51 Web Apps for Designers and Developers

In this article, Linda lays out 51 Web apps that you may be able to use for your home or independent design and development business.

No Mobile Device?

Unless your single uncle leaves you a good sum of money in his will, you may not have invested in a mobile device if you work at home. Even if you have, many designers and developers still use home computers or laptops for work. If you are tied to your computer, then you may want to use apps that are easily available to use on the Web, where you can collaborate and store information.

Most of you already know about social media apps, such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook – so I haven't included those networking devices in this list. Instead, I've included apps specific to self-employed individuals who work from home or who are independent contractors, with designers and developers in mind.

The following list is divided into categories, and each app is listed alphabetically within those categories. All apps are available to use online, so you do not need to download any software. Not all the apps are free, but most are reasonably priced, and most offer free trial offers to try the app before you plunk down some cash. You also may need to register to use some of these apps, even if they are free.

Design

1. CD Cover: Why go searching for a template when you can use this easy generator to upload artwork and add text?
2. CSS Sandbox: The preview for this app is live, so you'll see changes immediately as you select different options.
3. Dabbledb: Although recently acquired by Twitter, there seems to be no changes yet to this app that allows users to create online databases.
4. Formatpixel: Create your own online magazines, fanzines, brochures, catalogues, portfolios and more with text, uploaded images, interactivity and customization. Free for 1 project and 512K storage.
5. FormLogix: For designers who are not coders, this app creates forms for you, including the databases. They also have Contact us forms, Feedback forms, Events registration forms, Surveys, online Polls, Order forms, Invitations, CRM and more.
6. Letterpop: Use this app to create newsletters, actionable presentations, invitations, product features, event summaries, informative club updates and catalogues – anything you can print or introduce online is here. Individual plans start at about $25.00 per year.
7. Mocksup: Upload Web site to Mocksup so clients can view the work. First project, with up to ten mockups, is free.
8. My Brochure Maker: If you need a brochure tomorrow, use the custom templates at this site to create your project.
9. Templatr: This beta app enables users to build a template online and download the finished package.

Collaboration

10. Concept Feedback: Post your website, landing page, mockup, or wireframe and get design, usability, and marketing feedback from a community of online professionals.
11. ConceptShare: Easily share media and invite others to add and reply to comments, approve artwork, and markup on visuals. First 30 days are free.
12. Colaab: Review and collaborate on documents, images and video online and in real time.

13. <u>Creately</u>: This is a full-featured diagram drawing app with a user friendly, intuitive interface. which allows for easy co-working and sharing of diagrams.
14. <u>Dribble</u>: This app allows designers, developers and other creatives to show parts of their current works with a little sports lingo mixed in. It's also a fantastic resource for feedback and community.
15. <u>Entri</u>: Try this free collaborative tool for writing and sharing documents. When you're finished, you can click on the "Get HTML" button to copy and paste the HTML.
16. <u>Notebox</u>: With Notebox both you and your clients can now make notes directly on your design, allowing the notes to appear in context.
17. <u>PBWorks</u>: Create password-protected wikis instantly for any collaborative purposes.
18. <u>Vyew</u>: This platform provides real-time interaction for content, presentations and training for you, your clients and your network.
19. <u>Writeboard</u>: Collaborate with colleagues on copy, proposals, memos, etc. with this free tool. You can create as many writeboards as you'd like and invite as many people to collaborate on the writeboards. Writeboard requires Internet Explorer 6.x, Safari, or Firefox.

Communication

20. <u>Campfire</u>: Campfire is instant messaging for groups to share text, files and code in real time. You also can save the transcripts.
21. <u>DimDim</u>: I would be remiss in excluding this tool for collaboration, as it is one of the best platforms for Web conferencing that doesn't require a download.
22. <u>Followbase</u>: This service scans Twitter and collects customer ideas, problems, questions and mentions of your company so you can share what people are saying and respond.
23. <u>Grapevine</u>: Grapevine is a full-blown platform upon which you can build your very own Grapevine-powered applications for communication.
24. <u>Heap CRM</u>: Heap CRM keeps all or your contacts, messages, e-mails, files, events, tasks and much more all together.
25. <u>SnailMailr</u>: Use this online app to send a snail mail letter when needed – even overseas. Attach your logo and take advantage of high quality colour laser printing with this quick and inexpensive tool.
26. <u>Tw'er</u>: Want to spread the word about some activities or offers anonymously? Do it with this easy-to-use online Twitter app.

Web Business

27. <u>Adobe Browserlab</u>: Although I prefer <u>BrowserCam</u>, this free app is, by definition, less expensive for cross-browser testing.
28. <u>Domainr</u>: Search for domain names by word and get instant availability results and creative suggestions. View additional links for registrars, TLD and tools like WHOIS.
29. <u>Highrise</u>: Use this online tool to track leads, contacts and deals. This is a simple contact management system. The "Basic" plan contains 5,000 contacts and 5gb space for about $25 per month.
30. <u>Montastic</u>: Use this tool to monitor client Web sites. Montastic sends email alerts to you when a site goes down or back up.
31. <u>OpenDNS</u>: Add a new layer of intelligence to your home network that makes navigating the Internet a more secure, more controlled experience.
32. <u>PX to EM</u>: Do you have to prove to yourself that you're smart? Great – then save some time on conversions with this Web app that provides a full set of EM conversions based on a specified body font size.
33. <u>SerFISH</u>: Get full access to an SSH client from the Web. Also features the abilities to get around firewall and proxy restrictions, connect anonymously (no IP reporting) etc.
34. <u>Net2FTP</u>: Get full-featured access to your FTP server of choice with this online app. You can host a version of this app on your own server, too.

35. Pingdom Tools: What more can you get for free? Try this tool to test page load time, ping and traceroute testing and to monitor Web site performance and uptime.

Office Tools

36. drop.io: I like this file-sharing tool, as they charge by the GB used for uploads, conversion, storage and delivery of large rich media files. If you do not need to use a file-sharing tool often, this could work for you.
37. eSign-iT: An easy to use e-signature application that allows you to gain legally binding approvals for your requests.
38. Google Apps: If you already are using Google Apps, then you know you have access to free web apps covering email, document editing, RSS, calendar, 3D model builder and a lot more.
39. Harvest: Track time, log expenses, invoice clients, keep track of account receivables and revenue, all in one easy-to-use Web app.
40. iSendr: Free Web service iSendr will instantaneously transfer a file directly from you to a client, employee or coworker, no server or software required.
41. Myows: This is an easy-to-use app dedicated to providing a full suite of copyright solutions, from registration to management.
42. Springpad: This Web app not only captures things and organizes them for later (like Evernote); it also figures out what you're saving and tries to put it into context and help you use it.
43. Write.fm: Write.fm, originally built to help the Task.fm team move code snippets around, is based on simplicity and yours to use for the same concept.

Colour, Text and Images

44. Aviary: If you want some fast image editing, use this app, a collection ranging from image and vector editing to screen capture and audio editing.
45. Colour Palette Generator: Easy enough – just enter the URL of an image to get a colour palette that matches the image.
46. Kuler: Adobe allows users to start from a base colour or an image to quickly create all types of color schemes, such as analogous, monochromatic, triad, complementary, etc.
47. Pixlr: Pixlr is more of a Photoshop clone than any other image app outside Photoshop.com, with a GUI that may be more comfortable for Photoshop users.
48. Rasterbator: Created a rasterized image online. upload a file from your computer, follow the instructions, and the final image will be sent to you as an easily printable PDF. Using The Rasterbator requires that you have Adobe Flash Player 7 and a PDF viewer.
49. Splashup: Edit multiple images and layers together, use a variety of filters and tools as well as the ability to store images just about anywhere (Flickr, Picasa, etc).
50. Typetester: Use this tool to compare up to three types of fonts with customized settings all side by side.
51. What the Font: If you're confused about a font, upload a scanned image of the font and instantly find the closest matches.

Conclusion

The list above is just a small sampling of the tools available to designers and developers online that can help you maintain a business from anywhere you have an Internet connection. If you have any other suggestions other than the ones listed below, feel free to share. If you share, tell us how you use the app in your design or developer business.