



## Why do I need a website?

The main reason is that a website is a very cost-effective way to provide information to your current customers and attract potential new customers. Today, when people need to find information about a business, like their address, phone number or business hours, they start by checking their website. Similarly, when people are researching a product/service, they start by googling for companies providing that product/service. Twenty years ago, people used the Yellow Pages for these things, today they use the internet.

What type of website do you recommend for a small business?

For many, a brochure type website is a great cost-effective solution. Such a site is essentially an electronic brochure where you can showcase your products/services to everyone on the internet. Sites like this are typically 3 to 5 pages in size and use text and photos to highlight your products/services. For a business, the site will include a company history, business hours, business address, map/directions, phone and email contact information, customer comments, portfolio of work, or other information useful to existing and new customers.

What is involved in creating a website and more importantly, how much does it cost?

The basic steps for creating a website are the same for all websites, but the cost really depends on a website's size and complexity. This question is similar to asking a home builder how much it would cost to build a house for you. The answer will depend on how big the house is along with its special features like crown molding, granite counter tops, hardwood floors and radiant floor heating.

In reality, your website can cost as little or as much as you like. Similar to a building a house, the cost of a website depends on how big it is (both number of pages and amount of contents on each page) and how many special features on the website. But that doesn't mean you have to spend a small fortune to have an effective website.

There are three basic parts involved in creating a website:

- Domain Name Registration - A domain name is your website's name on the internet, your ".com". Domain names must be unique and are essentially leased on a yearly basis. The cost to 'register' a domain name is about \$30 per year.
- Website Design - This is the part of the process where a designer works with you to create a website to your individual needs and desires. The result of this effort is a set of computer files that together generate the text and

graphic content on a website's individual pages. This website design effort is a one-time cost and can run from \$500 to \$5,000 or more, depending on the number of pages and special features.

- Website Hosting - Once the website design is complete, the resulting set of computer files are copied on a powerful computer (server or "host") which is connected to the internet. These files can then be read by a browser like Firefox, Edge, or Google Chrome to display the various pages on the website. For a small business, the cost of website hosting typically runs \$100 per year, but it could be more based on website functionality and the number of visitors that might access the site at the same time.

Adding these three parts, the total initial cost for a new website typically runs between \$800 to \$5,000. This amount includes the first-year cost for Domain Name Registration and full year of Website Hosting.

After the initial costs, how much will I spend to keep my website online?

In general, there is a fixed cost of \$100 a year to keep an existing website online. This amount is cost for the annual renewal of the Domain Name Registration, and the monthly cost of Website Hosting.

In addition to the fixed cost to keep the website online, there is also a potential variable cost for Website Maintenance. This activity is very similar to the Website Design activity described in the previous answer except this one involves modifying or adding the text and graphic content of an existing website.

Most websites only require maintenance when you want to change or add something. For example, if your phone number's area code has changed, or you want to add another page describing a new product or service. Simple changes to an existing page cost as little as \$20; new pages or more complex changes typically cost \$100 to \$250 per page.

What if I am just starting a new business and don't have a lot of money to spend on a website? Are there ways to minimize the initial costs?

Yes, there are several things that can be done to reduce the costs. We have experience working with individuals in this exact situation - they are trying to start a business and want a website but have limited financial resources at their disposal. We know ways to decrease both the initial up-front investment as well as the recurring costs to keep a website online.

If you are just starting out and are in a similar position, please contact us and we will work with you to see what we can do to help you. We have low-cost options, and we may consider trading our design services for your products/services.

How long does it take to create a new a website?

It typically takes 3 to 4 weeks to complete the design of a website and get it online. If necessary, a website can be finished in a much shorter time if the client and we work closely together to minimize the time spent waiting for inputs needed at each step of the design process.

Once the go-ahead is received, we can usually mock-up a design concept in a week and provide to you for review and comment. After receiving feedback, we normally have a prototype version of the website up and running in a week or two.

The most common delay in the design process is waiting for the client to provide the content (both text and photos/images) needed to complete the individual web pages. Unfortunately, most people underestimate the amount of time it will take to complete this effort. Other individuals dislike writing and will endlessly procrastinate even starting this task. In that case, we sometimes will write a first draft for them and let them revise it.

How many pages can I have on my website?

There is no real limit to how many web pages you can have on a website. The more pages your website contains, the more it will cost you for the initial website design effort.

The typical size is 4 to 10 pages. While you can have more pages, it is important to logically arrange the pages, so visitors can easily navigate them and find what they are looking for. Equally important, each page should be well organized and contain information useful to the typical visitor.

I tried to design a website myself and couldn't finish, can you help me?

Absolutely yes - we will be happy to look at what you have done and make a quick assessment of the effort needed to complete the website. Please contact us and we will see how we can help you.

And don't feel bad about having this happen. A fair number of individuals have approached us for help after one or more unsuccessful attempts to design their website.

Trying to do your own website design & maintenance is a lot like trying to fix your own car. Sure, some people are equipped to do it, but for most of us, we are better off leaving the job to the pros.

Can you make changes or updates to any existing website?

Yes, but there is a caveat to this answer.

While we can make changes to most any website, the cost of those updates is very dependent on how the website was initially built. Specifically, what tools and/or technologies were originally used to design and implement the website.

If those tools and technologies are appropriate, we can make the desired changes for a reasonable cost. Conversely, if the site was built using something no longer supported, like Flash-based animation, the cost could be higher.

For updates to an existing website, the best approach is to contact us. After getting some basic information and a general idea of the desired changes, we will do a quick assessment and let you how we can help you.