



# W65

**WORKSHOP**65

BRANDING | WEB DESIGN | SO MUCH MORE...

A HANDY STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO DESIGNING AND  
BUILDING A NEW WEBSITE OR UPDATING YOUR  
EXISTING SITE AND IMPROVING ONLINE PRESENCE

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# W65 – A WEBSITE GUIDE

A HANDY STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO DESIGNING AND BUILDING A NEW WEBSITE OR UPDATING YOUR EXISTING SITE AND IMPROVING ONLINE PRESENCE

## 1

### BRANDING

You might be starting from scratch or you may have been trading for a while and already have a business brand look and feel you are happy with. Whatever stage you are at, it is important that the website establishes a clear brand recognition online that instantly identifies you and delineates you from the competition:

- How will I represent my brand through imagery? – Ideally images, messaging, colours etc. should be aligned across all digital and traditional marketing although it doesn't need to match, consumers need to be able to identify it's the same brand everywhere they see you.
- Do I already have a strong brand or does my existing look and feel need updating/expanding for better online use?
- Does this brand include a logo set, colour palette, font guides and support imagery?

## 2

### WEBSITE AUDIENCE

First of all you need to ask and answer some fundamental questions to set clear goals on what you want the website to do and achieve:

- Who is the website aimed at?
- What are my potential users/customers looking for?
- Is it available elsewhere, who is this competition (if any), are they successful and why?
- What can I offer to stand out from this competition (what are my unique selling points USP's)?



**REMEMBER:** If you need help fulfilling any of the points in this guide [WORKSHOP65](#) are here for you! We'll take you through all of these stages, as standard, as part of our website design service.

## WEBSITE REQUIREMENTS

Start by detailing out a list of requirements, what you want the website to do, what you want to show, how you want it to function. Think long term, a good website should last 3-6 years depending on complexity:

- What does the website need to do – is it purely an information point or is it directly selling a service(s) and/or product(s)?
- Do I need a shopfront or payment system – is yes, what do I need this system to do and how do I plan the management it?
- Do I need a booking system – again how should this work and how will it be managed?
- Will you need to source any specialist coding or third party add-on systems to achieve your required functionality?
- Do I need a CMS (Content Management System), how will the site content be updated?
- Are you going to hold customer data? – Data needs to be secure, taken and held according to GDPR and for any orders VAT and regulatory laws may apply.

## SITEMAP

The next stage is to work through and then organise content into a structure to best achieve the goals set-out previously. This includes:

- Produce an easy and clear to understand sitemap plan outlining all required functionality, text and imagery content for each page and how these pages link both together and to any external content or other websites. Most important pages on the top navigation, ideally not more than 2-3 clicks to get to where ever you want the user to be.
- Focus on how this works on mobile, most websites are viewed on mobile these days so site build and design should focus here.
- Text content gathering – allow enough time for copy writing/editing its more time consuming than you think and its important not just for the site visitor but for Google and SEO.
- Gathering of all imagery and/or video content needed (including editing & retouching for web usage) including sourcing any additional images needed through either stock sites or photography.
- Generation of any required graphic content (diagrams, maps, and infographics etc).

## WEBSITE BUILD PLATFORM

Once you have a preferred design layout, all your content is together and functionality needed is decided, it's now time to choose the build platform that's best for you. Note: If you are holding customer data of any kind, data security and site security should be a high consideration.

Choose the option that's best for your websites individual needs/ functionality, your personal skills (if building yourself) and importantly your budget! Some available options are:

- **ONLINE BUILD PLATFORMS** – self hosting. This is presently the best recommended, cost effective option for most small to medium size businesses. Can be easily built and daily managed by chosen designer or yourself with generally easy to use CMS's (top 4 listed):
  - **WIX** – regularly rated best overall, wide range of features, expandable, inbuilt SEO wizard, good security with inbuilt site back-up and good customer support.
  - **Squarespace** – best for creative/flexible website layouts, good security, good SEO.
  - **Weebly** – easy, simple, but purely template based, lacks reusable photo storage.
  - **GoDaddy** – best for quick builds, but again heavily template focussed therefore limited flexibility.
- **CUSTOM CODED BUILD** – by designer/developer/agency hosted on their or clients own 3rd party hosting company account. Most expensive option but best for highly complex, large websites where a custom CMS (content management system) may be needed for day to day running together with associated product/stock management systems.
- **WORDPRESS PLATFORM** – generally hosted via a 3rd party hosting company account. A popular platform but requires an reliable and experienced developer to properly set-up and build a custom design layout (outside of its base template system) to avoid a minefield of later management and functionality issues.



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## DOMAIN NAMES

If you already have a registered domain name that has been trading for a while you can skip this step as migrating or redirecting any domain is a simple task. If not, you might want to leave registering a domain until you choose a build platform or hosting option as many include these within their basic packages. Whatever you do remember these basic points:

- **Keep it simple** – you want your domain name to be easy to find. Don't overcomplicate it in an effort to be 'different.' It helps from an SEO point to have your company name within the URL.
- **Make it short and snappy** – avoid hyphens or special spellings (unless it's your brand name) your domain name needs to be memorable!
- **Reflect your site and it's content** – This helps reinforce your site's identity, making it easier to find and avoids confusion!
- **Choose a suitable extension** – .com, .co.uk, .co (+ country code), .org domains are the most common, again keep it simple.

## DESIGN LOOK & FEEL

Before you start building your website or pick a random template from an online platform – that makes you look just like everyone else! – it's very important to take time to produce a design look and feel that works best both for your brand and your content/products/services:

- Mobile friendly layouts are just as important (if not more so) as desktop, so all content should be designed to work here first.
- Ready to use templates can work in some cases, but most of the time they are at best a compromise and at worst will not work at all with your particular content and functionality required.
- Careful consideration should be placed on all navigation within the website, minimise where possible and place where users expect to find it. Multiple routes to pages and content are always a plus.
- Produce 'wireframe' layouts of important pages to make sure your content and functionality flows in a clear path for the user to follow and not just confuse with randomly placed buttons and graphics.
- Getting the right design, look, feel and layout of your website offline first can save you endless time and frustration in the build.

## BASIC SEO

As you build your site on your chosen platform, you'll start hearing the term SEO a lot. SEO stands for *Search Engine Optimisation* – this is a way of maximising your site's chances of getting found and ranked highly using popular search engines such as Google.

For a new site, don't expect to rank highly straight away! Google regularly tweaks its search algorithms so the best rule to follow is to write content that is interesting to your customers, clear to read, understand and ideally encourages an action, purchase/download/request for more details.

- **Keywords** – Carry out keyword research to discover what people are typing into search engines, and therefore which keywords you should target and include within your final page content.
- **Page Structure** – Make sure your page titles are clear, relevant, and as descriptive as possible, giving the user a clear idea of what they can expect to find on the page. Use headings to break up your content – remember to use the header tags *H1* for your main page heading, *H2* for primary headings, *H3* for subheadings, etc.
- **Meta Data** – *Meta Data* is simply the text you see on the search results for a particular page. The blue hyperlinked title is called the *Meta Title* and the small piece of descriptive text that appears underneath it is called the *Meta Description*. You should make these keyword focused, persuasive and as informative as possible. These descriptions should be unique for each page.
- **Alt Text** – When you upload images (ensuring they have been optimised for web use), you'll have the option to add *Alt Text* to each image. This is the text that search engines use to recognise the image content, so it should briefly describe what is in the picture, this all helps assess how relevant your images are and improves search results.
- **Links** – Links are pathways between page and content. Search engines have bots that regularly crawl your website helping them to understand its structure and hierarchy. *Backlinks* are links to your site from another website, the more of these *Backlinks* you can build the better.
- **URLs** – The *URL* is the website address for each page. The key to creating good *URLs* is to keep them short, descriptive and relevant to the actual page content.

**NOTE:** There are endless lists of SEO factors, techniques and tactics to improve your search engine rankings. Most online website build platforms come with in-depth help guides for SEO. Some like *WIX* even have an inbuilt SEO wizard to assist and guide you through everything.

## FURTHER MARKETING

### GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE

Managing a *Google Business Profile* is a powerful extra tool to help promote any business (especially locally) and also improve its associated website SEO. But it is essential that you gain full ownership of any profile via a **Google My Business** account to fully manage and use all of its features including:

- Gain reviews and engage with potential customers.
- Promote extra products and services.
- Improve local SEO results to stand out from the competition.

### SOCIAL MEDIA & GOOGLE ADWORDS

Additional social media marketing can be highly successful, but it can also be a bit overwhelming to start with. When you're getting started, make sure you follow these basics:

- **Keep it professional** – only post business related content (no cats!).
- **Don't spread yourself too thin** – keep it down to one or two relevant platforms suitable for your target audience.
- **Try to post regularly** – be consistent, only posting quality.
- **Engage, interact and stay in touch** – Ask questions, reply to comments and share mentions or posts you're tagged in.
- **Paid Search using Google AdWords** – good for ecommerce sites if budget allows whilst SEO builds. However recommend an agency as it can be very time consuming and easy to blow a budget.

Linking to your social media is only worth it if you stay active on your social media accounts, so try to follow these basics to get the most out of this strategy.

## ONGOING

As with any other marketing tool/shop front/sales point a website will only reach its best potential when used in conjunction with other traditional business promotional techniques such as advertising, mailing and personal engagement with existing/potential customers!

**NOTE:** This guide is by no means comprehensive in its coverage of all the points highlighted and is meant only as an outline guide to help in the successful build of an effective website.