

## Custom-Designed Websites vs. Websites Created on Social Networking Platforms

In general, an author or publisher will go one of two routes in creating a promotional Website. This article aims to pinpoint the differences between the two most popular methods. It will also reveal a third, and perhaps even more innovative method for authors who would like an active role in the success of their virtual home. The scope of this article only covers dedicated Websites, since non-dedicated Websites cannot be considered a serious promotional or e-Commerce tool.

### Custom-Designed Websites

Websites created and designed in the traditional way, using coding languages generated by a software or person, are considered custom-made designs. Websites have been created this way since the beginning of time (that is, the beginning of Internet time). Site owners hire hosting companies called "ISPs" to host their sites on a dedicated server for a fee. When a site is completed, the owner may or may not hire a webmaster to maintain and update the site. To be honest, a majority of site owners do not have webmasters and do not maintain or update their sites on a regular basis. The lack of regular maintenance and site updates often leaves sites "orphaned". They are scattered with dead links, contain outdated or irrelevant information that compromise credibility and therefore sales, and lose out on the potential of Search Engine Optimization.

Nevertheless, custom-designed sites, if done well, have a unique look and generally succeed in targeting the book's market successfully, as well as portraying the author or publisher positively. These types of sites have been functioning well for quite some time; however, the Internet is an ever-changing environment. A recent major change is the need for the actual sites and their content to change more often. This makes sense if you think of Websites as the building blocks of the Internet. Custom-designed Websites have difficulty staying competitive with blogs and forums which provide sites with new content, sometimes on a daily basis.

### Social Networking Websites

Websites created on a social platform are Social Networking Websites. The scope of this article, as mentioned before, will only explore dedicated and hosted versions of these sites. Free hosted blogs created on, for example, WordPress.com and free Social Media Networking sites like FaceBook and MySpace, are not within this category.

In most cases, Websites are created and stored within a database provided by a dedicated ISP. Not every ISP offers such services or provides personalized technical help with its set-up. (Contact us to receive a list of recommended ISPs). Social Networking Sites are usually created by the site owners themselves. The design or "look and feel" of these sites are selected from a collection of templates. Site owners with a small learning-curve are easily able to edit content and images, create and delete pages, and manage posts without any cost or knowledge of coding languages. Some examples of Social Networking tools include: blogs, RSS feeds and comment sections. These all open the door for more visitor interactivity that creates a feeling of connection through comments and ratings, forums, or voting on certain issues. Isn't this swell? It's the answer to all our needs as Website owners! Well, not entirely. The designs of such Websites are based on templates. As thousands more of these sites are created every day, so are the number of owners selecting the same templates. I have personally noticed the Internet "losing its edge" due to the fact that, let's face it, the sites look identical. I am also certain that this will soon be noticed and corrected by some big guns. The adjustments will aim to correct the problem by rating sites that are not designed with a template as higher than similar Social Networking Sites.

The creation of Social Networking Sites are simple, but only if you already know what you are doing. You will be required to deal with your ISP and set-up and activate your database within the platform. You will need to upload files to your server and frequently change the entire platform due to version changes. If you get stuck or have questions (and mark my word you will), the only help provided is

within forums where you can search for answers or post a question. There is no technical support provided. Besides the potential for glitches with database set-ups and sites losing their individuality, purely Social Networking sites also have great difficulty in gaining and keeping Search Engine Ranking Positions ("SERP") compared to custom-designed sites. This is the first sign that search engines rank unique sites higher, as I mentioned before.

### Hybrid Websites

What if, you say, we could combine the advantages of a Social Networking site with those of a custom-designed site? I've already seen these "hybrids" appearing. Site owners categorize their pages under two criteria: pages that need frequent changes and pages that don't. This set-up creates a site with frequently edited pages a Social Networking Site. Less frequently edited pages are set-up as custom-designed sites. The cost of such hybrid sites are usually lower, not to mention that hybrids allow owners more flexibility than ever, without any loss to individuality and Search Engine Optimization potentials. With a hybrid site, you can take advantage of the best of both worlds.

[Contact Authors' Web Design for a free estimate on the creation of a hybrid site or to makeover an already existing site.](#)

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