

# Building the Ultimate Online Presence

By Josh Seamon

*Any Ultimate team or league can benefit from having a robust online presence. The benefits of hosting an online Ultimate site generally fall into two broad categories.*

---

## Communication

Gone are the days when captain's meetings were organized over the phone and only occurred once a year. It still can be a chore to push volumes of information out to your team, but connecting to everyone in your organization has never been easier.

## Media

Ultimate players love photos and videos of themselves playing Ultimate. Incredibly inexpensive bandwidth and wonderfully simple online services make it possible to share gigabytes of media with your team and the world.

Before you set off into the wilds of the Internet, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do I have any money to work with?
2. Do I want to make the site public or private?
3. How many photos/videos do I want to post?
4. How much do I really know about web programming?

## Scenario 1

*You have no money, want to make the majority of the site public, have lots and lots of photos and video to post, and you know nothing about web programming.*

Lucky for you there are many other people out

there like you that want to be able to do the same thing. There are also countless services out there that are almost identical. Which service(s) you settle on will ultimately be up to the personal preferences you will develop as you play with the myriad of free offerings that are out there.

## My Opinion

When I look for free and dynamic web services I look for ones that are simple to use and work well together. My favorite solution is Google. For the site itself you can use Blogger, for photos you can use Picasa Web Albums, for your mailing list you can use Google Groups, for video you can use YouTube, for document sharing and data collection you can use Google Documents, for managing your team calendar you can use Google Calendar, and if you want to build a more static site you can use Google Sites.

## Pros

They are all free services! All of the accounts are controlled by one account. There's no need to remember login information for multiple services. All of the user interfaces are clean and simple and no web programming knowledge is needed to add content. All of the services are integrated with one another so you can very easily do things like embed your photos and videos into your Blogger site. You can easily change the style and layouts of each service. All of the services have granulated user permissions that allow you to keep certain content private.

## Cons

You cannot change every last aspect about the layout and style of each service. There is a 1GB data store limit to free Picasa Web Albums accounts. YouTube has a 10 minute cap on videos. You can't make complete local backups of your sites.

## What you can do with a little money

1. Purchase a Flickr Pro account to host your online images. For \$25 a year you can host an unlimited number of photos.
2. Purchase a team domain from GoDaddy for \$10 and point it to your main site. You can then create as many sub domains as you'd like and have them point wherever you want. For example, images.youteamname.com could point to your Flickr account. You can also setup email forwarding with the domain. You could have the email address captain@youteamname.com.

If you want to make the majority of your site private I recommend using Ning, a service that lets you build custom social networks. It is free, very easy to use, and access to the entire service can be limited to specific users.

## Scenario 2

*You have some money, want very fine control of how certain pages are accessed, have a massive amount of media to post, and you know a pretty good amount about web programming.*

For less than \$10 a month you can kick the free web hosting habit and buy your own hosting package. There are thousands of hosts to choose from but you really cannot go wrong with HostGator. Once you have your own hosting package, your options for what do to next are endless. I recommend jumping head first into the world of open source web applications. Some of my favorite options are as follows:

**Note:** You do NOT need significant programming skills to install any of these pieces of software. When you purchase your own domain you will have access to a domain control panel, which 99% of the time includes Fantastico, a script that will let you install just about any web application with a few clicks.

## Content Management

My two favorite systems are Joomla and Wordpress. If you want to build a large site with lots of

various features, I recommend using Joomla. If you want to run a smaller, lighter site, I recommend using Wordpress. If you look around you will find many pages written about the specifics of each system. Each system has disciples that are as devoted as the most hardcore PC/Mac cultists. I recommend playing around with both systems and then deciding which one is the right one for you. Keep in mind that both systems have a very large database of free add-ons.

## Media

Gallery 2 is a full featured, very powerful photo management package.

## Free services worth keeping

While it is possible to host and stream your own video files, there's no real reason to ditch YouTube completely. When you have your own hosting package you can put your raw, super high quality video files online for download, and post lower quality versions to YouTube. Now that YouTube supports high definition video, there seems to be less and less of a reason to post your own video downloads. Google documents is still king when it comes to easy document collaboration and data collection. Even though there are many free and simple calendar plugins for both Joomla and Wordpress, Google Calendar is a difficult service to ditch.

## Pros

You have complete control over all of your content. You can make your site look any way you'd like. You can make local backups of your data. You have access to thousands of free content management system plugins and themes. You have access to thousands of other free applications that can be installed on your hosting package. There is a massive amount of help material available for all of these systems.

## Cons

You will need to manually update software. Many packages come with automatic updaters, but some do not. The user interfaces for Joomla and Wordpress take a little while to get used to. Good hosting is not free.

## Example websites

### The National Ultimate Training Camp

Media rich, blogger site

The UltiVerse Wordpress-powered podcast blog

BUDA Joomla-powered league website