BlitzBack

I need a website but I don't know where to begin.

A no-nonsense, no jargon, no bs introduction on how to get a website up and running for small-business owners.

Introduction

If you're a small business owner, you've probably been told you need a website, so that people can find your product or service easily. These days potential customers Google what they want, find a vendor they feel "gets it" and get in-touch.

In this short document, we'll talk you through the 3 steps you need so that you can go from no online presence to a full-blown website. To make things easy, we're going to be using an example

> *Mike and Michelle have started a plumbing company in Oakville, Ontario. So far it's been all referrals, but they want to expand their reach via an online website. They just don't know where to start...*
>
> (hopefully this story sounds familiar)

Where do I begin?

You need 3 things to get a website up and running. Let's look at each item in turn and we're going to use an analogy to make things simple. Imagine we want to build a brand new house on a plot of land and we want people to know our new address. We need the following

1. An address to give to people.
2. The plot of land that we can build on
3. The house on the plot of land.

They correspond to the following in terms of your website.

Your house address = your website name (e.g. www.yourbusiness.ca) - this can sometimes be referred to as a domain name.

A plot of land = a hosting service. Just as a house needs space to be built on, a website needs server space to be accessible. This is very similar to cloud storage (DropBox, Google Drive etc.).

A house = Your house is the end product here, and so is your website.

In simple terms, **the house** (website) is on **a plot** (server) and has **an address** (domain name).

We always start with an address or website / domain name.

1. A website name.

Sometimes called a domain name, this is pretty straightforward, in our example we might consider www.MandMplumbing.com or MandMplumbing.ca (.ca is for Canadian businesses, .com is more generic). But these days most of the obvious names have been purchased, so you may need to think outside the box, for example, Amazon, Google - not names you would associate with an online retailer or a search engine. You can use a website like www.ionos.ca to search for and purchase your domain name.

TIP : Avoid long domain names. Although it's unlikely you'll be spelling out your domain name to someone over the phone, this will happen, or you might be typing it into a "Business websites address" field in an online form, so it's easier to be able to say/type "mandmpumbing.ca" then it is to say "mikeandmichellesplumbing.ca"

For our example, Mike and Michelle have decided to purchase mandmplumbing.ca. So now they have their address!

The cost of a domain is usually in the region of $20 per year although it's quite common to find offers for the first year at around $1-$2.

A domain name is just a name, there's no site and no server hosting it. Let's move onto the 2nd step, finding someone to host the site on their servers.

2. Purchase a Hosting Service Package.

A hosting service package is where your website will live, in our analogy, it's the plot of land where we build our home. For a basic website you might need just a few megabytes, but for a larger website, we might be talking gigabytes. Most small businesses are in the former category. But also take into consideration email. You'll want a nice, shiny new business email address (e.g. Mike@MandMPlumbing.ca or Sales@MandMPlumbing.ca) and space for emails will also be part of your overall package. I recommend but have no affiliation with hostinger.com.

TIP : At this stage, you might want to stop and consider a web design company. Why? Because purchasing a hosting provider, which is the next step, can involve some technical insight. For example, how much bandwidth on the site do you need, do you need Wordpress, what about backups, email, security etc.

TIP : Start with a very simple, basic package, so you're not stuck with a 3 year, enterprise-ready expensive contract when all you need is a 1 year starter pack. It's easy to upgrade services and difficult to downgrade them and if you're not happy with your hosting company, you're not tied to a long-term contract.

Mike and Michelle have decided to do it themselves and have purchased a beginners package from Hostinger. So now they have a plot of land!

3. Website

At this stage we have an address and a plot of land, now we just need to build a website on our land and we're online! This is where a web design agency would come in. **I do not recommend doing this yourself unless you've got a pretty decent background in design, IT and psychology (I'll get to that last one shortly).**

What I would suggest you do is contact a web design agency and see if they offer a **free consultation**. Sit down with them over a coffee and explain what you need. Most businesses will require a simple 3 to 5 or so page website to get started.

1. A great homepage where people can see what you offer.

2. A contact page where people can reach out to you.

3. An about us page which describes the business and the mission statement.

4. A services or product page which describes the different services on-offer.

Obviously this may not cover all your needs - for example realtors may require a full-on property search page, mortgage calculators, and more. If you're selling lots of products you'll need an ecommerce site but a good starter website should include some of the above.

So, have a think about what you need, contact a few companies and see what they can offer you. Some will have portfolios to show you or demo sites you can visit.

TIP : More isn't always better. Having a dozen webpages isn't necessarily better than having 3 or 4. You're asking people to click multiple times to find the information they are looking for vs having that information on a single compact page. Don't overcomplicate your website, make the experience simple and intuitive.

Psychology

Most people who build their own website might be great on the technical side, but the website still doesn't attract clients or turn visitors into purchasers. Why? Because their website doesn't resonate with their target market. A good website design takes this into consideration. Does it speak to the pain points your clients are experiencing and the reason they visited your site? Does it simply, quickly and clearly communicate what you do, how you do it and what you can do for them? There are lots of psychological elements that go into making a website really speak to your visitors. A good web design company will know these things and ensure your site is built with these items in mind.

Mike and Michelle need those four pages and they meet with a local web design company and explain what they want. The agency creates a demo plumbing site for them to view. It meets their vision and they contract the agency to build their site.

Once you (or your agency) build your website, congratulations, you're online!

There's obviously more to the story - what about hackers? How do I get my emails set up? What if I want to add more pages? Or an online booking form? How do I show up on Google's search and so on, but that's for another day. Right now, these three steps are all you need to get started.

Good luck on your journey.

About BlitzBack.

We build and manage websites and provide marketing services such as Google AdWords and Analytics. We do it, so you can focus on growing your business. Consultations are free. We'll knock up a demo site on our dime and if you're happy we can flip it over to you and get you online in as little as 3 weeks. We provide after-sales support packages to keep your site updated with the latest security packages and provide regular backups. Give us a call and we'll set up a free, no heavy sell, bs-free meeting.

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