

**Why do I need an online presence? My business is small and it's a service. I do not want to sell anything online.**

**KEY: You are always selling something: yourself, your passion, your services, an outcome that inspires....**

An online presence is important for customer service.

- Regardless of age, most people today do not use a phonebook. It is their custom and habit to search the internet for phone numbers and addresses.
- Customers expect you to have a website and they count on it being a current and comprehensive overview of what you offer for services. Many are suspect if you are **not** online.
- It is a respectful way of keeping clients informed about promotions, upcoming events, new products, tips and highlights; they can access this information when and how they choose.

An online presence is a key tool in a company's business plan and marketing strategy.

- It allows customers, prospective clients, and potential employees / business partners to quickly and easily find out about your business and services.
- It is a place to showcase your business – years of service, types of services and features, testimonials from current clients, images of a clean, relaxing atmosphere, messages that demonstrate how you compare to the many companies that are your competitors.
- Less than \$200/year (not counting one-time set up/periodic edits), a website is a cost-effective, low maintenance way of advertising your business – added to free Facebook, Instagram LinkedIn, Twitter – especially compared to expenses of printing and mailing brochures, putting up a bulletin board, or publishing weekly ads in local papers.

**What are the basic requirements for starting a website?**

- **Domain name** - This is the address where your website will be found on the Web. The best domain name is one that uses the company's name in the URL. But sometimes that can be hard to get, if you haven't already registered it. If you can't get your company name, then consider something catchy or memorable that your customers can associate with you. It needs to be relevant to your company (containing your company's name), easily remembered, and easy to spell. Once you've committed to a name, you'll want to stick with it. Remember that it should be something that you like and can live with for a long time, as there's a possibility that people will start remembering your domain name before they remember your real company name.  
Cost: \$20/year or less
- **Web Hosting/Internet Service Provider** - Your ISP simply provides access to the internet. If you want a website of your own, you will need to effectively "rent" the space for it on a hosting company's server. Deciding where you're going to put your website is important. You want flexibility, excellent support, great reputation, reasonable cost. Once you have both a domain and hosting account, you will need to point the domain to your host's nameservers, to connect the domain name to the server. When you signed up, your hosting provider should have sent you the names of the nameservers. They look something like ns1.nameserver.com and ns2.nameserver.com. Cost: 150/ year or less for basic service
- **Someone to Build the Website and Maintain it.**  
First determine what you need. A graphic designer focuses on creating images – so they can help if you need a logo and a particular web template that is unique to you; but they may need to work with a web designer for the finished product. A web developer/coder can build any type of website you can think of, but they may need to work with a designer to make it look the way you want it. A web designer is someone who can translate your vision into an actual, tangible website – the layout, content editing, images, graphics – using WordPress templates or code-free, drag and drop website builders like Weebly – then teach you how to keep it updated.  
Cost: \$250 (basic WordPress, with you providing content) to \$5,000 (relying totally on experts).

## Basics for Planning the Website

Website name:

Owner:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

1. **Provide a brief overview of your organization.** What do you do or produce?

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

2. **What is the purpose of this site?** You need to have a clear goal for your website including the business problem you're trying to solve. Below are a few examples to choose from; add any additional goals. Check all that apply; add any additional goals.

- ☐ Explain your products and services
- ☐ Bring in new clients to your business
- ☐ Provide your customers with information on a certain subject
- ☐ Deliver news or calendar of events
- ☐ Create a blog that addresses specific topics or interests
- ☐ Allow clients to pay online and to request service
- ☐ Provide support for current clients

3. **Do you have a timeframe or deadline to get this site online?**

(If you have a specific deadline, please state why.) Generally development takes 2-3 weeks once copy and pictures are finalized.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

4. **How much are you willing to spend?** Web design companies work within a set of given constraints. Your budget is one of them. If you know how much you can spend on a web design project, this information will make it much easier to recommend an approach and will save us both a considerable amount of time.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

5. **Target market**

Who will visit this site? Describe your potential clients. Young, old, demographics etc.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

6. **Why do you believe these potential clients should do business with you rather than with a competitor?** What sets you apart?

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

7. **What call to action (CTA) should the potential clients perform when visiting your site?** Check all that apply; add any additional goals.

- ☐ Call you
- ☐ Fill out a contact form /email
- ☐ Fill out some other form (explain)
- ☐ Sign up for your mailing list
- ☐ Search for information
- ☐ Purchase a product(s)

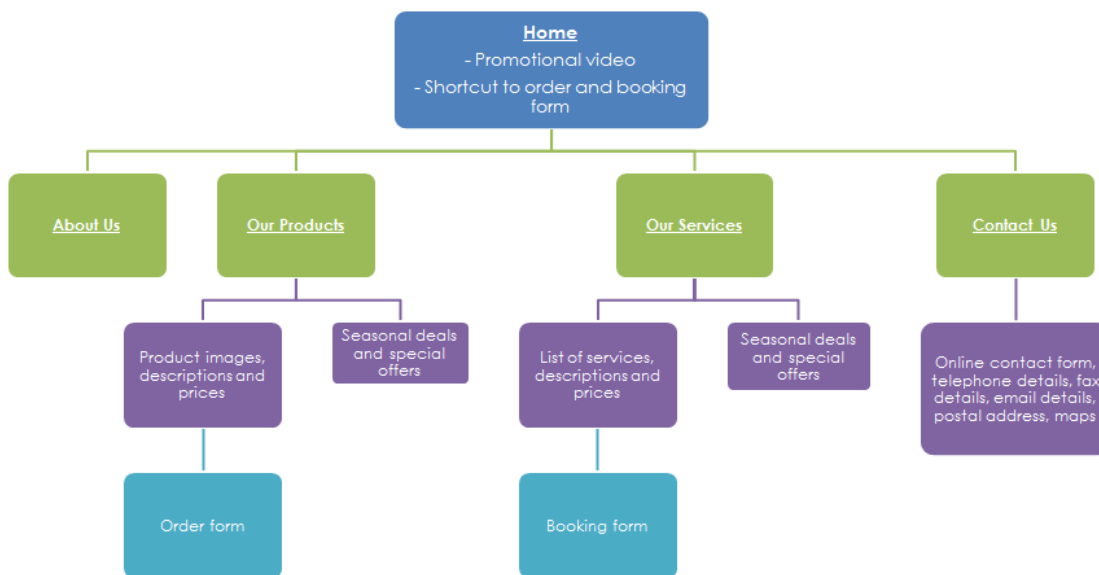
Other: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

## 8. Sections/Pages

Review your purpose (#2) and make a list of all the sections/pages you think that you'll need. (Review websites in similar markets to get ideas if you need a starting place.)

Page	Content Notes
Home	
Contact Us	
Our Services	
About Us	

Or create a site map:



## 9. Written content and images/photographs.

Do you have the written content and images/photographs prepared for these pages? If not, will you need copywriting and photography services? **(Please note that before any real design work or site construction can begin, an outline of the content and preferably all of the content will be needed.)**

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

## 10. Design elements

When people come to your new site for the first time, how do you want them to feel about your organization? Are there specific colors, logo, fonts etc. that should be incorporated? If you do not already have a logo, are you going to need one designed? Is there a specific look and feel that you have in mind?

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

## 11. Websites of your closest competition

Please include at least 3 links of sites of your competition. What do you like and don't like about them? What would you like to differently or better?


## 12. Websites that you like

Along with putting down the site address, please comment on what you like about each site, i.e. the look and feel, functionality, colors etc. These do not have to have anything to do with your business, but they could have features you like. Please include at least 3 examples.

(Caution A website should focus more on what your customers like and what they will respond to than on your personal preference, so don't get lost in your own personal style.)


## 13. Marketing the Site

How do people find out about your business right now? Have you thought about how you're going to market this site?

Do you have any social network accounts setup? (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.) Do you want links to those accounts on your site?

Do you have a mail service account? (Constant Contact, MailChimp etc.) Will you want to build your mailing list and use it for advertising & newsletters?

Will you want printed materials (business cards, catalog, etc.) produced as well?

If someone were searching for your product/service, what types of search terms (single words or phrases) might they use? Please list all the possible search terms you can think of.


## 14. Maintenance

The best sites on the Web change frequently and are kept up-to-date. If you're planning a website for your business you should factor in the cost of having at least one person who adds new content at least weekly and fixes problems as they are found.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Will there be sections that need regular updating? Which ones? Would you like to be able to do most of the updating yourself? [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

If you're planning on writing a blog do you already have several things written? Do you already write on a regular basis? [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Are there any features/pages that you don't need now but may want in the future? Please be as specific and future thinking as possible. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)