



**AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUB®**

Parent Club Best Practices

Club Websites

1. Development Costs and Ongoing Administration Costs & Considerations
 - a. Your club **MUST** own its domain name. Do not allow an outside party or a club member to be the registered owner of your domain
 - b. Expect to pay between \$10,000 & \$15,000 for an effective website
 - c. Always solicit member input in the development of the website
 - i. A website development committee is an absolute requirement
 1. Club member input should be encouraged
 - d. Hiring a Professional Firm for Web Development & Administration
 - i. Look for a firm that works with non-profit groups
 - ii. Ask other similarly sized clubs who they would recommend
 - iii. If you see a website you like, look at the bottom of the home page. The developer is usually named therea
2. It All Starts with the RFP (Request for Proposal)
 - a. The RFP lays out in detail all of the elements a potential developer would need to know to decide if a response is warranted.
3. Sample Generic RFP
 - a. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ppMMWfSHNRDnoowdSRSlyGxRRDfnq1008Dt6KdNuyw/edit>
 1. Every addition will cost more money
 2. Submit RFP to Top 4 Web Development Candidate Firms
 3. Q&A for Selected Developer Finalists

- a. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/14J2sHk0U0797DICDi8I1qzXo5fdxLK4j/edit>
 - b. The club and the chosen web developer must mutually agree and sign a contract that specifies what is expected of the developer in providing the club the finished product based on the original RFP.
 - c. Handling of content, upgrades, bug fixes etc.
 - i. Club Member or Professional Firm
 - ii. Pros & Cons of Relying on Club Members for ongoing upgrades & maintenance
 - iii. To pay or not to pay
 - 1. Clubs may choose to pay their member administrators
 - a. Look for a member who might have a web development LLC
 - i. This avoids violating club By Laws stating that club members cannot profit directly from club activities
 - 2. Clubs may choose to hire an outside professional firm to handle website day to day maintenance.
 - 3. Decide on a yearly budget for items 1 and 2
 - a. Club must negotiate a contract for ongoing maintenance with specifics for what duties you are expecting them to perform.
This can be done as part of the RFP
 - d. Consideration of the hybrid model
 - i. A solution used by many clubs involves hiring a professional firm to handle the technical aspects of website administration.
 - 1. Professional firm to handle upgrades, bug fixes and other technical issues.
 - 2. Club members drive content management in much the same manner as they divide up content for their quarterly publication.
4. Possible Core CMS website platform development options.
- a. A CMS (Content Management System) is an application, or set of programs, that are used to create and manage online content, such as a website with text, images and videos. Some examples of other popular CMS are WordPress, Drupal and Joomla.

- i. Word Press
 - ii. Showsite Magazine (parent club website development)
 - iii. Constant Contact Web Services
 - iv. Website.com
 - v. WIX
 - vi. Squarespace
 - vii. Network Solutions
- b. Website Store options – for club merchandise sold year around and the National Specialty
- i. WIX
 - ii. Shopify
 - iii. Weebly
 - iv. Gator
- c. Website must be platform independent – **MOBILE FRIENDLY IS THE KEY**
- i. In 2016 mobile internet platforms replaced the desktop as the primary instrument for web access.
 - 1. As of 2018, 70% of web traffic was initiated via some form of mobile device
 - ii. However, it must also service all platforms (mobile and otherwise) that a user might utilize to access your website.

5. Domain Management System

- a. In order to post a website in the Internet, you must obtain an unique domain name which users access. It's what's know as 'The Home Page' or 'The Splash Page'.
 - i. Your domain name must tell a user exactly who you are.
 - ii. Don't use 'cutesy' domain names like <http://liondogs.com> instead of the more informative <http://leonbergerclubofamerica.com>. You also must make sure that the domain name you have chosen is not already claimed by some other entity. Once you've reserved your domain name, make absolutely sure that your club is the owner of that DNS address (Domain Naming System) and it's not under the purview of an individual member.

6. Creating a Vibrant, Informative User-Friendly web site for your club:

- a. Who are You? Who your club is and what you represent?
 - b. On the home page, include an easily navigable site map
 - i. Each site should have a drop-down menu of the elements the club wants included on the splash page.
 - c. Include picture collages of your dogs and interesting videos of your dogs in action
 - i. Update this collage frequently (this helps your SEO presence)
 - d. Easily accessible list of club contacts
 - e. How to Join
 - f. Club foundational documents (Constitution, By Laws & Member Practices)
 - g. Breeder Education Page
 - h. Judge's Education Page
 - i. Grooming Section (if appropriate)
 - j. A Q&A page for visitors that is regularly monitored by a designated club member
 - k. A listing of other club affiliated websites like a health foundation, rescue organization, URLs for local specialty clubs and a list of club social media outlets
7. Consider a Members Only Area built in to your club website
- a. Password Protected
 - b. Member information available only to other members
8. Provide a digital copy of the club's publication if your primary publication is hard copy
- a. Probably best to do this on a separate website
9. Financing club website
- a. Using Portions of the annual membership fee
 - b. Advertising Revenue
 - c. Annual Grant from club Board of Directors
10. How to Drive and Analyze Traffic to Your Website
- a. Understand the basics of Search Engine Optimization & Google Analytics
 - i. What is SEO

1. Search engine optimization (SEO) is the art and science of getting pages to rank higher in search engines such as Google. Because search is one of the main ways in which people discover content online, ranking higher in search engines can lead to an increase in traffic to a website.
 2. Learn more at: <https://searchengineland.com/guide/what-is-seo>
- ii. Ever wonder why searching Google for any breed always brings up the AKC web page on that breed as the first listing? This is ‘close to home’ example of search engine optimization (SEO)

11. So, let's have some useful fun that's also instructive

- i. If your club has a website, do a Google search on your URL and note the ranking of your listing. Should be no worse than the Top 5
 1. Studies have shown that in 67% of web searches, users will click on one of the first five websites listed in response to their query.
 - a. If your club website is outside the Top 5 responses to a query, you are losing traffic to other similar sites.
 2. Reiterate that 70% of your total web traffic is going to come from a mobile device of some kind so make sure your website is optimized to handle traffic from those types of devices.
 - a. Here's a website you can query to find out just how mobile friendly your website is:
<https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>
- ii. What are Google Analytics and How Can I use it to gauge website penetration?
 1. Google Analytics is a free tool that enables you to track website visitors. It provides website traffic analysis and

real-time statistics of user interaction with the website. Once this analysis is complete, it allows website owners to analyze their visitors, with the objective of interpreting and optimizing website's performance. This pair of YouTube video explains Analytics and how to download and utilize the statistics provided by Google Analytics

- a. <https://analytics.google.com/analytics/academy/course/6>
- b. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3V01bDbIR0>

iii. Email is also an effective tool for marketing your club and analyzing traffic on individual emails

1. You have access to analytics on the email side as well

a. Offers real time metrics, individual open rates, and click through rates

i. Click-through rate shows you the engagement of your email. Unlike click-to-open rate, this measure indicates activity out of everyone who received an email in their inbox. It provides insight into what percentage of your audience is interested in your content over time.

12. Consider a separate web presence for your National Specialty

a. Establish a webstore on the National Specialty site. See above for list of webstore providers

b. Trying to combine your Specialty website with your regular club website causes immense misunderstandings and issues that can be easily avoided with separation

13. Website Usage Statistics

a. Take advantage of web traffic statistics offered by many website platforms. Website stats can help to show admins who is using the site, what content is being accessed and which content seems to be of little value to members or the general public.

14. You can get data on how many people are reading emails (ex: Delegate Reports). Their website has the capability of charting email numbers when

they use the mail feature built in to their website provider. Gives you and the “email open rate” as a percentage.

- a. Here’s the URL to learn more about the Word Press statistics plugin:

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-statistics/>

Word Press provides another application plugin that allows the collection of statistics on how many people are reading an online newsletter, providing informational statistics such as total sent and the percentage of people receiving the message vs. those who actually read the communication.

The plugin is called the “Newsletter Plugin”.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/newsletter/>