

Once you've decided to take the plunge into cyberspace, the next question is: "Where do I start?". We point you in the right direction

Action stations

where shall we go?



An experienced web designer is the ideal first port of call for anyone looking to launch a website. ABTA members can go to www.abta.com where they'll find a list of web design companies that have ABTA travel industry partner status. The advantage of doing this is that agents can be sure they are talking to people who know all about how the travel industry works and who have set up sites for other travel companies.

You can also get the names of web designers by having a look at competitors' sites, as

most sites contain the details of the company that designed them in the first place.

Prices vary, depending on what you want, but if you pay an expert to give you a presence on the web, it will cost about £600.

However, there are cheaper options. Genesys Travel Technology Consultancy senior partner Paul Richer suggests approaching a local college or university to persuade a cash-strapped student to design your site at a fraction of the cost of a professional.

You can also build your own site, using Microsoft Front Page or a similar package,

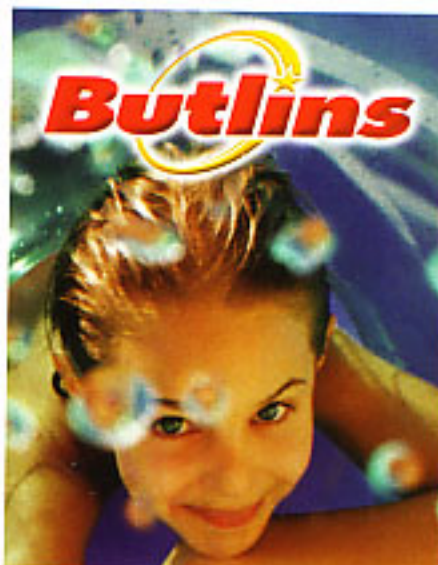
which costs about £120. You'll also need some graphics to go on the site. You can search the web for free graphics, or buy a package for another £120.

The global distribution systems suppliers are another option. All offer web design services for the agent that wants to set up a site from scratch, as well as options that can be built into the agents' website to allow bookings to be made online.

Sabre's Sabre.Res suite of products starts at £100 a month for its basic Advanta.Res product. Or, for an up-front payment of £2,700 followed by monthly payments of £200, agents can opt for a

more sophisticated product that allows them to load their own negotiated fares on to the system.

Consortia members can also sign up to the travel portals operated by head office. Both Advantage Travel Centres and Worldchoice have their own websites that give details of special deals and have a search facility where users can find their nearest consortia agent. In August 2003, Advantage upgraded its option to allow members to tweak their own pages on the site so they can change the text and colours, add their individual logo and highlight their specialist knowledge.



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