



Helping local small businesses design, build and strengthen their online presence.

Why Do You Need A Website?

Many small business owners either don't have a website or do not get the most out of their online presence. This may be because they have been in the same location and have a big referral base, getting all their business by word-of-mouth. Or they know that they should be getting online, but they have no idea of what to do or where to start, so have put it off. Or they may have a website that was put up quite a few years ago and they have now become complacent, and now it looks dated with incorrect information.

There are many reasons why businesses are not making the most of the various digital marketing channels, and this is exactly why it presents such an opportunity to businesses that want to grow and leap-frog their competition.



There are a number of reasons why you should have a website for your business. Even if you have a small home-based business, you can benefit from having a website.

Advantages of Owning a Small Business Website

As for direct advantages, probably the most logical reason for building up your online presence is to increase the exposure of your product or brand. Regardless of what size business you own, a website can give you a much larger audience to promote your products and services to.

You can expect to see a reduction in advertising and promotional costs once you start using your website to tell potential customers about your product. You can advertise various promotions, sales, feature items, new arrivals, discounted or discontinued sales and a whole lot more with your website. Each of these promotional ideas would be costly if they were to be used in print or radio advertising.

Along with saving money on advertising, a website allows you to promote your business outside of your regular 9am to 5pm business hours. In fact, a website never closes which means your message, your product and your business are out there and working for you online 24/7. Because of this, your business can potentially have a far greater reach than your storefront open five or six days a week. What this means is that with a website working for you all day and all night, more people will discover your business and what it has to offer... even when you are at home sleeping!

Another great advantage to having a small business website is the ease with which you can update or change content. If you have even just a little bit of creative talent, you can share those inspirations with your customers through your website. It also allows you a unique opportunity to interact with customers through a blog or other elements that can be added or updated regularly. For example, seasonal surveys, subscriber prize giveaways, guest posts and much more can be incorporated into the design and function of your website to keep you in touch with what your customers are doing, and it will in turn build their loyalty.

Even people who have never stepped inside your business may actually do so after finding your website. Think of your website as a virtual tour of your business – minus the hassle of finding a place to park. You can very easily showcase all of your business and what it has to offer to potential customers with a website. They get a chance to look your business over without having to go near it, and if they like what they see, they can visit you. New customers will start to support your business solely because of the introduction they received from your website.



A small business website will also give your business a touch of professionalism you can't get anywhere else. A business with a website stands out from those that don't, as it indicates that the business is professional and the owner/manager takes pride in the business and takes care to provide potential customers with the information they are after. Providing this information builds trust and loyalty with the customer, and can position you as an authority in your industry and location.

There is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all website which means it can be as personalized to suit and promote your brand. Websites promote authority in the business world and with the popularity of handheld devices and tablets; a small business website allows your customers to find you via the platform they are already using.

Think about your own browsing habits...

These days, a small business website is considered an essential extension to your business, so if you don't have one, then you are easily missing out on opportunities. Think about your own browsing habits... if you are looking for the services of a small business, (eg. A plumber or accountant) in your local area (eg. Bondi), then if you are like so many other people, you probably jump onto Google and search "plumber Bondi" or "accountant Bondi". If you have a website, and it is set up and optimised correctly, then you can appear high up in the search results, meaning more eyeballs on your business.

You and your business need a website in order to stay competitive, current and accessible. Without one, your small business will suffer as you won't exist online and people looking for you there may not be able to easily find you. And with more people searching on the internet to find information, products and services, if your business doesn't have an online presence, then that search traffic (including leads and sales), will be going to your competition.

How Will You Promote Your Website?

Now that you have your shiny, new website up and running, you are ready to fling open the doors to your business and welcome in many new customers. But how are they going to know about your website?

Many small business owners create a website, and then hope for the best. But if it is not set up correctly and effectively promoted, all it may amount to is a pretty looking business card with no-one visiting it.

You now need to promote it, so that you can tell the world all about you, your business and products and services, and why they should do business with you. But how do you do that?



Ways to drive traffic to your small business website

There are many ways to promote your new website, with many of them costing next to nothing. The important thing to keep in mind is that, in order to see results from your website, it requires relevant targeted traffic, or visitors to your website.

Add to traditional advertising

For example, if you are currently using traditional means to advertise items in your bricks-and-mortar business, be sure to include your website address in all future advertising campaigns. Put it on your business cards, menus, flyers and any other item you hand out to customers or distribute to promote your business.

Have your website address advertised in the phone book, in any form of print media you are currently using as well. This can be in trade publications, local newspapers/magazines and brochures.

Other traditional forms of advertising that offer excellent ways to promote your website include radio and television advertising, outdoor billboards and signs and on your company vehicle.

Pay-per-click advertising

To reach an audience that is more in tune with the internet you may want to consider Google AdWords, Facebook Ads and other pay-per-click (PPC) type campaigns. You place an ad and then are usually charged every time someone clicks on your ad. Because of the reach of online advertising, this can be very costly if not done correctly.

Rather than sending your message out to everyone (even those who have absolutely no interest in your products or services), with many PPC platforms, you can zero in on your target market, by specifying such things as interests and hobbies, age, gender, location, etc, and only show ads to these people, which can have a dramatic effect on your ad's effectiveness.

Search Engine Optimisation

There are also search engine optimisation (SEO) techniques that can help to improve your rankings in the search engines to funnel traffic to your website. Website SEO is a large and specialised topic, which involve various on-page (on your website) and off-page (on other pages and sites on the internet) techniques.

One of the most important aspects of SEO is the use of appropriate keywords on your website. Keywords are entered into the search engine as a search term, and the search engines use this to provide a list of the most appropriate and relevant websites on the internet for that search term.

Making sure that you use the best keywords for your industry and location is very important. You use these keywords in the content of your site, as well as in the meta title, description, tags, images, URL, etc to help search engines understand what your website is about and assist with making better matches to queries. The better the matches, the higher your website potentially ranks which can be a competitive edge over any of your existing competition.

As mentioned above, keyword research is only 1 part of SEO. There are many different techniques used in SEO'ing a website. For more information, [click here](#).

Social Media

Then there are various social media platforms you will probably want to explore. Not all of them may fit with your core demographic, but it would not be a bad idea to have a Facebook Page, a Twitter account, an Instagram account or a Pinterest page, or a combination of these.

These social media sites allow you to share various photos and pieces of content to create a following for your business. The more interesting, funny or informative postings you make, the more your followers learn about you and it eventually builds a level of trust. This can be a huge benefit to your business when followers are keen to see what will be posted next from you or your business.

So how will you promote your website?

As you can imagine, these extra promotional tools & techniques can take time to set up and maintain. Many small businesses utilise the skills and knowledge of website experts to set up, run and maintain the promotion of their websites, so that they can do what they are best at and concentrate on running their business.

In order to run your business and reach new customers effectively, you will need to incorporate the digital marketing techniques mentioned above so you can get the most out of your new small business website.

What Is Required To Set Up And Run A Website?

Many people jump in and think “A website will solve all my problems...”, without giving much thought to what is actually required. Before setting up a website, there are a number of different things that you need to consider. Some of these include:

- Domain name and registration
- Website hosting
- Platform
- Structure & layout
- Pages
- Security and backups
- Ongoing website maintenance



Domain Name and Registration

The domain name is your internet address that your current and new customers will need to use in order to locate your website. The domain name should be unique, easy to understand and spell. For example, if your business name is Salty’s Mexican Restaurant the domain name you choose should be similar to your business name. eg. SaltysRestaurant.com would be a sensible choice. For businesses operating solely in Australia you will need an ABN (Australia Business Number) or ACN (Australia Company Number) in order to register a .com.au domain name. A .net.au is also a good choice for Australian businesses.

Many Domain Name Registrar companies exist, and it is usually as easy as setting up an account, choosing your domain name, and then registering it for a certain amount of time (eg, 1 or 2 years). You can also elect to set up privacy so that your

personal details are not [publically accessible](#) (although this option is not available on .com.au domains).

Website Hosting

The next part of the website puzzle is hosting. This is a fancy way of describing the 'space' online where you will have your website parked (where your website files will be stored).

It is common for many Domain Name Registrar companies to also provide hosting, but you may decide to keep your Registrar and hosting separate. If you do keep them separate, then you will have to go into your Registrar account and point your Name servers to your hosting account.

There are some free hosting options available, but quite often you will only have the option to use a sub-domain of the hosting site. An example of this would be if your website was hosted by (for example) free-hosting.com and you used their free hosting service, your website address might be www.free-hosting.com/SaltysRestaurant. It may still work for your business, but you would never own the sub domain, and it is not a very professional image for your business. Plus, if you ever decided to move hosting providers (eg. If the hosting company closed its doors), then you would have to update all your branding with your new URL.

This is why it may be best to own your domain name, and as long as you pay your annual renewal fee, you can keep it as long as you want (you can even move it between Registrars if you need to).

Website hosting plans come in a variety of sizes, but for many small businesses, the smaller to mid-sized plans are suitable.

Platform

Once you have chosen a web hosting site you will need to decide what platform or programming system you will want to use in the construction of your website. There are many different options to choose from... some of the more common choices are WordPress, Joomla or an HTML site, with each having specific benefits.

If you are going to build and maintain the website yourself you may want to use WordPress. It is relatively easy to use, but (possibly more importantly) it is open source, with many free and paid options that gives you the flexibility you need to customize the site to your needs.

Structure & Layout

Before you build your site, you should be clear on the layout of the site. You might want to ask yourself questions like:

- Why do I want a website?
- What is the main purpose of the website, and every page?
- What do I want people to do when they come to my site?

If the website is for your small business, then you may want people to call you, so you would make the phone number easy to find. If you are selling products, then you may want to display your specials on the front page, and have an easy way to purchase products online.



You may want to include calls-to-action so that you direct people around your site to where you want them to go.

Make it easy for people to find the information they are after, because if they can't find it, they will probably move onto the next site in the list, and take their business elsewhere.

Pages

The website you build will require a number of content pages. There are a few 'standard' pages you should have as part of your website. At a minimum, this could include:

- Home - this is the first page anyone sees and has an overview of everything else on your website
- Services - this is where you highlight any and all special services your business provides
- About - this page explains who you or your business are, including some background information
- Contact - this should have all the information anyone would need to reach you for your services. It can include phone/fax numbers, street address, cell number, e-mail and any other connecting site where your customers can find you.

There are additional pages to consider including in your website and they will depend on your specific service. These can include:

- FAQ (frequently asked questions)
- Blog - where you can post articles and invite comments from customers & visitors
- Pricing
- Portfolio
- Testimonials
- Terms of Use

- Privacy
- Disclaimer
- Site map
- and just about anything else that is relevant to your business that may be of interest to your client base.

Security and Backups

Security and backups is critical to any website, but is something that is often overlooked. Maintaining the integrity of your website should be taken seriously, as it is far easier to prevent issues rather than attempt to fix something afterwards.

There are many free and paid options available, so there is really no excuse for not implementing systems to take care of this for you. In addition to using security and backup plugins, it is important to update your software when required (eg. For WordPress, keeping your WordPress core, themes and plugins updated). Also other things like using strong passwords, restricting backend access to your site, not using public wi-fi hotspots, etc should be considered.



Ongoing Website Maintenance

In addition to the updates that have to be carried out on a regular basis above, there are other maintenance tasks that need to be considered.

If you receive a number of questions or requests coming through your Contact Us page, you will require time to respond to them in a timely manner in order to keep the connection with existing or new customers. You will probably receive spam emails as well, so it is important to keep these monitored and cleaned out so that genuine emails are not missed.

You will also need to continue to update the content on your website, such as adding new blog posts, updating business hours, staffing information, changes to product pricing and much more in order to keep online customers coming back. There is nothing worse than going to websites that have old out-of-date information. This can be a quick turn-off for visitors.

Then you will need to factor in time and effort in the actual promotion of your website (eg. Facebook & Twitter posts, blog posts, etc).

This all takes time, so being prepared from the start is an important step to getting the most out of your site.

As you can see, just tossing together a quick little webpage and leaving it unattended will very likely not produce a lot of new traffic to your business. This is why you may need the assistance of a website designer, developer and SEO expert to set up your website and maintain it.

Once your site is up and running, the ongoing maintenance part can be a big job for any small business owner as it takes time and energy away from the day-to-day running of the business. So instead of doing it all yourself, you may wish to consider using the services of experts to help.

5 Tips for Planning Your Website

You have decided that you absolutely, positively need a small business website. You love that it allows you to reach your customers all the time – even when your storefront business is closed for the day. A website not only expands the reach of your business to a wider span of potential new customers, it also allows you to engage with existing ones via an interactive platform.

Having a website also puts you in a position to become more competitive, more aggressive and more accessible. With technology shifting so much towards small, handheld devices, your website allows you to become part of the digital world and your business will weave its place into the digital landscape. A business without a website can suffer the consequences of not being ‘seen’ by those who do not travel down the street to where your business is located.

But in order to have a great website, you need to consider and include certain aspects to get the best results from your digital marketing investment. These five tips will help you to focus on getting the right setup built into your website project.



User-Friendly Layout

Have you ever visited a website and couldn't find what you were looking for or it was hidden somewhere? Have you just given up on websites that you can't find your way around? These are the problems you want to avoid with your website. The last thing you want is to lose a potential customer, or frustrate one because of your small business website not being user friendly.

Ways to make your website easy for visitors to use include making the colour and layout easy to see and understand. This includes having a proper size and colour for the fonts used in the content in relation to what appears in the background. Your website should also have an easy to find and use menu structure, with menu items that clearly identify what they are for. This also means contact information, including phone numbers, email address, business address and open hours, should be as easy to find and understand.

SEO-Friendly

Search engine optimisation (SEO) helps to get your website higher up in the search engine search results. These people may not know your business even exists when they conduct a search for a service or product that you offer, so it can be a great way to get new leads.

With proper SEO techniques used on your website, search engines can end up promoting your website higher up in the rankings... generally the higher in the rankings you are, the more traffic your website will get.

There are many different techniques used with SEO, and it is a very specialised field. But we will discuss some of the techniques used below.

Your small business website should contain the proper keywords that match your specific business type. A keyword, or keyword phrase, is what people use when searching for products and services in the search engines.

There may be many keywords that are relevant to your industry ad location. Take for example a dog trainer in Concord. People looking for help to train their dog in this area may search for things such as:

- dog trainer Concord
- dog obedience training Concord
- puppy training
- Stop barking dog
- dog training tips
- dog toilet training
- dog training tricks

You can see that the list can go on and on. Not all keywords are the same though... some are better than others, depending on the search volume and the competition on each one. This is where further investigation is required to pick the best ones.

Those keywords should appear in headings, titles, meta descriptions, image alt tags and throughout the written content. However, those keywords should not be overused or search engines may penalise your website which would be about as useful as not having a website at all.



The content that you include in your website should also not be repeated, must all be original and should be relevant to your business. For example, if you sell car parts, your website should not have articles and blog posts about greenhouse gardening.

Other content on your website will be images. They should be optimised for quality and size (pixels and kb) for improved page loading speed and photo viewing.

Your website internal and external links should be working properly at all times. The internal links are the ones visitors will use to move around your website to other pages or sections. External links are those that direct visitors to other websites from yours. If a link stops working, it is considered as a broken link. Fix or remove those as soon as you can.

Your small business website needs to have a mobile responsive design. This means it will be able to operate properly on mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets. If your website is not mobile responsive, it can now be penalised in search results on the search engines.

SEO works well if your website has all the standard pages built into it that most websites are designed around. These would include Home, About Us, Services, Contact Us, Privacy, and Terms of Use/Disclaimer. Additional pages are a bonus but they all must be relevant to the purpose of your website.

SEO is a huge topic, and these points are just the tip of the iceberg. Implement these basic points to give your site a good foundation and the best chance to rank well.

Have A Plan For What Pages Your Website Needs

Having a plan for your website is important, as this is essentially the blueprint for your website. As mentioned previously, there are some standard pages that most websites have, and are expected, so that your visitors can find what they are after.

You will want to include a Home Page, which is generally the most important page of your entire website. It needs to be well laid out, uncluttered, fast loading, and visually appealing. It can also contain some details on you and your services and lists all the other pages of your website so visitors can dig deeper for more details.

An About Us page gives more details on you and your business, possibly a little more in depth background than would be on your Home page. This is where you can tell your story or history of the business as well, so that you can show you are a genuine business and an authority in your niche, and build trust.

There should be a Services page that lists what your business provides as well as pricing and promotional sales.

The Contact Us page will explain how customers will be able to reach you and in addition to phone/fax/e-mail information, a street and postal address, plus a map to help find your business would go nicely here.



A Privacy Policy page outlines that your website protects the privacy of your online customers.

The Terms Of Use page basically explains to website visitors how they can use your website and feel confident in knowing your website is an accurate and fair representation of your business and not some sort of scam site.

A Disclaimer page roughly covers everything else so that you are not legally liable for something resulting from the use of information found on your website. A lot of these pages are meant to cover you, and in doing so provide an essential form of online protection to you and your business.

Other pages to consider adding to your website include Testimonials. This is where you can use messages and comments from customers to add to the credibility of your business or service to new visitors and potential new customers visiting your website.

A Portfolio/Gallery page gives you the opportunity to post photos or video of some of your products. Remember, your website is not your storefront business, so if your regular business has a showroom, imagine this page as being the same thing for customers who have not set foot in your physical business location.

A FAQ page is a great addition where you can provide some information to questions you commonly hear about the kinds of products and services you provide. This page can help elevate your online reputation setting a tone of authority with the kinds of questions and answers used here.

Blog and News pages are great ways to promote your business and service as well as giving you an excellent venue for interacting with customers. If you post regularly on your Blog page and update the News about your business frequently, this helps keep customers informed and assists with building trust and a bond with them.

A Site Map is a computer-style road map of the pages in your website. The Site Map is mostly used by search engines to learn what pages exist in your entire website.

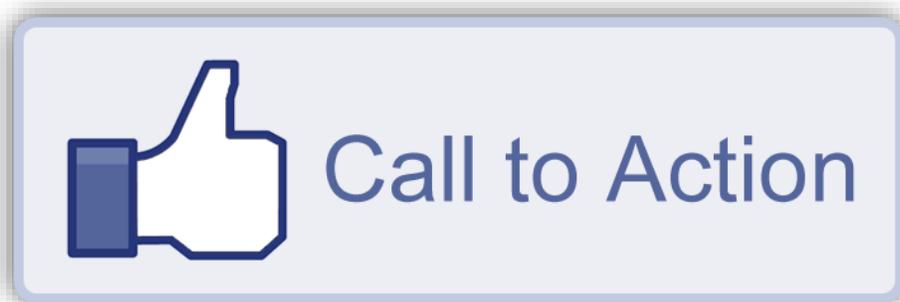
Any other pages you may wish to add will have to be relevant to the type of business or service you provide in order to be relevant and effective as part of your small business website.

Calls to Action

This is such an important part of any website. This is the action where customers and visitors to your website are requested to perform something.

When designing your site, always have a clear purpose for every page, and also think what actions you would like visitors to your page to take. Typically it's a 'Buy Now' or 'Order Now' or 'Click Here' kind of action.

It may vary depending on the kind of business your website represents but ultimately this links through to the money page, information page, or contact details collection page. This subsequent page needs to be neat, uncluttered and very obvious what the visitor then needs to do, but should not be perceived as begging of any kind. Done right, this page will produce a lot for you and your business.



Professional Look and Feel

There are a number of reasons why your small business website should look professional and not like something tossed together by your next door neighbour after losing a bet. Your website is going to be the first thing many people will see related to your business. It will leave an impression and you will want that impression to be a good one.



Think of it like your storefront business – you keep the outside of it clean and tidy, fix and repair unsightly items such as peeling or fading paint, replace signage when it gets old looking and keep the windows clean. All of this sets a tone for your customers about your place of business. So does your website.

Attention spans are short. Walking past a storefront is much different to looking up a website. You actually have only about three seconds to make that first impression with your website. Information needs to be laid out nicely, navigation buttons need to be easy to see and the Home Page content needs to relate to your business and convey any messages quickly. If a website visitor can't find what they are looking for right away, they will be gone. Your Home Page must be interesting enough to keep them interested encouraging them to look deeper into the site and find out more about your business.

Nothing kills a business website quicker than outdated information. Be sure to monitor and update such things as addresses, phone numbers and whatever else is listed in your website that can change over time. This includes pricing, promotion packages and details about you and your staff. Keeping these things up-to-date shows you care about what website visitors are learning about you and your business, and that you want them to know as much as possible about what you are currently up to, and not what your business was doing two years ago without any further updates.

Another part of any website that adds to the professional look is the use of the branding that exists with your business. This includes company logos, slogans, colours and whatever else you currently use to give your business an identity. Think of your website as an extension of that branding. With your logos added it helps provide consistency across different mediums, so your existing customers can easily identify that your website as being part of your business.

If you or your business has won any special awards or recognition for something specific in your niche, be sure to include that somewhere to show you have something to back up your claims of being “The Best (Fill in the blank) Service in

2016” as it will actually assist with building trust with online customers. While there is a fine line between bragging and promoting achievements, with a small business website any kind of award can work in your favour when displayed proudly.

In Conclusion

There you have it! Five solid tips to help you focus the development of your website. It may sound like a labour intensive exercise, but in reality you can see enormous benefits to your business by having one. It is an investment, and shows to the world that you are serious about your digital marketing strategy and taking your business forward. How many hugely successful businesses do you know that don't have and well designed and constructed business website and online presence?

