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Customizing Headers and Footers

Although a website is just a collection of web pages, the collection is not random. A central theme ties the web pages together with common elements such as branding, logo, layout, and formatting. On really large websites, the interweaving of these elements can be quite complex. Each of Google's websites, for example, has its distinct identity and yet you can identify it as a "Google website". It takes a small army of designers and illustrators to achieve such a "Similar But Distinct" identity.

But it's fairly easy to establish a unifying theme for the web pages of a small website, such as yours. And you can do it all by yourself; a common header and footer is all that's usually necessary. Naturally, it would make immense sense if you could design a template for headers and footers once and use it on all of your web pages.

A template isn't all that revolutionary a concept. You've probably built a template in your word processor for your letterhead or for a boilerplate, for example. Many widely-used applications save you the trouble of repetitive formatting by allowing you to make templates. Therefore, it shouldn't come as a great surprise to you that you can build page templates in Office Live Small Business as well.

A web page template in Office Live Small Business has two components: information and design. The information component consists of the text and images that are specific to your website, such as your company name, logo, slogan, copyright notice, and so on. The design component deals with choosing the right font, colors, background pictures, and other such visual elements. Once you configure the necessary settings, you'll have a shell, so to say, which will appear around the content on your web pages.



You'll start building the shell in this chapter and shape it to perfection over the course of the next two chapters. In this chapter, you will:

- ◆ Decide what your website's title should be, and set it in your template
- ◆ Decide what your website's slogan should be, and set it in your template
- ◆ Decide what information should go into your website's footer, and set it

We'll deal with the design and page layout elements of the shell in the next two chapters.

Choosing a title for your website

A website's title is usually the name of the business it represents. My little company is called *Acxede*, for example. Therefore, it's logical that my site's title mimics my company's name. Now, there's only so much real estate available on a web page for the title. Because *Acxede* happens to be a short name, it can fit into most page layouts. But if your business is incorporated as *Anthony Donaldson's Vacuum Cleaner Sales, Service, and Rentals Incorporated*, this scheme of things breaks down. What do you do then? A good rule of thumb is to echo whatever name is on your business card. Unless your business card is the size of a postcard, you'd have shortened the name to something like *Anthony Donaldson Inc.* Use that as your site's title.

People often want to set their domain name as their site's title. Because my company is called *Acxede*, it would, of course, be terrific to have *acxede.com* as my domain name. And I do. Unfortunately, not everyone is that lucky. More likely than not, the domain name you want is already taken. Let's say that you're Sam and you own a deli called, naturally, *Sam's Deli*. Everyone just calls it "Sam's". It wouldn't be unreasonable for you to want the domain name *sams.com*. The trouble is that Sam's Publishing has already snapped it up. Okay, so how about *samsdeli.com*? Nope. Another Sam owns it. So you're forced to settle for a domain name that doesn't echo the name of your business; something like *samsfreshfood.com*, perhaps. Nevertheless, your website's title should still say "Sam's Deli" because that's the name of your business, no matter what domain name you ultimately settle on.

Now that you know more about setting a website's title than you ever wanted to, let's get around to doing the honors.

Time for action – setting the site title

1. Pull down the **Design Site** menu from the **Page Manager** toolbar and select **Design site**. A new window opens, displaying the **Microsoft Office Live Small Business Web Design Tool** web page with **Site Designer** as the active tab.
2. Click on the **Header** button on the ribbon. The **Customize Header** dialog opens.



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3. Replace the text **Welcome to my site** in the gray box in the **Site Title** section with your site's title. I'm going to set it as **The Office Live Guide** for the site that I'm building—this book's companion site.
 4. Pull down the select options for the font face just above the title. You'll see a choice of seven fonts: **Arial**, **Courier New**, **Georgia**, **Tahoma**, **Times New Roman**, **Trebuchet MS**, and **Verdana**.

Why only seven? After all, Microsoft Word seems to have a hundred. The reason is that in the Web's architecture, the task of displaying a given font is delegated to your browser. Not every browser can display every font. If a browser can't display a font that you've specified, it displays one that it thinks is right. Such a substitution might distort your web page. But these seven fonts are, more or less, the least common denominator; most browsers support them. Therefore, the chances of your web pages being distorted are quite slim if you choose one of these seven.

So which of these seven should you choose? Follow this two step process:

- If one of the fonts in the list looks like the font on your letterhead or the sign above your office, choose that one.
- Not even close? Choose either **Georgia** or **Verdana**.



Most fonts, such as **Arial** or **Times New Roman**, came to computer displays from the world of print. They were designed to look good on paper. Making a font look good on paper is relatively easy because text is printed on paper in very high resolution. On a monitor, however, pixels of resolution are at a premium. Besides, the resolution can vary from monitor to monitor. Therefore, text will look better onscreen if you use fonts that are designed specifically for monitors rather than using fonts that are grandfathered from the print world. **Georgia** and **Verdana** are designed specifically for monitors and so they're the ideal candidates for the text on your web pages.

Set the font you've chosen. I've set it to **Georgia**.

5. Next, pull down the adjacent select options for the font size. You'll see a choice of seven font sizes. They're conveniently numbered from **1** to **7**. Size **1** is the smallest and size **7** is the largest. For some inexplicable reason, people often choose a size that's either too big or too small. I recommend size **5** for the title. That's just about right for most websites built with Office Live Small Business.

One thing you've got to remember, though, is that: Thou shalt use Georgia or Verdana in size 5 for your site's title is **not** the eleventh commandment. I've suggested these settings because, in my experience, they are just about right for most websites built with Office Live Small Business. They make the header appear proportionate to the text on the web pages. But, they may not be right for your site if its title or slogan is either too long or too short. Come back and experiment with the font face or size of the header elements if your pages look out-of-whack after you finish building your website.

Set the font size you've chosen. I've set it to 5.

6. Although you can choose a color for the title, let's skip it for now. The choice of color depends on other layout options as well. Therefore, we'll address it when we set the design and layout options in Chapter 3.



Although you can make the title bold, italicize it, or underline it, you'd do well by avoiding the temptation. Depending on a combination of factors such as the font face, font size, and resolution of a visitor's monitor, these special effects can make the text quite difficult to read. The last thing you want to do is to inadvertently make the title of your site unreadable.

7. Your **Customize Header** dialog should now look something like this:



8. Keep the window open; you might as well set a slogan for your website while you're there.

What just happened?

You just took the first baby steps towards building your website! Agreed, all you did was set the site title—not exactly the kind of stuff that you'd write home about, but it's a fine start nevertheless.

Your site's title and slogan, which you'll set in the following section, play an important role in helping people find your site from search engines.

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