person who submits news to your site. Never fail to thank someone.

Do not try to determine your audience. Your community is your audience.

Rarely will any photo, video or article be too dumb to publish.

Be considerate of the citizens in your community.

**Video: You must do video:**

Buy a flip camera

Start a Youtube account and learn how to upload videos.

Embed Youtube videos into your articles.

Post your community videos even if you think you are a bad videographer.

Your readers love videos & photos of smiling people.

## **Social Media Tips:**

Start a Facebook Fan Page.

Post photos and videos on Facebook. Interact with your members.

Post links to your interesting articles on Facebook.

Never allow Fans to spam your Facebook with personal or business promotions.

Your Facebook Fan page is your public image. Control accordingly.

Promote your advertisers on Facebook in an appropriate manner.

Twitter is fun and playful, however Put 99.9% of your efforts into Facebook.

## **Answers to the questions I'm asked the most:**

No, I'm not in competition with anyone. I do my thing, they do their thing.

Do not start a community website site to make money.

Do not try to sell advertising for 2 years. Opportunities await your patience.

Always act like you know what you are doing...always. You can figure it out later.

No idea is stupid until you figure out it doesn't work.

If you can imagine it, try it.

Expect great opportunities to find you constantly.

## **Last but not least. Embrace this tip:**

Consider yourself a valuable member of the local media. You ARE the press. Act accordingly.

Enjoy the perks that come with this job.

Steve Sherron is a long time resident of Union County, NC. He operates a network of community websites in Union County & South Charlotte.

Steve is available to speak or do consultant work to help you establish a community website and help you to build your presence in the local media and Social Media.

