



## Website Creation Toolkit





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A solid website is essential in building an online presence. Depending on your company's needs, websites can range from simple promotional pages to a full-fledged e-commerce site. The key factors required in creating a successful website are:

- An attractive design that accurately reflects your business's image.
- A user-friendly and intuitive interface.
- An integrated business process that outlines the regular maintenance involved and the personnel responsible for updates.
- Relevant and informative website content.

The following sections provide a step-by-step guide that will help you create an effective website.

## Set Objectives

The first step is to determine what you would like the website to accomplish. A general rule is to start small and then scale up if required. Many companies invest plenty of time and money into building a flashy website with more functionality than is actually required. There are two main benefits from starting small: it allows you to test out the response from clients, and it ensures you have the proper procedures in place to manage your website.

A few questions to consider include:


- What is the purpose of the site?
- Who is your target audience? Are they comfortable with online applications?
- What look and feel would be suitable?
- Who are your major competitors? How can you make your website stand out?
- Will staff members maintain and update the website, or will you outsource this task?
- What is your budget?
- What is your timeline?
- What information would you like on your website?
- How should the information be organized?

## Domain Name

Finding an available domain name is one thing, finding a *good* and available domain name is another. If anyone has ever tried registering a website address, you know how difficult it can be to find a strong and available name (i.e. [www.YourName.com](http://www.YourName.com)).

A good domain name is:

- Easy to remember.
- Intuitive and related to your business.
- Easy to spell.
- Relatively short in length.



Strong content is the backbone of any successful website.

Once you have found a domain name, ensure that it is properly registered with a reputable company. Keep your access information in a secure area and remember to renew your domain name on time. If you would like some recommendations, **Sunriff** can point you towards a great company to register your domain name with.

## Develop Strong Content

A common mistake many companies make is to focus all of their energy on coming up with a “cool” design and neglecting the website content. While a flashy design may initially draw visitors to your website, strong (and new) content will draw them back again and again. When deciding what information to place on your website, start thinking about what sections and sub-sections the information should fall under.

Tips for Writing Strong Content:

- Keep it simple. Writing for the web is different than for print. Online readers tend to have shorter attention spans and scan the page quickly to gather information. Lengthy sentences or sections will discourage people from reading your content. Try to create brief sections to better organize and lay out the content.
- Look at the whole picture. How does text relate to graphics on the page? Do the two elements complement or contradict each other?
- Consider your audience. Ensure content is suitable and relevant to your audience.
- If your content is opinion-based, ensure readers are informed that it is not fact. A simple disclaimer at the bottom of the page should do the trick.

## Design

The main point of a website is to communicate information. Ensure the look and feel of your website is consistent with your message. An attractive, yet user-friendly design does wonders towards building your company’s image and credibility.

Here are a few design elements to consider:


### Usability

Is your website intuitive and user-friendly? An accessible design allows a new visitor to easily find the information he or she is looking for. Usability also encompasses page load time; if your website is bogged down by animation and effects, visitors may get frustrated or impatient waiting for the page to load.

### Type of website

The kind of website you decide to build will impact your design. There are three main types of websites:

- Promotional Website – also known as “brochure style,” this type of website promotes your products or services and provides information about your company. By far the most cost effective method, a promotional website is the first step towards building an online presence.



It is best to start off small and then grow your website later.

- Application Website – a step up from a promotional website, application websites allow for some interaction between visitors and the site. For example, visitors may enter a username and password to access account information.
- E-Commerce Website – a comprehensive website that enables visitors to complete transactions online with credit card information. This involves more complicated back-end development with databases and requires a large investment.

Many companies are eager to jump right into a full-fledged e-commerce site without considering the cost and upkeep required. Even simple promotional websites can generate sales. Consider the following scenario: a customer visits your website and is interested in your products/services. He or she then calls or emails to ask a question. The customer is happy with the answer and places an order—all this because your simple promotional website generated interest. So even though your website may not have a transactional component, it can still generate sales. A properly built promotional or application website can easily grow into an e-commerce website.

## Hosting

There are oodles of hosting companies out there. Each one has different services offered, therefore the cost to host a website ranges from free to about \$50/month. When choosing your hosting company, consider the following factors:

- Cost
- Types of services or features offered
- Reliability/Uptime – do they have a maximum number of visitors per month?
- Security
- Option to host applications if requested
- Customer Service

A commonly asked question is, “Would it be better to go with a local hosting company?” In a nutshell, the answer is...not necessarily. The main factor to consider is whether the company is trust-worthy and easily accessible should any problems occur. So if a hosting company in Timbuktu offers better services than a local company – go with the company in Timbuktu. Some businesses are simply more comfortable going with a local company so they can demand face-time if needed.

Keep in mind that you may experience a slightly faster download time if you go with a local hosting company and if the majority of your visitors are local. However, the benefits are marginal and would not outweigh the alternative of opting for a better service plan with a non-local hosting company.



Protecting privacy not only benefits your visitors, but also enhances your company's image.

## Privacy Legislation

Oh, the joys of privacy legislation! Technology is a beautiful thing, but with the added convenience and efficiency it brings, it also transmits a bunch of security issues.

If your website collects any personal information (i.e. any information that identifies an individual) for sales or email lists, you should familiarize yourself with privacy acts. The most common acts are the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) and the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA).

The main focus of any privacy act is to ensure the collectors of the information, such as you, are using the information for a *reasonable* purpose. A good practice is to obtain direct or implied consent when collecting people's personal information. A simple privacy statement on your website explaining how information is collected and what it is used for should be posted.

Why should you care about privacy legislation? Well, for starters, having lax privacy policies reflects poorly on your company. All it takes is one disgruntled customer to create a publicity nightmare. Another good reason for enforcing strict privacy policies is to avoid the legal mess that would occur if an investigation from a privacy commissioner were to take place. So, make sure your bases are covered!

## SEO Strategy

Search Engine Optimization (SEO), also known as website marketing is a vital part of your online marketing strategy. When a website is "optimized" it contains relevant keywords, content and headers on each page to ensure major search engines are finding your website. When implemented correctly, SEO helps drive targeted traffic to your website. SEO is an in-depth topic that could perhaps be covered in a textbook, but the following points provide a brief overview of the process involved in attracting visitors to your site.

- Determine a short list of the most relevant keywords for each page. When executed properly, this tells search engines that your site has plenty of relevant content and therefore increases your ranking pertaining to the keywords you have chosen.
- Ensure the title of the page accurately describes the content.
- Insert the keywords into the meta tag (description) on each page.
- Ensure the headings on each page are loaded with keywords.
- Evaluate the keyword density in comparison to the total number of words on each page and aim to strike a balance. Too many keywords can make your website look like "spam."
- Bold or italicize keywords or phrases that appear in the content.
- Add external links on pages whenever possible to increase your ranking.



### Sunriff Web Services:

- Web Design
- Web Development
- Content Creation
- Content Management
- SEO Strategy
- Online Marketing

For more information, please visit [www.sunriff.com](http://www.sunriff.com).