Due to the ever-expanding nature of the Internet, individuals often find themselves blinded by the many choices currently available in the market. In an effort to “keep it simple”, the following are brief notes on the topics covered in the presentation this evening - both the essentials and the most popular resources (as at the 16th May 2006!).

These ‘eCommerce Options’ provide straightforward information on the elements required to “get online” and the benefits found in selecting one option over another for different purposes. The author is not affiliated or partnered with any of the ‘Suggested links’ websites or their governing companies – the following are all personal recommendations.

Please feel free to ask questions during the presentation or to contact Bridget directly on 0418 646 031 or via bridget@cineplicity.com.au

**Domain Names**

- You need to register a domain name if you want a permanent, personalized website URL and email address (rather than a Hotmail/Yahoo style address which is deemed highly unprofessional or an ISP based address which is always subject to change).
- You may register a .com domain name because they are cheaper to purchase than a .com.au domain name. However, you may not realise that a .com.au domain will give your website a sense of ‘legitimacy’ within the Australian market. Anyone can buy a .com domain, but if you operate a company, and you are serious about operating within Australia, it’s a good idea to pay the extra for the credibility alone.
- That being said, if you are looking to expand to the international market, it is also a good idea to register both .com AND .com.au domains (if they are available). This also reduces the problem of someone “forgetting” to add the .au when they send you an email.
- Compare the pricing from a number of domain registrars – you will be surprised to see the markup on domains sold by some websites!

**Suggested Links:**

- [www.godaddy.com](http://www.godaddy.com) - the world's largest domain name registrar for .com domains

**Web Hosting**

- Websites are usually comprised of a number of files including images, PDF documents, sound and video files and HTML pages – collectively known as “site files”. If you intend to have a website, you will need somewhere to store the site files – commonly referred to as “web space”.
- Your domain name ‘points’ to this web space, making your website available to the public.
- Compare the pricing and features of each plan you see – define your base requirements and match them to the most suitable/beneficial web hosting plan.
- Most Web Hosts also include email hosting which should include a “webmail” service.
- There are ‘managed’ hosting packages available if you prefer to let an experienced party handle the setup of your Web Hosting.

**Suggested Links:**

- [www.dreamhost.com](http://www.dreamhost.com) - for inexpensive, self-managed web and email hosting
**Design**

- Is the design or your website consistent with the rest of your marketing materials? These include your business cards, stationery, email signature, product tags and brochures.
- Is the style of your design consistent with the image you wish to project for yourself or your company?
- Excellence in design will require some initial expense but it is a worthy investment if you or your company ‘trades’ on a certain image.

**Suggested Links:**

www.australianinfront.com.au - a collaborative project space and launch pad to Australia's best online designers, artists, companies and other design related web sites. The Directory lists and exposes the best Australian individuals and design companies. It's the yellow pages of creativity.

**Sticky Content & Mailing Lists**

- The term “sticky content” has become widely known. It means that the content of your website will "stick" in the minds of your visitors, which translates into repeat visits.
- Regularly updated content adds value to any website – the value of the returning audience!
- If your website is not designed to work across the most popular browsers you could be losing your audience!
- The collection of subscribers to your mailing list means you have an instant promotional network to email at any time. These emails are deemed 'solicited/legal' (i.e. not spam!) because the user has given you their email address.

**Suggested Links:**

www.imdb.com - the Internet Movie Database is the biggest, best and broadest movie index on the planet. Every section on the homepage is updated on a daily basis which draws their audience back in droves.

www.news.com.au - Australia’s No.1 news and information site is a continuous stream of updated news

www.e-businessguide.gov.au - provides information and resources about eBusiness for small businesses in Australia and for those who advise them. It is an initiative of the Australian Government.

**Content Management**

- Once your website is online, who will manage the content? There are a number of options:

  - **Content Management Systems (CMS)** are easy-to-use, web-based administrative tools which allow you to manage the content of your website anywhere, at any time, as long as you have an internet connection. A skilled person is required to setup a CMS, so there may be some initial expense, but in the long term this solution will be more cost effective if you are committed to maintaining your own website.
  
  - **Web Development software applications**, such as Adobe “Dreamweaver”, can be purchased if you have the time and patience to learn a new program. This process is similar to learning Microsoft Word for the first time. The WYSIWYG nature of these programs means they are fairly simple to use (once learnt) but, because you must install the software onto a single computer or laptop, your mobility is limited compared to the web-based nature of a CMS.

  - **Out sourcing** your content management to a Web Services company or contractor could save you time and effort in the long run but is less cost effective than a self-managed solution. However, if your website does not require regular maintenance – this may be the best option for your needs.
Online Store

- “Reputation is the cornerstone of the smooth e-commerce systems we now take for granted. If you have ever bought or sold an item on eBay, you would have almost certainly clicked on the reviews describing the person you were dealing with. It provides an odd but effective assurance that the person you are about to impart with your money or goods is both real and trustworthy.” – The Forth Estate
- If you intend to accept credit card transactions online, you will need to acquire a Merchant Account from a banking institution and an SSL Certificate from a web services company.
- Who will manage the online store? Refer to the same options outlined for Content Management.
- There are a number of options available in order to sell your good and/or services online:
  - eBay enables you to create a virtual store to either auction or directly sell your goods. This is, perhaps, the most impersonal yet widest reaching tool for online sales. However, due to its lack of customisation, eBay is recommended as an accompanying solution to your website’s own online store.
  - Content Management System (CMS) eCommerce “plugins” are easy-to-use, web-based administrative tools which allow you to manage the items in your online store anywhere, at any time, as long as you have an internet connection. As previously stated, a skilled person is required to setup a CMS, so there may be some initial expense, but in the long term this solution will be more cost effective if you are committed to maintaining your own online store.
  - Custom Built Online Store solutions can be created to your specification through a Web Services company. These solutions will also incur initial setup expense but could offer greater flexibility in the features of your online store.

Suggested Links:

- eBay.com
- PayPal.com
- OsCommerce.com

Weblogs, Web Feeds & Podcasts

- “A weblog (usually shortened to blog, but occasionally spelled web log or weblog) is a web-based publication consisting primarily of periodic articles, most often in reverse chronological order. The use of browser-based software is now a typical aspect of “blogging”. Like other media, blogs often focus on a particular subject, such as food, politics, or local news. Some blogs function as online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic.” – Wikipedia
- “Web feeds are widely used by the weblog community to share the latest entries’ headlines or their full text, and even attach multimedia files.” – Wikipedia
Podcasting is a method of distributing multimedia files, such as audio programs or music videos, over the Internet for playback on mobile devices and personal computers. Podcasts are distributed using the RSS (or similar) syndication format. The term podcast, like "radio", can mean both the content and the method of delivery.” - Wikipedia

**Suggested Links:**

- **www.typepad.com** - a powerful, hosted weblogging service - you can publish anything instantly
- **www.moveabletype.com** - a premier weblog publishing platform for businesses, organizations, developers, and web designers with powerful customization to give you control over everything you publish.
- **www.blogger.com** - since Blogger was launched, almost five years ago, blogs have reshaped the web, impacted politics, shaken up journalism, and enabled millions of people to have a voice and to connect.
- **www.wordpress.com** - an easy and powerful way to start blogging

**Social Networking**

- One of the biggest shifts in media history has come about with the emergence of personal content creation platforms such as the MySpace network and Flickr photo sharing applications.
- These platforms allow you to create an instant promotional network for your art, trade, wares, skills or personal interests.

**Suggested Links:**

- **www.myspace.com** - an online community which lets you meet your friends’ friends. You can share photos, journals and interests with your growing network of mutual friends.
- **www.linkedin.com** - an online network of more than 5.5 million experienced professionals from around the world, representing 130 industries
- **www.flickr.com** - almost certainly the best online photo management and sharing application in the world

**Peer-to-Peer & Internet Telephony**

- **Peer-to-peer (P2P) telephony** became a natural next step from the traditional ‘file-sharing’ nature of standard P2P and Instant Messaging programs. Applications such as Skype were the first to develop the P2P telephony network which enables a user to call a person on his or her contacts list – for FREE!
- **Internet-based telephony – Voice-over-IP (VoIP)** has been around for years but has only recently surfaced in the mainstream market. It is simply using your Internet connection to make and receive telephone calls rather than going through wires via a Telephone Exchange in the traditional manner. It costs much less than standard Telephone services, particularly if you make a lot of Interstate and overseas calls. Unlike Skype, you are not limited to only calling people on your contacts list – VoIP is used through a normal telephone handset and you can call anyone who has a telephone number!

**Suggested Links:**

- **www.skype.com** - a program for making free calls over the internet to other Skype users. It’s free, easy to use, and works with most computers.
- **www.ozinternetphones.com** - a list of VOIP / Internet Phone service providers in Australia