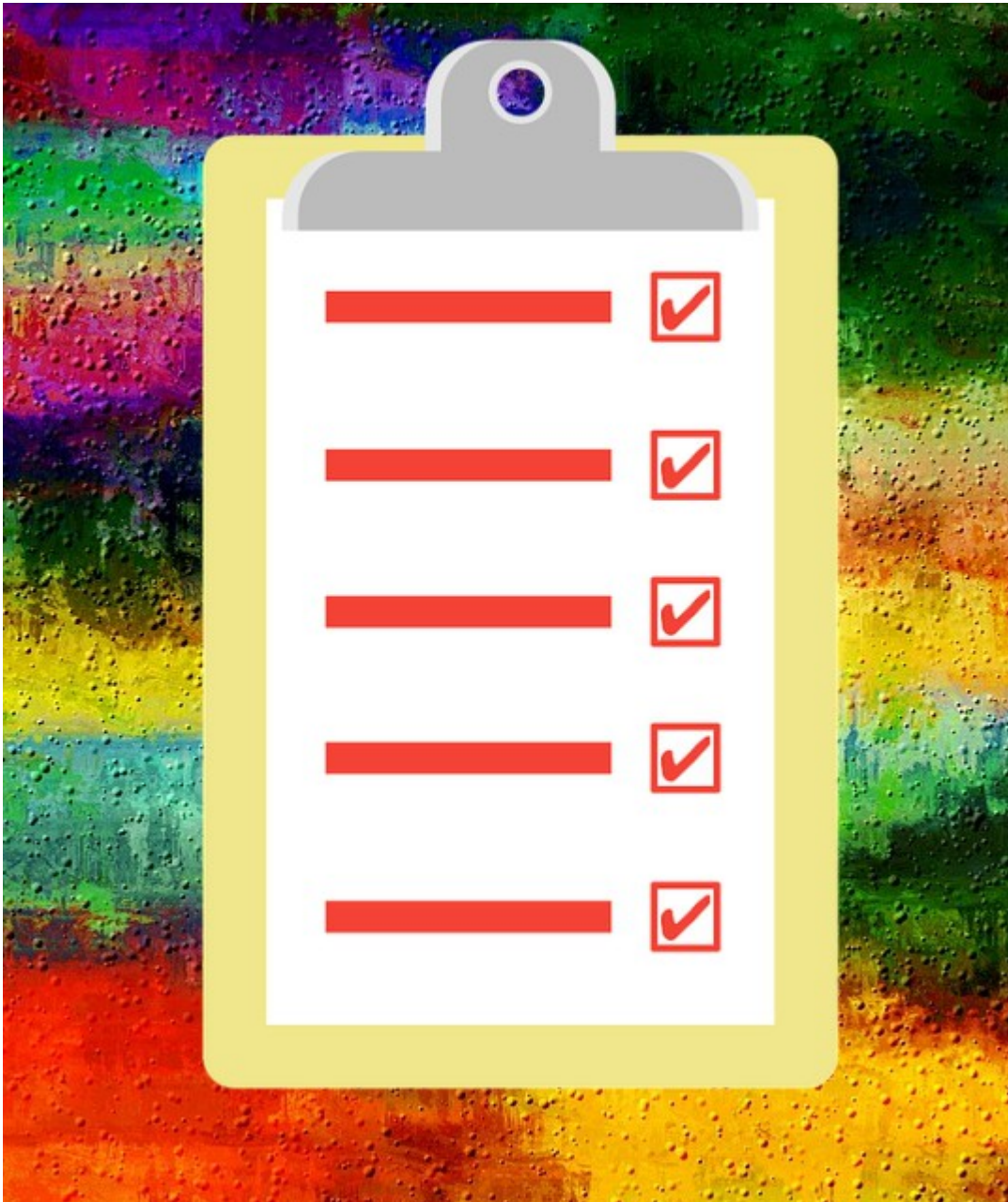


# How To Get Your Business Online: A Checklist For Beginners



**What you need to know before planning  
your business website**

## About the Author

Vanessa Shelton believes that the best way to secure your future is to do it yourself. Operating a small business is a goal that many people talk about and would like to pursue, but they aren't sure where or how to begin. Vanessa's Desk is here to help you figure it all out.

Vanessa simplifies the world of websites for folks who are frustrated or overwhelmed with the many details of creating, marketing and maintaining their website. She knows that most business owners just want to run their business and have neither the time nor the interest in learning all the 'technical stuff'.

She believes in individual service and considers effective communication to be one of the keys to successful business. Living up to her tag-line: *Bringing YOUR Ideas To The World*, Vanessa treats your goals like they were hers. "The best part about this work," she says, "is that my clients become friends."

Visit [Vanessa's Desk](#) for more information or if you need help with any of the items on this checklist!

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**Congratulations!** The decision to start a business is one of the best things you can do to secure your future. And in order to grow that business you must have an online presence. Most of the time, that means having a professional website.

Creating an effective website can seem like a very complex operation. And there are indeed many questions to answer and decisions to make. It's even more difficult when you aren't familiar with all the pieces that go into the process.

So where do you start? Right here. Knowing your answers and preferences on these six points will make getting your first business website a much easier and more effective process.

## **1. Determine your budget.**

When planning your budget, there are three main costs:

1. Your domain name. This is the address of your website; it's what visitors will type into the address bar to view your site. You purchase these from a domain registrar such as GoDaddy or NameCheap in yearly intervals. The average price for the most common extensions (.com, .net, etc.) is \$15 - \$20 per year.
2. Your hosting service. This is the space that you rent on a server so that your site can be live on the internet. The price of this service will vary from as little as \$8 to \$10 per month (you usually have to pay several years in advance to get the lowest rates) up to \$40 or \$50 per month for very large or multiple sites, or sites with a lot of "extras".
3. Your website design and development. This is the actual planning, designing, and building of your site and is the most variable of the expenses. There are some free options but they aren't recommended for several reasons: ads on your site, extra words added to your domain name, non-ownership of your site files, etc. There are also many designers with extremely low prices; some who charge as little as \$150 or less to do a website of sorts. This is usually because they are either very inexperienced and need practice and/or entries for their portfolio, they use cookie cutter templates so all their sites are alike, or they know nothing about business, marketing, keywords, or any of the dozens of other factors that go into an effective business website.

Professional website development can cost anywhere from a few hundred to several thousand dollars. The price depends on dozens of factors that a reputable developer will discuss with you before giving you an estimate.

## **2. Determine your goals and purpose.**

What is the website's main goal and purpose? To sell products or services? To provide information? To drive traffic to another site or sales page? What do you want people to do when they visit your site?

The key here is having a firm knowledge of the goals and operations of your business. The answers to these questions will determine a lot about your site's structure and functions.

## **3. Decide on site specifics.**

What specific sections will your site include? How many pages will there be? All sites have home, contact, about us, and policies pages, but there can also be other informational or sales pages as well. Will you include a blog? Do you need a shopping cart? Event calendars? Are there other sections that need to be included?

## **4. Know what you are going to say.**

This is the most important step in the process. What you say – and how you say it – will determine the degree of success your site achieves. Do you know which keywords you want to emphasize? Will you need copywriting for your content or do you already know what you want to say on some or all of your pages?

## **5. Create a strong visual impression.**

How do you want your site to look? Do you already have a logo, tag-line and color scheme? What are some websites that you like or features you would like to include? What sites or features do you dislike or want to avoid on your site?

## **6. Plan for long term success.**

There's a lot more to website success than just building and posting it. Like anything, it will require regular upkeep. How do you plan to maintain and promote your site? Will you do it yourself or will you need help with some or all of it?