

Why do I need a business website?

Running a business nowadays requires diversified marketing and advertising strategies. If you're not getting your image out there you could be overlooked by potential customers. Costs and effectiveness of advertising your business dramatically differ, depending on methods used to get the word out there.

Costs to connect with your audience can range widely but one of the best strategies is to establish an online web presence. Second only to radio advertising, running your business with an online presence is the cheapest method to reach the greatest number of potential customers. You may be surprised to hear that advertising in printed news media is the most expensive method, second only to direct mailing (cost to reach 1000 users) [1] but it has its place.

There are good reasons why you should be considering a functional and efficient web presence for your business:

1. **Customer expectations** – nowadays with the Internet's almost universal market penetration it's vital that you have a presence online. With more than 80% preferring to search the likes of Google over and above asking friends & colleagues for referrals it pays to be found. Customers now expect to find your business details online.
2. **Credibility** – a business needs to look professional and confident to attract potential customers. If you run a well-designed website and an online presence that matches your visual marketing then it's a professional look. An engaging and quality website could make the difference between you and your competitors.

WEBSITE

3. **Open for business 24/7** – you may close your doors at 5pm but your website provides a marketing experience for your customers long after you've gone home. You're allowing your potential customers to interact with your business and make purchases in their own time. Best of all is that your audience is global.

4. **“Competitive necessity”** [2] - in most industries nowadays you'll find businesses are listing online to take advantage of that global audience. If you're not listed alongside, or above, your competitors then you could well be left behind – it's a level playing field, at last! More than half small businesses still don't have websites yet (in 2015) so why not beat them to it? [4]

5. **Static vs dynamic** – printed advertising is static but a website is inherently dynamic and doesn't have a deadline for changes. A website never stops evolving and growing, the task made easier for you by employing a web design expert to work alongside your business

6. **Feedback** – you may also choose to employ the use of social media alongside your website. This gives your business the opportunity for instant feedback about your products & services and also provides a social network for obtaining further endorsements and potential customers who wouldn't have found you otherwise. Feedback can then be channelled back to your website.

WEBSITE DESIGN

- ☒ Home
- ☐ About us
- ☐ Services
- ☐ Portfolio
- ☐ Contact
- ☐ ...



7. **Local marketing, start small** – there is a strong emphasis inside search engines like Google to support your local business presence. Indeed most of your potential customers are now searching Google, Bing etc for local products & services, over and above asking friends and reading through magazines & newspapers. Your emphasis on being a reliable and reputable local business will then allow you to expand further afield with your quality web presence.



8. **Cost of advertising** – probably one of your most important issues when you employ a quality website designer with a comprehensive ongoing maintenance contract is that you're in good hands whenever maintenance is necessary. It's not something you should have to worry about – your website maintenance contract should take care of all that nerdy stuff for you. The potential for return on a well-planned, attractive, and functional, website will outweigh the initial set-up costs. This becomes your online brochure with the widest audience.

9. **Forewarned is forearmed** – with a comprehensive and efficient website, full of data and information about your business products & services, you're giving your potential customers the opportunity to learn more about your business, thereby effectively adding value to said business. You'll lose the tyre-kickers and gain serious inquiries. Customers love freebies, and if you're offering additional information without charging them for it, then you'll be very popular! You can also offer the likes of warranties, and terms as an instant reference.

10. **Tax deductions** – every small and medium business loves hearing this term. Although tax laws are far from simple there is a distinct possibility that your web presence may be either fully or partially tax deductible, come tax time. Rather than take our word for it ask your accountant about the legalities and possibilities.

11. **Business loans and goals** – a well-designed and run website will be advantageous to show your banking manager if they ask to see it, as a sign of your progress & intentions. When it comes to rewriting your business plan you will find your website helpful in structuring your plan.

12. **Customer support** – your website will provide current information on products & services to customers & potentials without having to reprint, redistribute or mail everyone; they can see your up-to-date information instantaneously. A FAQ section can answer commonly asked questions and save yourself lots of time on the phone.

13. **Website and email address** – a business website will allow you to supply a valid, matching and professional email address – a more professional look.

14. **Your online voice** – running a website for your business or interest group, blog etc gives you a voice to speak about your own business, the industry, your interests, skills and specialities. It can showcase your portfolio and even host your CV.

15. **Website vs directory listings** – a business directory listing is only half the story; it may give address, phone number and business name but your website is going to provide the overall story for your potential customers. A business directory will guide your customers to your website for more information about your business or interest group.



16. **Ownership** – when you place an ad somewhere it's valid for the time that you paid for, but then it's gone. If you advertise in a social media column they own your data and decide how its presented. When you run a business or interest group website it's entirely yours, it contains your information, in your own format and style, in the way you want it to be seen with as little or as much detail as is required. You dictate where it goes and for how long.

With a well-designed and targeted website, employing a suitable SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) regime, you can now take on the big boys on a level playing field using one of the most economically beneficial forms of marketing for your business. Your new website will become one of your most powerful business tools. If you don't have a website then you're losing business to competitors that do. Your website will quickly weed out the tyre-kickers from genuine customers out there.

Gumtree Computer Services works with you to establish a web presence suitable for your growing business, but unlike other designers we also specialise in ongoing maintenance of your valuable marketing tool, a feature often overlooked once the job is initially done. We will look after your web presence so you can get on doing what you do best.



Some helpful statistics to sway your decision-making:

- more than 2.4 billion people use the Internet every day, 90% of them having purchased online in the past 12 months;
- the Internet is non-demographic-specific and covers all possible potential customer groups
- by Dec 2014 there were 12.5 million Internet subscribers in Australia [5]
- In 2014 usage of mobile devices in Australia rose to 21 million but mobile data usage jumped by 91% [6]
- Australian Twitter users count 2.8million, LinkedIn = 3.1million, Google+ = 60,000, Pinterest = 355,000, Instagram = 4million, Facebook = 14million [7], [8]
- search engine usage – Google = 93.65%, all others = 6.35% [7]
- by 2016 more than half the commerce \$ spent in the USA (e.g.) will be web-influenced [9]
- 64% of smartphone owners shop for goods & services online [10]

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