
Websites explained

For many small business owners or managers, investing in a website is daunting. Whether it's your first website or a replacement one, you could find you've made an expensive mistake if you don't know what to look for or what questions to ask.

We've written this simple guide to help you through the process. You're not under any obligation to come to us here at WEB-right for your new website, although we'd be delighted to help you if you do.

How much does it cost?

This is the first question everybody asks and there's no easy answer. The cost depends on the size of your site (the number of pages) and what 'bells and whistles' you want added to it.

Essentially it's much the same as going to your local supermarket. The more shopping you put in your trolley, the more you'll pay at the checkout. If you have a small budget, you have to put fewer things in your trolley.

Your chosen web developer will need information like the number of pages you want, whether you want an online shop and a picture gallery or whether you want people to be able to sign-up for email newsletters, etc, before giving you a price. If this isn't established at the beginning, you could find you're faced with extra charges you hadn't bargained on, or a site which doesn't do what you need.

All the websites WEB-right builds are designed to grow with your business. You can start with a small basic site and, as your company grows and you have more money in your budget, you can add more pages and bells and whistles. This saves you having to start again if you find you need a bigger site with more refinements further down the line.

Why do you need a website?

Nowadays, people look online for almost everything they want to buy. You probably do that yourself, whether it's from your PC or a smart phone. Sometimes people are looking for information before they buy so they can make an informed decision. Some are looking to buy their chosen product there and then.

Years ago, as consumers, when we wanted to buy something, we would look at adverts in newspapers and magazines, or at leaflets or sales letters that came through our door. Now, the first place we look is on Google. And if you're not there and your competitors are, guess where that prospective customer will go?

Cheap websites!

A word of warning! We regularly see and hear people saying they want a cheap website.

When it comes to websites, like most things, you only get what you pay for. Your website is a marketing tool and must earn its keep. If it doesn't help you generate more business and help increase your sales, there is no point in having one. If you want steak for dinner, you wouldn't buy a pack of supermarket value mince.

While finding someone offering to build you a website for £100 might seem a great deal, there's a high chance you will be wasting your money. Of course there are some exceptions, but a cheap website will typically look unprofessional, be badly built, and won't do the job it's intended for.

How long does a website last?

Websites go out-of-date, so when you invest in a website, it won't last forever.

Changing fashions

Website fashions change and in time your website might start to look dated. Unless you're a slave to fashion, this might not worry you greatly. But if your site is old, you might want to give it a new look and this could mean starting again with a new website.

WEB-right's websites are designed to be easily updated to save you the expense of starting again with a new site. Even the look of your site can be changed to make it more contemporary.

Website security

Security is the most important reason for updating your website. Website hacking is a big problem and sites built on older systems are more at risk. A hacker can hijack your website, infect it with viruses and do a lot of expensive damage to your site and your reputation.

We also offer regular security updates to all our client's websites which significantly reduces the risk of their sites being hacked.

Types of websites

It's very important you can update your website yourself. If you can't, you will have to pay your web developer to make changes for you and this is expensive. A few years ago, the average website couldn't be updated unless you had specialist skills and expensive professional software. Today's websites are different.

CMS website

Nowadays, most websites use a CMS (content management system) so you can update them yourself.

All the sites build by WEB-right are built on 'WordPress', which is a very easy to use online CMS system. You can update your site yourself without the need for any software - all you need is an internet connection. You can make the updates from your PC or Mac, or even from a tablet. We give you a guide to using the system and we are just a phone call away if you need help.

You might come across website systems called Joomla and Drupal. Although these use CMS and you can update them yourself, they are considerably more complicated to use than the WordPress system. If you have reasonable technical skills, these systems might be suitable for you. But if not, we wouldn't recommend them.

Self-build websites

If you have a very limited budget, you might want to consider an online self-build website system. In our opinion, these can be a better option than paying someone to build you a 'cheap' website!

These systems vary, but some are free to build a basic site. They often charge a monthly fee for some of their 'premium' features. You also pay more if you need more hosting space (we talk about hosting below). You build these sites online yourself using a template. You choose your template and you can usually adapt it with different colours and images.

While these systems can make good starter websites, there are disadvantages. As we said earlier, when it comes to websites, you get what you pay for. They are restrictive and can look very 'home-made' if you're not good at design. It can also take a while to master the system so you need to factor in the time it takes to figure out how they work.

Most importantly, they have limitations when it comes to SEO (search engine optimisation - we talk about this later in this guide too). But overall, they are a reasonable starting point if you don't have the money to spend on a professionally-built website.

If you're thinking about building your own site with one these systems, www.squarespace.com is one of the better ones. You might also like to look at www.mrsite.com and www.weebly.com.

Mobile 'optimisation'

These days, websites need mobile optimisation. This means people must be able to view your site on a mobile phone. More and more people are using phones and other mobile devices (e.g. tablets) rather than computers to search online. If your site isn't mobile-friendly, the potential visitor will pretty soon give up and go elsewhere - probably to your competitor's website. A site that isn't mobile-friendly can be almost impossible to see on a phone screen!

If you have an existing website and access to your visitor statistics (e.g. Google Analytics or Statcounter) take a look and see if it tells you how many people have visited your site using 'mobile browsers'. If a high percentage of your visitors are coming from mobiles and your site doesn't work properly, you will be losing a lot of opportunities.

The percentage of mobile traffic is likely to vary depending on what business you're in. Consumer-type businesses selling to the public (e.g. hair dressers or online shops), are likely to have a higher percentage of mobile traffic than an office-based service company. This is quite logical. If your prospective customer is a business and likely to spend most of their day in an office sitting at a PC, that's what they'll use to search Google.

On the other hand, when that office worker leaves work and goes home, he/she is likely to switch to their iPhone if they want to shop online for their own personal needs.

Some website developers will charge you extra if you want mobile optimisation, and that charge will vary. All the sites built by WEB-right include standard mobile optimisation.

If you're buying a new website, be sure to ask about mobile optimisation, if there is a charge, and how much it will be.

Google and mobile websites

There has been a lot of scaremongering about Google and websites that aren't mobile friendly. You might have been told that websites will vanish from all Google's listings completely if they can't be viewed on a mobile. That is rubbish!

What Google **HAS** changed is the way it ranks sites when someone searches on a mobile. If your site doesn't pass Google's 'Mobile-Friendly Test' and if it's difficult to view on a mobile, it will fall down the rankings in all Google searches from a mobile device. But your site will still be found as normal if that person searches on a computer.

Buying a domain name

If this is your first website, you will need a domain name. This is the name of your website, e.g. www.mywebsitesname.co.uk. Domain names are sold by online website companies such as www.simplereg.com or www.123reg.com.

When you go online to buy your domain name, the system will check your chosen name hasn't already been taken by someone else. There are millions of websites, and millions more names are already reserved, so it might not be easy to find a name you like. You can add hyphens (for example, www.web-right.co.uk) or you can use a combination of words, letters and numbers which will help.

When you buy a domain name, be aware, you don't own it for ever. Your domain name has to be renewed, normally at yearly or two-yearly intervals. If you don't remember to renew it, your website will vanish from the internet until you pay the renewal fee.

The domain registrar (the company you bought the name from) will send you email reminders before your renewal fee is due. But if you don't see them or you ignore them and you don't pay your renewal, your website will disappear.

Eventually your domain name will be put back into circulation and could be bought by someone else.

Many of our clients rely on us to manage their website domain names for them. That way they don't have to worry about remembering to renew their domains on time and their websites going down.

It's not just small businesses that forget to renew their domain names. Not that long ago, Halfords forgot and their website vanished! They paid the renewal fee once they realised what had happened and their website was restored, but it probably cost them a lot of money in sales while it was down!

Website hosting

All websites have to be 'hosted'. Think of hosting as paying rent for your website to 'live' on the internet. Hosting prices vary enormously from very cheap (yes, cheap again and the same applies) to very expensive. Your hosting is normally paid annually in advance, or monthly, depending on your hosting company.

Beware of cheap hosting offers. Although it might seem like a good deal to only pay a couple of pounds a month, you need a service that's secure, reliable and provides you with good support. If there is a problem and your website goes down, you don't want to wait for days or even weeks to have it fixed.

Some web developers and hosting companies charge large sums of money for hosting, often two or three times more than average. We've come across companies charging in excess of £500 a year to host one small website. If you have been quoted for hosting and you think it's expensive, ask exactly what you're getting for your money and do some like-for-like price comparisons.

Although WEB-right provides hosting, we only host sites we build ourselves and this is done through a reputable British company with UK-based servers. Our annual hosting charges depend on the size of your website and how busy it is. Our average fee is normally between £80 and £150 a year (plus VAT). The cost of your first year's hosting is included in the price you pay for your website, so there is nothing more to pay until year two.

SEO (Search Engine Optimisation)

You might have heard the term SEO. It stands for search engine optimisation. This is the 'process' of making your website work so it's found by Google and the other search engines.

SEO is a big subject and there are a lot of myths surrounding it. It is not so technical or scary as a lot of people will have you believe. The most important part of SEO is the writing on your site (known as copywriting) and we will talk about this later in this guide.

SEO traps to avoid!

When it comes to SEO there are a lot of cowboys and unscrupulous people about. If you don't know anything about SEO or websites, it's easy to get sucked in. It could cost you a lot of money and, in some cases, cause damage to your website.

1. Website owners regularly get emails from SEO companies offering their services. **DELETE them!** These are spam and if you take them up, you will be throwing your money away. In the worst case scenario, these companies can damage your website so badly that Google will blacklist it.
2. Some web developers will charge you a fee to list your website with the search engines. **DON'T pay it!** Google doesn't need your website to be listed and you shouldn't have to pay for this. Google will find your site quite easily on its own.
3. Some unknowing or unscrupulous people might suggest you put 'invisible' text on your website to help the SEO. They will tell you to put text on the pages of your website written in the same colour as the background so it can't be seen. While the human eye might not be able to see this, Google's systems will. So please **DON'T do this**. Your site could be penalised or even blacklisted if you do.

If you work with someone on your website's SEO, make sure it's someone reputable who knows what they are doing.

Using photographs on your website

Photos are a great way to brighten up your website. They make the pages look interesting. If you sell products, having photographs is essential so potential customers can see what they're buying.

If you are a service company, photos can be a little more difficult. For example, what sort of picture would an accountant use? Pictures of spreadsheets and tax returns would be pretty dull! Service companies often use abstract images or sometimes landscapes of the area where they're based.

Be aware, you must own or have permission to use any photographs or images on your website. You cannot just copy pictures off the internet or other people's websites. This is called 'plagiarism' and is theft of someone else's 'intellectual property' and will get you into trouble. When you're caught (and the likelihood is, you will be), you could face legal action.

Hire a professional photographer

In an ideal world, the best photographs are ones which are exclusive to you and taken by a professional photographer. But we appreciate not everyone has the budget to pay for photography.

Taking photos yourself

If you take photos yourself, don't just take one or two - take loads! That way you have a better chance of getting some really good ones. Before you take the photos, take a long, hard look at the background and make sure there is nothing in it to spoil the pictures. We see a lot of otherwise good pictures that are spoilt by empty coffee cups, kid's toys or waste paper bins (or worse) in the background!

Using an image library

There are image libraries online where you can buy photographs to use on your website. Although you 'buy' the images, you don't actually 'own' them. Instead, you pay to use them under license. The license is specific to you, so you can't give the images to other people to use.

Prices vary, but www.123rf.com is low cost and has a good selection. You'll find plenty more if you shop around the internet.

Copywriting for websites

As we said earlier, the copy (the words on your website) is the most important part of your site's SEO. The copy is also very important to the people visiting your website. That's what tells them what you do and how your products / services will benefit them.

When it comes to writing copy, you have two choices:

- **Using a copywriter**

You can engage the services of a specialist copywriter to write the copy for your website. WORD-right, WEB-right's copywriting service, specialises in SEO copywriting and has a proven track record helping sites perform well. SEO copywriting is a skilled and time-consuming job and this can cost you as much as the website itself. However, it will make a significant difference to your site's performance. It will also save you a lot of time and hassle!

- **Writing your own copy**

Many small business owners opt to write their own copy because they either don't have the budget for a copywriter or they don't know there are such services available.

If you decide to write your own copy, you might find it hard to know what to write about and how to go about it. It is also likely to take you quite a long time.

Please be aware, like photographs, it is against the law to copy and paste content from someone else's website to put on your own.

Copywriting training

WEB-right's sister company Copywriting Training Ltd (CTL) can help if you decide to write your own website copy. CTL runs affordable short copywriting courses which are delivered completely online.

One of these courses is [SEO copywriting](#). This course will teach you the basics of SEO and how to go about writing for your website. The cost of the course is just £115.00 and you have access to the course material for a year. Because the course is delivered online, you can sign-up and start it at any time.

If you don't know how to go about writing the copy for your website, this SEO copywriting course will make it easier for you!

Engaging us to build your website

WEB-right has been building effective small business websites since 2009 and has a wealth of knowledge and experience. Included in our services are:

- Affordable starter websites to grow with your business
- SEO support
- SEO copywriting
- Website packages

Spread payments

If you engage WEB-right to build your website and you commission our copywriting service, a spread payment option* is available. This allows you to budget for your site by paying a fixed amount each month by Direct Debit. Ask us for more information. You can phone us on 02392 503742 or email enquiries@web-right.co.uk.

*Terms & conditions apply.

Finally ...

If you're considering having a new website and there is anything you're not sure about, give us a call. Advice costs nothing and we're happy to help.