



## Website Success Checklist



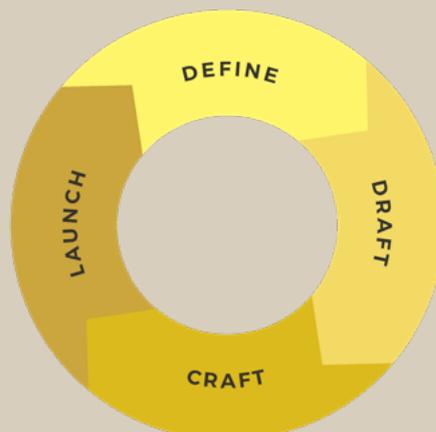
Creating or rebuilding website?

Don't rush in and build a website that lacks real-world impact—it's the classic rookie mistake!

Domains, platforms, themes—they're the common starting point, but just a tiny piece of the puzzle. You need to get clear—and get comprehensive—before you get started.

We've distilled two decades of web experience into the digital gold you need to build a website that truly builds your business!

Here's how you do it:



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- 1. Know your people
- 2. Clarify your strategy
- 3. Plan your pathways
- 4. Define visitor actions
- 5. Set your budget
- 6. Break your budget!
- 7. Define website success
- 8. Define your scope
- 9. Plan your build
- 10. Set a launch date
- 11. Miss the launch date!
- 12. Use project tools
- 13. Find a web mentor

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## 1. Know your people

Ask 'Who's this website really for?' Then ask 'What do they need from my website?'. Everything's built on that. So use 'avatars' or 'ideal clients' to answer those questions. Otherwise you'll be flying blind on **website structure, content and language**. Remember the saying: 'content that speaks to everyone reaches no-one!'

## 2. Clarify your strategy

If your website isn't part of an overall marketing strategy, you probably shouldn't build it! You need to understand exactly **how your website fits** into your marketing ecosystem. Does it lead people? Capture emails? Do you sell stuff on it? Knowing precisely how your website supports your business is crucial.

## 3. Plan your pathways

The web is the biggest haystack in history—don't make your website a beautiful needle that no-one ever finds! You need a **website promotion plan** that maps the pathways into the site. Are you advertising on Facebook? Google? By email? By word of mouth? Knowing how people will arrive at your site puts you in the driver's seat.



### Recommended Resources:

[The 19 Channels You Can Use to Get Traction](#)  
[Traction Bullseye – Free Download](#)

## 4. Define visitor actions

Visiting a website shouldn't be a spectator sport. What actions do you want visitors to take? Is it completing a contact form? Adding an event to their calendar? Downloading a free offer in exchange for their email address? Sharing something on social media? Or signing up and paying for a program, course or workshop? Simply **build your website around user actions**, not aesthetics.



### Pro Tip:

Build trust by offering your website visitors free resources and information that creates value and makes their life easier. [Like this one.](#)

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## 5. Set your budget

Don't skimp on resourcing your website! In today's world, a website is never just an add-on. It's the real business. You get what you pay for, and a **website knocked up on the cheap rarely serves business growth**. Imagine your website as a premises—would you get a shopfront with no signage and a leaky roof? Lay solid foundations with a **budget based on revenue or marketing spend**.

## 6. Break your budget!

Websites always go over budget. Either in time, or money, and almost always in stress! **We all underestimate the energy required for solid content. We all underestimate the time and cost of designing and building the websites our businesses deserve**. If it's an agency building it, you may stay on budget. If you're building it yourself, you'll go waaaay over budget.

## 7. Define website success

What does website success mean to your business? Is it launching Stage One in six weeks? Is it launching and getting 1,000 new visitors each week? Is it about attracting 15 new paying clients each month? **Whatever success means for your business, write it down now**. Be optimistic, be realistic, and then be aware that tracking targets is what business is all about.

## 8. Define your scope

Single page brochure website? Showing upcoming events? Or separate landing pages for each of your products and services? It's time to define the scope of your website **in service of your business needs**. Our previous steps have all led to this decision. Notice that you set the budget before the scope? This keeps things real when defining your scope :)



### Pro Tip:

Don't get blocked by thinking every feature has to be implemented and your website has to be perfect before you launch. In the words of **Ryan Levesque**, "You don't have to get it perfect, you just have to get it going". Get it live as soon as you can!

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## 9. Plan your build

Even simple websites are big projects. Complex websites can be huge projects, and can get overwhelming.

**Be gentle with yourself!** If your website's more than just a couple of pages, and includes things like events and booking integrations, then you need to plan the build in separate stages. Make **your 'Minimum Loveable Website'** the first stage, then focus on finishing and launching it.

## 10. Set a launch date

Deadlines motivate and focus you.. Set a launch date for your website, and work towards it. **Give yourself some flexibility**—these things often take longer than planned. Avoid unnecessary stress by not planning other marketing activities that rely on your site being live by a particular date.

## 11. Miss the launch date

Kind of like the budget, right?! Websites are never ready by the launch date! They're notoriously over-budget, notoriously delayed. **The bottleneck is almost always content**—communicating what really matters just takes longer than we expect.

## 12. Use project tools

Especially important if you're collaborating with others. **Email is not a project management tool!** Try Trello—it's free, awesome, and is used to track tasks through stages, to collaborate on task lists, comments, content, screenshots and files tied to every task.



### Recommended Resources:

[Set up Trello to manage your website project](#)

## 13. Find a web mentor

Whether building the website yourself, or outsourcing to a pro, you need **someone who can guide you through the process**. Make sure **your mentor** is focused on content and outcomes—the last thing you want is an old-school web designers or developers still obsessed with just 'great aesthetics' or 'clean code'.

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- 14. Create content first
- 15. Make content king
- 16. Develop your messaging
- 17. Make it about them
- 18. Focus on feelings
- 19. Keep content simple
- 20. Hire a copywriter
- 21. Spend creative time
- 22. Draw your pages
- 23. Think mobile first
- 24. Plan 'scannable' content

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## 14. Create content first

Content should always trump fancy design, and always trump theme or platform decisions. Just like building a house starts with knowing what you need in each room, building a **website should start with content**. Don't make the mistake of designing and building the website, then try to just 'pour' the content in.



### Pro Tip:

Let your customers do the talking. Start gathering testimonials today. Preferably by video so that by the time you launch your website, you can let your customers do the talking.

## 15. Make content king

DIY? Designer? Developer? Agency? Whoever builds your site needs to understand that content—including words—is the **backbone of your website**. Content is king! And because you're the one closest to the content, you'll need to go through all the 'who?', 'what?', and 'why?' points above—no matter who builds your website!

## 16. Develop your messaging

Create clear and distinct messaging, that your audience finds **entertaining and compelling**. Focus on the gains of using your products or services. Don't talk about yourself, what you do or what you've done. Imagine you're the client, and talk to them about how your business is about to **change their lives**.



### Recommended Resources

[Building a StoryBrand: Clarify Your Message So Customers Will Listen](#)

## 17. Make it about them

Remember that you're only as relevant as your capacity to help your customer. Think of your **customers as the real heroes of your website**, and yourself as the guide. It's true that your experience will establish trust—bit only insofar as that experience helped your customers. Even when it's about you, **make it about them!**

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## 18. Focus on feelings

Know how your visitors are feeling about your products or services before they find your website. Do they yearn for a **better life**? Are they frustrated? Then figure out how you want them to feel after they discover your website. Curious? Open to new paths? Ready to act? People make purchasing **decisions with feeling** as much as logic, so focus on feelings.



Recommended Resources

How do they feel? [Mapping your website visitors feelings](#) (free worksheet).

## 19. Keep content simple

Like this :)

Simple language reaches more people.

## 20. Hire a copywriter

If you employ one professional to help with your website, then make it a **talented copywriter**. Your sales come from messages. Messages come from words. Words come from either you or a copywriter. Your **words will be the centrepiece** of your whole website.

## 21. Spend creative time

Content creation and messaging is crucial, and you'll need plenty of brainstorming and quiet time to explore ideas about **what your audience needs to hear**, and how. Set aside a few hours per week to spend creating compelling content.

## 22. Draw your pages

Before you choose a platform, template, or design, you need to draw your page. Use the actual words you plan to use, not lorem ipsum (placeholder) text. Writing by hand is good for **keeping content brief!** And when it's time to transform your drawing into a web page, you'll be **designing around actual content**, not 'squeezing' the content into an ill-fitting design.

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## 23. Think mobile first

**51 per cent of website traffic** is on mobile devices—and growing! Traditional website design focuses on desktop experience, with mobile an afterthought. Big mistake! Drawing the mobile version first, and **focus on the experience of the mobile user**.

## 24. Plan 'scannable' content

People don't read web pages. They scan—they only stop to read when something catches their eye. So when you draw and create your website pages, **use strong, simple headers, and short sentences and paragraphs**. Use rows and columns to break up the content and make it easier to digest. 'Scannable' content gives the visitor a choice and power they love.

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- 25. Pay for experience
- 26. Own your domain
- 27. Use a CMS
- 28. Platform scale
- 29. Own your webhosting
- 30. Learn about SEO
- 31. Use a page builder
- 32. Follow layout principles
- 33. Be consistent

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## 25. Pay for experience

If you do need to hire someone to create your website, make sure they're the real deal! There are thousands of people who have created a single site in WordPress, SquareSpace or Wix and now call themselves web designers. **You do not want them building your site!** Get an experienced designer/developer—it'll save time and money.



**Recommended Resource:**  
[How to select a web design company](#)

## 26. Own your domain

Your domain is your web address. It's like the title to your land. **Purchase your domain name yourself**, then keep the login and verification details as you'd keep your land title. If you do get someone else to purchase it for you be sure they do it in your name and that you have the login details. Now **you'll always have control** of the fundamentals.



**Pro Tip:**  
Always use unique, high-quality passwords.  
[Learn more about basic data security.](#)

## 27. Use a CMS

Having a content management system (CMS) allows you to **update your website regularly**—refining your message and adding new content when you need to. You want **independence**, and to not be tied to costly developers. The solution? Often a website management platform, like WordPress, Squarespace, Wix or Weebly. These get better by the month, and are designed for non-technical users.

## 28. Platform scale

Choose a website platform that will grow with your business. Although a website review and perhaps rebuild is due every few years, it's much easier using the same platform. Some inspired googling will help you choose the platforms that are likely to be going strong when you next need to design on them.

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**Recommended Resource:**  
**The Ultimate**  
**Website Builder Guide (2017)**

## 29. Own your web hosting

Your web host holds your content online. It's like the house you build on your land. If you delegate the setup, make sure your account is in your name, then keep the login and verification details as you'd keep your house title. Again, it's control of the fundamentals.

We recommend [SiteGround](#).

## 30. Learn about SEO

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) increases unpaid visibility of websites in web searches (overwhelmingly Google). It's totally separate to paid advertising on Google or elsewhere. SEO happens both 'on-page' and 'off-page'.

**On-page SEO** means tweaking both the written content and HTML code on your pages in order to rank higher on searches. **Off-page SEO** refers to links and other external signals (and demands another blog post to fully explain!).

## 31. Use a Page Builder

Page builders empower you to create and design new text and image content. WordPress features page builders like **Divi**, Beaver Builder or Visual Composer. Some developers hate them, but they put **webpage layout into the hands of everyday users**. Platforms like Squarespace and Wix are essentially page builders with extra web functionality. Even if you hire a pro, make sure they use a builder so you can make changes later.

## 32. Follow layout principles

Proximity, WhiteSpace, Alignment, Contrast, Repetition



**Recommended Resources**  
**Beginning Graphic Design and Composition**

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### 33. Be consistent

Your content should be expressed in a consistent 'voice' or 'tone'. Mostly in the copy (writing), the voice forms the personality of your website. But whether in visual design or in copy, your 'voice' needs to present like a person who you meet and instantly trust—**someone authentic and believable**. A consistent voice becomes familiar and is more trustworthy.

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- 34. Make your website fast
- 35. Make your website secure
- 36. Test and test again
- 37. Promote your website
- 38. PROMOTE your website
- 39. 'Split-test' your pages
- 40. Measure, learn, update
- 41. Love your website

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## 34. Make your website fast

Load-times are absolutely crucial to website success. Google itself experienced a 20 per cent traffic drop years ago as a result of a 0.5-second loading delay! Page-load delays are an absolute website-killer, so a top priority is serving content to users fast. Page load speed is a **Google ranking factor**, so you can bet your competitors are working on this!

## 35. Make your website secure

**Hacking destroys websites and businesses every day—and increased 32% in 2016.** Don't be the latest victim. Your security starts with knowing the particular protections your web platform needs.

## 36. Test and test again

It only takes an hour or so to test your website, but sorting out issues created by not testing can take all day—especially if you have an aggressive launch plan. Create a Prelaunch Checklist! Test every button and every link. Make sure that forms can be submitted, purchases made, and free offerings downloaded. And of course, checkout how it looks on mobile.

## 37. Promote your website

A website without traffic is just 1's and 0's. It's time to put your Website Promotion Plan (see point x) into action. Whether it's SEO, content marketing, event marketing, viral marketing, Facebook or Google ads, social engagement, affiliate programs, surveys, or community building, it's time to drive some traffic to your site.



Recommended Resources

[The 19 Channels You Can Use to Get Traction](#)

[Traction Bullseye – Free Download](#)

## 38. PROMOTE your website!

That's NOT a typo! Repeat, and repeat again! Nothing is as important as **promoting your website**—driving traffic should be a key weekly task, well-resourced with your time, energy and money.

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### 39. 'Split-test' your pages

A 'split-test' or 'AB test' presents two forms of any given page to users, then tracks which page performs better. This is a secret weapon of smart players in the online market—especially for online sales. It's not easily done with platforms like Squarespace and Wix, but some **WordPress plugins** can make it a breeze.

Alternatively, use a landing page builder like **Instapage**.

### 40. Measure, learn, update

See your website as a living entity that needs you to keep in touch and look after it. Tools like Google Analytics, Heap, **Hotjar** or **Mouseflow** help understand visitor interactions. Your website is never 'set-and-forget'. Learning how to tweak and improve your website with analytics is a continuous process.

### 41. Love your website!

Love your website, and it'll love you back! Gift it with a plan for the coming month, 3 months, and 6 months. Court it with a 12 month imagination session, exploring **how it fits into your future business** that it's helped build. Planning regular reviews, fresh content, and scheduled updates are all ways to keep the love alive :).