

# Technology Use Guide

Improving Technology at the unit level for better recruiting and retention

## Introduction

This is a topic near and dear my heart. My non-scouting career has been in the small and very small business IT Consulting and support field for the last 20 years (2003-2023). Throughout my career I have helped 20+ companies with different website issues, lapsed registrations, migration to new web host, creating from scratch, etc. All scouting units, no matter their total membership fit in to the small company or very small company designation when considering technology use. During the run up to my on-course time at Woodbadge 23-1 I wanted to find something that I could bring over from my non-scouting career to benefit not just my unit but the larger scouting community.

This guide is created to provide a basic overview of what is needed to build from scratch a new website that if designed appropriately will help improve your units recruiting and even retention. Each section has an introduction and then it guides you through the steps taken with screenshots when appropriate. It will take some work and commitment from you to set up and maintain. This is not a set it and forget it sort of venture, this takes a shift in mentality, a shift in how your unit uses technology.

The basic ideas are this, to better improve recruiting you need a website that works for you, that helps with Search Engine Optimization, is helpful to new families that don't know scouting, and provides an easy way for them to reach out for more information or for them to join. Retention is accomplished by having that and resource pages and online payment options for your members. The goal when questions come up from members and potential members should be to drive them to your website.

There is some ongoing cost with this, which can be difficult for some units. As described in this guide, the cost per year is about \$80 for fixed fees and if you add the credit card processing there are per-transaction fees.

Most of this can be accomplished for free with minimal trade-off for a well designed and maintained website. When appropriate free options are discussed throughout this guide.

## Purchase Domain

The first thing you need is a domain. A domain is the address you have people type in to get to your website, like google.com, yahoo.com, or shac.org. For our discussions there are 2 parts to a domain, the domain name and the extension/ top level domain. Google is the domain name, and .com is the extension or top-level domain. There are lots of different top level domains available. Some are expensive, and others are restricted, like .mil and .gov. Stick with the .com, .net, or .us top level domains.

Keep it in the Goldilocks zone for domain names, not too short, not too long, descriptive enough without going overboard.

Before purchasing your first domain, decide if you're going to get the paid-for web hosting discussed in the next section. If the free service route is chosen then purchasing a domain is not necessary.

Most of the paid-for services in this guide are easiest paid by credit card. If your unit does not have a credit card, a parent might have to pay for the service and get reimbursed, or maybe your charter can help. Most website hosts and registrars offer pay by invoice, but that is usually slower.

### Picking and registering the domain

Use a valid registrar, somebody like Godaddy, Network Solutions, or your website host if they offer the service. Wix, Weebly, Squarespace, Shopify are some of the website hosts that should also offer domain registration as part of your plan. Bluehost and hostgater are also some services you might try.

Check to see if your specific domain is available first. The registry checks a global database, so trying other registrars would not benefit.

Sign in or register for an account.

Complete the registration information.

Any domain registration requires information be provided for the WHOIS database, which is a publicly accessible address. It is a way to show ownership of a domain. Registrant, Administrative, and Technical contacts must be provided. The information can be repeated across all 3. Use the chartered organization details here. Private registrations are available for additional cost.

### Website Hosting Service

The website hosting service you choose is going to make the biggest difference in your ability to maintain and design your website. Many services will provide you a free trial or a free website option. It may be worth it to try a few different services before settling on one.

Things to look for are easy to edit pages, no coding, and drag & drop features. Ecommerce options, calendar sync to google might be nice, lots of room for pictures, etc.

Most website hosts will also register your domain, but it isn't required. If you already have a domain, they can walk you through the process of pointing your existing domain at their servers.

Make sure to set up a secure account, share the details with others in your unit, and if utilizing a credit card, be sure that it is a unit card, charter organization card, or you have a an agreement in place with a parent about ownership of the service.

### Basic Website Design

This is what will take the longest time and make the most impact. You want a dynamic website with lots of color, pictures, and graphics. On the homepage keep the total word count down to near zero. You probably want to start with just a home page and then expand to the following:

1. Home page
2. Calendar
3. Payments
4. Resources
5. Join FAQ

## Credit Cards

In order to accept credit cards sign up for Square Account. Get permission from your charter organization to use their EIN and have you bank account handy. Other mobile credit card processing companies exist and may offer similar service and similar devices, but Square has been easy to use and is the recommendation here as long as Trails-End continues to use Square within their app to process credit card payments for popcorn.

## Venmo

There are two options available when setting up Venmo, using a personal account linked to your unit bank account or using a Venmo business account.

The cleaner, preferred option is to set up a Venmo business account. Venmo business charges a percentage for every transaction.