TAKE YOUR SMALL BUSINESS ONLINE

A step-by-step guide for launching your SMB on the web

by Andrea Rowland

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A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR LAUNCHING YOUR SMB ON THE WEB

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GET TIPS & TRICKS
TO TUNE UP YOUR
SMALL BUSINESS
IN THE GODADDY GARAGE.

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LET'S GET STARTED

JUST THE FACTS, JACK.

I'm so glad you're reading this guide. It means you're serious about turning your business idea into a reality or taking your enterprise to the next level. You understand that to truly compete in today's marketplace, you need a strong presence on the Internet. That's where your customers like to spend a **whole lot** of their time — reading, watching, researching, socializing and buying.

FACT: 87 PERCENT OF ADULTS IN AMERICA USE THE INTERNET — AND THEY TURN TO THE WEB MORE THAN ANY OTHER SOURCE TO FIND LOCAL BUSINESSES AND SERVICES.

IF YOU'RE NOT ONLINE, YOU DON'T EXIST TO COUNTLESS POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS. YOU'RE MISSING A HUGE OPPORTUNITY TO:

BE MORE ACCESSIBLE

Don't penalize me for shoe shopping at midnight — enable me! Unlike an actual storefront, a website doesn't close up shop at 5 p.m. It's open 24/7 to showcase your products and services, contact information, store hours, and more.

BUILD YOUR BRAND

No big advertising budget? No problem. No matter how small you are, you can afford to use a website, social media profiles and other web-based efforts to raise brand awareness, establish credibility, and develop a loyal — and growing — customer base.

ESTABLISH CREDIBILITY

I can't find your business ANYWHERE online? No website or Facebook page or Yelp review? You must not be legit. Sorry, that's how consumers think these days.

CONNECT WITH CUSTOMERS

We all want to be Liked, right? The Internet offers endless possibilities for engaging with your target audience, in real-time, in the comfort of your pajamas.

GENERATE SALES LEADS

Because let's be real — that's what it's all about. You can boost your customer base with a website, social media profiles, contact forms, and email marketing campaigns. I promise.

" WE ARE ALL NOW CONNECTED BY THE INTERNET, LIKE NEURONS IN A GIANT BRAIN."

— STEPHEN HAWKING

YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

Sure, it's fine to start with a Facebook business page or an Etsy store. But as you get serious about competing online (and off), you'll want to expand your digital footprint to include a number of important elements.

CUSTOM DOMAIN NAME
Your domain name is the heart of your business's unique address on the web. It should tell people who you are and what you have to offer at a glance, direct them to your website, and help protect and promote your brand.

WEBSITE
Your website is your business's online home. It's where you tell your story, showcase products and services, and start to establish credibility and expand your reach.

SOCIAL MEDIA
Getting active on the social networking sites where your customers spend their time is key to building an online community around your business. You can use sites like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, LinkedIn and

YouTube to market your products and services, establish yourself as a thought leader in your industry and, most important, build relationships with your customers.

EMAIL
Branded email is an affordable and effective way to communicate with your customers and generate leads.

LOCAL REVIEWS AND DIRECTORIES
You can inspire consumer confidence (ahem, get more new customers) by garnering positive reviews on third-party sites like Yelp and remaining current on business directories such as Google My Business.

ONLINE REAL ESTATE

Want an easy way to picture how your domain name and website work together? Real estate. Your website is your house, sitting on a piece of property with a street address. That property is known as your hosting account — the space on the Internet where you place the files that make up your website. People find those files (which they see as your website) by going to your online street address. This is your domain name.

YOUR DOMAIN NAME

YOUR WEBSITE

123

YOUR HOSTING ACCOUNT

PLAY TO WIN

Putting your business on the web means putting your business in the game. And playing to win means taking a strategic approach to building an online presence, including:

- Getting a domain name that represents who you are and what you do at a glance

- Launching a website dedicated to telling your story, your way

- Creating valuable content

- Making sure the right people see that content (think social media and SEO)

- Using your website, email and directories to generate leads

- Measuring, then tweaking for improvement

This guide will show you how to get started. Ready? Onward!

STEP 1:
GET A DOMAIN

WHAT'S A DOMAIN NAME?

Your domain is the part of your website address that comes after the www. Like this:

www.**coolexample.com**

For a business, a domain name can also anchor a professional email address. Like this:

ceo@**coolexample.com**

Let's say I'm looking for a plumber in Detroit. I whip out my iPhone, tap Google, and enter "plumber in detroit mi" — and voilà! I get a list of search results that include relevant websites identified by their domain names.

You want your business to show up in search results when potential customers are looking online for the products or services you offer. That's the goal. Getting a domain name is the first step to reaching it.

Plumbers in Detroit, Michigan with Reviews & Ratings - YP ...
www.yellowpages.com › Detroit, MI ▾ Yellowpages.com ▾
Results 1 - 30 of 841 - Find 841 listings related to Plumbers in Detroit on YP.com. See reviews, photos, directions, phone numbers and more for the best Plumbers ...

10 Best Plumbing Services in Detroit, MI - Thumbtack
www.thumbtack.com › MI › Detroit ▾ Thumbtack ▾
Dec 11, 2015 - Schaefer Plumbing & drain cleaning Inc. ... He offers sewer repair, replacement, and much more at affordable rates. ... Unlike other plumbing companies, Complete & Drain Cleaning L.L.C offers full-time sewer and plumbing repair services for both residential and commercial properties.

Detroit, MI Plumber | Roto-Rooter Plumbing & Drain Services
www.rotorooter.com › Locations › Detroit, MI ▾
★★★★★ Rating: 5 - 93 votes
When you need a plumber in Detroit, Roto-Rooter has all the expertise you need to solve your plumbing problems. Call 313-223-1212 to schedule an ...

Moore Brothers Plumbing, Heating, & Cooling: Plumber ...
www.detroitlicensedplumber.com/ ▾
Call Moore Brothers Plumbing, Heating, & Cooling in Detroit, MI at 313-241-0254 now for Plumber services you can rely on!

Cross Plumbing: Home
www.crossplumbing.biz/ ▾
With years of experience, we offer complete plumbing services, and are ... We offer plumbing services to keep your water flowing smoothly. ... Detroit, MI 48227.

25 Best Plumbers - Detroit MI - HomeAdvisor
www.homeadvisor.com › Pro Ratings & Reviews › Michigan › Detroit ▾
Plumbers Directory for Detroit, Michigan. Find Customer-Rated, Prescreened Home Improvement Professionals for Detroit, MI. All Plumbers are rated by ...

plumbers in Detroit, MI | Reviews - Yellowbook
www.yellowbook.com/s/plumbers/detroit-mi/ ▾
Find plumbers in Detroit, MI on Yellowbook. Get reviews and contact details for each business including videos, opening hours and more.

WHAT'S A DOMAIN EXTENSION?

A top-level domain (TLD) is the domain's extension — the part of the domain name following the "dot," like the bold part in these examples:

coolexample**.com**
coolexample**.net**
coolexample**.guru**
coolexample**.nyc**
coolexample**.photography**

The most common domain extensions are .com, .net, .info, .co and .org. You've probably seen a bunch of websites with domain names ending in these extensions because they've been around for long time (at least in Internet years). That's why it can be tough to secure a short and memorable domain name with those extensions.

THERE ARE MORE THAN 124 MILLION DOMAIN NAMES ENDING IN .COM.

Well, you're in luck. We're in the midst of a domain name revolution. Hundreds of new domain extensions known as generic top-level domain names (gTLDs) are becoming available — giving you the chance to snag a domain name that's highly relevant to your industry (like .photography, .restaurant, .design, .consulting, .plumbing and .healthcare) and location (such as .nyc, .vegas and .london).

CHOOSE A DOMAIN NAME

Your domain is your business's nameplate on the web, so take care to choose a domain name that **represents your business** and is **easy to remember.** Here are 5 tips for picking a domain that sticks:

1. **Keep it short.** Would you remember it if you saw it on the side of a bus?
2. **Make it easy to type.** Avoid hyphens and unusual spellings.
3. **Include keywords.** Try to use words that people might enter when searching for your type of business.
4. **Target your area.** Use your city or state in your domain name to appeal to local customers.
5. **Pick the right extension.** One of those industry- or geo-specific domain endings we just talked about might be a better fit for your business than a more generic .com. Try it on for size.

When you're noodling through domains, do a little research to make sure the name you love isn't trademarked, copyrighted or in use by another company. That could result in a hassle that's easily avoided.

GO FISH (FOR GTLDS)

Say your name is Tom and you own a tropical fish shop in the Bronx. Try different combinations of your business name, industry, primary product or service, and location. Remember to play around with the domain extension — in many cases, you can actually use the extension as part of your online name. You might come up with a list that looks something like this:

tomsfishshop.com, tomstropicalfish.com, tomstropicalfish.nyc, tomstropical.fish, tomsfish.com, toms.fish, tomsfish.shop, tropicalfish.com, tropicalfish.shop, nytropicalfish.com, tomsfish.nyc, nytropical.fish, tropicalfish.nyc

PICK THE PERFECT DOMAIN NAME

Complete the following fields with relevant business information to come up with the perfect domain:

Business Industry: Ex. Catering

▶ _____

Services: Ex. Food for wedding receptions

▶ _____

Products: Ex. Hors d'oeuvres, chocolate bar

▶ _____

Geographic Location (If applicable): Ex. Chicago

▶ _____

Words that describe your services: Ex. Elegant

▶ _____

Now try combining the words in your list to create short and representative domain names. Remember to play with various domain extensions. Run your names by a few friends, and narrow down your list based on their feedback. When you've got a list you love, you're ready to search for your favorite names' availability through a registrar like GoDaddy.

REGISTER YOUR DOMAIN(S)

It's time to visit your preferred domain registrar — an accredited organization that sells domain names to the public — to start your search. If the domain you want is available, you'll register it for a specific amount of time — sort of like leasing it. As long as it's registered to you, no one else can claim it.

For example, when you register a domain name for one year, you need to renew your registration when that year is up or else someone might get your domain. Most people register their domain name for three to five years.

REGISTER YOUR DOMAIN FOR MORE THAN ONE YEAR SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT RENEWAL WHEN YOU'RE IN THE MIDST OF GROWING YOUR BUSINESS.

How much will your domain cost? Well, it depends on factors like the name's projected popularity and its extension. You can easily register a domain for less than $10 a year — or pay thousands for that must-have name.

If the domain name you want isn't available, you might be able to purchase it through the domain aftermarket, or auction. Sometimes the extra investment is worth it to secure a premium domain like toms.fish, tomsfish.com or tropicalfish.nyc.

PUT YOUR BUSINESS WEBSITE
ON THE MAP
WITH A NEW GEO-DOMAIN LIKE
.NYC.

WHY REGISTER MULTIPLE DOMAINS?

Sometimes, it's smart to register more than than one domain name to represent your business. Here's why:

TO PIVOT FOR GROWTH
If you have a domain name with a traditional extension, like yourbusinessname.com, you can register additional domains that represent specific products or services you offer, or markets you serve, as your business grows.

TO PROTECT YOUR BRAND
If you own a domain, your competition doesn't. This is one easy way to help protect your brand online.

TO IDENTIFY WITH A LOCAL MARKET
If you serve customers in a specific geographic area, it's important to make that local connection clear in your website address.

TO IDENTIFY WITH A SPECIFIC INDUSTRY
There's a good chance people will search for products and services by industry — like "wedding photographer in savannah" — so including your industry in your domain can make you stand out in search results.

PRO TIP
If you register more than one domain, attach your website to your primary domain and point any secondary domains to that address. It's really easy.

WANT SOME PRIVACY?

The WHOIS database lists every single domain currently registered in the world, along with the name and contact information for whoever registered the domain as its administrator. Purchase domain privacy if you're not into that kind of visibility.

QUICK CHECKLIST: GET A DOMAIN

TASK	✓
Brainstorm domain names	
Narrow down your list	
Get feedback	
Search for availability	
Register domain(s)	

Time to get a domain: **1 hour or less**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Want to learn more about domains? Check out these resources:

[GoDaddy Domain Search](#)

[GoDaddy Auctions](#)

[#NamingMonth](#) in the Garage

[gTLDs: Online names with game](#)

[How to buy a domain that someone else owns](#)

STEP 2:
PLAN YOUR WEBSITE APPROACH

START WITH THE END IN MIND

With that domain name in hand, you're ready to start *thinking* about your website. That's right — thinking about your website. Like most everything else in business and life, a bit of planning goes a long way toward ensuring that your site will do all the things you want it to do for your business.

Do you want your website to inform? To inspire? To generate sales leads? To actually sell products or services?

The nature of most business websites is either informational or sales-driven. Is it enough for your website to showcase your products and services, or do you want visitors to be able to buy them directly from the site? If so, you'll want an ecommerce website (more on that later). When you figure out what you want your site to do for your business, you can begin building the type of site that will achieve those objectives.

PLANNING YOUR WEBSITE

Start to figure out the best type of website for your business, with features that will help you achieve your online goals, by answering the following questions:

What is your overall objective for your website? Ex. Showcase my landscaping services

▶ _____

Who is your target audience? Ex. homeowners

▶ _____

Where is your target audience? Ex. Miami

▶ _____

How do you want visitors to describe the "feel" of your website? Ex. Edgy, fun

▶ _____

How much information do you want to provide on your website? Ex. As much as possible

▶ _____

Do you want to interact with customers using your website?	☐ YES	☐ NO	☐ NOT SURE
Do you want to establish yourself as a thought leader (to build credibility) through your site?	☐ YES	☐ NO	☐ NOT SURE
Do you want to increase referrals with your site?	☐ YES	☐ NO	☐ NOT SURE
Do you want to drive business to a brick-and-mortar store?	☐ YES	☐ NO	☐ NOT SURE
Do you want to collect visitors' contact information?	☐ YES	☐ NO	☐ NOT SURE
Do you want to sell products or services on your site?	☐ YES	☐ NO	☐ NOT SURE
If so, do you want to process payments on your site?	☐ YES	☐ NO	☐ NOT SURE

Excellent! You just worked out the **purpose** and began to map the **direction** for your new small business website. You'll use this information as you move forward with building a strong online presence.

PREP TO SELL ONLINE

If you plan to sell products or services on your website, you'll need an ecommerce website, also known as an online store. This type of website requires a few more specialized parts than a standard website. Here's what you'll need to plan for:

A SHOPPING CART
This tool will let you display product images and descriptions. Look for a cart option that includes important features like shipping options and inventory tracking.

PAYMENT PROCESSING
While you can use a third-party service like PayPal to collect payments, establishing your own merchant account to accept credit card payments will give your business more credibility. Merchant accounts let you accept payments from major credit, debit and gift cards on your site — so your customers don't have to leave your online store to pay for their goods.

GoDaddy's Online Store includes built-in payment processing. That's a good thing.

SSL
The first thing most savvy customers look for when they make a purchase online is an SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) certificate. SSL certificates are digital certificates that encrypt the information your customers send when they purchase products or complete forms on your website. Visual indicators of an SSL can include a padlock icon in the browser, https:// before the website address, and a green address bar.

SECURE YOUR ECOMMERCE WEBSITE WITH AN SSL CERTIFICATE TO MAKE SURE CUSTOMERS FEEL SAFE MAKING PURCHASES ON YOUR SITE.

ECOMMERCE SALES IN THE U.S. TALLIED
MORE THAN $304 BILLION IN 2014.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce

QUICK CHECKLIST: PLAN YOUR WEBSITE APPROACH

TASK	✔
Complete Website Planning Worksheet	
Check out all-in-one ecommerce website packages (e.g. GoDaddy Online Store)	
Look at ecommerce plugins (e.g. WooCommerce for WordPress)	
Read up on merchant accounts (e.g. PayPal)	

* For ecommerce websites

Time to plan your website approach: **1-3 hours**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Beef up your website planning with even more info from
these resources:

GoDaddy website building options

How to start an ecommerce website

What to look for in your first shopping cart

3 ways to simplify the search for the right ecommerce solution

How to start an online store in 3 steps

STEP 3:
PICK YOUR
DESIGNER

DIY OR DIFM?

OK, I know that you might not be well-versed in the art of website building — and I don't expect you to be. The good news is that you've got options. Self-starter? You can do it yourself with a template-based site builder or content management system like WordPress. Too busy for that jazz? Hire a professional.

But whatever path you take, you'll want to consider these primary factors: cost, customization, complexity, time, and ongoing maintenance. A good method for making your final decision is to prioritize your most important considerations, then weigh the options against your needs.

32% OF CONSUMERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO CONTACT A LOCAL BUSINESS IF THEY HAVE A WEBSITE.

Let's take a closer look at your choices:

SITE BUILDER

Site builders like GoDaddy's Website Builder, Wix and Squarespace are great if you're a DIY-type who wants an affordable, attractive, basic website in a short amount of time. Simply choose a pre-designed template and then replace the text and images to meet your needs. Drag-and-drop. Easy to create and update. Plus, most popular site builder plans including website hosting.

WORDPRESS

Like the idea of building and updating your own website without learning HTML, but want more flexibility than a site builder? If you've got a little skill and some extra time, a CMS such as WordPress might be for you. You can choose from myriad free or paid WordPress themes (designs for the overall style of your website). A plethora of plugins also can boost your site's functionality. Some WordPress offerings, like GoDaddy Managed WordPress, even bundle hosting, security and support into one plan to make it easier to set up and maintain a WordPress website.

PROFESSIONAL DESIGNER

Hiring a professional designer is a great option if you have an idea for your website, but don't want to build it yourself. A pro can collaborate with you to turn your vision into a fully functional, customized website that meets your online goals. Unless you've got a designer pal who owes you a big favor, this is the most expensive route to get online. But it can be a great investment when you consider the time and effort it will require for you to build a custom website.

A template-based website builder offers a fast, affordable way to build a website.

CHOOSE YOUR BEST WEBSITE BUILDING OPTION

	You – Site Builder	You – WordPress	Professional Web Designer
Cost	Avg. $50 - $150/year	Free	Avg. $500 - $3,000 initial design fee
Hosting	Often included	Avg. $50 - $150/year*	Avg. $50 - $150/year
Skill Level for Building Required	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Your Time Required	Moderate	More, depending on complexity of site	Minimal to no time, depending on service
Customer Support	Tutorials, help guides; phone, chat support with some products	Support websites*	Varies, fee
Updates	Immediate, free	Immediate, free	Varies, fee
Advanced Features	Not available	Available, fee or technical knowledge required	Available, fee
Mobile Website	Varies, often included	Varies, often included	Available, fee
Website Design	Pre-built templates included	Custom templates available for purchase	Custom design

*Hosting and 24/7 support included with GoDaddy Managed WordPress

QUICK CHECKLIST: CHOOSE A DESIGNER

TASK	✓
Review your website building options (see chart and do some research)	
DIY: Site builder or CMS?	
DIFM: Start hiring	

* Ask for referrals, look at freelance marketplaces, or check out
GoDaddy's Website Design Service

Time to choose a designer: **A few days**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out these resources to learn more about your website building options:

GoDaddy Website Builder

GoDaddy Managed WordPress

GoDaddy Online Store

GoDaddy Website Design Service

Website development 101 for small businesses

Build your own website vs. hiring a pro

How to build a website

What to look for in a web design company

Learning how to code a website

W3Schools

STEP 4: CREATE REMARKABLE CONTENT

TELL YOUR STORY

So, what's your story? Every business has one. And a compelling story drives an effective small business website. How did you get started? What do you tell customers about your business, or how do you explain to friends how you make a living? What problem can you solve for your customers, as only you can? Think about your mission, your passion, and what makes you stand apart from the competition.

Then start writing.

It could be as simple as this:

"I started baking with Mom when I was barely tall enough to reach the kitchen counter. She taught me everything she learned from her mother and grandmother, and encouraged me to pursue my passion in college. I started my bakery right out of culinary school. Today, I might not end up covered in as much flour, but I still love baking as much as I did when I was a kid. I think you'll taste that passion in my cookies."

And that, my friends, could be the anchor text for your home page.

"FOCUS ON THE CORE PROBLEM YOUR BUSINESS SOLVES AND PUT OUT LOTS OF CONTENT AND ENTHUSIASM AND IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO SOLVE THAT PROBLEM."

— LAURA FITTON

FIVE CORE PAGES

You're going to tell that story throughout a handful of pages on the your website. I think five core pages — **Home, About Us, Products/Services, Testimonials,** and **Contact Us** — makes for a solid small business website, but <u>you really can do it in as few as three pages.</u>

Developing the content for these pages requires telling your story with words that count (text) and images (photos, videos, your logo, etc.), presented in an appealing way (that's the design factor).

It's important to make this space — your website — easy for visitors to travel through, or navigate. A click here, a link there, and they'll get a clear idea of who you are and what you can offer to them.

GET INSPIRED

Not sure how to start telling your business's unique story on your website? Well, you don't have to do it alone. Here are a few places you might find inspiration:

– talking to friends
– customer referrals
– existing brochures and other marketing materials
– company newsletters or cards
– other websites

Take a look at what other successful businesses in your industry do on their websites, and note what you like and what you don't. There's nothing wrong with getting a little online inspiration, just don't copy someone else's content.

DESIGN BASICS

Even if you hire a pro to build your site for you, you'll need to make (or at least approve) decisions about the look of the site — its design. Here are a few design fundamentals you'll want to consider:

LOGO
Think about how you want to incorporate your company logo into your website's design. Maybe you want to echo the colors of your logo on your site, or make the logo "pop" against a contrasting background.

COLORS
For brand harmony, it's important to choose the right color palette for your website. Do you own a creative company? Perhaps vibrant colors like hot pink and tangerine speak to your brand. If you're in the professional services industry, more subtle hues such as charcoal and blue might be more appropriate.

THINK ABOUT THE FEELINGS COLORS EVOKE FOR YOU AND MATCH THEM WITH HOW YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FEEL WHEN THEY VISIT YOUR WEBSITE.

FONTS
The way type on your website looks impacts readers subtly, but because text is everywhere on your site, it adds up to a substantial impression. Think about the fonts that might best represent your particular business — from bold, linear styles to more delicate, feminine fonts.

LAYOUTS AND MORE
Consider the amount of "whitespace" (space between elements) in your design. A lot of whitespace can denote clarity or simplicity, while having very little of it can make your site look active or intense. Other elements, like background colors, gradients, and the "texture" of your overall design can contribute to your online impression.

By putting a little thought into these basic design elements, you'll make big strides in telling your story, building your brand, and framing your products and services in the best possible light on the web.

" PEOPLE IGNORE DESIGN THAT IGNORES PEOPLE."

— FRANK CHIMERO

WEBSITE IMAGE TIPS

How much time would you spend on site where you're expected you to read everything to understand what's going on? Not much, I wager. By using a few thoughtfully chosen pictures and/or short videos, you can quickly convey the information and impression you're going for.

Here are three tips for using images and video on your website:

SHOW INSTEAD OF TELLING

If it would take a thousand words to explain something, showing it is better. This is especially true of product shots and video demonstrations. Use them to create an impact.

TAKE THEM YOURSELF

If you need to snap a few shots of a product or make a video, you already have a tool you can use — your smartphone. Just adjust the lighting, be aware of the background you're using, and snap away. When you're done, you can edit them using an online editor, or an application like Adobe Photoshop.

USE QUALITY STOCK IMAGES

With stock images, you can save yourself time and get high-quality images at a fraction of the cost of a professional photographer. To learn more, check out The Smart Guide to Using Stock Images.

IF YOU'RE SELLING PRODUCTS ONLINE, IT MIGHT BE WORTH THE INVESTMENT TO HAVE PROFESSIONAL PHOTOS TAKEN OF EACH PRODUCT.

ARTICLES WITH IMAGES GET 94% MORE VIEWS.

Source: Jeff Bullas

BE MOBILE-READY

Here's a [staggering mobile fact from our friends at Google:](#) 80 percent of smartphone users do shopping research on their phones. They tap and swipe their way through search results, websites and reviews to figure out what they're going to buy, and from which seller. What then? A full [50 percent](#) of those mobile-savvy searchers visit a store within a day.

If your website isn't easy to tap and swipe, you're outta luck.

More than just a site you can see on a phone, a mobile website is optimized for use on a smartphone and other mobile devices. It's *designed* for a positive user experience on mobile. Whether you design your own website or hire a designer to do it for you, make sure your small business website is mobile-responsive.

To learn more, check out "[Responsive web design: It's not just a trend](#)" and "[Native mobile app vs. responsive design smackdown.](#)"

WORKSHEET: CONTENT CREATION FOR WEBSITES

Use this Content Creation Worksheet to navigate through the process of creating content for the five core pages you need to make your business shine online: Home, About Us, Products/Services, Testimonials, and Contact Us.

GET STARTED

Website Address (domain name) _____

DESIGN OBJECTIVES

Choose a website design that reflects and supports your answers.

What is the objective of your website? _____

Who is your target audience? _____

How do you want them to feel about your website? (e.g., professional, edgy, fun) _____

Do you have a business logo? _____

TIP: If yes, choose colors for your website that complement your logo.

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT — 5 PAGE WEBSITE

The five basic pages every business website should have:

- ☐ Home
- ☐ Contact Us
- ☐ Testimonials
- ☐ Products & Services
- ☐ About Us

HOME PAGE

On your home page, you want to include the top things visitors need to know in order to decide to do business with you. Who are you? What do you do/sell? Why should I trust you? How do I contact you?

Describe your business in one short sentence (tagline).

_____

Describe your business and what's great about it in just a few sentences.

_____

_____

_____

Call-to-Action. What is the one, most important thing you want your visitors to do before they leave your site? Be clear, concise and tell the what you want them to do. _Examples: Call for a quote • Schedule appointment online • Watch our demo • Sign up for a class • Donate now • Email us for a free quote_

_____

_____

Primary Contact Information. Include one primary way for customers to contact your business on the home page; typically, this is your phone number. Your "Contact Us" page can include all of the various ways to contact your business.

_____

_____

Products/Services Section. Include a short bulleted list or a few photos of your products and services on the home page, and then add a link to the full product/services page to view all. List general categories of products or services. _Example: Specializing in Residential Glass Services: Dual Pane Glass Replacement, Custom Showers and Mirrors, Glass Shelves and Tabletops, and more..._

_____

_____

Sign Up Form. What information do you need to collect? (i.e. email, name, phone, etc.). **Tip: The less information you require, the more sign ups you'll get.**

_____

_____

How will you motivate visitors to sign up? Very briefly describe why your visitors should sign up and include this with your sign up form. _Example: "Sign up for exclusive deals and VIP access to special events."_

_____

Credibility. Include one customer quote or review on the home page and link to the testimonial page for visitors to read them all.

_____

_____

PRODUCTS/SERVICE PAGE

List the general categories of products/services you offer.

_____

_____

Describe products/services in more detail:

Name of Product

Brief Description

Hot Rock Massage

Provides a deeply relaxing experience for the boy, mind and spirit.

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Based on your business, you may want to include:

☐ Product images.*

☐ Pricing

☐ Payment options

☐ Return policy, warranties or guarantees

☐ Shipping options and timeframes

NOTE: If images are too small or you don't include enough product angles, visitors may abandon your site and purchase elsewhere.

ABOUT PAGE

Describe your business in a few short paragraphs. How did you start it and why?
What do you do differently than other businesses? Get personal, get passionate.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Other things to consider:

☐ Photos of yourself or your staff

☐ A biography on your expertise

☐ Company or product awards

☐ Testimonials or specific quotes from your customers.

TESTIMONIALS PAGE

Increase visitor confidence and trust by adding recommendations, quotes and testimonials from your customers.
Ask top customers to write a few sentences about your products and/or services.

Take advantage of ratings & review sites – join (it's free to list your business) and encourage customers to rate your business.
Do a little research to find which ones are relevant to your business.

CONTACT US PAGE

How do you want customers to contact your business? _____

Phone number _____

Hours of operation _____

Physical address, directions, map to location _____

Email (Look professional. Make sure your email address matches your website address.) _____

Depending on your business, you may want to add contact "categories." For example:

Product Returns – send to P.O. Box
Billing Issues – email us at billing@mycoolnewbusiness.net
Customer Support – call (800) 555-1212

Tip: Choose the most important way for customers to contact you and put it on every page of your website.
Most importantly, add it prominently to your home page.

QUICK CHECKLIST: CREATE BASIC WEBSITE CONTENT

TASK	✓
Complete Content Creation Worksheet	
Edit content for 5 core pages*	
Gather images (e.g. logo, staff pic, products)	
DIY: Add content to website*	

* Ask someone you trust to review

Time to create basic content: **1-3 days**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Whew! That was a lot of work. Give yourself a pat on the back — you deserve it. Want to take an even deeper dive into content? Here are some resources to help:

Website writing that pops

Write your own damn website content

5 quick tips for improving your website content

Copywriting tips

5 tips for a knockout home page

How to get customer testimonials

Web design 101: How to use images

Best practices for using website images

How to make a video with your phone

Avoid 20 website design mistakes

STEP 5:
GET FOUND

SEO FOR STARTERS

Congratulations! You've already accomplished the first rule of thumb for getting your website found — creating relevant content. The type of content that will resonate with your target customer. Keep at it. (Oh, didn't I mention that content creation is an ongoing process? Keep it fresh, that's the mantra.) Now it's time to take the extra steps needed to boost your business's visibility online.

Enter search engine optimization, fondly known as SEO.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO): THE PROCESS OF REFINING A WEBSITE TO GET HIGHER SEARCH ENGINE RANKINGS AND ORGANIC VISITORS TO YOUR SITE, WITHOUT PAYING FOR SEARCH ENGINE PLACEMENT.

Imagine you're a chef who's spent a week perfecting a new recipe. If you don't get it on the menu, it's going to collect dust back in the kitchen because most of your customers aren't going to know about it. It's the same way with your website — you've cooked up all this amazing content, and you want search engines like Google and Bing to serve it up to potential customers in their search results pages. Bake it and they will come? Um, no.

A strong **organic search** ranking will work wonders at attracting visitors to your website. Unlike paid listings — advertisements that display in sponsored areas — organic search results are "free" and based on, among other things, the site's content and how closely it matches the keywords being searched.

"THERE IS NO BLACK MAGIC TO SUCCESSFULLY ATTRACTING CUSTOMERS VIA THE WEB."

— RAND FISHKIN

HOW DOES SEO WORK (IN A NUTSHELL)?

The fun begins after you (or more likely, your website guru) does the website backend stuff needed to attract the attention of the almighty Googlebot. Now, search engines know that your site exists. They scan it, index the information, and analyze the website's content to determine how and where your site should display on the results page. Your site won't rank well if it isn't optimized.

While each search engine has its own set of ranking criteria, they all look at these same basic but key elements:

RELEVANT PAGE CONTENT
Again, KING. A good rule of thumb is to include between 300 and 700 words per page, focusing the page content on its target keyword's subject matter.

KEYWORDS
Do some research to discover what **select words and phrases** people use to search for your type of business. Sprinkle these keywords throughout the content on your website (see **Fun with keywords**).

META TAGS
These are HTML tags that contain info to help search engines know what your site's about. They help describe your website in search engine results (see **Tag, you're it**).

WEBSITE NAVIGATION
This covers all the links on your site and how visitors navigate from page to page. Like visitors, search engines rely on good navigation to get around your site.

IN THE WORLD OF SEO, A BROKEN LINK IS LIKE HITTING A BRICK WALL. MAKE SURE ALL THE URLS IN YOUR NAVIGATION ARE VALID.

SITEMAP

A sitemap is essentially a map or directory of all the pages in your website. It guides search engines throughout your site with the names and locations of pages. [Learn more about sitemaps.](#)

LINK BUILDING

Search engines use both **internal links** and **backlinks** to rank your site. You create an internal link by linking from a keyword or sentence on one page of your website to another page on your site. Even more important for search ranking are backlinks — links from other websites that point to your site.

IMAGE OPTIMIZATION

This one's got its own section. Keep reading to learn how to get SEO juice with the images on your website.

> **"Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience—and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action. "**

— THE CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE

FUN WITH KEYWORDS

Once you discover what keywords your target customers use to search for products and services like yours online, it's time to produce content that targets those terms. For example, if you publish a page targeting the keywords "maple custom cabinets," include that exact phrase a few times naturally in the body copy.

Be relevant. A relevant keyword helps online users find your site if they search for it using a search engine.

Be specific. Your keywords should represent what you do, your location, the services you offer, your products, and your industry.

Be strategic. Once you've chosen your keywords, use them in your website's content, page titles, metadata and image names. Use each word or word combination, as well as their variations, at least two to three times per page.

Be natural. Overusing, or "stuffing," your keywords will harm your site's ranking because search engines read sites like we do.

SEARCH ENGINES WILL PENALIZE YOU IF YOUR CONTENT HAS AN EXCESSIVE NUMBER OF KEYWORDS, SO DON'T OVERDO IT.

HOW TO OPTIMIZE IMAGES

Your website's visitors love images, and so do search engines. Include at least one image on each page, and take these steps to optimize each image so you gain referral traffic from Image Search.

1. Align the page's target keyword to the **image file name.** For example, if the page targets the keywords "beaded turquoise necklace," the primary image's file name should be "beaded-tur-quoise-necklace.jpg." Always use lowercase and separate each word with a hyphen.

2. Use and optimize the **Image ALT Text** attribution, again using the page's target keyword. For our example, the Image ALT Text should be "Beaded Turquoise Necklace." Uppercase, no hyphens.

3. Make sure the page text corresponds to the image file name and Image ALT Text. Search engines look at the text content around the image to help understand its subject matter. They can safely assume the image actually is a picture of a beaded turquoise necklace if they spy the keywords "beaded turquoise necklace" in the content on the page.

Tip: Making your image file size smaller so it loads faster can also help your search rankings.

TAG, YOU'RE IT

Under your website's hood you'll find fields to enter various kinds of metadata — including three tags that play a key role in SEO.

TITLE TAG

Displayed in the browser's title bar and as the title for your listing in search engine results, this tag offers a glimpse of what people can expect from the page. It helps if each page on your site contains a unique title, but keep it concise — less than 65 characters including spaces.

META DESCRIPTION TAG

Displayed below your website's link in search results, the meta description tag should entice people to visit your site. It's a must for every page on your site, and should include the keyword for that page. Limit this tag to less than 150 characters.

HEADER (H1) TAG

Each page on your website should include only one H1 tag — generally the most prominent text on the page. This tag doesn't display in search results, but it tells visitors what they're reading or viewing (sort of like a chapter title in a book). Keep the header tag short and be sure to include the page's target keyword.

DO I NEED A BLOG?

If you want to increase traffic to your website, boost search engine rankings, and establish yourself as a subject-matter expert — yes. A blog also is a great way to interact with your customers and capture feedback about your products and services.

Again, this is all about adding valuable content to the mix. A blog gives you an amazing content marketing vehicle — a means to talk about your company's values, provide a look behind the scenes, and offer useful solutions without sounding like you're "selling."

Your blog's content makes excellent fodder for your social media sites (more on that soon), and it's a great way to build relationships with industry influencers and customers by linking to relevant content on their sites. Post consistently for the best results, at least once every two weeks — more often is better.

B2B COMPANIES THAT BLOG GENERATE <u>67% MORE LEADS</u> PER MONTH THAN THOSE WHO DON'T.

REVIEWS, DIRECTORIES AND MAPS

With an estimated 90 percent of online shoppers saying online reviews sway their buying decisions, and 88 percent confessing that they read business reviews on the web to help them determine the quality of local businesses, it's hard to deny the significance of your business's presence on sites like Yelp and Trip Advisor.

THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE YOU'VE GONE TO THE LOCAL RESTAURANT WITH THREE STARS RATHER THAN THE EATERY WITH 2.5 STARS — SO WHY WOULDN'T YOUR POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS VET BUSINESSES THE SAME WAY?

Online reviews and directory sites (like Google My Business, Foursquare and YP) are a big, fat conduit for new business. If people like what they see, they'll click the website link in the review or directory listing, and you've got a new visitor on your site. Plus, search engines typically pull information from business listing sites and display them under your website address for local search results.

You want your website address (and other information) to be listed on these sites — *correctly*. You've got a few options here:

1. You can go to each site individually and update your business's pertinent information as needed (like when your phone number or menu change).

2. You can subscribe to a service (like GoDaddy's Get Found) that enables you to enter and update that pertinent info in one place, before pushing it out to myriad review and directory sites.

We're a society on-the-go, and online maps are a go-to source for local business information. They're a fantastic tool for helping potential customers find your business.

– Set up a Google My Business account to show up on **Google Maps.**
– Log into Apple Maps Connect with your Apple ID to add and update your business's info for Apple Maps.
– Check out other online map services, like MapQuest and Bing Maps.

Serious about getting your website found? Find, claim, and verify your business information on key online review sites, directories and maps.

ONLINE REVIEWS INFLUENCE 90% OF ONLINE SHOPPERS' BUYING DECISIONS.

Source: Dimensional Research

QUICK CHECKLIST: GET FOUND

TASK	✔
Optimize each web page with relevant keywords	
Add internal links	
Add meta tags	
Add image tags	
Add/update online business listings*	
Add/update online maps	

* Save time by managing all local business listings from one place with
   GoDaddy's Get Found

Time to boost visibility: **3-5 hours to start, then review monthly**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

I'm not gonna lie: they're aren't too many shortcuts when it comes to getting your business found online. It takes effort. But, with a little know-how and some extra caffeine, it is totally doable — and totally worth the work involved. Here are some more resources to get you started:

Garage SEO guide for SMBs

GoDaddy's Get Found service

Moz Blog

Hiring an SEO company

Meta tags and the head section of a website

How to make writing SEO-friendly copy almost kind of tolerable

How to set up online reviews on your WordPress website

Use online directories to promote your SMB for free

Here's why your ecommerce site isn't ranking on Google

8 dimensions of a perfect keyword

STEP 6:
CONNECT WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

WHY SOCIAL MATTERS

Establishing a business presence on the social networks where your customers and prospects spend their time is sort of like setting up a booth at the world's largest virtual trade show ([although sometimes it feels like a circus]). You can bet your competitors are there, vying for the attention of all those potential customers with flashy banners and give-aways. There's a crowd gathered around the booth playing a funny video and the vendor live-streaming a makeup demo.

Why is social media so important for businesses today, and more importantly, how can you get in on that action?

SOCIAL MEDIA SITES AND BLOGS REACH 8 OUT OF 10 OF ALL U.S. INTERNET USERS.

You can use social media to:

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS
By developing a following on popular social media sites, you can connect with your customers and prospects and share content with large numbers of people. Social makes it easy to target specific customer questions or issues, while making the same information available to all existing and potential customers.

BUILD YOUR BRAND
Social media gives you the opportunity to share valuable information about your business and showcase your personality.

DRIVE TRAFFIC TO YOUR WEBSITE
Including a link back to your website in interesting social posts can generate serious traffic.

ESTABLISH EXPERTISE
Share your knowledge and experience to build credibility as an industry thought leader.

MAKE SALES
Ultimately, these activities — connections, brand building, driving traffic, establishing expertise — all lead to the same place: sales.

Establishing and maintaining a strong social presence for your business definitely requires a commitment of your time, but the benefits make that investment worthwhile. By getting social, you will continue to build credibility, raise brand awareness, and, especially, engage with current and potential customers.

Ready to get started?

" **CONTENT IS FIRE,**
SOCIAL MEDIA IS
GASOLINE. "

— JAY BAER

PICK YOUR POISON

Just like IRL (in real life) you can't be everywhere — in your studio, at your son's soccer game, at the grocery store, in the bathtub with your favorite novel — at the same time. Same for social media. You've got to figure out where the people who are most interested in your type of products or services are spending their time, and go there.

Different social networks appeal to different demographics. Some platforms specialize in visual content — perfect for product-centric businesses. Some networks allow you to share long-form content, live-stream video, stay on top of industry trends, and "spy" on your competitors.

Do some research. Where is your target audience hanging out? How about your competitors? What benefits can each network offer your business? Analyze and prioritize.

Take all that data, look at it in the context of the marketing goals you've established for your business, and define a social media strategy that works for you. This ebook can help with that.

COMPARING POPULAR SOCIAL NETWORKS

With so many social media platforms available, it's hard to decide which sites provide the biggest return on your time and money investments. Use the following chart to compare five of the largest social media platforms to help determine the most effective social media sites for you and your business:

	TWITTER	FACEBOOK	LINKEDIN	INSTAGRAM	PINTEREST
Number of active users worldwide	320 million	1.55 billion	100 million	400 million	100 million
Business application	Separate account for business	Business page separate from personal account	Company profile page separate from personal professional profile	Separate account for business	Separate account for business
Relationship	Followers	Followers	Connections	Followers	Followers
Engagement opportunities	Likes, Retweets, Mentions, Replies, Follow	Likes, Shares, Comments	Likes, Shares, Comments	Loves, Comments	Pins, Likes, Comments
Key demographics	Popular among the college-educated and the under-50 crowd.	More than 70% of all American adults online	Users are more likely to be ages 30 to 64 (rather than 18 to 29) — unlike any other social platform.	53 percent of adults ages 18 to 29 love it.	Dominated by women under the age of 50.
Paid options to boost visibility	X	X	X	X	X

BEST PRACTICES FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR BUSINESS

Once you're all set up on your chosen networks, and listening to get a pulse on your customers and competitors, it's time to start posting and sharing content. The fun part. To get the most out of social media for your business, it helps to follow a few basic guidelines:

MAKE FRIENDS
Social media is about people connecting with people. So, even if you're representing a business, be sure to let your human side shine through in your posts. Return favors (such as a sharing and liking posts and pages).

ADD VALUE
Provide useful information in your posts, such as links to related articles and videos.

SHOW SOME RESPECT
Treat your followers with dignity and respect, and you're likely to get the same in return.

PRACTICE RESTRAINT
One of the quickest ways to lose followers is to overdo it. Posting quality content once or twice a day is enough to engage with your audience.

GET IT RIGHT
Be sure to check your facts, spelling and grammar.

ENCOURAGE OPEN DIALOGUE
Craft posts that encourage followers to respond. Ask questions.

BE RESPONSIVE

Acknowledge followers' feedback and engage them
in conversation.

GET VISUAL

Post photos, videos, and other visual elements to boost
engagement.

LEVERAGE PROMOTIONS

Come up with special offers for social media followers.

DRIVE TRAFFIC TO YOUR WEBSITE

Include your website address in posts for followers who want
to learn more.

70% OF FACEBOOK USERS LOG IN DAILY.

BESTIES: YOUR WEBSITE AND SOCIAL PROFILES

You want your business's website and social media profiles to be joined at the hip. Texting each other during class. Sharing friends and trading gossip. You get the point. After you set up your social media profiles, post links to them everywhere — on your website, storefront, marketing materials, even your email signature.

Buttons on website. Make it easy for website visitors to become followers by adding social media icons or links to your website.

Links in social posts. Include your website's URL in your social media posts. Also, add widgets or add-ons to your site so live feeds of your social media posts show up there.

Share, Follow, Like. When people "like" your business's social page, they become members of your business's online community. Take every opportunity to "share," "follow," and "like" others' pages so they'll return the favor!

TIME-SAVING TOOLS

As a small business owner one thing's for sure — you're busy. And social media has a well-deserved reputation as a bit of a time-suck. These tools can help you manage your business's social media presence in less time, with fewer headaches.

Hootsuite. This is a popular tool for scheduling posts in advance and using keywords and hashtags to listen in on conversational streams.

Buffer. It's super-easy to batch schedule updates and share pages on all your social networks.

Sprout Social. This powerful platform features publishing, engagement and analytics functions that make is much easier to manage and engage on all your social networks.

Likeable Local. This robust tool does the legwork for you, automating the process of providing content on social media and making sure it reaches the right audience for your business.

Feedly. This RSS reader will help you keep track of new posts that go out from your competition.

TweetJukebox. Enter as many tweets as you like, then set a calendar for when you want them to go live.

Tip: Use the scheduling feature available for Facebook business pages.

QUICK CHECKLIST: GET SOCIAL

TASK	✓
Compare social networks to find best fits for your business (see chart and do some research)	
Set up business account(s) and page(s)	
Create post(s) to announce new website	
Listen, share, comment	

Time to launch social presence:

2-4 hours to put up first posts, then ongoing

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Feeling a bit overwhelmed? Take a break. Get some coffee. Meditate. Then come back and check out these articles to learn even more before you start getting social:

Social Media Examiner's Getting Started with Social Media: A Resource Guide

Garage's Social media guide for small businesses

Using social to find customers

Twitter for people who hate Twitter

Tips for using Facebook for business

How to make a YouTube account

Everything you need to know before your put your business on Instagram

Everything you need to know before you get on Periscope

Simple ways to build a Pinterest following

STEP 7:
DRIVE TRAFFIC
TO YOUR WEBSITE

HOW TO GET VISITORS

We've talked about how your social profiles can drive visitors to your business website (it's huge), but we're not quite finished on this topic. Driving traffic to your website is an ongoing process. Like maintaining your hair color. And raising your children.

Like any worthwhile endeavor, attracting visitors to your business's online home takes time and patience. You might even need to pull out your debit card. Let's look at a handful of proven strategies …

CREATE COMPELLING, SEARCH-WORTHY CONTENT
Yup, that again. Whether it's a shareable infographic, entertaining how-to video, or blog post about why spending time in your online store is more fun that watching Game of Thrones, make content that people can't find anywhere else. This is the kind of stuff people will want to link to from their own websites and social profiles (remember *backlinks?*). Make sure they find that amazing content by optimizing it for search engines.

SEND BUSINESS-CLASS EMAIL
Remember that domain you registered? The one connected to your website? You can use it to send branded email to your customers and subscribers. Every time you send an email from that business-class account, you're marketing your website. Cool, huh?

To really drive traffic back to your website, include strong calls-to-action (CTAs) in your emails. Come up with short, catchy phrases that inspire readers to take a specific action on your website. And that's just one of many ways you can use email marketing to drum up business on your site — we're going to dive deeper in the next chapter.

EMAIL MARKETING HAS AN ROI OF 4,300%!

MAXIMIZE BLOGS

Share snippets from your blog on your social channels, with links back to the entire post on your website. Drive even more visitors to your site by hosting guest posts from industry influencers and satisfied customers — and ask them to share the link to the post on your website with their social followers. And don't forget that all that fresh content you add to your blog is like candy for search engines.

JOIN ONLINE COMMUNITIES

Like local meetups, there are online communities for just about every interest and industry you can imagine. Check out forums, blogs and chats related to your market. Leave meaningful comments with links back to relevant content on your website.

SET UP SHOP ON A MARKETPLACE

Maybe you're already got an Etsy site or a Fiverr profile — these marketplace sites are handy for promoting your products or services before you set up a website of your own. After you're up and running, you can use your marketplace pages to drive traffic to your new website. Feature your hand-knitted mittens on your Etsy site, for example, with a link to your online store for the matching scarf. Offer your

headline writing services for $50/hour on Elance, and link to a full menu of your copywriting services on your website. You get the idea.

RUN PROMOTIONS

Everybody loves a deal. Offer online-only promotions, redeemable through your website. Get the word out by sharing the promotion on your blog and social media profiles.

LEVERAGE LOCAL REVIEWS

Make sure your website address is listed correctly on all those online review sites that 88 percent of your potential customers are visiting for info. If they like what they see — including your feedback — they're likely to click the link.

82% OF MARKETERS WHO BLOG DAILY, AND 57% WHO BLOG MONTHLY, ACQUIRE A CUSTOMER USING THEIR BLOG.

"FRANCHESCA AND SHARKEY, MY FRENCH BULLDOGS, HAVE THEIR OWN BLOG. AND THEY ARE BRILLIANT AT IT."

— MARTHA STEWART

EMAIL MARKETING — IT'S YOUR PARTY

With its massive ROI and ability to keep your business connected with subscribers — people who've expressed an interest in receiving your emails — you're missing out if you don't embrace email marketing. Think of every newsletter and campaign you create as a chance to throw a party for your customers:

Send exclusive invites. Offer subscriber-only savings that recipients can redeem on your site.

Give party favors. Provide useful tips and tricks that link back to blog posts on your site.

Play spin the bottle. Include a shout-out to a customer who's doing something cool with your product or service (with a link to their website).

Crown a party queen. Introduce exciting new products and services with links to your website for more info.

Have cake. Include links to entertaining videos and other stuff that's just plain fun.

PAID OPTIONS

Sometimes you've gotta give a little to get more. Enter online ads, "sponsored" posts and other paid options designed to put your business info front-and-center and to drive traffic to your website. A few benefits:

Fast and cheap(er). Online ads cost a fraction of traditional print ads, and you can execute them quickly.

Captive audience. Your ads show up in front of targeted consumers glued to their favorite social networks and other websites.

Easy to measure. You'll get plenty of handy metrics for measuring the success of your online ad campaigns.

THE TOP THREE PAID ADVERTISING SPOTS ON A SEARCH RESULTS PAGE GET A WHOPPING 46% OF THE CLICKS ON THE PAGE.

QUICK CHECKLIST: DRIVE TRAFFIC TO YOUR WEBSITE

TASK	✓
Set up business-class email	
Set up email marketing program	
Publish a blog post	
Join the conversation in an online community	
Set up a marketplace site*	
Create a special promotion	
Look into paid options	

* For ecommerce websites

Time to start driving traffic to your website: **3-5 hours to set up approach, then ongoing**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

So that's Driving Traffic 101, in a nutshell. Include your website address and links to your site everywhere — in social posts, email marketing campaigns, business cards, print and online ads, videos, the rear window of your Tesla. You get the point. Here are some resources to learn more about getting visitors to your website:

Professional email from GoDaddy

Email marketing 101 for small businesses

How to use Instagram to drive traffic to your website

Use video tips to drive traffic to your site

Define your email marketing goals

How PPC ads can complement SEO efforts

STEP 8:
GENERATE LEADS

LET'S TALK CONVERSIONS

Driving traffic to your website is key, but converting your website's visitors into leads is how you'll stay in business. That means figuring out who's visiting your site and contacting them directly so you can work to convert them into customers.

At the end of the day, you're in sales. So don't be timid about asking website visitors to share a little bit about themselves. A little bit. A name and email address. That's all you need to start converting, and most people are used to giving out that info online. Ask for a phone number if you've got a callback strategy in place — but don't be shocked if some visitors shy away from giving their digits.

INCLUDE YOUR BUSINESS PHONE NUMBER OR EMAIL ADDRESS ON EVERY PAGE OF YOUR WEBSITE.

"SIGNING UP IS A POWERFUL SIGNAL OF INTENT TO BUY."

— JORDIE VAN RIJN
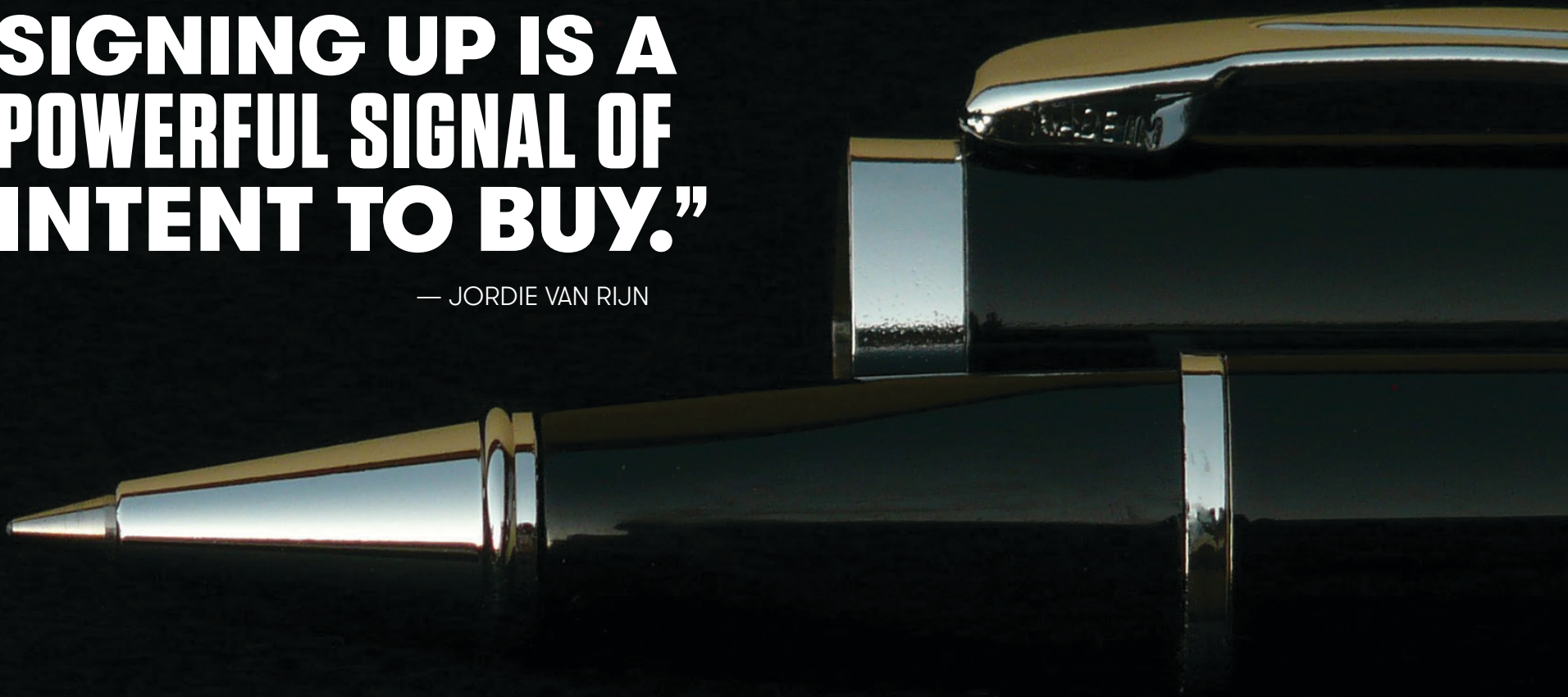
COLLECT EMAIL ADDRESSES

Email isn't going anywhere anytime soon. It's become a part of our daily existence, and the primary way for businesses to connect with customers. But how do you get those valuable email addresses? Sure, you can place some sort of sign-up form on the counter if you have a brick-and-mortar store. You can collect emails at trade shows and other events. That's great. But your website is a much more powerful tool for soliciting email contact info from people who are interested in what you have to offer.

Here's how you can collect email addresses and other contact info on your website:

Include a contact form. Visitors will fill out the form on your site because they have a question, need information, or want you to contact them. It's where they go to connect directly with you.

Add a sign-up form for visitors to receive information about products and services, updates, discounts, etc.

Include an email opt-in box on your checkout page (for ecommerce sites).

Give a special offer for joining the email list.

Pretty straightforward, right? Most popular website builders include a contact form in the template, and WordPress offers some nifty contact form plugins.

EMAIL MARKETING — WORTH THE INVESTMENT

Now that you've got all those email addresses, what are you going to do with them? How about reaching out to those customers and prospects though a branded, professional-looking email campaign that's brimming with value for its recipients? Great idea!

Email marketing offers a targeted approach to connecting with current and potential customers. After all, they've opted in to receive your email correspondence. It can build brand awareness and loyalty. Even better? The cost. Harvard Business Review called email marketing "the most cost-effective advertising method available today."

When you invest in a legit email marketing program (like GoDaddy Email Marketing and Constant Contact), you get all kinds of goodness:

- It's easy to add a sign-up widget to your website.
- You'll store email addresses in a user-friendly database.
- You can export email addresses for use in social media campaigns.
- You can create attractive email campaigns using templates.
- You can track open rates/who clicks on what links.
- You can create contact interest groups.

BUSINESSES THAT USE EMAIL TO NURTURE LEADS GENERATE 50% MORE SALES-READY LEADS AND AT 33% LOWER COST.

ALL HAIL THE CALL-TO-ACTION

You want your website visitors to *do* something — in this case, to give you their contact information. The call-to-action is a means to that end. It's a concise, convincing and (hopefully) clever offer that requests information from the visitor in exchange for something they might want. You can even link a call-to-action directly to a contact form.

Let's say you've got a real estate website. This call-to-action encourages visitors to give you their contact information: "Looking for the perfect home? Sign up here and we'll notify you daily about new listings!" In two short sentences — well-placed on your website — you're giving visitors an easy way to opt-in for a daily email from you. They get something of value, and you get something even more valuable — one step closer to a sale.

Check out this article to learn more about crafting compelling CTAs.

PLAY/PAUSE

"By far, the biggest factor in increasing conversations (at Keepsy) was putting two big green buttons smack in the middle of our home page with clear, obvious calls-to-action."

— BLAKE WILLIAMS

EMAIL MARKETING BEST PRACTICES

The inbox is a crowded sandbox. You want to send business emails that make it past spam filters, stand out, and entice recipients to open and click. With that in mind:

Only send email marketing campaigns to people who have signed up for or requested them. Look for email marketing programs with opt-in buttons or sign-up forms to help build permission-based contact lists.

Stick to a schedule. Test different days and times to see which combination has the best open rate (the number of list subscribers who opened the email message, a percentage of the total number of emails sent). Be consistent.

Only include requested subject matter. Deliver the kind of information your contacts signed up for, and you'll build credibility and trust. Send them a newsletter about party planning when they signed up for plumbing tips, and you'll probably lose a subscriber.

Create interest groups. Placing your contacts in different groups based on their interests or preferences to market more effectively.

Avoid spam and trash folders. To prevent triggering spam filters, avoid using all caps or multiple exclamation marks in the subject line or body of your email.

Give 'em reading options. Send both HTML and plain text versions of your newsletter so all of your contacts can read your message on their computer or mobile device.

Put a name to your email. Use your personal name or the name of your business as the From or Sender name.

Keep building your contact list. Add calls-to-action and sign-up forms to your website and social media profiles, and collect contact information in person at events or conferences.

QUICK CHECKLIST: GENERATE LEADS

TASK	✔
Add a signup form to your website	
Include a call-to-action on each web page	
Send an email marketing campaign	

Time to start generating leads:

1-3 hours to set up approach, then ongoing

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Starting to see the potential of your website beyond serving as an online billboard for your business? Turn it into a lean, mean, lead-generating machine! Here's how you can learn more:

GoDaddy Email Marketing

3 keys to driving conversions

Best practices for email distro lists

Align your email marketing with the buying cycle

Writing super subject lines

Getting started with WordPress forms

54 email marketing resources

STEP 9:
MEASURE
IMPROVE
GROW

WHAT'S NEXT?

You've got a website and social profiles in place, plus the know-how to drive traffic to your site, engage with followers, and generate leads — so you're in a great position to grow your business. What now?

STAY SOCIAL
You'll want to tweak your social media strategy as you gain some experience engaging with followers. What types of content get the most positive response? When are you engagement rates the highest? Is it time to try some paid options? Which social networks seem to be working best for your business? You don't want to spread yourself too thin, so make smart use of your time on social. Focus on deeper engagement on the sites that matter most to your audience.

GET MOBILE
If it isn't easy for your customers to navigate through your website on their phones and tablets, fix it. According to Kissmetrics, 73% of mobile Internet users say that they've encountered a website that was too slow to load, and 51% have tried to navigate through mobile sites that crashed, froze, or spit back error messages. As more and more consumers turn to their mobile devices to browse and buy, it's important to keep your site off that mobile performance naughty list.

HONE YOUR FOCUS
Channel your time and energy into online efforts that prove most effective for your business — email marketing, a particular social media platform, a call-to-action on your home page, whatever works best for you. After you get some skin in the online game, take a step back and evaluate your progress. Revisit your online marketing goals, and adjust based on your experience.

KEEP YOUR WEBSITE IN SHAPE
Updating and maintaining your website's content and functionality is key to staying current and delivering what your visitors want and need. Plus, continually updating your site with relevant content will work wonders at improving your search engine visibility. Keep it fresh with consistent blog posts, up-to-date photos and videos, and design tweaks that reflect evolving trends.

40% OF PEOPLE ABANDON A WEBSITE THAT TAKES **MORE THAN 3 SECONDS TO LOAD.**

TRACK YOU WEBSITE'S PERFORMANCE

Remember those goals you set for your website? Sure, you'll know as you get closer to meeting them. But you won't really know how well your website is working for your business — and how to adjust your online marketing strategy — without help from web analytics. As a small business owner, you need to know how many people are visiting your site, how they found it, and if your online marketing efforts are working. Web analytics products can give you all of those answers, and more.

WEB ANALYTICS: THE MEASUREMENT, COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND REPORTING OF INTERNET DATA FOR THE PURPOSES OF UNDERSTANDING AND OPTIMIZING WEB USAGE.

There are a number of products that can analyze your site to tell you what's working and what's not. Google Analytics is a good place to start.

Here are some of the main metrics you're going to want to measure:

VISITORS
Learn about visitors to your website, such as whether they are new or returning, how they found you, where they are located, and which browsers they are using.

PAGES
Gather information on specific pages so you can analyze the effectiveness or popularity of each page on your site.

REFERRERS
Find out which websites, URLs, search engines and keywords lead visitors to your site.

ECOMMERCE
Get specifics about revenue-boosting and lead-generating visitor activities, such as purchasing products and signing up for newsletters.

MOBILE
Discover how many customers access your site using their mobile devices, and how they use your mobile site.

SOCIAL MEDIA
Measure the success of your social media profiles with details about others' engagement with your social content.

ADVERTISING
Learn about the effectiveness of your online marketing efforts, and measure your advertising return on investment (ROI).

"MEASUREMENT IS LIKE LAUNDRY.
IT PILES UP THE LONGER
YOU WAIT TO DO IT."

— AMBER NASLUND

QUICK CHECKLIST: MEASURE SUCCESS

TASK	✓
Set up Google Analytics	
Keep tabs on main metrics (e.g. visitors, pages, referrers)*	
Evaluate and adjust website performance (inc. on mobile)	
Evaluate and adjust social media strategy	

* Ongoing: Use measurements to tweak website content and build external links

Time to start measuring and improving:
1-3 days to set up approach, then review monthly

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Getting started with Google Analytics

Google Analytics basics for WordPress and more

Why you need analytics for your online store

How mobile can grow your business

5 signs your business needs a digital makeover

How to evaluate your website design

Kissmetrics Blog

STEP 10:
CHECK ALL
THE BOXES

CHECKLIST : 10-POINT WEBSITE REVIEW

Wondering if you have an effective small business website? Your site should be more than a glorified business card. It should entice visitors to learn more about your products and services, establish that you're a credible business, and turn your visitors into customers. Even a website with just the bare essentials should help your business grow.

Answer the questionnaire to see if you've covered the basics:

Y N Do you have clear/concise statements on the home page about who you are and what you do?	**Y N** Are you collecting email addresses through signup forms?
Y N Does your home page have a call-to-action (i.e. Call now, Watch demo)?	**Y N** Is your primary contact information on every page?
Y N Do you have an about us page that represents your passion for the business?	**Y N** Have you included "trust logos" (i.e. Better Business Bureau, Awards, Authorized Dealer)
Y N Have you included customer quotes, reviews or testimonials?	**Y N** Can your visitors share your website through Facebook and Twitter?
Y N Have you clearly defined your products/services, pricing, warranties and refunds?	**Y N** Do you promote a "special offer" for your website visitors?

All done? Great! Now tally up the number of Y's you circled to get your diagnosis.

0 - 4 Sounds like you're just getting started. Give us a call. We'll help you out.

5 - 7 You're on track. Pick one area to focus on this week. Make it happen.

8 -10 You're a guru. It might be time to take the next step. Email marketing?

Want more information about building a website and taking your business online?
Check out The GoDaddy Garage

THE END

"DON'T CRY BECAUSE IT'S OVER. SMILE BECAUSE IT HAPPENED."

— DR. SEUSS