

## Join the Technology Age: Market your jewelry online

Is being a technophobe hampering your sales? Do you wish you had customers from around the globe like some of your technosavvy compatriots? Conquer your technology fears today and learn how to market your jewelry online. Watch your profits skyrocket as you enter the modern era of website sales.

### What should I have on my website?

- **Home page:** Business logo, jewelry photos, links to other pages
- **An artist's statement:** Your philosophy and a short bio, maybe a few photos
- **Shopping:** Secure checkout with thumbnail jewelry pictures
- **Favorite links**
- **What's new:** Galleries or juried exhibitions you're featured in, classes you're teaching, etc.
- **Link to your blog**
- **Contact information**

Opportunities for jewelry sales abound through numerous Internet services, such as eBay auctions, blogging, and online promotions, to name just a few. The Internet makes it possible to market your art to millions of potential buyers. In today's economic climate, having an Internet presence is no longer an option—it's a necessity. Customers expect to find your jewelry online, so make the commitment today to take your business worldwide.

### Create your website

Think of your website as the cornerstone of your online marketing, the "base" that customers will always return to. Remember that a clean, streamlined website works best: quick to load, easy to navigate, and simple to use—exactly what a customer wants.

If you prefer to focus your energies on jewelrymaking versus website creation, hire someone to design your website. The easiest option is to hire a friend or colleague who has experience. Alternatively, contact the graphics department of a local college and pay a student to do the job. For a reduced rate, you get a website and the student lands an important résumé builder. Another option is to find websites you admire and contact the owners to find out who

designed their websites. Many websites have links to the people who designed and maintain them, which means you can contact them directly. However, if someone else creates your website, make sure you learn enough so you can update it if you will be doing the maintenance yourself to save time and money.

If you decide to create your own website, the first step is selecting a domain name—the name people type into their browsers to find you (for example, [www.artjewelrymag.com](http://www.artjewelrymag.com)). To see if your desired domain name has been taken, use search engines such as [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) to look up the name. If you are set on a particular name but see that it is taken, check the suffix of the domain name—".com" is the most desirable suffix because it's the most well known, but you might be able to use the desired domain name with ".net" or possibly ".org."

Select a name that indicates jewelry. For example, any company could be called "wildfirecreations.com," but "wildfire-pendants.com" lets the customer know what they're getting. Changing names at a later date will confuse customers, so pick a name you can stick with.

Next, select a location to host your website. Yahoo web hosting ([www.webhosting.yahoo.com](http://www.webhosting.yahoo.com)) and [www.bizhosting.com](http://www.bizhosting.com) are examples of website hosts. Research several

hosts to compare monthly fees and options. Small companies may have leftover bandwidth on their servers, which means they could host your domain for an even lower fee.

Your host should offer email, traffic monitoring, easy-to-reach technical support, uploading of text and pictures, and a Secure Socket Layer (SSL) to process online transactions securely.

Many hosts also offer basic templates for web pages. If your host does not provide templates, or you don't like the ones provided, you can purchase a website creation program such as VCOM's Web Easy Professional or Microsoft's FrontPage® to help you design your website. (*Editor's Note:* Check out <http://website-creation-software-review.toptenreviews.com> for a useful 2005 software report.)

### Connect with customers

A blog (web log) is an online journal about a specific topic. Your topic will be your jewelry and how and why you create it. Used correctly, a blog establishes a direct link between you and your customers.

Picture what happens when you're selling at your booth. You chat with customers, share the inspiration for a piece they admire, and answer questions about how long you've made jewelry, how you got started, where you get your ideas, and so on.

That's the sort of information you'll share on your blog, only now it's available to millions of potential customers. Use your blog to post pictures and write about your jewelrymaking, current projects, appearances, and anything else you want to share. (Did your firing go astray? Did the cat knock over your enamels? Share funny stories—people love to see the behind-the-scenes side of art.)

Bloggng makes your website truly interactive—customers can ask questions and post comments as they relate to you as a real person. The titles of your entries can also be brought up in a search, driving traffic to your website.

Keep your blog active, giving people a reason to return to your website. Ten minutes a day, three to four times a week is all it takes to create a connection that keeps customers returning.

### Sell it on eBay

There are other online auction houses such as Yahoo Auctions (<http://auctions.yahoo.com>) and [www.bidz.com](http://www.bidz.com), but [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com) is the largest. If you've never used eBay, nose around. Spend some time searching for items and checking out auctions. Take eBay's online tour of the website and stop by the Learning Center. Helpful online tutorials teach newbies how to write the perfect listing and give step-by-step instructions for posting and selling items.

When creating an auction for your pieces, consider the title. You have forty-five character spaces to hook buyers into looking at your auction. Avoid using words like "Wow!" or "Super!" because people don't enter these words as search terms. Instead, go for recognizable

terms. "Handmade" or "one-of-a-kind" (often abbreviated as OOAK) always draws attention, and something like "Viking Wire-Weave Necklace" works well if you're selling something very specific. Also, some sellers put their initials or a short phrase in every listing title, making it easier for buyers to instantly identify their items.

Dale Metz, a graduate of eBay University and teacher of "The Amazing World of eBay" workshop at universities and community colleges, says, "On eBay, you live and die on feedback. The more positive feedback you generate, the more people will seek you out and trust you when purchasing high-ticket items."

Cheryl Coccaro, jewelry artist and author of *Easy Internet Selling*, agrees. "The most common mistake made by eBay beginners is listing their item and expecting to receive a high price with an account showing zero or low feedback," she explains. "After a few listings with no sales, people tend to give up."

Coccaro and Metz recommend selling some low-priced items to quickly gain feedback. "It's okay to mention in your auction that the items are priced low to develop some positive feedback," says Coccaro. "And, yes, you're allowed to have family and friends buy the items and leave feedback."

For a professional-looking auction, have several photographs of each item, be up front about flaws, and list your payment and shipping terms. Coccaro offers savings for multiple sales shipped

in one package. She also includes a gift certificate to be used on her website—another means of driving traffic to her online business.

### From technophobe to technosavvy

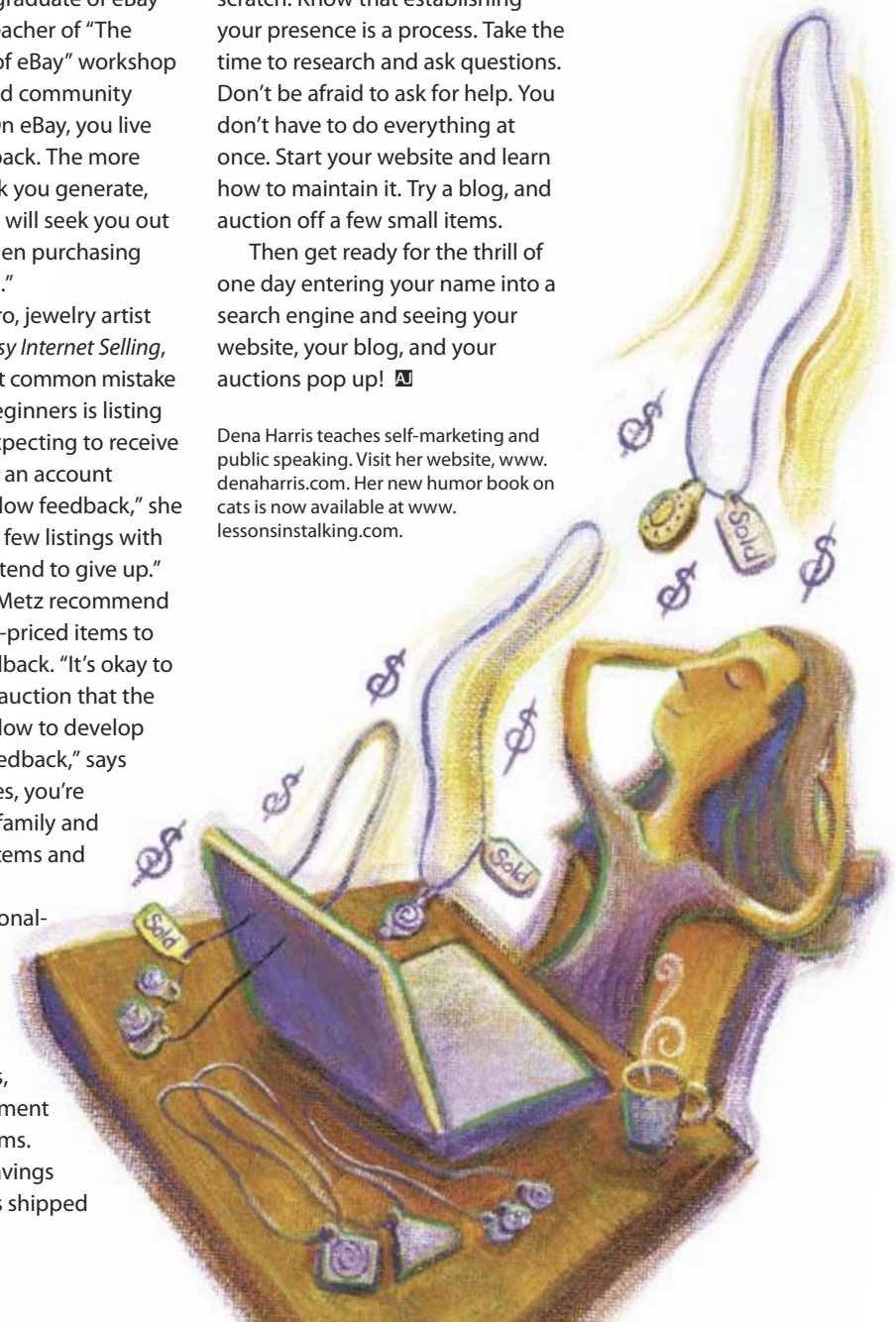
Building your exposure on the Internet can seem overwhelming, especially if you're starting from scratch. Know that establishing your presence is a process. Take the time to research and ask questions. Don't be afraid to ask for help. You don't have to do everything at once. Start your website and learn how to maintain it. Try a blog, and auction off a few small items.

Then get ready for the thrill of one day entering your name into a search engine and seeing your website, your blog, and your auctions pop up! 📺

Dena Harris teaches self-marketing and public speaking. Visit her website, [www.denaharris.com](http://www.denaharris.com). Her new humor book on cats is now available at [www.lessonsinstalking.com](http://www.lessonsinstalking.com).

### Internet extras

Check out [www.artjewelrymag.com](http://www.artjewelrymag.com) for more tips on how to establish your Internet presence.



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