

The Rise of DIY Website Builders



Taken by Skyler Romero

The main conference hall for the website design company, Infogenix. It has had little traditional use since the beginning of the pandemic.

With the Covid-19 pandemic looming over the face of the planet, Sydney Jenson, a student at BYU, lost her internship for her final semester. Without an internship, she feared she would not graduate. That's when she discovered online website developers, and another way she could graduate from the comfort of her home.

2020 has been difficult for just about everyone. That is, everyone except the internet. According to an article published by the New York Times, as the pandemic has raged on, internet use has skyrocketed. Apps and services ranging from Netflix to Nextdoor have had their traffic increase by as much as 73%. Virtual Private Networks and even more secure internet access have also been in high demand as more people flood online.

Even more people have become invested in online shopping to acquire groceries, goods, and other products many need to maintain their way of life. In November alone, shoppers spent \$5.9 billion in online groceries ordered for pickup. This number is dominated by August's \$8.1 billion.

As most of the human population has been quarantined for the majority of the year, people are becoming fully immersed in the internet. That includes turning to the internet for business of all kinds.

Websites are now one of the primary methods of buying and selling, and have begun to overtake other traditional methods, especially in the year 2020. With this new website importance, Do It Yourself (DIY) website builders have grown to incredible heights, creating templates and designs that anyone working with them can use regardless of training. But what happens to the older, custom website design companies competing with these new giants?

Infogenix, a traditional, custom website development company started in 1998, is currently working from home. Ryan Romero, founder and owner of the company, says that it isn't quite as bad for his business as it has been for others. Some employees began working from home months before the stay-at-home orders.

Since most companies cannot meet in these trying times, many customers are flocking to online substitutes to modernize and upgrade their businesses for the hyper-online era. Companies like Squarespace, Shopify, Weebly, Wordpress, and Wix have capitalized on this need, providing thousands with cheaper access to website building.

There are so many different ways to access the internet in our days, from a standard computer, to the phone in your pocket, and everything from tablets to smart fridges. Each of these access points need different website formats, and creating that many different formats custom can get pricey very quick. Many small businesses can't keep up with this cost, especially against big corporations who can throw enough money for web development.

Ryan Camomile, another owner of Infogenix said, "Nowadays, the webosphere is so complicated, for the industry to survive, there actually needs to be Do It Yourself type builders created."

This issue is primarily the one that DIY builders solve. It provides a way to create these myriad of formats for less money than their custom counterparts. And they can look good doing it. And all of this can be done by you. What could be better?

However, some developers claim that these DIY builders are not nearly as effective as they claim to be. Romero said, "[DIY builders] work for a lot of people, but if you get complicated websites, the DIY builders start to break down."



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A large business complex that is usually filled with people, now silent and devoid of life. This is one of many that have suffered through the difficulties of the pandemic.

Custom development by far works the best with this issue. With the ability and knowledge of coding and web design, the sky's the limit for how you can create a website. All you need to do is think it, and be able to pay for it. DIY builders don't have such luxuries.

Professional web developer and freelancer Wayne Smiley said that, "I think if a layman person were to just jump on [DIY builders], I think their expectations would not be met versus what they were promised or proclaimed to be."

With that said, Smiley also stated, "I think if that same person were to apply themselves and spend 10-30 hours getting to know the system...then I think they could meet those expectations. But a majority of people don't want that."

Whether or not a person or business wants to put the necessary time into creating a website seems to be the demarcation line for what dictates a successful website.

David Driggs, owner of an internet publishing company and creator of the website "countryreports.org," works with no employees and multiple website development companies to maintain this, and various other websites. Driggs frequently uses Wix to create websites for himself and others, along with custom-made Content Management Systems (CMS). Driggs says, "I had a custom CMS made...and that allows me to add content, add new pages to my site without a lot of intervention from a third party [sic] so I can kinda manage the content on my own for the most part."

With this CMS, Driggs has made many websites using Wix and custom work. Through Driggs' hard work and patience, he's been able to create these websites in a way that function well and look better.

Driggs notes that because of this custom CMS, he's been able to spend more money on developing his own websites without having to coordinate with a third party for additions or updates.

Overall, it seems that DIY builders are more than adequate for those with low budgets or little experience. But custom builders are significantly better at creating exactly what you need, and what others can use.

But as far as Sydney Jenson was concerned, she didn't need anything fancy, she needed to graduate. She said, "I don't have much experience [in the workforce], but because of Covid my internship was cancelled. So I was unable to do any in-person internship for my last semester of college at BYU. So I had to kind of come up with my own internship and one of the opportunities that my counselor told me I could do was create a blog."

It is through this blog that Jenson has been able to overcome this seemingly insurmountable hurdle. For the past few months, she has written for this blog, with supervision and input from her professors.

Because of this access to create something professional enough to substitute an internship, but not too complicated for someone with no experience in web development, Jenson was able to finish her last semester and will graduate this December with a degree in Health and Wellness.

Both these DIY builders and the traditional custom web development have their benefits and drawbacks. It all comes down to what works best for you and your business. Smiley says it best, "I think more and more people are feeling empowered like, 'Hey, I can go and do this myself' and, you know, maybe 10% or 15% of those people accomplish it and they are able to do it with no additional outside help. But I would say that a majority of people who get started will still need to rely on some sort of specialist."

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Empty desks of computers, their owners working at home. It is estimated that 56% of laborers in the US work from home.

