

**EXCERPT FROM CHAPTER 4  
THE AUTHOR WEB SITE**

An author without a web site in this day and age is like an unknown writer on a desert island. Somehow, someone will have to know to look for you, and it will take a great deal of time and effort for them to find you. Unless you've already proven yourself to be worth it, they won't expend their time and energy on you.

This is one area in which other authors are your competition. If their web sites are inviting and filled with information about their works and their lives, while you are not represented at all, you will lose.

Americans in particular are accustomed to having information at their fingertips. This includes reporters and reviewers who are working under tight deadlines. If your picture is readily available for them to download, they are much more likely to print it in their publication. If they have to go through the extra effort to scan a picture and format it, they will ask themselves if they have the time and if it's worth the extra effort.

Likewise, if they have questions about you, your background, your other works, or your scheduled appearances, it is far easier for them to logon to the Internet than to compile a list of questions and play telephone tag with you or your publicist or editor.

A web site can cause your media attention to become an unstoppable steamroller. The more press you receive, the more press you are likely to receive. You will also learn that many booksellers will look up your web site even while you or your publicist is on the telephone attempting to schedule an appearance. A professional-looking web site can get you book signings, reviews, and publicity.

The cost is not astronomical. If you shop around, you can locate web hosting packages for as low as five dollars a

month. Many of these have step-by-step wizards that walk you through designing your site so it looks like it was developed by a professional.

Pay close attention to the web site name. When you begin to appear on television, you can have the station post your web site address on the screen while you're speaking. It may only remain on the screen for a few seconds, though, so it must be something easy to remember. Even more important is when you're being interviewed on the radio and you have to tell someone your web address. The listeners could be driving home from work and may not have a pencil or paper handy—or even if they did, they might not want to reach for it while barreling down the highway.

When Pamela June Kimmell's first novel, *The Mystery of David's Bridge*, was released, her web site address was <http://hometown.aol.com/junekimm/myhomepage.index.html>. It was a terrific looking site, but the address was so long and cumbersome that it was difficult for radio listeners to remember. Even if it was shown at the bottom of a television screen, how long do you suppose it would have to remain on the screen for you to reach for your paper and pencil and copy it down?

Fortunately, Kimmell developed a new site, [www.pamelajunekimmell.com](http://www.pamelajunekimmell.com). Though she had no background in computers or web site design, she was able to develop the entire site with the help of an online wizard. The result is a dramatically different site that proclaims to the world that she's in the big leagues.

If you're tempted to place dashes between words for the visual affect, think twice before doing it. [www.pamela-june-kimmell.com](http://www.pamela-june-kimmell.com) looks more appealing, because it's easy to see that you're viewing three separate names. But say it aloud. If you're advertising your web site on the radio, how much more time does it take for you to say it? And will all

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those dashes confuse a listener whose attention might be divided between the radio interview and the road?

When you are researching web hosts, ask if you must enter “www” before the site name. Some web hosts require it, while others do not. Instead of wasting precious air time saying “double-u, double-u, double-u, dot” it makes sense to leave it off if you can. If you streamline the name, you will increase the number of visitors to it. Just try saying these two URLs out loud: [www.pamela-june-kimmell.com](http://www.pamela-june-kimmell.com) and [pamelajunekimmell.com](http://pamelajunekimmell.com).

## **WHAT SHOULD YOU HAVE ON YOUR WEB SITE?**

First and foremost, information on your books and a way to purchase them. All of the information contained in your press kit, including the Grabber Sheets and Q&A, should be on your web site. In fact, you can elaborate much more on your web site than you can in the confines of a press kit.

You can opt to use PayPal or set up a credit card account to accept orders online, or you can link to [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), [bn.com](http://bn.com), or other online stores. Giving the visitor options for purchasing your book is best. You will also want a printable order form that a visitor can mail in with their check or money order. Many people still utilize the Internet for research, but don't trust it for the online purchases.

Your fan base will want to know something about you. Two rules: always give them some background, and never give them more than you'd want a complete stranger to know.

Occasionally, you'll see a book catapult to the best-seller list that won't even list an author, as in *Primary Colors*. The author is listed as “Anonymous” and the publisher, Random House, used that title to generate tremendous buzz.

For the rest of us, the public expects to learn something about the author, particularly about their other writings and the geographic area in which they live or work. The latter is particularly useful to obtain local media attention. Never provide your home address on the Internet—if you'd like to give visitors a means to contact you by snail mail, obtain a post office box.

You should also have a page of Upcoming Events and Past Events. Many times, these will be used by the book stores to determine whether they want you to sign at their store. For example, it is much easier to sign at a chain store if you can demonstrate that other stores within the same chain have booked you as well.

Past Events should almost always contain pictures, especially in the beginning. If a line has formed at your table, ask someone to take a picture. Use this to show that others have displayed interest in you and your work. Attention generates more attention!

If you receive media attention, whether it's in the form of a review, television appearance, radio appearance, newspaper, or magazine article—post a reference to it on your site. You can use your web site to advertise upcoming media appearances, as well as show past exposure. This can actually help you to obtain even more exposure. And if an article has been published online, link to it to provide the information to the visitor literally “at their fingertips”.

Above all, keep your web site up to date. There's nothing that shows inattention to detail more than clicking on “Upcoming Events” only to see a list of events that occurred two years earlier!

Finally, set up a “Links” page. One of the best ways to get word out about your book is through other writers and other web sites. As Pamela June Kimmell states, “You never know which authors have a sizable fan base. Their fans might just check out your website if the other author has

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provided your link - and vice versa. It's simply part of networking.”

Stephanie Chandler provides a wealth of free information on her web site, [www.businessinfoguide.com](http://www.businessinfoguide.com), which is loaded with great tips for entrepreneurs. She has also started a monthly ezine, so when site visitors register, she builds her online mailing list. In addition, she sells e-books and special reports at this site, as well as at [www.stephaniechandler.com](http://www.stephaniechandler.com).

Georgia Richardson has a weekly ezine entitled *All Things Royal* ([www.queenjawjaw.com](http://www.queenjawjaw.com)), which gives a dose of laughter to her fans every Monday morning. It also gives her the boost to start her writing for the week ahead.

It goes without saying that you should also have a professional email address. Look for a web host that can provide you with email addresses also. If your email address is [hotstuff@webhost.com](mailto:hotstuff@webhost.com), you'd better be a Cajun chef.

Many authors have a personal email address that they do not advertise, as well as a public address they post on their site. One word of caution: once you type your email address onto a web site and publish it, webbots can locate it and send you incredible amounts of spam. Look into building a form on your site that allows Internet visitors to email you, in lieu of typing out your email address, or invest in a very good spam filter.