The Physical Environment

➜ The server. SERVER

This is where your Web site will eventually live. To decide what to put there, your team needs to know a little about the place.

ADVERGIRL tip:

The two main answers are Unix and Microsoft. These represent the religions of IT. Each has a different 'best at,' but to talk to a zealot, you'd think one was the kid everyone beat up at school and the other was the prom king.

Top three questions to ask and a technology sync:

- How is the environment architected?
  - Is it just one box (computer) or do you have a separate server for data? What about reporting?
  - How is it backed up? What security do you have in place? How can we access it? Is there FTP in place? (FTP stands for file transfer protocol. It enables your team to add files to a server remotely)
- How much space is available?
- How much bandwidth?
  - The combination of those two questions lets your team know how much data it can load on and how many people can access it and still have a good user experience.
- ▸ **Sync:** What operating system does it run on?

The Web site

➜ The Design: How it looks.

The design of the site is generally created in Photoshop and includes basic page templates, art direction for multi-media and 'production graphics' - all those headers and design elements needed to bring every page to life.

Top three questions to ask and a technology sync:

- What is the purpose of the Web site?
- What is the number one thing we want people to do?
- What other Web sites does your audience frequently visit?
- ▸ **Sync:** What about multimedia for this audience?
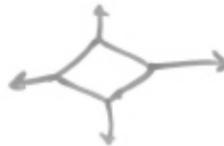
ADVERGIRL tip:

The design and function of the Web site are often different ventures entirely. Languages and techniques like .NET (pronounced dot net) and action scripting enable designers, content creators and developers to work on independent 'layers' of the site and bring them back together for the final product.

Programming: How it works

Files

In one of many languages, the logic that governs the site - everything from clicking here, shows you this to complex multimedia interactions.

Top three questions to ask and a technology sync:

- How do you plan to update your site? Who will work on it? How often?
- How will your audience use the content on your site?
  - Subscribe? Print every page? Email to friends?
- How do you expect the site to evolve over the next 2-3 years?
- ▸ **Sync:** We generally program in [language], can your internal team support that?

The Content: What it says. DATABASE

Generally housed in database, the content includes everything we want to say, every document we want to share and any data we keep on our visitors to customize the experience for them.

Top three questions to ask and a technology sync:

- How do you want to personalize the site for visitors?
- How will people find the site?
  - What search terms are most important?
- What content exists today and what do we want to create?
- ▸ **Sync:** Is there a database platform you prefer? SQL (/sequel/), Oracle, etc?

The Big World (Wide Web)

The People: Who uses it

WWW
MOUSE

Once the site has launched, finding out how people are using it helps track key metrics and improve the experience and content over time.

Top three questions to ask and a technology sync:

- Can we put a plan in place to audit and consider improvements to the site on a regular basis?
- What offline inputs should we leverage to create behavioral tracking groups online?
- What does the ideal online behavior for each of those groups look like?
- ▸ **Sync:** Should analytics feed into another system, like a CRM?

ADVERGIRL tip:

This is a great time to talk about marketing the site. With so many choices online, leveraging solid SEO principles in development won't always be enough. Talk about opinion leader marketing, regular communication to visitors, and online and traditional advertising to quickly move the needle.