



# Website Intro Guide

A GUIDE TO ESTABLISHING A WEB PRESENCE  
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Hello

Following conversations I have been having with small business owners I work with, one of the major discoveries I have made is that we who work on websites (including myself) believe that as the web has been around for a significant period of time, everyone has a full understanding of what is needed to produce and maintain a website.

Clearly this is not the case and in particular new business owners, who are starting on the exciting path of working for themselves, do not have a full understanding of what is required to establish an effective presence for their new venture on the web and the benefits this presence brings.

With this in mind I have taken the decision to produce this guide to help build an understanding of how websites are created and explain the terms used which I hope will help in the early days of establishing a web presence.

### **1. Why do I need a website?**

In today's commercial world your website is the most important gateway to your business. Prospective clients, searching for the services you provide, may wish to contact you based on the information you provide.

This by no means will guarantee to generate business through your website. However, when you have your first face to face meeting with a prospective client, on your departure they will study your site to confirm what they believe you as a business can deliver.

A very important note here is your website will be viewed on many different devices, so you will need to ensure your site looks professional when viewed from desktops, tablets and mobile phones.

### **2. What sequence do I need to follow to create a website?**

There are a number of steps you must follow to establish your business website as follows: -

- a. Register a Domain Name
- b. Arrange website hosting
- c. Configure your business emails
- d. Establish the design of the website
- e. Create content including text and images
- f. S.E.O. (Search Engine Optimisation)
- g. Publish your website
- h. Register and submit a site map to the search engines

### **3. Register a Domain Name**

A domain name is the address of your website. You need to select a name which best describes your business. There are a number of companies who will help you to select a domain name and then register the site for you. I do not want to make any recommendations on which company you should use, just search online for "domain name registration" and then select a company to perform this task.

#### 4. Arrange Website Hosting

Once you have registered your domain name you will need to arrange hosting for your website.

What is hosting?

When you enter a website address into a browser such as [www.brentdavenport.com](http://www.brentdavenport.com) the home page of your website will be displayed along with links to all the other pages containing information you wish to provide about your business.

Hosting is the service that delivers this function.

Normally your website files will be stored by the hosting company on a machine (server) located in a secure datacentre. You will need access to this server to save your website files.

Copying your website files to the host is called "Uploading".

You will upload your files to the host server using FTP access, this will require a user name and password, which you create when you open your hosting account.

As with domain name registration there are many companies who can provide this service. You should note that I have always found that using a hosting company, located in the country where you are based, to be the most effective policy.

Your domain name registrar will usually offer a hosting package when you register your domain name, but I have found that sometimes it is better to find a hosting company first as they may provide domain name registration free of charge when you take their hosting package.

It is wise to spend time researching this service as there are some very good deals available.

## 5. Configure your business emails

This is one of the most important tasks you need to do.

Your hosting company doesn't just handle your website; they will also provide you with basic email functions which you need to configure. I cannot emphasise enough how important it is for you to complete this task.

Over the years free of charge email addresses, provided by hotmail /gmail/yahoo and others, are available to everyone.

As a new business you should not use these accounts for your email address, if the website address is [www.abc.com](http://www.abc.com) then your email address should contain the domain name as [brent@abc.com](mailto:brent@abc.com). Managers of companies do not trust emails sent from free addresses and, in main, ignore them thus losing a potential client at the initial point of contact.

Your hosting company will have many different email options available to you, some free of charge as part of your hosting package, and some with enhanced services or larger storage capacity. In the early days the basic email package should be sufficient and will allow you to judge what you require once you are on your way.

The main reason for the configuration of emails at this point is, as you start to create your website, you will need to point certain pages to an email address such as [contact@abc.com](mailto:contact@abc.com) from your contact page or [sales@abc.com](mailto:sales@abc.com) for product enquires and so forth.

One point to remember is emails have to be administered and answered. This will take time off your busy day, so my advice is to keep the number of email addresses you have to a minimum. You can achieve this by having, for example, a single address and configuring your host to "catch all" emails sent to your domain and forward them to this single address.

Email addresses included with your hosting package will normally be POP3 or IMAP. Both can be downloaded to your desktop, tablet and mobile phone using your preferred email program.

One note here is that POP3 will download your emails to a single device and, once downloaded, will remove the email messages from the host. IMAP will allow the download to all devices and keep a copy of the email messages on the server.

For expanded facilities and larger storage of emails you can choose an "Exchange" mailbox. Again, your host will offer this facility and you also have the option of a Microsoft 365 Business account.

## 6. Establish the design of the website.

I have already pointed out your website is your gateway to present the goods and services you offer. A well-designed website can help you to achieve a good impression on a prospective client's initial visit to your site. It is important the design provides a good user experience and helps your website visitors access and navigate your website.

I take the view that although a website today is an essential marketing tool for all new businesses it is in general not the route to great riches and should be used as part of your overall marketing plan.

You should consider the following points when deciding the type and design of your website: -

a. What type of website do I need for my business?

An easy way to answer this question is, do you intend to sell your goods and services from your website?

If the answer is "NO" then an Info Site should meet your requirements

If the answer is "YES" then, in general, you will require an Ecommerce Site

b. Info Website

This type of website is exactly as named with detailed information on the goods and services you provide along with delivering the ability for any prospective client to download this information. It is also possible to present a small number of products for sale online without the need for an Ecommerce site, allowing payment providers such as PayPal to handle your clients' transactions.

c. Ecommerce Website

If you intend to sell goods and services (shop/store) you will need an ecommerce website. This site will present the products you have to offer and deliver a full sales management experience to your clients. Your online store will be managed using a web based back office and will deal with customer registration, shipping, payment and all facilities required to run an effective online ecommerce store.

Once it is clear on the type of website you require the next step is to take the decision on how to achieve the design you require.

a. Do it yourself

Although not the best method, sometimes your budget may dictate you must in the early stages of your business do the work needed to get your website up and running.

There are a number of free of charge website builders available and one of the most popular is WordPress. You also have the option, at a small cost, of adding a website builder to your hosting account.

Be warned that although this method is the most cost effective, and many of the website building software products promise an easy way to “Get on Line”, the end result could be a significant amount of work on your part to achieve a site design and appearance that does not attract the clients you are searching for.

b. Purchase a website template

This is my preferred method of getting a good website design at a low price, which, from the outset you will know exactly what your site will look like. Most template companies also include a mobile version of the template so you don't have to worry which device your website is being viewed on.

You will still need to populate the template with information on your products and services but the end result will be a much more professional design.

c. Employ a professional

If you have a budget then employing a website design company or freelance designer could be a good option.

It is important you do your research to ensure the person or company you engage will deliver the desired solution in budget and on time.

Freelance websites are also a good place to search for a solution provider as you can list your requirements and state a budget.

Whether you choose a company or a freelance a frequent issue is that only you know your business, so outside of the standard information pages such as Privacy Policy and Contact Us they will not generate the content you wish to present.

## **7. Website Content**

This without question is the most important part of your website design. Not only does this content give details of your products and services but the text and images you use will be picked up by search engines such as Google and Bing, thus important in determining your ranking on their websites.

You know the products and services you provide better than anyone, so it should follow that you creating the text required is the best option. This statement could not be further from the truth.

Whilst creating text for a website it is good to include links to product datasheets and brochures. This requires a small amount of coding but will allow your site visitors and prospective clients to get the information they require to take the decision to buy. If you do not know how to do this coding then you will need to employ a professional.

Further, as already discussed websites are viewed on different devices. The latest figures indicate that views of websites by mobile devices is 62%. This indicates the text you create should be created with this in mind as all mobile devices have much smaller screens so larger amounts of texts could be difficult to read on such devices.

As a picture says a thousand words, photographs (images) are important for any website. When you add any image to a website you also need to consider the size (data not physical size), as any image must be downloaded to the device viewing your site.

There are many photo editing programs available, but the golden rule here is get the image down to the smallest size possible without causing the quality of the image to deteriorate. This will ensure when your website downloads it will be in the shortest possible time.

## 8. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Before you publish your website, you will need to edit the meta data of each page to enable the search engine companies to find and index your website.

The highlighted items below display the meta data parts you need to edit: -

```
<title>Home Page – abc.com</title>
```

This is the title of each website page displayed at the top of the web browser.

```
<meta name="Description"
```

```
content="Place your website description in this area. This is read by most search engines.">
```

This text needs to relate to the text displayed on each page

```
<meta name="Keyword's"
```

```
content="add, your, keywords and phrases in this area, separated, by, commas,">
```

Keywords are not as important now but it is always wise to add keywords related to the page

SEO is a difficult subject to approach in this document. It is important to remember that if you are based in Manchester in the UK, for example, then for prospective clients to find your website you should create text and meta data that refers to this.

For example “ABC Company provides widgets to our clients in Manchester” this would then give your website a good chance of being picked up by the search engines, so that when prospective clients search for “suppliers of widgets in Manchester area” your site is in with a good chance of being listed on the first page.

The wider the area you wish to cover the more complicated it is to conduct a successful SEO exercise on your website. There are many companies providing a service who you can use, but be warned even though you pay for this service success is not guaranteed.

## 9. Publish your website

To publish your website is to make your site go live.

If you are using a web editing software, provided by your host, then you just hit the publish button.

If you are using any software package, not provided by your host, then you will need the hosting FTP account details that usually they look like this below: -

FTP site: <ftp.abc.com>

User Name: abc.com

Password: xxxxxxxx

You can also establish ftp contact using Windows Explorer. Just enter the ftp site into a new window and Windows will then give you a user name and password window. Once established you just copy all the website files on your local machine to the remote host.

## 10. Register and Submit your Website to the Search Engines

It is important that you register your website with the search engines. Full instructions are available on how to do this on each search engine website.

Once you register the site you will need to create and submit your website in sitemap.xml format. When successful your site will be indexed and monitored for the amount of site visitors, location and if there are any page errors.

Below is an example of an .xml site map, which you can edit using the windows notepad, or you can use a free online website to create the site map for you : -

```
<urlset xmlns="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap/0.9" xmlns:xsi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance" xsi:schemaLocation="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap/0.9 http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap/0.9/sitemap.xsd">
<url>
```

```
<loc>https://abc.com/</loc>
```

```
<lastmod>2020-11-25T09:02:42+00:00</lastmod>
```

```
<priority>1.00</priority>
```

```
</url>
```

```
<url>
```

```
<loc>https://abc.com/index.html</loc>
```

```
<lastmod>2020-11-25T09:02:42+00:00</lastmod>
```

```
<priority>0.64</priority>
```

```
</url>
```

```
<url>
```

```
</urlset>
```

I hope this introduction helps you to understand what needs to be done to establish a website for your business.

There is a lot of help out there, online on how to achieve success with your new web site. I wish you all the success and, should you need any help, then do not hesitate to contact me.

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