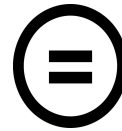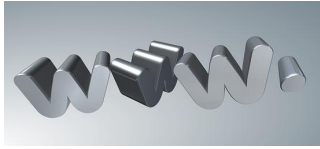# Website vs Facebook – why do I need a website?

 + **=** Your complete web presence

You have your Facebook page up with lots of followers, so why would you consider a website? The argument in having a business website working alongside your Facebook page is worth discussing. This sheet is designed to help you understand the differences between both systems and how they can compliment each other to promote your business or interest.

To start with, there are some valid reasons why you should be running a business website alongside your social media:-

1. A website is akin to your digital store-front. It's like having a physical address for your business. People expect to find your contact information, products & services, images, reviews, pricing etc. It's like your front store window.
2. A website ranks organically in search engines; meaning, quality content on a website ranks higher in search results than if you were to pay for ads (i.e. PPC) and force your way to the top. Facebook by itself doesn't provide any convincing SEO ranking points.
3. Facebook will limit the amount of content. A website holds none of those limits.
4. Creative freedom – Facebook requires you to operate inside their creative restrictions; your website offers endless possibilities, on your own terms.
5. A website package can provide a seemingly endless array of analytics, visitor stats etc to monitor how your website is performing. Facebook offers Facebook stats; a highly restrictive capability to track your potential customers.
6. Total control – Facebook governs restrictions and changes that they wish to exact on you (social media networks have been known to shut down before too). With your own website you have full control over creative processes and direction.

*"There is no denying that Facebook is a great social media site for businesses looking to expand their digital marketing strategies. However, Facebook should not be your home base. Facebook should **support your website**, helping to drive customers and leads to a unique, highly functional location, where you have all of the control."* [4]
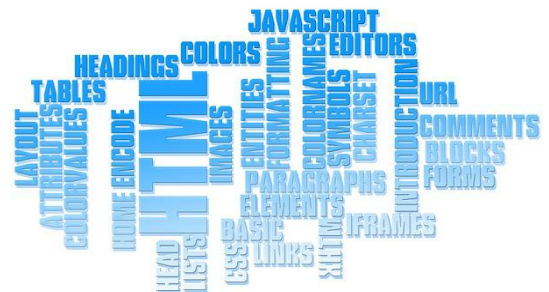
… in other words, the website forms the basis for all publicly available business data, the heart of your marketing push, while your Facebook page provides interactivity with potential customers and followers.

Questions to ask yourself about setting up both a Facebook page and a website:

– **What's your purpose?** If you're just starting out, have small tidbits of interest and not too much information to provide, then Facebook may be your first point of call. It's only optimised for small quantities of data and not lengthy diatribes, datasheets or project material. However if you have plenty of products and data, and a future of changes, then you'll need a more structured website where you have room to expand.

> *"A simplified way to look at it is that your website is where all your content ultimately lives, and Facebook is a place you can promote/discuss/share what you're up to with it." (Kate McMillan, 2010).* [6]

– **Who is your audience?** Believe it or not, not everyone is inside Facebook just yet. Those in Facebook want to converse with you. If your business is of a dynamic nature then a static page on Facebook is of no use.

– **How to handle SEO?** Your website provides the capability to research and utilise keywords and SEO techniques to enhance your business listing. Facebook organises you in to common interest groups – Facebook entirely dictates how you are found and listed. A website is a universal element; Facebook takes a more focussed approach to SEO and won't help your main search engine ranking at all.

– **Facebook's limitations?** When you create pages in Facebook you're competing inside Facebook's system against many other business similar to yours on the same playing field and, literally, pixel space on the screen. On the other hand your website pits you across the entire Internet. You don't want to appear on the same business page alongside other business ads.

– **A website's limitations?** Generally speaking a well-designed website is going to take longer than an afternoon to construct, even for someone with some decent coding skills & nouse. Alternatively there's now a lot of help from some excellent Content Management Systems (CMS) such as Wordpress, Joomla, Drupal etc to speed up time from design to end product. These CMS products account for SEO very well.

For best effectiveness employ both systems in tandem to get your message across – use Facebook for those prepared for plenty of conversation and interaction with an audience for easily shareable information, alongside a website for your complete project, lots of structure, calls to action for items and services and full control over your branding and appearance. A Facebook page is a great place to get interest flowing while your website is being built.

Do you have a one-off event happening? Then Facebook might be your friend. You can incorporate RSVPs, use calendars and the share button to build followers. The same goes for those wanting a short or finite shelf life for a product range (for example). Facebook can work as a promotional strategy for a product, or line of products, and building enthusiasm but ultimately you want viewers to go back to your website to see what the fuss is all about.

Did you know that when you upload data and information to a Facebook page you no longer have ownership of that content? It becomes Facebook's property. In the last few years Mark Zuckerberg and his Facebook team have made some changes that affected lots of business listings positively, but also negatively. You have very little comeback if something they change in the system affects your listing,outside of your country's censorship laws, but that won't happen with your own website.

The Pros and Cons of Websites and Facebook

	Pros	Cons
Facebook	- quick and free - low commitment - global - engagement - branding - new pages are easy - limited eCommerce	- limited design - open forum - limited reporting tools - lack of ownership - advertising conflicts
Website	- cost effective - credibility - full control - better marketing - reduced overhead - 24-hour availability	- maintenance - increased complexity - more marketing effort

If you already have a website then a social media link will improve your existing organic search success. If you already have a Facebook page then you will need a website to establish the basis for your overall online presence and start to rank in search engines more effectively.

Gumtree Computer Services can help you design, build and implement your new web presence. Generally it's a two-stage process – the web presence is installed and then we concentrate on developing ongoing SEO success – a process that has no guarantees and can easily take from weeks to months to begin to see results.

Addendum - Recently Facebook launched a push called "Local Awareness ads" targeting local areas, which is handy but it's not a free service and targets only specific demographics, namely location, age and gender demographics. [8]

Many of these words have been borrowed from researched, credible, alternative locations (listed where possible) as a discussion supported by the web design and SEO communities.

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