

5 Steps to Set Up a Business Website

Below is a brief overview of steps to set up a general website from the Ecommerce session of MOBI's Starting a Business course. Visit the course to learn more about digital marketing and ecommerce.

1 Registering your domain name. Each website has its own unique name, such as Amazon.com or Google.com. This is your "domain name." Domain names typically end in “.com,” “.org,” “.biz,” “.edu,” or others. You will need to decide on and purchase your domain name for your business. Be sure to conduct a search in advance to ensure your intended domain is not being used and is not copyrighted. It's helpful to choose something easy to remember and spell.

2 Hosting your website. Purchasing a domain name does not mean you have a website, but it is the first step in setting one up. Next you need a place (typically a physical or virtual server) for your website to reside. Many business owners lease hosting space through a web hosting provider. Some larger companies may build their own platforms or networks to host online content and sites. For an ecommerce website, a more robust hosting plan would be necessary. Shop around for different hosting providers and do some research to find the best one to fit your needs.

3 Securing your website. Website pages secured with a Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) certificate are those branded with the “HTTPS” in their URL address rather than just “HTTP.” An SSL certificate is a type of digital certificate that provides authentication for a website and is used to secure and encrypt sensitive information like credit cards, usernames, passwords, and other private data sent over the Internet. SSL certificates verify that the website is who it claims to be, and that the web service host is the owner of the domain. It is very important for an ecommerce website to have an SSL certificate to create trust with users and ensure their information is safe, so they can securely make a purchase online through your website. Most hosting companies offer SSL certificates that you can purchase for your domain for a relatively small fee. Do not skip this step!

4 Building and designing your website. You will need to decide whether to build your own website or hire a web developer. Both options have their pros and cons. There are a variety of website builder tools on the market that can provide templates or “drag-and-drop” functionality to make it easier for non-technical people to create websites. There are even options to add “shopping carts” to support ecommerce sites. (Some examples of website builders/tools include: Shopify, Wix, Squarespace, Wordpress/WooCommerce, Google Sites and Weebly.) However, if you want a more customizable look and user experience or if you have a complicated design or sales model, you may wish to hire a web developer. In today's gig economy, it can be easy to hire a freelance web designer to help build a website. If you plan to include ecommerce, be sure to hire someone with experience in this specific area. Also know exactly what the terms are, for example, how many revisions are included, who will publish the website, who will make changes or complete future updates, who will fix problems, etc.

5 Ensuring mobility. Be sure your website is user friendly on mobile devices as well as desktops and tablets. Customers are shopping on all their devices, so you want to provide a good experience no matter where they are viewing from.