

SMALL BUSINESS WEBSITE BASICS



Overview

Having a website has become almost a requirement for small businesses. However, when it comes to setting up a website, there are so many options, choosing what to do is often confusing for a non-technical small or independent business owner. This guide is designed to take some of the mystery out of that decision process.

Why do you need a website?

Today, most small businesses need an online presence as much as they need a phone or mailbox. Customers and clients -- current and potential -- expect you to have one. For some small businesses, a website has become the primary selling tool -- a means to access inventory or collaborate on client projects. For other small businesses, a website is little more than a directory listing with static contact information. Other small businesses have launched constantly updated weblogs or detailed service-oriented resources. From simple to complex, websites have become a requirement for doing business in many industries.

In addition, most people begin their search for a product online using a search engine like Google, Yahoo or MSN. Having a website, [especially a web site that is designed to be an effective Internet marketing tool](#), can be very valuable for small businesses. Without the right web site, people will not be able to find your business.

Should you hire a developer or do it yourself?

Option 1: Do it yourself

PROS: You'll save money by doing it yourself, not to mention have complete control over the look and feel of the site. If you make yourself the administrator, you have the freedom to update and make changes whenever you feel it's necessary. If you have a working knowledge of basic web design there are free tools that will allow you to create a professional looking website on your own.

CONS: If you don't know much about computers and/or web design it could take a while to learn everything and get your site up and running. Also, if you choose to become an administrator, you will have to spend even more time dedicated to making any updates and changes to the site.