

B R O J U S T T A K E
A C T I O N

HOW TO

BUILD A

BUSINESS WEBSITE



- Building a small business website is important to inform your audience, explain your value proposition, boost brand recognition and drive sales.
- To build a business website, you first need to choose a domain name and secure web hosting. Then, optimize your website to improve your search engine rankings and drive traffic.
- Keep your website up to date and optimized for mobile devices. Also ensure your site speed is adequate to improve your search engine rankings.
- **This article is for small business owners looking to build a website or improve upon their existing website.**

It's no longer feasible to run a business, even a brick-and-mortar one, without a web presence. Consumers turn to the internet for everything from product research to location and operating hours. Even just a simple, well-designed website can give you an edge in your field, and if you have products to sell, your site can open up new markets and expand your business cheaply and easily.

Website design software has evolved to be easy for anyone to use. You don't need to know coding to develop an attractive and functional site. No matter what program you use, you just need to follow some basic rules and tips to give your website a professional look, make it easy to find, and show your company in the best light.

Here's our step-by-step guide to creating a successful business website.

1. Determine the primary purpose of your website.

A business website generally serves as a space to provide general information about your company or a [direct platform for e-commerce](#). Whether you create a simple website that tells a little about your company or a more complex e-commerce site, the most important thing you must do is say what your company does – on the homepage in plain terms. Don't make customers root around to discover if your company can do what they need, warned Erin Pheil of website design company Followbright.

Editor's note: Looking for the right website design service for your business? Fill out the below questionnaire to have our vendor partners contact you about your needs.

"Think about your specific user experience and the journey the user will go through as they navigate your site," added Gabriel Shaoolian, CEO of website design and digital marketing agency Blue Fountain Media. "Whatever the fundamental goal of your website is or whatever the focus may be, users should be easily able to achieve it, and the goal itself should be reinforced as users navigate throughout your site."

If you don't plan to [accept payments through your website](#), you won't have as much work to do in setting it up. If you are a retailer or service provider and want to offer customers the option to pay online, you'll need to use an external service to receive your payments, which we'll discuss later in this article.

2. Decide your domain name.

Your domain name is one of the most important features of your website. It's the URL you'll share with your current and potential clients and promote on social media.

Therefore, you want it to be descriptive and easy to remember and type in. Try to keep it short, and steer clear of abbreviations, acronyms, and numbers, if possible, to avoid customer confusion.

You also need to decide your top-level domain, or TLD. This is the suffix at the end of your domain name, such as .com, .net or .biz. However, nontraditional TLD names have grown in recent years. These TLDs can be based on location, such as .nyc, or type of business, like .marketing, .agency or .law. While these can be descriptive, .com is still the main go-to. Read our article on [choosing a nontraditional TLD](#) for more information.

Once you've selected your domain name, you'll need to confirm its availability and purchase it through a domain registrar. These are some popular domain registrars:

- Domain.com
- GoDaddy
- [Squarespace](#)
- Wix

As you select your new domain name, check copyrights to make sure you're not infringing on anyone else's protected name. If your preferred URL is already taken, you can call the company using it and ask to buy it from them or use a domain buying service from a company like GoDaddy, which will reach out to the owners of your desired domain name. This service costs around \$70 per domain.



Tip: Your domain name is how users will find your website, so choose one related to your business or services. Learn more about [how to name your business](#).

3. Choose a web host.

Every website needs a host – a server where all its data is stored for the public to access at all times. Hosting your own website is probably too large an expense for your small business, so you'll need to select an external host.

Depending on your budget, you can choose from two different routes. A shared web host, the less-expensive option, means you'll share a server with other sites. Dedicated hosting costs significantly more, but it means that you get your own private server and won't have to compete with other sites that could drag down your speed. Some web builder platforms, such as Squarespace and [Wix](#), include web hosting in their monthly packages.

These are some options for web hosting services:

- **A2 Hosting:** A2 Hosting offers both shared and dedicated hosting options. New customers can acquire a Lite hosting plan, which is sufficient for some small businesses, for as little as \$3.91 per month for the first year.
- **DreamHost:** DreamHost offers three hosting plans tailored for managed WordPress websites: DreamPress, DreamPress Plus and DreamPress Pro. Costs generally start at \$16.95 per month.
- **1&1 Ionos:** This web hosting company is known for its cloud hosting and offers other cloud-based options such as servers and site backup. Plans and capabilities vary, but plans typically begin at \$15 per month.

If you're looking for free website hosting options, it's important to remember that hosting a website is by no means free for the hosting company. Therefore, they may employ other methods, such as placing banner ads on your website, to compensate for the free hosting.

When choosing a host, consider how well that host can answer questions about its server locations and reliability, said Jim Cowie, former chief scientist at cloud-based internet performance company Dyn.

"It's good to ask, 'Can you show me how close you are to the major markets my customers are going to be in?'" Cowie said. "Any good hosting provider should have the tools to show you ... measurements of their performance."

As your business grows, you may find that you need to upgrade to a different web host, or even work with multiple providers to handle your website traffic and operations.

Cowie advised keeping a close eye on your site performance and the experience your customers have using your website so you can determine your hosting needs. **[Read related article: [How to Choose a Web Hosting Service](#)]**

4. Build your pages.

A good website is more than a static homepage. You'll want to create multiple pages dedicated to different aspects of your business, such as a detailed catalog of your products or services, or a blog section for company updates. As for your overall website, make sure each page supports the site's primary goal, has a clear purpose and includes a call to action (e.g., "learn more," "sign up," "contact us" or "buy this").

A contact page, as your customers' direct link to you, is one of the most important sections of a website, so include as much information as you can (your business's phone number, email address and physical location, if you have one). It's also a good idea to include information about the founding team or staff on an "about" page so customers can put real names and faces to your brand.

If your business doesn't already have a logo, hire a graphic designer or create a logo yourself to use on your website, business cards, and social media profiles. This will help your clients identify your company quickly and easily on the web.

Justin Zalewski, director of product design at innovation consultancy Studio Science, offered a few basic tips to help you create efficient, content-rich pages for your website:

- **Be clear about what your business does.** Distill what your business does into a clear, concise statement and lead with that. Visitors should be able to understand what you do within seconds of landing on your homepage. A few well-written pages are more effective than dozens of poorly written ones.
- **Place strategic calls to action.** CTA buttons tend to perform best when they match the information on the page. For example, a "buy now" button makes sense on a product page, but a "contact us to learn more" button might be more appropriate on the "about us" page. Similarly, a page listing customer reviews might have a button that takes the reader to the available plans and pricing.
- **Automate speed improvements.** Set up as many automated speed improvements as you can. If you use a content management system (CMS), installing the right plugins will cache parts of your site so visitors don't need to download anything more than once. For WordPress users, Zalewski recommended WP Super Cache or W3 Total Cache, which compresses files and allows visitors to browse your site more quickly. Some of the more technical aspects of caching and compressing files may require a web development partner if you're not particularly tech savvy.
- **Avoid stock photos.** Tacky stock photography is the quickest way to turn a great site into a mediocre one. If you're looking for photos to use on your page, it's best to use a picture of your actual team or office.

Pheil added that high-quality images of the products increase sales, so invest in good photos of the products or services you sell.



Tip: Build informative and engaging webpages that offer a positive user experience. Strategically place CTAs to encourage users to engage in specific behaviors.

5. Set up your payment system (if applicable).

While this step won't apply to all business websites, companies that want to offer the option for customers to pay online will need to integrate electronic payment systems with their websites. The easiest way to do this is through [e-commerce software](#) or [third-party payment processors](#).

Many web hosts offer an in-house shopping cart or integration with e-commerce programs. Do some research to make sure you get a solution that's easy to work with and flexible enough to meet your needs now and in the future.

Did you know? E-commerce businesses need to make payment processing available on their sites, whether through their e-commerce software or a third-party processor.

6. Test and publish your website.

Before announcing that your site is live on the web, make sure it works on all major browsers, like Internet Explorer, Microsoft Edge, Firefox, Safari and Chrome. Click through each page and feature on every browser to ensure images show up, links are correct and the format looks smooth. This will take some time, but the effort you put in now will save you future complaints from [visitors who can't access certain features](#).

Also make sure that your website displays properly on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. This step should not be overlooked, as Google and other search engines have migrated to mobile-first indexing, which prioritizes the performance of the mobile version of your website when it comes to search engine rankings.

Another important feature to incorporate from the very beginning is an analytics program. By setting this up before the website is live, you can iron out any issues and coordinate a proper setup, Shaoolian said. Once the website is live, you can monitor page performance and determine why a certain page is successful or unsuccessful based on your analytics.

"You can look at which of your marketing campaigns are showing the most conversions, and examine any metrics such as city, browser, etc. to shed some light on how your audience is interacting with your site," Shaoolian said. "If you ... implement this [after] the site goes live, you'll miss out on valuable data and have no way of seeing which elements of your site are successful or unsuccessful right from the start."

Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or Pinterest is the best way to increase your audience reach and alert customers to what's going on with your company. Whenever you update your website, post about it on your social media outlets, but balance that with genuine, nonpromotional engagement.

Also include links to your social media on your website. The most common places to do this are the footer or the ancillary bar (the extra menu in the top right that often holds login or contact links). Learn more about social media for business in our [marketer's guide](#).

8. Invest in search engine optimization (SEO).

Submitting your website to major search engines will help direct potential leads to your page, as will deploying a strong SEO strategy across your site. Shaoolian said that defining title tags, meta descriptions, and Uniform Resource Identifiers (URIs) that are relevant to your company and aspects of your industry can boost your rankings in search engines for the products or services you're trying to market.

"Building relevant keywords into your content from the very first phases of your website, and having a strong focus on SEO from website launch, will help you generate traffic early on," he said.

As you build your business website, these important [on-site SEO](#) tactics can help you improve your ability to move up the ranks. (There are also [off-site SEO tactics](#) you can pursue).

- **Choose the right keywords.** Select keywords that are relevant to your business and that your potential customers are searching for online. Visit our guide to [SEO small business tools](#) to find a solution that can help you identify, analyze and track these keywords.
- **Publish fresh content.** Regularly publishing on a blog, adding to your website and updating your content all signal to search engines that your site is relevant for the chosen keywords. Choose topics that are relevant to your business and exciting for your industry to position yourself and your business as thought leaders in the space.
- **Place internal and external links.** Internal links are the links on your website pages that lead to other pages on your site, while external links are your links to other popular, high-authority websites. Place these links strategically throughout your website. Make sure that the links make sense, fit the context and provide value to the reader; otherwise, linking may count against you.
- **Optimize images.** Compress images so they don't slow down your site's loading time. Take the same approach with video, making sure that any clips load quickly and don't slow down how your site moves overall. Images' metadata, such as tags and captions, is also an opportunity to work in your keywords and tell search engines what the images are about.
- **Maximize your site speed.** Pages should load as quickly as possible; within a few seconds is ideal. You can use free site speed checkers such as [Google's PageSpeed Insights](#) to see if your site is performing optimally.

9. Maintain your site.

Staying relevant is important, so update your website frequently with blog posts on current industry events, new products and offers, and company news to keep visitors coming back to the site.

You should also check at least monthly to ensure your software and all add-ons are up to date. Pheil said that if your software is not up to date, it's in danger of being hacked, even if your website host's security is strong. If you don't have time to do this yourself, delegate the task to a trusted employee or a freelance website manager.

Starting a website for your business is a low-cost investment that can help you establish credibility and reach a wider customer base than you ever could through traditional marketing techniques. If you keep your website updated with fresh, current content and are quick to address technical issues, you'll never have to worry about "not existing" to your current and future clients.

Key takeaway: Keep your site up to date with fresh content and timely information to ensure it remains professional and top of mind for your audience.

Business website FAQs

How much does a business website cost?

According to research by Mark Brinker, the average cost of a small business website ranges from \$4,000 to \$10,000. The reason for such a wide range has to do with the type of business involved and the amount of work the business owner is willing to do. The difference between taking your own pictures and hiring a photographer can be a few hundred dollars. The same can be said for professional copywriting for web content and so on.

How long does it take to create a business website?

Website creation can range from days to months, but if you're looking for an average, we can turn to DreamHost, a leading web host provider for small businesses, and they say the typical website building process runs between two and four months.

What should you include on your website?


Every business should include pertinent information like who you are, what you do and how you can be contacted? Your site should also include the [products or services you sell](#), along with an easy way for customers to make purchases online. Businesses may want to include mission statements, reviews, testimonials and a regularly updated blog that provides valuable information regarding the company and industry.

Nicole Fallon and Stella Morrison contributed to the reporting and writing in this article. Some source interviews were conducted for a previous version of this article.

My Recommended Tools

Website & Form Builders



Bluehost makes it easy and quick to get a website up and running, has an easy to-use cPanel interface that's ideal for beginners, features a wide array of great features, is generally fast, has reliable servers, and has some pleasantly surprising security features for a budget-friendly web host.

Try Bluehost



GrooveFunnels is an all-in-one tool that allows users to build sales funnels, landing pages, and websites

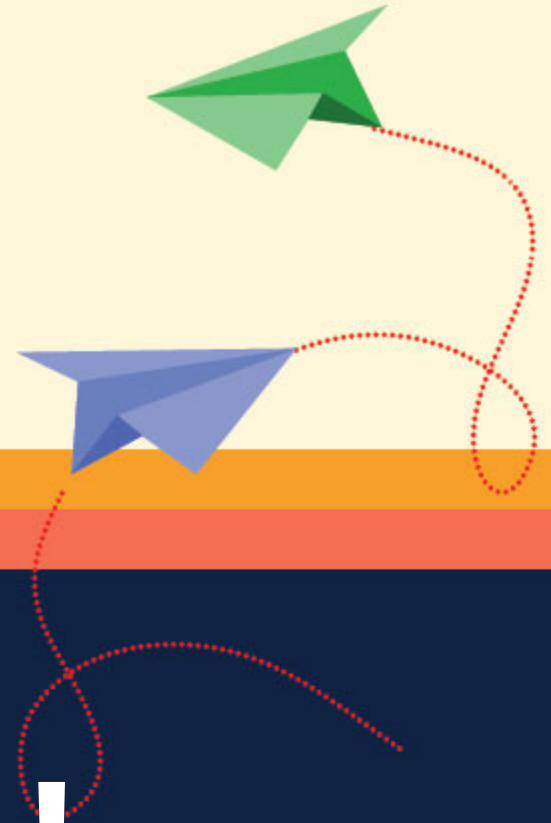
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GetResponse is a complete online marketing software that helps you grow your audience, engage with your customers, and boost online sales. With over 30 tools in one easy to-use platform, you can transform your online marketing and bring tangible results

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