Why do you need a website?

While most business owners know they could benefit from a website, many don't exactly know why. In truth, businesses need more revenue and customers. It turns out a website may facilitate this if it is designed in a strategic way.

What is the main function of your website?

Believe it or not, this is a fundamental question that is sometimes not given enough attention.

A website should always be designed to direct visitors to perform a specific action. This can be any of the following:

❐ Sign up for a newsletter   ❐ Get in contact

❐ Purchase products   ❐ Register for an event

❐ Subscribe to a service   ❐ Purchase tickets

Preliminary Considerations

Before you can get a site up and running, you need to set up a few components. There are many affordable options that will provide good performance.

Domain Name

A **domain name** is the address visitors will use to reach your site. In general, it should be descriptive as well as easy to spell and remember.

Hosting Services

Websites are kept up and running by servers provided by a **hosting company**. This is generally structured as a monthly or annual fee. Some hosting companies provide customer support for their users. Here is a comparison comparison of several companies.

SSL Certificate

SSL certificates verify that a website uses secure sessions. This is important for security purposes. Visitors also like to see that a website is secure. Internet browsers may alert users if a site is not secure. An SSL certificate can be provided by the hosting company.

Website Features

Depending on your needs, your website may include certain features. These serve a specific function and can include:

❐ **Maps plugin** - Displays the location of your site on a street map.

❐ **Contact Form** - This will prompt a visitor to enter specific information and will send their response to you.

❐ **Email Address** - An email address provides a point of contact for visitors.

❐ **Social Media** - A website may feature links to social media accounts or **plugins** that will display the latest content from the social media account.

❐ **Analytics** - Analytics track and report metrics for the site including the type and source of traffic to the site. This is most commonly implemented through Google Analytics.

Appearance and Layout

Site Map

A site map is a breakdown of what pages a website will contain as well as how they will be organized. This should be simple and organized in a manner that makes sense.

Menu

A **menu** is a listing of the pages to which a user may navigate. It will include the names of the pages and possibly **sub menus**, which will open when a menu option is picked.

Sidebar

A **sidebar** appears on the side of a website and can feature written content or a menu to navigate the site. The sidebar may be hidden or always visible to the visitor.

Footer

A **footer** appears at the bottom of the page and features key information a visitor may need.

Themes

A theme is a predefined arrangement of a site. It can specify color scheme, site layout, page types, and the overall design of the site. These can be free or purchased and are also customizable using HTML and CSS.

Website Copy

Copy is any written content that will appear on a site. It informs the visitor about the company, products, and services. If the messaging is precise and compelling, it can make a convincing case for your company and prompt action on the part of the visitor.

- ❒ Biographies
- ❒ Company profile and history
- ❒ Product and service descriptions.
- ❒ Product names, slogans, and taglines
- ❒ Blog posts

Copywriters

A **copywriter** creates the content which appears across all facets of a business. Don't underestimate the value of a skilled copywriter, and consider hiring one to achieve higher quality content.

Features and Content

Multimedia

Multimedia should be of high quality and high resolution to look good on the site. Make sure that you have the rights to use all of the images and other media.

Logos

A **logo** is the graphical representation of the company or product. It is generally featured at the top of the website and used across promotional material like business cards and advertisements.

Photos

Photos may be of products, team members, or any other relevant subjects. Make sure they are high quality and you have the rights to use them.

Gallery

A gallery is a collection of images. This may be used for art portfolios, real estate listings, or menus. The gallery can be clicked through or may switch between photos automatically.

Videos

Promotional videos or demo videos for performers can be included on a site. This can be done by **embedding** a video from a video hosting site like YouTube.

Other Considerations and Tips

Responsiveness across browsers

A site should look good and operate well on various browsers, including mobile ones. Mobile browsers are accessed via a smartphone and this is increasingly how sites are viewed, so make sure the site functions properly on smartphones.

Security

Keep account login credentials secure. Don't write them on a sticky note on your computer, and be judicious about giving others access to the site.

Update plugins and themes to avoid security issues.

Renew hosting services and domains

Stay on top of expiration for hosting services in order to not lose your site. This will ensure there's no interruption and your site it up and running as needed.