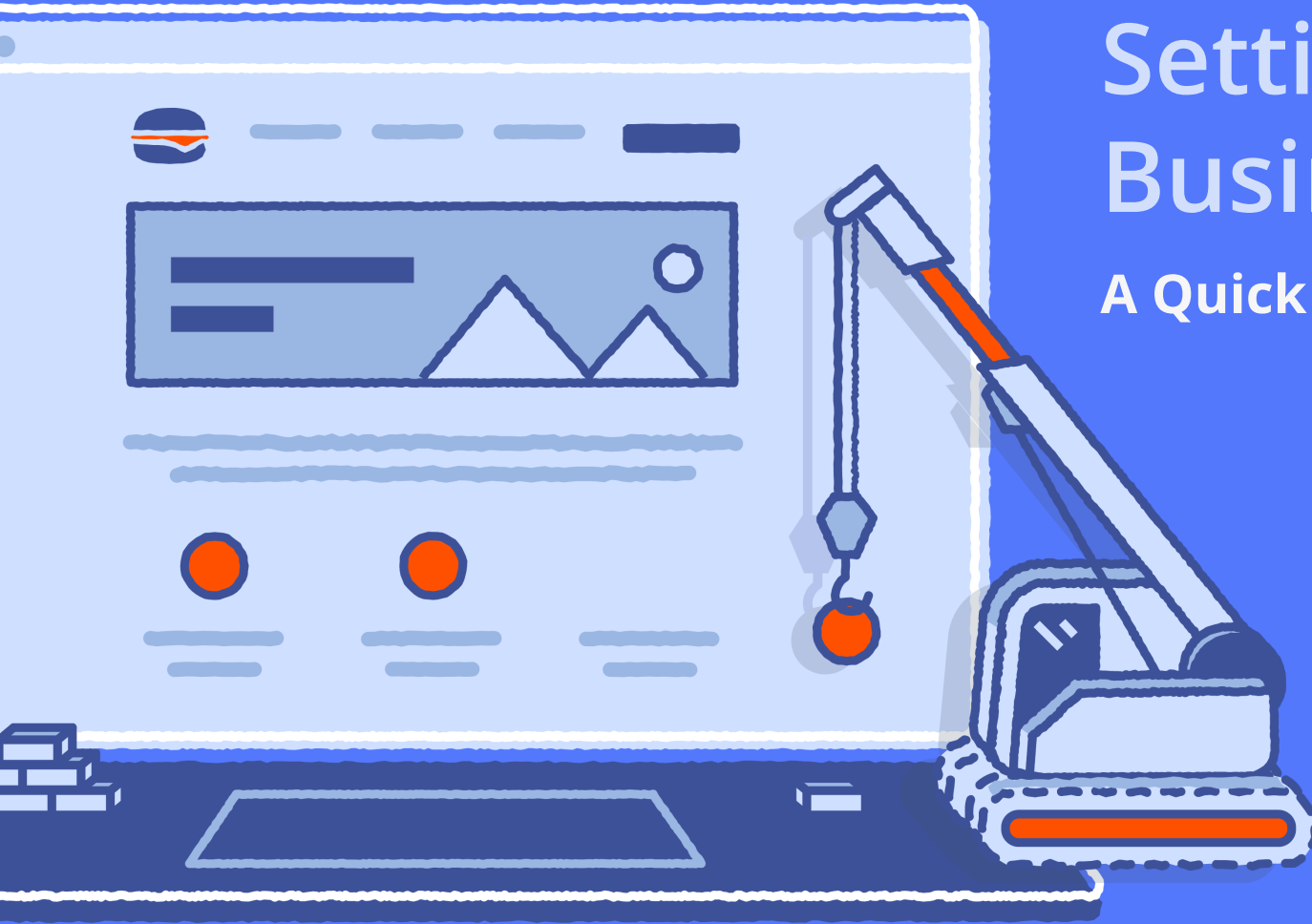


Setting Up a Business Website

A Quick Start Guide



We can think up hundreds of reasons why you need a website, like...yesterday. But we won't put you through that extensive list. Instead, we took a vote and chose the top 5 ways local businesses like yours benefit from having one. (OK we didn't take a vote. We just know these things). Here's what we came up with...

Small business websites, if done well:

- Give your local business serious street cred
- Make running your business more efficient
- Help you get found faster and more often
- Serve as an extension to your customer service
- Make you accessible 24/7

But that's all much easier said than done. So what's keeping you from making it happen? The most common excuses we hear from small business owners are time, money and just flat-out not knowing how to build a website. Creating and maintaining a website has to be a major money-pit and time-suck, right?

Wrong.

Creating a website for your business isn't all doom and gloom. These days, getting a custom-built, personalized business website doesn't typically involve high-priced marketing agencies, time-consuming coding or throwing hundreds of dollars a month into a black hole of regular website maintenance and upkeep.

With that in mind, are you ready to get going? We narrowed down the process for getting you a killer business website into 8 critical steps. Yeah, 3 steps would have been more poetic. But we're here to make sure you cover all your bases, not to be cute.

- 1 Set Your Goals and Your Budget
- 2 Think about Storage and Bandwidth
- 3 Buy a Domain
- 4 Choose a Platform
- 5 Design It Up
- 6 Write It Up
- 7 Go Mobile
- 8 Convert, Convert, Convert

1

Set Your Goals and Your Budget

Don't get starstruck by the high-end website providers with tons of bells and whistles if your website isn't your main goal for getting appointments and sales. That said, websites serve multiple purposes for all types of businesses.

What goals do you have for a business website? Before you jump right in, you'll need to establish these goals and track your progress against them. That'll make sure you're heading in the right direction on your website journey.

Typically, businesses invest in a website so they can:

- Get found online
- Generate new leads
- Bolster your reputation as a credible business
- Explain your product or service
- Sell your product or service

Goal Setting

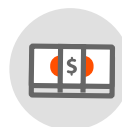
Hopefully these goals sound a little familiar. But to prepare for a website build, we need to get more granular. Think about your business specifically, and your target customer, and put together some more measurable goals for how a website is going to help you grow your business.



Book Now



An example of a measurable goal would be: Earn 10 additional bookings per month, thanks to a new "Book Now" option on my website.



As far as budgeting goes, there are plenty of options spanning a wide range of prices.

Budgeting

OPTION A

Do It Yourself

You can start with the least costly, which would be doing it yourself. If you go the DIY route, it's obviously less expensive in terms of dollars. But in terms of your time, it could take several hours away from other things you could be doing to run and grow your business – so keep that in mind. For a solid DIY solution, don't spend more than \$100 per year, which should really only be for the custom domain name.

OPTION B

Pay a Pro

If you go the professional route, you may be pleased to hear that prices vary quite a bit from about \$100 – \$1,000 per month.

- The lower end of this price range accounts for hiring a web developer for initial site setup and design. Most of these guys won't be around after the fact for updates and changes you want to make.
- Middle of the road options include companies who are willing to do all of the legwork for you. They'll set up the site, go back and forth with you on it, and manage it for you for a regular monthly fee.
- The steepest price tags will come from full-scope marketing agencies. Don't get wooed by these guys unless you have some serious goals for scaling your business fast and can justify the large, even cringe-worthy investment.

2

Think about Storage and Bandwidth

Bandwidth needed is calculated by the number of pages on your site, the file sizes of the content on those pages and the number of visitors you anticipate. If you envision the website of your dreams having tons of high resolution images, slick videos, high visitor traffic and maybe even e-commerce capabilities, you'll need a larger amount of bandwidth than most. If you see your site more like an online billboard that advertises your services and helps customers get in touch, you could likely settle for a little less.

As far as storage goes, web pros call this requirement "disk space." Disk space can live on a dedicated server, a shared server or a virtual one that's private. Regardless of where it lives, you need to estimate about how much of it you'll need before building web pages.

Here's some back-of-the-napkin math. For an average page size of 50KB, 20,000 visitors per month, and 5 pages per visitor your website will need about 5,000MB, or 5GB, of bandwidth per month.

Pro tip:

Ideally, your web pages should stay under 50-60KB, including images and flash to cater to anyone using dial-up connections of under 56Kbps (in some more rural areas, this is still the only option). For these people, a 60KB page will take more than 8 seconds to load.

Oh, and plan ahead for spikes in traffic. Website traffic can peak unexpectedly (or even expectedly), causing major issues if you don't have enough bandwidth to support the increase in visitors. If you're not prepared, your site could crash, and so could your business.



3

Buy a Domain

A unique domain name is pretty much a “must have” for your local business. (A domain name is basically yourbusinessname.com, or something similar if your business’s name is already taken online.) What do we mean by saying you need a domain name that’s “unique?” Many platforms and web hosts will offer you a domain name that appends their name to the end of your URL. That can make finding you difficult and can detract from your brand’s credibility. Also, if you ever want to move your website to a different host or platform, a unique domain name will ensure you can keep the same URL you’ve been using.

So what should your domain name actually be? Start with your company name. Unfortunately for many of you, that may already be taken. If so, make sure whatever domain name you do choose is:

- As short as possible, so it’s easy to remember and type
- Easy to spell, avoiding words with multiple spellings or meanings
- Keyword-rich, meaning it includes words people search when looking for your product or service
- Targeted, including the name of your city to make it more unique

To actually get your domain name, you have two practical options:

1. Register your domain name on your own.

To register the domain name on your own, choose a trusted, accredited registrar. GoDaddy is a good example of an accredited registrar. If you risk registering with a less-than-recognized registrar, you risk not being able to take your domain name with you if you ever change web hosts.

2. Register your domain name through your web host or platform.

To register a domain through a web hosting platform, simply visit their website and begin your website setup. At some point in the process, they’ll ask you what to do about a domain. **Remember:** Many will offer you a free domain with their name attached to the end. We recommend forgoing this option and buying the rights to the unique domain.

How much should this cost?

Most unique domains cost between \$10 and \$35 annually. If you’re asked to pay more, try a different registrar. We recommend registering the domain for 3-5 years to start. This will typically save you a little money, and it’ll definitely save you the hassle of remembering to renew your domain each year.

4

Choose a Platform

There are a couple basic routes you can go down when creating a website. You can either build it yourself, or you can hire a professional (we mentioned this earlier when talking budget).

If you decide to design your own website, you'll need to find a platform to design it on. Do some research online, and make absolutely sure the domain and platform you decide to use work well together. Wordpress, Weebly, Wix and Drupal are common platforms that have good reputations for playing nicely with others. Things to consider when looking at potential platforms are:

- Pricing structure
- Ratings and reviews on ease of use
- Layout options
- Customization options
- Technical skills required



Drupal



Wix



Weebly



Wordpress

Or, you can hire a professional. As we mentioned earlier, if you're not a big DIY-er, you can hire a freelancer or someone who does this specially for small businesses at a reasonable price. **Word of warning:** Freelancers typically say, "sayonara" and "see you never" after the initial site setup. Companies like Thyrv don't. More on that in a bit.

5

Design It Up

Whew! It took us a sec to get to the good stuff. Now for the part you've been waiting for – designing your website!

There are two elements you need to have in place prior to making any important design decisions:



1. A company logo



2. Your brand's other attributes such as color palette, typefaces and imagery you plan to use

These are the first things you'll incorporate into your website, and they'll set the tone for everything else you do. If these aren't clear to start with, you're likely to end up with an inconsistent, jumbled mess of a site.

Pro tip:

We recommend hiring a professional designer to establish these elements for you. We call them the professionals for a reason, after all.

Once your branding elements are set, you'll either:

- a) Start laying out your site on your own, or
- b) Hand over the reins and let someone else go to work on your site.

If you chose option A, you have some big decisions to make. You'll need to decide what pages you need, choose an appropriate navigation for these pages and lay out a sitemap that makes the most sense for your type of business.

Here are the most common pages small businesses will want to account for. You'll likely have more than these, but in case you don't, they need to be spot on.

Once you know what pages you need, you'll create wireframes (or templates) of the pages where you can plug in content later.

Common Pages



Home Page

First impressions are absolutely everything. More so even than the text you put on the page, how it looks will either keep someone on your page or send them hitting the back button. Keep it simple with clear and concise text that gets your message across.



Products and Services

Be as clear as possible about the exact products and services you offer. Provide imagery where able, and be clear about how what you do differs from competitors. This (as well as the home page) is the perfect place to include engagement buttons and calls to action like, “Book Now” or “Schedule Your Appointment Today.”



About

Since you’re local, customers care about getting to know you. More so than larger chains, they care about who you are and what you do for their community. So tell them! Be clear about your business’s industry, who you serve and your main product/service category. Then, feel free to give a little history and background information about why you do what you do. Did Great, Great Uncle Larry start the business 150 years ago, and it’s been passed down from generation to generation since? Say so! People love a good story, and it’s one of your best differentiators from the boring big guys.



Contact

Since you’re a local business, you’re going to be held to a higher standard for customer service. It may not be fair, but since you’re a tad smaller than some of your competitors, the perception is often that you can get back to customers faster and with more personalized responses. Use the contact page to generate new leads and build trust with current customers. Ensure your information is accurate and kept up-to-date so you can stay in touch in real time.

Here's our best advice for designing these pages:

Avoid clutter.

Space out elements of text and images, and don't be afraid of including content "below the fold." Most people are browsing via mobile, so they don't mind scrolling for additional information.

Stick to your color scheme.

If you are using more than two colors in your navigation, background or elsewhere, your site is likely to look juvenile and outdated.

Keep your text consistent.

Use the same typeface and text color for any copy on your pages. If you feel a need to vary the size of your text, do so sparingly – don't exceed more than two different text sizes on any given page.

Be smart with your pictures.

Only use professional stock imagery, or more preferably, pictures of your own business. Keep these lower resolution, so they load as quickly as possible for your browsers. Most online resources recommend no larger than 50 KB per image, with one major image per page.

Tread lightly with videos.

Well-produced videos can give your website flair for sure. On the flip side, cheesy videos with poor production value can do a lot to damage your credibility. If you have a nicely produced video of your business, feature that on the home page. If you have less formal videos you'd like to use, save those for social.



6

Write It Up

Second only to the initial impression your site gives off is the actual copy you use to tell your story. The copy you use will help each page on your website serve a clear purpose. This means making your copy short, sweet and easy to digest.

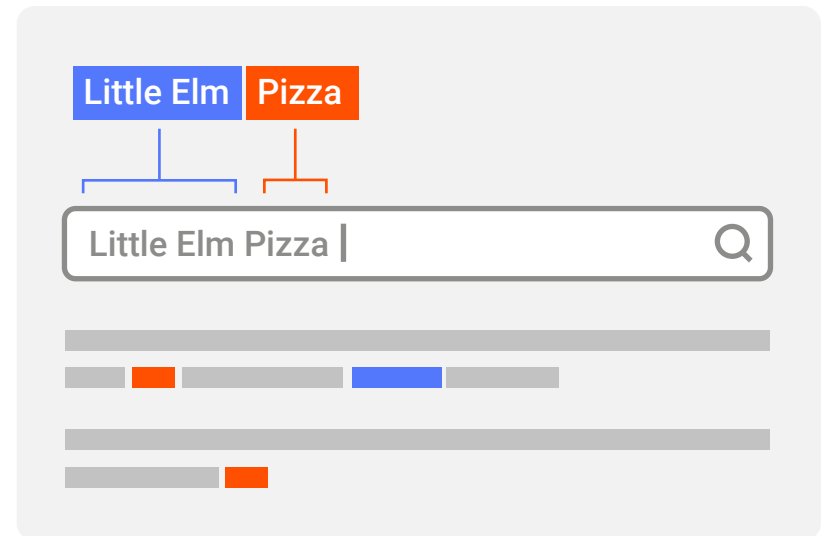
Tips from the copywriting connoisseurs:

- Try not to ramble. The only thing that should feel redundant on your site is your calls to action.
- Write using plain, easy-to-understand language. Avoid big words and industry slang that your potential customers may not understand.
- Use short sentences and paragraphs. Each paragraph should have no more than 3 sentences.
- Use bullet points where able.

The content on your page also affects another big factor – your website’s ability to get found. Marketers and web developers employ something called search engine optimization (SEO) to up their popularity online.

The best way to optimize your website for search engines is via keyword phrases. These are 2- to 5-word phrases that

consumers are searching for online when they’re looking for a business like yours. So here’s the question of the hour – do you know which keywords will get you ranked and found by your ideal customer?



5 Steps for Analyzing and Choosing the Right Keywords:



1. Make a list. Think like your customers. If they want to find a business like yours online, what would they search for? Remember, these can be 3- to 5-word search terms, not just single words.
2. Go through your list of keywords, and pick out the most descriptive, specific and unique keyword phrases. These are going to be some of your best bets for reducing competition for these keywords and ranking well when a potential customer searches for you.
3. Try adding your location into some keyword phrases for even better targeting.
4. Use a keyword research tool. Some of the cool kids on the keyword research block include Google Analytics or Moz Explorer. These tools tell you exactly how many people are searching for specific terms each month. They also suggest terms to use and can tell you if a keyword is very competitive. (If many businesses are trying to rank for a given term, it's considered competitive and is harder to rank for.)
5. Work your keywords into your copy. Don't overdo it! This needs to feel natural and not at all forced.

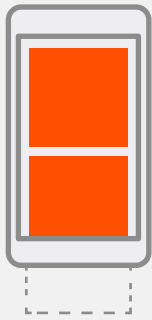
Pro tip:

Put yourself in the shoes of your customer. For example, while you might describe yourself as an “outdoor living space engineer”, your potential clients are far more likely to be looking for a “landscaper designer” or “gardener.” Even if you don't think of yourself in this way – your clients do. And when it comes to keywords, that's what matters.

7

Go Mobile

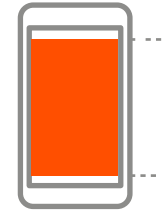
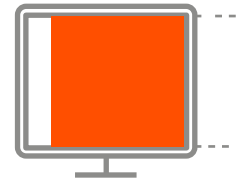
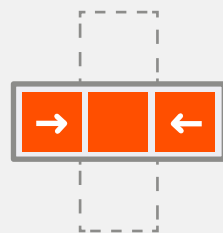
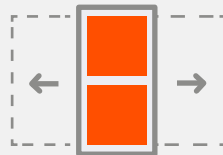
No matter which direction you go with developing and building your website, it's absolutely got to resonate with mobile users. There are a few design options for sites that play well on mobile platforms:



- **Mobile-first sites** – These are originally designed for mobile and serve as your primary site, almost exclusively targeting mobile users.



- **Responsive design sites** – These are built using flexibly sized elements, style sheets, java script and HTML so they conform to your screen no matter what.



- **Adaptive design sites** – these are formatted with pre-defined screen sizes and are almost as cool as responsive sites, but they could end up leaving some visitors with wonky views.

Luckily, most design platforms and design professionals are up to speed on designing for mobile, and they default to responsive designs. However, it's still a big consideration to keep in mind when laying out images, videos and content, so make sure that's included.

Mobile design considerations:

- Think of their thumbs. Lay content out vertically, not horizontally. This will make it easier to view by scrolling up and down on a mobile device, as users are most inclined to do.
- Format text to at least 11 pt. so mobile viewers don't get annoyed trying to pinch and drag your page to increase the size of the text.
- We'll hit you with the "don't ramble" tip again. If your copy is too long or wordy, mobile viewers will get tired of squinting and move right along.

8

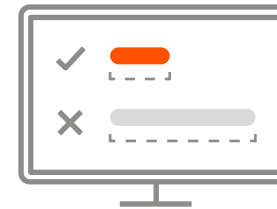
Convert, Convert, Convert

Once your site is built, do yourself a favor and set it up for success. We'd hate to see any more tears shed because a business owner set up a beautiful site but forgot to help it convert visitors into leads and customers!

Think back to the goal you set when we first started. Our example was to gain additional customers using a "Book Now" button. That's a pretty common goal for local business owners who live and die by their ability to fill appointments. Whatever your goal, it's time to implement some calls to action (CTAs) to help you achieve it. **Note:** It's okay to include two different CTAs on your page, but don't get crazy. If you implement more than two, consumers will be confused as to where to click, and they may opt for the back button instead of converting.

Our Advice for Winning CTAs:

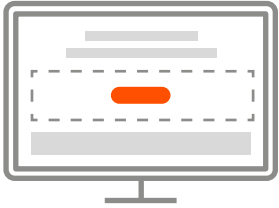
- **Keep CTA language short and clear.** If you're wanting them to contact you, go for "Contact Us" instead of "Get in Touch with a Service Provider Today." Though the second option may seem more accurate, that button would take up way too much space on your page and may even come across as trying too hard.



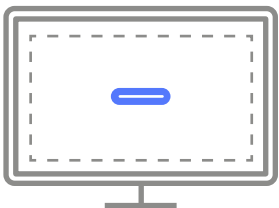
- **It really is about location, location, location.** Dedicate the most prime real estate on your home page (and other relevant pages as well) to your CTA button(s). Your CTAs should be as visible as possible at all times. It should attract visitors' attention more than any other page elements, second only perhaps to a high-quality video in the hero area of your home page.



- **Keep the area around your CTA buttons free of text and especially other links.** If you have more than one button, space them out such that users cannot accidentally click the wrong button. (Think mobile users, fat thumbs.)



- **Give buttons an accent color for their background.** This is the one place we'll give you a liiittle leeway to think outside the box with color. Choose one that stands out, and make the text on top of the button either white or dark gray, whichever best complements the background. Take our word for it, and avoid other text colors here, pretty please.



Don't go it alone.

Full disclosure – this guide is one of the more in-depth guides we have in our arsenal. Why? Building a website for your business is a serious undertaking, and it can be a make-it or break-it mission for your business. Sound more like mission impossible? There's no shame in waving the white flag and asking for help.

Remember when we mentioned your options earlier? A) Doing it yourself OR B) Enlisting a pro to do it all for you? **Spoiler alert:** We're the pro. We cost a lot less than the high-priced agencies, and we do a lot more than the inexpensive freelancers who'll leave you without long-term support.

[GET STARTED TODAY](#)