

# Business Technology Program

## How-To Guide: Important Things to Consider When Building Your Own Website

Having the capacity to build your own website can save your business thousands of dollars. If, however, the site is built without the proper considerations, it could cost your business much more down the road.

### Questions To Ask

Before you start, ask yourself:

- What are the goals of your website?
- Will content need to be updated regularly?
- Who will update the website?
- Is there a call to action?
- What are the costs associated with running and maintaining the website?
- How will your visitors most likely view your website (desktops, tablets, smartphones, etc.)?

**Goals:** Understanding what you're attempting to achieve with your website should influence every decision you make during its construction. If you're using your website to sell a particular product, the design should funnel traffic to the point where the visitor is faced with a decision to make a purchase or leave. If the site is built for branding purposes, what content are you providing that will entice the visitor to return? Define your goals and design around them.

**Content:** Content is still king. You'll need to understand how your site's content is getting updated, who is updating it, the cost of content generation, and the frequency with which the content is updated.

**Costs:** In general, websites can be built and run on the cheap. However, there are several cost considerations, including hosting (using a third-party service or setting up your own server), domain registration, content creation, ecommerce systems, email accounts (some service providers do not provide unlimited email and charge a fee for additional addresses) and bandwidth capacity (some service providers charge based on bandwidth needs).

**Usage:** Think about who your customers and visitors will be and how they will want to use the site. For example, if you expect your website will be used on a lot of touch-screen devices, such as iPhones, eliminate (or at least minimize) the number of rollover items. On a touch device, there is no mouse to roll over an object. If you plan to allow visitors to post items on your site, who will monitor the activity?



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**SEO:** From the domain name you select to the titles of your webpages, all of these decisions help search engines rank your website. It's important to embed a good SEO strategy in the foundation of your website. Start with descriptive page titles that focus on your niche; then back that up with strong meta keywords and related content.

**Social integration (and other tools):** For many people, Facebook has become their homepage. Integrating Facebook and other social tools into your website is imperative. First, it provides a contemporary feel to your site (can you remember the last site you visited that didn't have a Facebook or Twitter button?). Second, these tools are an easy way for users to share the content of your site. Third, these tools are free and are extremely easy to implement. Here are tools to consider:

Name	Website	Price	Function
Facebook	<a href="http://www.facebook.com">www.facebook.com</a>	Free	To share and connect everything
Twitter	<a href="http://www.twitter.com">www.twitter.com</a>	Free	Live conversation, 140 characters at a time
Feedburner	<a href="http://www.feedburner.com">www.feedburner.com</a>	Free	Feed distribution, analytics
Linkedin	<a href="http://www.linkedin.com">www.linkedin.com</a>	Free	Social network connecting professionals
Flickr	<a href="http://www.flickr.com">www.flickr.com</a>	Free	Photo sharing service
YouTube	<a href="http://www.youtube.com">www.youtube.com</a>	Free	Video sharing service
Digg	<a href="http://www.digg.com">www.digg.com</a>	Free	Social sharing service
StumbleUpon	<a href="http://www.stumbleupon.com">www.stumbleupon.com</a>	Free	Social sharing service
AddThis	<a href="http://www.addthis.com">www.addthis.com</a>	Free	All-encompassing social sharing service

## Must-Have Web Site Features

- "About Us" page
- "Contact Us" page
- Site Map (for navigation and SEO purposes)
- FAQ
- Social Integration (It's free marketing)

