

DO YOU REALLY NEED A WEBSITE?

If you're starting a business you *NEED* this guide.

- Does your business niche need a website?
- Pros and cons of websites
- Amazing (and FREE) methods to market your business without a website
- Pros and cons of free marketing methods
- How you'll know when you need a website
- Website check list for when you're ready to take the leap

*Advice from experts with over 15 years
experience running a successful web company.
It can save you literally thousands.*

OUR EXPERIENCE

Swell Pixel is owned and run by us, Lorna and Andrew Crystal. We've owned and run a successful web and digital consultancy business for over 10 years and we each have over 15 years experience working with websites.

Andrew is an experienced server administrator and IT network specialist. He splits his time between his role within Swell Pixel and his long standing role as a senior project and IT manager for a chemical company, overseeing and implementing six-figure projects. During his time with the company it has grown from a start-up business to having a multi-million pound turnover and extensive global trade.

Lorna worked in senior administrative roles for international companies before moving into the world of websites. Starting as a content manager for a nationwide training organisation, she progressed to software testing and optimising user experiences. Learning about websites from the ground up, across a variety of different platforms, means Lorna is skilled at providing advice that works and ensuring that pitfalls are avoided.

OUR EXPERTISE

Most people understand very little about websites and the online world and many web developers seem to take advantage of this.

We provide simple, trustworthy, easy to follow advice.

We have been providing advice and digital consultancy to start-ups for over 10 years and in that time we've seen those companies flourish - even during a recession!

Successful businesses don't need to cost a fortune

Our Client Facts

- Over 80% of our current client list started working with us as start-up businesses
- Over 70% of these businesses have now been trading for over 5 years and are still our clients
- Our client retention rate is over 95% per year
- The greatest testimony to the quality of our services is that in over 10 years, we have never needed to advertise our web, hosting or digital consultancy services*

**Only now that we have launched guides & courses have we begun to market these using a combination of google ads, word of mouth and a bit of social media - lets face it website images & quotes aren't that exciting!*

KIND WORDS

Invaluable dealing with technical aspects of the website and helping to grow our online presence

Director of Wavehunters Ltd

Professional and friendly at all times. We have been extremely happy with the work they have carried out.

Claire Norcliffe, owner of Overland Campers

Andrew's knowledge and consultancy skills have been invaluable, helping us to achieve a multi-million pound turnover

Director, Eurotek Foundry Products Ltd

Swell Pixel have been brilliant to work with. We had limited funds...The guys were super hands on.

Mesmear, Farm and Holiday Barns, Polzeath

I wanted someone who got me, understood my brand and the message I wanted to convey and Swell Pixel delivered on all accounts.

Gemma Montgomery

WHO NEEDS A WEBSITE?

If you're considering starting a business then the chances are that you have an endless 'to do' list and one of the major jobs is to get yourself an eye-catching new website.

These days it is assumed, without even a second thought, that a website is an absolute necessity for all new businesses, in fact, for any business at all.

Many businesses don't just survive with no website, they thrive.

The reality is that there are hundreds of thousands (probably millions) of businesses that don't have a website and aren't planning on getting one any time soon.

Many of these businesses aren't scraping by or struggling to succeed in a world that revolves around wi-fi and smart phones. These businesses aren't just surviving with no website, they're thriving.

YOU DON'T NEED A SITE

Swell Pixel is a website company. We design, build and host websites as well as providing digital consultancy and advice services.

We make money by selling websites to businesses and teaching businesses how to optimise them. That's how we pay the bills. The more websites we build the more holidays we get. It is in our interest to sell websites.

So listen carefully.

*As a new, or fledgling, business you
DO NOT NEED A WEBSITE*

You can have a very successful, very profitable business without a website.

You need to understand and believe that. Only then can you decide when is the best time to invest in a website that will work for you.

REASONS WHY

There are four main reasons why you shouldn't rush in and get a website straight away.

*All new businesses have the same problems:
lack of audience, lack of funds,
lack of time, lack of clarity.*

In over ten years we haven't met one single start up business that isn't lacking in at least one of these areas. This isn't a failing, it's completely normal. Starting a business is a huge learning curve and you need to give yourself the space to react to, learn from and/ or adapt to the curve balls and unexpected issues that arise.

Even clients who already run successful businesses face these same problems if they decide to start a second, or third, business.

LACK OF AUDIENCE

So your web developers have created a masterpiece and your site's finally live.

Where's the flood of hits on the site? Why can't you see your business listed in Google? Why has the site been live for days/weeks and nothing is happening?

Success doesn't come from having a website. It comes from finding an audience.

It can take search engines weeks (sometimes 6-8 weeks) to index a new site. Even once indexed your site will be competing against thousands or even millions of similar businesses - many of those will have marketing budgets that will make your eyes water. Unless you've got a very niche business AND excellent on-page SEO you're not likely to rank highly in search results.

At least until you're established you need to get the audience to find your business using other methods.

LACK OF FUNDS

The majority of start-ups we meet are trying to get their business off the ground on a very tight budget.

Websites, designed and built by a professional, can cost anything from a couple of hundred pounds/dollars to tens or even hundreds of thousands of pounds/dollars. The cost depends on size of the website, the functionality of the site, how the site is built (custom/bespoke builds are usually more expensive than open source platforms such as WordPress), the expertise of the developer etc.

In addition to the site build there will be hosting fees and invoices for any ongoing work or changes that need be done.

A website that doesn't work properly will make your whole business look unprofessional.

Cutting corners to fit your budget can have a seriously detrimental effect on how your business is perceived and ultimately affect the type of clients you attract and the amount of profit you make.

LACK OF TIME

Even if money is no object then time is a serious hurdle.

Websites need input from you. The web developer can only do so much.

*Don't underestimate how much there is to do
when starting a business.*

You will need enough time available to create a detailed spec with the developer, approve designs and provide content - even if your developer helps with this or you pay a copy writer they will need input from you - no one will know your business as well as you. In many cases you will also need to supply or approve images.

Once the site is built you will need to take time to ensure it works as you expected, working through any snags before signing off the site to go live. Website creation is a big job.

Getting a new site built at the same time as you are trying to find your feet in business creates a lot of unnecessary stress.

LACK OF CLARITY

No matter how clear you think your business model is, starting a business is a time of great flux and you need to be able to adapt to changes as quickly and easily as possible.

Remain flexible and keep an open mind

Although you can, of course, develop and adapt websites as needed this incurs additional expenses and needs additional time inputs from you. Once committed to a website spec you will become less open to changing your business model even when doing so would be beneficial.

Take this example of one of our client's. Her original business model was as a coach working 1 to 1 with clients for an hourly fee. She was invited to give a presentation at a conference of peers and realised that developing courses for coaches (taught in groups rather than 1-1) would be more profitable and enjoyable. Having not started a website she was able to test this business model before having a site built that suited the new direction.

NOT EVEN A FREE SITE!

Many people who are starting a business on a tight budget think the answer to this problem is a 'free' build-it-yourself website. There are plenty of these around including WordPress.com, SquareSpace, Wix.

Be very careful. If something seems too good to be true it usually is.

Although they always offer a free option these are usually extremely limited and there are many 'paid for' optional extras (that most people expect would be free). Costs add up quickly.

Many charge a small monthly fee, but this adds up and within 2 years it would have been much more cost effective to have a site professionally designed and built. Often you are 'renting' the website - you won't have the ability to download and move the site to another web company or choose your own hosting.

Do not underestimate how frustrating and time consuming it will be! We have yet to meet anyone who is satisfied after using these services!

WEBSITE PROS

Benefits of having a website:

- Contains all the information your clients/ potential clients want to know in an organised, easy to navigate, user friendly manner
- You, rather than an external company (social media etc) have complete control of the site and all it's content. You have total ownership. Third party companies (e.g. Facebook/ Instagram/ Twitter) are constantly changing the rules regarding who sees your posts
- Provides a central hub for all online activity of you business
- Looks more professional and permanent. People can be wary of whether businesses/ trades are legitimate
- Potential way for new clients to find your business
- Allows unlimited growth of your company
- Provides answers to common questions/ problems so you don't have to repeat yourself - answers on social media get lost in the feeds
- Can create a useful portfolio to refer potential clients to
- No limit on the amount you can say
- Less expenses/ commission than selling on third party sites (ebay/Amazon etc)
- Allows you to present yourself/ your business as an expert in your field

A Website is an amazing marketing tool only once you have clarity about what it needs to achieve

WEBSITE CONS

Disadvantages of websites

- Upfront cost of the design and build
- Cost of hosting
- Cost of amendments, additions and content management
- Time involved in planning the site
- Time (and money if using a copy writer) in producing content
- Time and/or money for SEO (Search Engine Optimisation)
- Build it and they will come is a fallacy - having a website won't automatically increase the number of potential clients that find you
- Depending on your website's 'role' chances are you will still need to market the site
- Organic SEO/ audience growth without any marketing other than a website takes a lot of time and requires a lot of work creating content to be found by search engines. A website alone is a very slow way for a business to grow unless you have a very tight niche.
- Unless you have clarity on the role of your website then the chances are it won't add value to your business

Websites aren't a magic bullet. They are part of a wider, long term, marketing plan

GET NOTICED FOR FREE

So if a website alone isn't the answer to all your marketing and promotion needs then how will you get noticed?

*Focusing on free marketing methods takes
LESS time, NO money and you will see results
MUCH FASTER than with a website.*

There are several types of free marketing that will kick start your business without needing a website.

We always recommend starting small and building gradually. If your business has limited capacity (e.g. many businesses that take bookings such as hairdressers, beauticians, electricians or coaches) then there is a good chance you will see clients flooding in quickly! If you spend valuable time doing everything possible straight away you might find that it was the first action that sees you full to capacity with clients. Everything additional to the first action was a waste of time!

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can work wonders for a new business and it's free. We know lots of people hate it but you need to see it as a tool, accept it is useful, set boundaries for it's use and be consistent.

Social media is networking, without the awkward chats in a dull conference rooms

Here's what to do:

- Set up a Facebook business page and Instagram and Twitter accounts
- Ensure all the relevant details are complete such as your email/ phone number, address and opening hours if applicable. Make it easy for potential clients to contact you
- Follow or like (depending on the network) your existing contacts (including family, friends & business acquaintances). Ask them to help by sharing your page
- Follow and like posts by relevant other accounts. Especially local businesses in your area. Local businesses like to support other local business
- Interact with others when relevant - ask or answer questions, show support, give positive feedback

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Once you've set up your social media and you're into the swing of liking other people's posts you need to set good habits for posting about your business.

Make all social media posts relevant to your business. Do not add generic waffle.

Posting on Social Media:

- Post regularly. No more than 4 times per day. Start small and build up, you don't want to over commit by posting 4 times per day to realise it's taking up too much time. Be consistent
- Regularly like, share or comment on other relevant social media (similar businesses, local businesses, clients, ideal clients, relevant groups)
- Do not only post sales messages. Offer solutions, comment on things that affect your niche, add lots of relevant pictures and show examples of your work/ products.
- Search for and use relevant hashtags (# Instagram and Twitter)
- DO NOT post anything offensive or rude
- Sort photos into relevant albums on Facebook eg, a hairdresser may have albums for different colours, hair length, styles. This helps people find the information they want easily
- Include pictures of your service list, menu or price list
- Ask all clients to write a review, respond to every review

DIRECTORIES & MAPS

Get your business in the search engine listings quickly by adding it to maps and directories.

Once you have set up a Facebook page you can use the page url where they ask you for a website address and direct potential customers to your page.

Directories and maps have excellent SEO and will often be near the top of any search results.

Get Listed:

- Add your business to maps such as Google Maps and Bing maps. These will often appear at the top of the search results page and from the maps users can click to go directly to the business website (or Facebook page). It will also give your contact details and opening hours enabling potential clients to get in touch with you quickly and easily. These listings are great for local businesses when people will often search for a type of business and a location eg, plumber in Bude or Chinese restaurant in Springfield
- There are lots of free business directories that you can also list your business on e.g. Yell.com The more listings you have, the more likely you are to appear close to the top of search results

EMAIL LIST

Building an email list of people who are interested in your business and may become your future customers is important.

It is best to use a marketing and newsletter platform (I recommend MailChimp which is free for the first 2000 email address on the list, over that amount you can pay each time you send a newsletter or you can choose to pay monthly). Any reputable e-newsletter platform will take care of GDPR for you.

An email list is one of the most valuable marketing tools you can have.

Getting Started

- Create a newsletter account for your business. Mailchimp provide clear, step by step instructions of how to do this
- Create a basic landing page to collect email addresses. You will be given a url for this page
- Post the landing page url onto your social media and ask people to sign up to receive emails with your news/ events/ offers
- Give incentives for people to sign up to your newsletter (discount codes, exclusive events, bonuses etc)
- Send newsletters regularly and make sure the newsletter is of interest to the reader. Don't annoy readers by sending too many

E-COMMERCE BUT NO SITE?

We speak to many start-up businesses that need a website because they want to sell products. This can be anything from selling holidays or clothing to making and selling crafts.

Here's the problem : creating an e-commerce website doesn't create an audience, and you need an audience to have buyers.

Using well known online retailers or booking sites provides you with an immediate audience.

Benefits of Using a Third Party For Retail:

- Using a third party sites such as Ebay, Amazon, Etsy or TripAdvisor provides you with a massive audience that is ready to buy
- Many independent retailers will sell goods on behalf of small businesses, giving you all the benefits of a real-life store with no upfront costs
- The commission you have to pay will be much less than the cost of an e-commerce site as a new business
- As you become established clients will return directly to you for your services in future meaning that you can by-pass the middle-man
- It allows you to confirm whether or not the product / service has a market
- You can use your social media and e-newsletter accounts to direct users to your product on the third party sites or in stores

CONS - FREE MARKETING

Using these various platforms is a great place to start and for many businesses, especially local businesses, this is as much marketing as you will ever need to do. However it's not all rosy, there are drawbacks.

*Don't forget you're not in control.
Nothing is really free!*

Negatives of free marketing:

- They are third party companies. You don't have control of how your posts and images reach your audience (unless paying for advertising)
- Ownership of the information you post is a grey area
- They may limit the percentage of your audience that see your posts.
- Your page/ account can be blocked/ removed- by error, accidental reporting of content or malicious reporting by 'trolls'
- You don't have control of the information posted e.g. all reviews are public even if false
- They care about **their** business/organisation and **their** profits, **not** yours
- They can change the rules at any time and you have no control over it
- Popularity of platforms can change, if it loses it's audience so do you
- Third party companies may dictate pricing structures, postage costs and commission rates

REAL LIFE EXAMPLES

These are just a few genuine examples of people we work with who run successful businesses.

Will a website add value to your business?

Holiday Home Business : NO WEBSITE

They are fully booked during peak season with above average bookings out of peak season. They don't have a website but have a Facebook page and Instagram account. They don't use third party booking services. They have built up their audience and customer base over time.

They usually post twice a day, one post features one of their cottages or the local area, with plenty of images or solves a problem e.g. 'Family Attractions within 10 miles'. The other post mentions availability, special offers or how to book. They also like and comment on other posts and make a habit of liking and following the social media of anyone who has stays in their cottages. This interaction and genuine interest in their customers encourages repeat bookings.

They have no need for a website because they don't want to increase bookings as some free time gives them time for maintenance, refurbishment and to take holidays themselves.

REAL LIFE EXAMPLES

Online Retail : NO WEBSITE

A new company (2018) wanted to start selling clothing, footwear and accessories online. They needed the start up costs for the business to be as low as possible. Both owners were also working full time so and didn't have the time to deal with social media or create marketing campaigns to develop their own audience/ customer base.

They chose to sell on Ebay and within 12 months were turning over enough money to replace one full time wage and are well on their way to replacing both wages. The only upfront expenditure they have is purchasing the goods for sale. There is no need for them to have their own website, as their business is growing at a rate they can handle, and they understand that it would be very difficult/ impossible to replace the number of buyers who use Ebay 24 hours a day on their own site.

Handmade Crafts: NO WEBSITE

A craft lover wanted to generate income from a hobby. Starting by selling handmade crafts and bespoke gifts at local craft fairs. Created a Facebook page to promote products and friends and family were asked to share the page. The audience grew rapidly at this point. Several local gift shops offered to stock the products - some pay on delivery upfront whereas others pay once the goods are sold. This business now provides a wage whilst allowing the owner to work from home.

REAL LIFE EXAMPLES

Joiner : WEBSITE

A joiner to move away from employment to start being self-employed. He started a Facebook page and Instagram page with examples of his work. He created organised photo albums on Facebook so he could direct potential customers to the most relevant examples.

He listed his business on Google maps and in free online directories, making sure to add photos as well as giving his mobile number, email address and opening hours allowing potential customers to contact him easily and he always linked these listings back to his Facebook page.

Every time he completed a job he requested a review on Facebook and Google and the majority of people were happy to oblige.

Within 12 months he was earning more being self-employed than when he was employed. At this point he decided to have a website created to highlight his work and to explain all the services he offered in detail.

He knew the site wouldn't immediately increase his audience but he wanted a central point to showcase his work that was easy to refer people to. He still keeps social media sites up to date because people to share photos of his work therefore increasing his audience.

REAL LIFE EXAMPLES

Life coach - WEBSITE

After qualifying as a life coach our client wanted to create a website as soon as possible but didn't have the funds available.

Using Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to tell people about the new business and asking contacts to share the page she grew an audience from scratch. The plan was to have a website as soon as possible. The website would provide value to the business because it would have blogs and FAQs, providing free advice for potential clients and at the same time establishing her expertise on the subjects.

The money earned from the first few clients (who used the services after seeing social media posts) was used to fund a website.

Social media and e-newsletters are now used to drive people to new blog posts on the website and the blog posts encourage readers to book sessions. There are also sign up forms on the website linking to Mailchimp to collect email addresses. Booking, with pre-payment, is now available direct from the website. This reduces the amount of admin time needed.

The website not only establishes her expertise but also streamlines the business processes and funnels users to booking online increasing income. The site is a valuable business asset.

REAL LIFE EXAMPLES

B&B: WEBSITE

The owners of a B&B wanted to get more bookings and pay less commission to third party sites. By creating their own website it meant that previous customers, as well as people who'd seen them on third party sites, could find them again easily online. In turn this meant that they increased the number of repeat and first-time guests that booked directly - therefore reducing the amount of commission payable to third parties.

They still listed the B&B on third party sites because the marketing budgets of those companies are MUCH greater than they'd ever be able to afford.

To support the new website they created a Facebook and Instagram account but only post a couple of times each week. They post once about how wonderful it is staying at their B&B - this can be photos of the local area, details of local attractions, reviews from guests or photos of the B&B, and the second post details any special offers, available dates and links to 'Book Now.'

WHEN TO BUY A SITE

The best time to buy a site will be different for every business. Often businesses that cover all areas of free marketing can delay creating a website for years and may never need one.

So how do you know when is the right to take the leap?

- Is your business already on it's way to being established i.e. do you already have some paying clients/ sales?
- Have you put funds on one side to pay for a website?
- Have you already set up the free methods of marketing that your business needs? These will give your website a head start
- Does your business have the capacity for more clients/ sales?
- Are you clear on what you want a website to do for your business? Is it to provide information, generate leads via call/email, allow online purchases (e-commerce), take bookings, streamline processes, increase sales/booking and, if so, by how much?
- Do you have enough time available for the creation process?
- Do you have a marketing plan? How are you going to get potential customers to your website?

WEBSITE CHECKLIST

If you're certain the time is right to create a website for your business the next step is to ensure the build, and your relationship with the developer, runs as smoothly as possible.

Check out our other guide : *Everything You Need To Know BEFORE Buying A Website*

www.swellpixel.co.uk/buying-a-website

Before agreeing to a new website check that you understand, and are happy, with the following:

- What platform will the site be built on and what does this mean, practically, for you now and in the future?
- What type of hosting is available and what are the differences?
- What access you will have to the website?
- Is SSL included?
- Who has ownership and control?
- What will happen if you want to move to a different web company?
- What does the web developer expect from you and what you need to provide?
- What onpage SEO will be done and who is responsible for it?
- Do you have domain name access and control?
- How much are the ongoing charges, charges for maintenance, amendments and content management?
- Will the site be fully responsive as standard? - around 50% of all web traffic is now on mobile devices

SUMMARY & CLARITY

YOUR GOAL AS A NEW BUSINESS IS TO GET YOUR
PRODUCT OR SERVICE IN FRONT OF AN
INTERESTED AUDIENCE



YOU CAN HAVE THE MOST AMAZINGLY BEAUTIFUL
WEBSITE IN THE WORLD BUT WITHOUT AN
AUDIENCE IT IS *USELESS*



FINDING AN **INITIAL** AUDIENCE AND YOUR FIRST
CUSTOMERS IS QUICKER AND EASIER USING
FREE MARKETING METHODS THAN A WEBSITE



A WEBSITE, WITH A CLEAR ROLE, CAN SUPPORT
AND HELP YOUR BUSINESS TO GROW. IT CAN ALSO
BE A VALUABLE TIME SAVING ASSET.

AND FINALLY

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