

What you need before you build your business website

Seven things worth sorting before you spend any money — and five you can safely ignore.

Most websites that go wrong don't go wrong in the building. They go wrong in the week before, when decisions get skipped and the whole thing stalls halfway.

None of this needs any technical knowledge. Work through it with a cup of tea and a notepad. **If you get through all seven, you are more prepared than most people who pay thousands for a website.**

1 Decide the one job your website has to do

Most sites underperform because they try to do everything at once. Pick the single action you want a visitor to take — book an appointment, ring you, or send an enquiry — and let everything else on the page support that one thing.

☐ **Done when** you can finish this sentence: "When someone lands on my site, I want them to..."

2 Register your domain name yourself

Buy it with your own card, on an account you control. If someone else registers it "for you", they own it — and getting it back later can be slow, expensive, or impossible. For a UK business a **.co.uk** is perfectly respectable and usually cheaper; take the **.com** as well if it happens to be free.

☐ **Done when** the domain is registered in an account you can personally log into.

3 Write your words before you think about design

This is the real bottleneck on almost every project — not the building. You need four things:

- What you do
- Who it's for
- What it costs
- What happens next

A hundred and fifty clear words beat fifteen hundred vague ones. Write it the way you'd explain it to someone at a bus stop, not the way you think a website is supposed to sound.

☐ **Done when** you have a page of plain text covering those four points.

4 Get one decent photograph of yourself

If you *are* the business, people are buying you — and they will look for your face before they read a word. One real photo taken near a window on a reasonably modern phone beats every stock image ever published.

Avoid stock photos of handshakes, headsets and anonymous people pointing at laptops. Visitors recognise them instantly, and they quietly reduce trust rather than building it.

☐ **Done when** you have one photograph of yourself that you don't actively dislike.

5 Decide how people will actually book you

Settle this *before* anything is built, because it changes the design. A booking tool showing your real availability? A simple enquiry form? Just your phone number?

Pick one primary route and make it obvious. A site offering five ways to get in touch reliably produces fewer enquiries than one with a single clear button.

☐ **Done when** you've chosen one route and know what, if anything, it costs per month.

6 Decide whether to publish your prices

There's no universally right answer, but there is a real trade-off. Publishing filters out people who can't afford you and saves everybody's time. Withholding them wins enquiries from people who want to negotiate — and loses the larger number who simply won't ask.

If you're a sole practitioner with a limited number of hours to sell, publish them.

☐ **Done when** you've made a deliberate decision rather than quietly avoided one.

7 Sort the unglamorous bits

Nobody enjoys this part, and it takes about an hour:

- A **privacy notice**, if your site collects any personal data at all — a contact form counts. The Information Commissioner's Office publishes free templates for small organisations.
- Run the **ICO's self-assessment** to check whether you need to pay the data protection fee.
- A **business email address** on your own domain, rather than a personal Gmail.
- Confirm **every account is in your name** — domain, hosting, booking tool — with you listed as the owner.

☐ **Done when** you hold every login, and a privacy notice is ready to publish.

Five things you don't need (yet)

- **A blog.** Nobody is waiting for it, and an abandoned blog whose last post is dated two years ago looks considerably worse than no blog at all.
- **A professionally designed logo.** Your name, set in a good typeface, is entirely sufficient for your first year of trading.
- **Ten pages.** Three good ones outperform ten thin ones, and you'll actually finish writing three.
- **A monthly retainer.** You should own your website outright. Paying indefinitely for something you can't take with you is a poor arrangement.
- **To understand how any of it works.** You don't need to learn to code, and you don't need to know what hosting is. That's what help is for.

If you'd rather not do it alone

I help small businesses and sole practitioners get online without the jargon — either by teaching you to build it yourself, or by building it for you.

Learn With Me · £95 — a two-hour session; you leave with a draft and the skills to continue.

Done For You · from £350 — a three-page site with online booking, live and yours.

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