

- » Setting up your site for success
- » Considering the best platform for your needs
- » Designing a look and feel that works
- » Getting and analyzing website results

Chapter **1**

From Groundbreaking to Grand Opening: Constructing Your Website Step by Step

You've embarked on an incredible journey with a remarkable goal: to build an website for your business or endeavor that attracts visitors and converts leads.

You may have tried to build a website in the past, but were left feeling frustrated, angry, or even worse, you lost time and money. Well, that is all over now. I am here to walk with you through every step of the process.

I've been working with people just like you for several decades and I know what questions you have. I know where you can get stuck. I know where a non-technical person needs some help. Most importantly, I know that you want to get the job done and don't want to repeat the process later! This chapter helps you set the stage for building an excellent website and outlines the sequence of steps you'll follow to build an effective, compelling, and modern site that best represents your organization online.

Setting Up Your Site for Success: Foundation, Messaging, and Search Engines

Many DIY website builders worry about choosing a platform and a theme. I see it all over the Internet: “What platform should I choose?” “Which platform is the best?” “How do I choose a theme?” These are all good questions, but in the grand scheme of things, as far as your website success is concerned, the platform you use doesn’t matter that much.

If you had Picasso’s paintbrush, paints, and canvases, would you be able to create a masterpiece? If you had a contractor’s hammers, saws, and heavy equipment, would you be able to build a house? If you had a scalpel, anesthesia, and some cotton balls, would you be able to perform surgery?

Most likely the answer to all three is a resounding no. Having the tools doesn’t mean you know how to effectively use them. The same is true when building websites. Having a web host provider, easy-to-use software, and a couple of plugins doesn’t mean you can build a website that will bring in thousands of click-throughs and hundreds of orders. It’s more than the tools. Building a successful website includes:

- » Using the right messaging.
- » Organizing your website so that visitors can find things with the least amount of clicks possible.
- » Understanding what search engines are looking for.
- » Creating content that is easy to understand and digest.
- » Laying out your content in interesting and unique ways so that visitors understand your message.
- » Building trust so that visitors feel comfortable handing over their email addresses or their money or their time.



REMEMBER

Having the tools is a means to an end. The tools can’t teach you the skills; they just provide a way to use skills you already have. This book will teach you the skills.

Picking a platform

Remember that, although the platform you choose is important, equally or *more* important is the messaging, as well as how you provide information to search

engines. You should indeed choose a platform that you can use easily. However, be sure to also consider your messaging and content, how search engines work, and how to lay out your content. This is what I teach you in this book.

Having said that, you may still want some advice about which platform to pick, so consider the pros and cons of the following platforms before you decide on one:

- » **Wix:** Wix is known for its drag-and-drop interface, making it super easy to design your website without any technical skills. If you are a beginner, this may be a good option for you. Wix offers a wide range of templates and customization options, and it comes with hosting, templates, and design tools all in one place. In addition, Wix frequently updates its platform with new features and designs. Its ease of use comes at the cost of less control over more technical aspects of your website. That means you can run into a wall when you want to do more with your website. Also, it can get expensive. While it starts off affordable, costs can add up with additional features and apps. Like any other closed platform, if you decide to move your site from Wix, you most likely will need to rebuild your website from scratch.
- » **Shopify:** Shopify is ideal if you are setting up an online store, as it provides powerful tools specifically for e-commerce. Shopify also offers robust security features and reliability for handling transactions, which is important, and its platform integrates with many third-party apps and services. But there are some considerations: Shopify can be expensive, especially with transaction fees and add-ons, and it is not the best choice if your primary focus is blogging.
- » **Squarespace:** Squarespace is known for stylish and professional templates that are great for portfolios and visual presentations. Like Wix, Squarespace includes hosting, templates, and e-commerce capabilities and is user-friendly with a drag-and-drop interface. Squarespace does not have as many third-party integrations as other platforms and customization is somewhat limited compared to platforms like WordPress. While it supports e-commerce, it's not as powerful as Shopify for online stores.
- » **WordPress:** WordPress is a popular software for building websites. It come in two flavors — `WordPress.org`, which you download and install on your own hosting platform, and `WordPress.com`, which is a platform you log in to, much like the others. WordPress is the choice for many who are semi-technical or need to create a custom website, as it is highly customizable. WordPress offers extensive customization options with themes and plugins, and there is a huge global community offering support, plugins, and themes. WordPress is great for all types of websites, from blogs to e-commerce sites, and you have full control over your website and its data. While this all sounds great, for novices, WordPress has a learning curve. It can be overwhelming for beginners due to its complexity. WordPress also requires regular updates and maintenance, especially for security. You are the manager of the software, not the platform, like in the other options presented here. For example, you need to arrange your own hosting, which can be a technical challenge for non-technical users.

There are many others out there — this is just a small sample. Chapter 2 goes into more detail about choosing the best platform based on your needs and goals.

Building the foundation

Setting up the mechanics of your website involves registering your domain name, choosing a *platform* (a place to host your website), a basic understanding of how nameservers work, setting up your email, and making sure you have a few other items in place.



TIP

The good thing is that if you have already checked some of these boxes, you can skip some of the sections in this book. For example, you may have already registered a domain name. In that case, you don't need to read the section on choosing a domain name in Chapter 2. If you are starting a new business and you have not registered a domain name, then read that section. The same goes for the platform, hosting, and email sections.

Understanding your potential customers

Once you get set up with the mechanics, start thinking about connecting with your audience. Your website needs to do a lot of preselling on its own. Ask yourself, "... can my website presell my products or services?"



AUTHOR
SAYS

Building a successful website starts with understanding your customer. Understanding your customers' pain points and how to offer the solution to their problems is very important. When you understand your customers, you empathize with their wants and needs. *Your website should reflect your understanding of your customers and show that you have the solution to their problems.*

You want to show visitors that you understand them right away, by placing a very strong message on the homepage that talks directly to their heart. Throughout your website, you want to place content that addresses the problems that the visitor is having right now.

You might have heard that one way to create good messaging on your website is to show transformation. How will your potential customer's life be transformed after engaging with you? Chapter 3 walks you through some exercises that help you create a website that will resonate with your potential customers.

Understanding your customer helps you with other efforts as well, such as social media marketing, social media advertising, email marketing, print advertising, and more.

A Place for Everything and Everything in Its Place

This is one of my favorite sayings. When it comes to websites, this principle rings true! An organized site allows visitors to easily find whatever they need, and a *sitemap* is the tool for organizing a website.

A *sitemap* is kind of like an outline you might create for a paper you're writing. The outline ensures that the paper covers all the important points and that there is a hierarchy to the important items. Figure 1-1 shows an example sitemap that I worked on with a health club client.

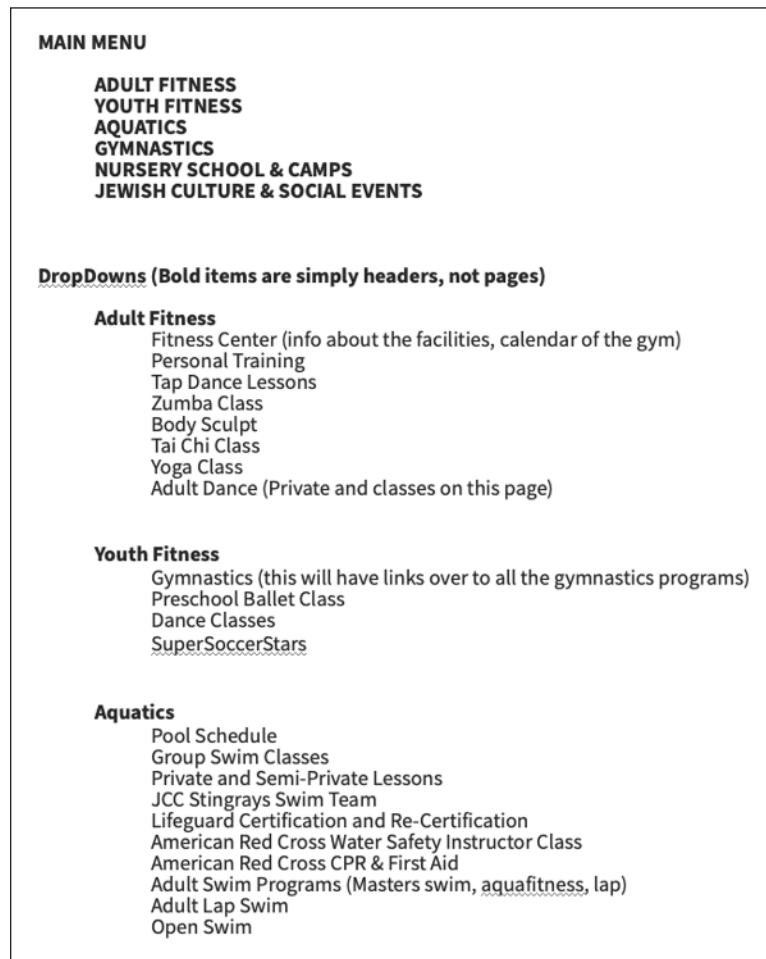


FIGURE 1-1:
An example
sitemap built for
a health club.

For your website, you need to create an outline that includes two things:

- » The *functionality* that you want the website to have, such as a shopping cart, forms to gather leads and for people to reach out to you, a calendar system to show your events, galleries of photos, databases for displaying content, or videos.
- » The *information* that you want to provide, such as services you offer, product categories you offer, content that shows your credibility and authority such as degrees, licenses, or photos, and ways to reach out to you.

When considering functionality, your website can also work for you in other ways. Some examples:

- » You might have some forms that clients need to fill out before they come into your office. If you move those forms online, you can decrease the amount of time that patients or customers have to spend in your office.
- » You might have some videos that potential customers can watch prior to coming in to your place of business. You can place those videos on your website. Then you don't have to spend your time repeatedly explaining the basics.

You can move many administrative and repetitive tasks to your website as well. A sitemap helps you think about these issues.

When it comes to thinking about the information you want to provide, building a sitemap also gets you thinking about how can you best use your website as a tool for your business. Think about what information would be most relevant to a potential lead that would turn them into a customer. To do this, you probably want to use your website as a pre-sales tool. This means that your website should provide great information to those looking for it, and also do some of the initial screening that your salespeople would normally do when meeting with a customer. Not all customers are good for our businesses. If you can use your website to weed out the customers you don't want before they come in contact with you, that will save you time and energy. You can do this by adding specific fields to your forms, by showing photographs of the level of service you provide, and by being clear about the services you provide.

If you've already built a website or you've just started, you understand when I say that building a website can be a lot of work — there are a lot of tasks that you need to perform and a bunch of content you need to create, not to mention design!

Having those tasks organized into a list can help you focus and get things done, so it's important to create a sitemap early in the process.



REMEMBER

The great thing about creating a sitemap early in the process is that it becomes your to-do list. This will save you so much time. Sitemaps and lists go hand-in-hand!

Creating a sitemap helps you identify the tasks you need to complete and the information you want to provide:

- » You need to write the content for each page.
- » You need to find images for each page.
- » You need to think about the Call to Actions (CTAs) to include on each page.
- » You need to think about the other information that will drive people to other parts of your website and keep them engaged.
- » You need to think about the keyword phrases you want to assign to each page and some basic SEO for each page.

I like thinking this way, because it breaks up a really giant project into small tasks. You can keep checking items off the list!



TIP

There are lots of online tools that you can use to create a sitemap, or you can do this exercise in Word, Notes, Pages, Google Docs, or another word processing application. In any case, start off by brainstorming all the information you think should be on your website and the functionality it should have. Then, take all this great information and organize it so that it makes sense in terms a website flow.

Chapter 6 walks you through the process of creating an amazing sitemap for your website.

Developing a Look and Feel that Works

Once you have the mechanics, sitemap, and content gathered and ready, it's time to think about how your website will look. You want your content to look amazing and have a modern aesthetic.

- » A modern website feels good to a visitor.
- » A modern website shows that your business is up to date with current technologies.

- » A modern website shows that you are willing to invest time and money in your business, and that translates to the visitor.
- » Visitors will know that the owner of this website is willing to invest time and money in the business and its customers.

How you lay out your content is an art, but it's not rocket science. This book helps you here. There are plenty of websites that you can look at and "borrow" ideas from. For example, Figure 1-2 shows a site that's expertly designed. Some points to note on this website:

- » The fonts are modern, easy to read, and are used consistently.
- » The colors draw visitor attention to important items instead of being distracting.
- » Pleasing design elements are used, such as a slanted line dividing the rows, icons and images supporting the text, and rounded corners with a slight drop shadow to lift content off the page.
- » The rows and columns separate content into easy-to-read sections.
- » There is good use of whitespace so that visitors can read and digest one section at a time.

The look and feel of your website depends on large part on the audience you want to draw to it. For example, Figure 1-3 shows pbs.kids.org, a site for children. Notice the use of icons and images and the lack of words. Clearly a site for young children. Compare this to Figure 1-4, which shows the New York Stock Exchange site. It's a serious site for adults about trading stocks and bonds. Think about how these two sites appeal to their respective audiences.

If you provide therapy solutions, you might want to design a calming and compassionate website with muted colors, engaging and emotional photos, and rounded edges. If you provide services to hip youth, you might want to design a slick website with lots of animation, strong colors, large fonts, and more points for engagement such as videos to watch.

When you create a website that looks beautiful and modern, people want to stay on your website. And when people want to stay on your website, they begin to trust you more, and when they trust you more, they are moving down the buyer's journey and becoming a warm lead, which in turn moves the lead closer to being a customer.

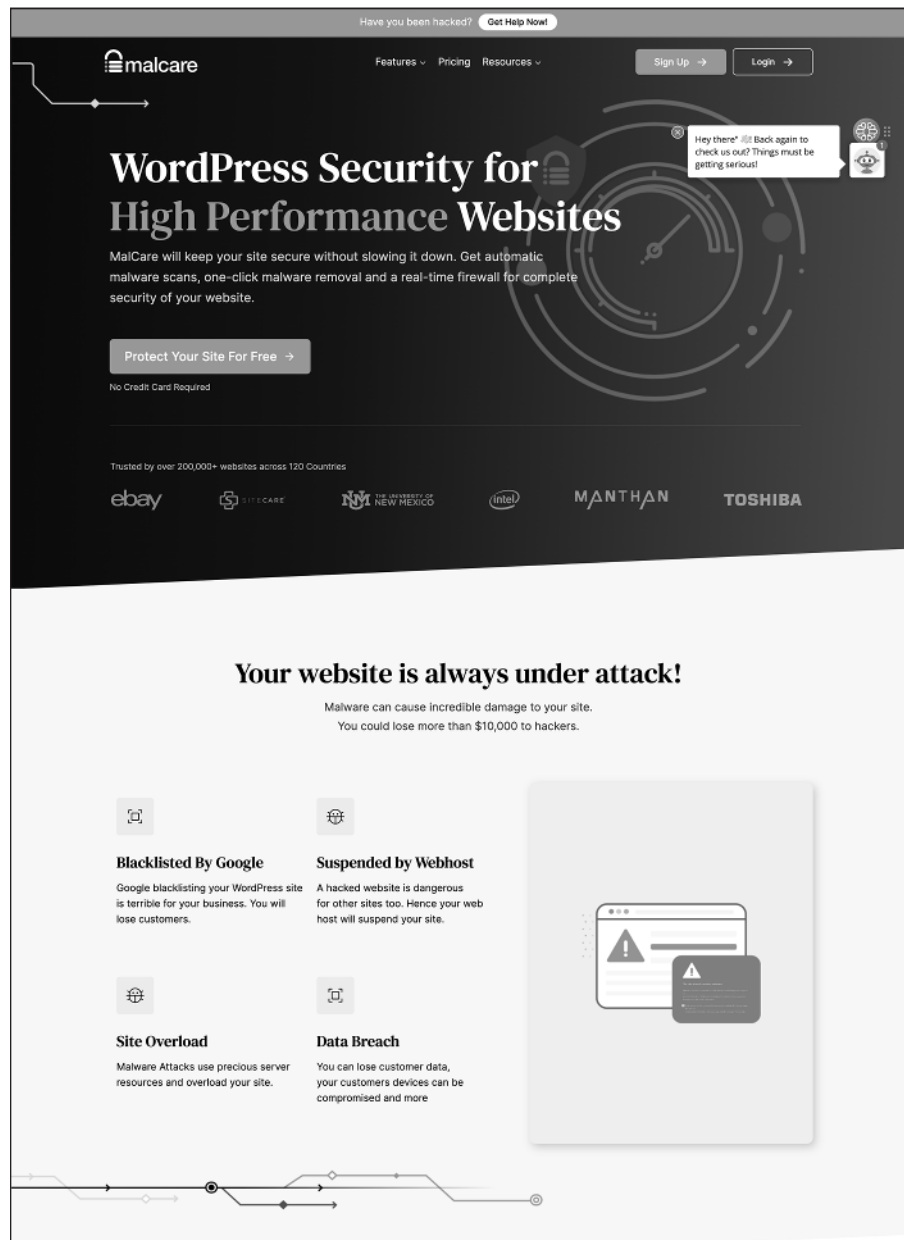


FIGURE 1-2:
An expertly
designed website.



FIGURE 1-3:
The design
elements clearly
indicate that this
is a site for
children.

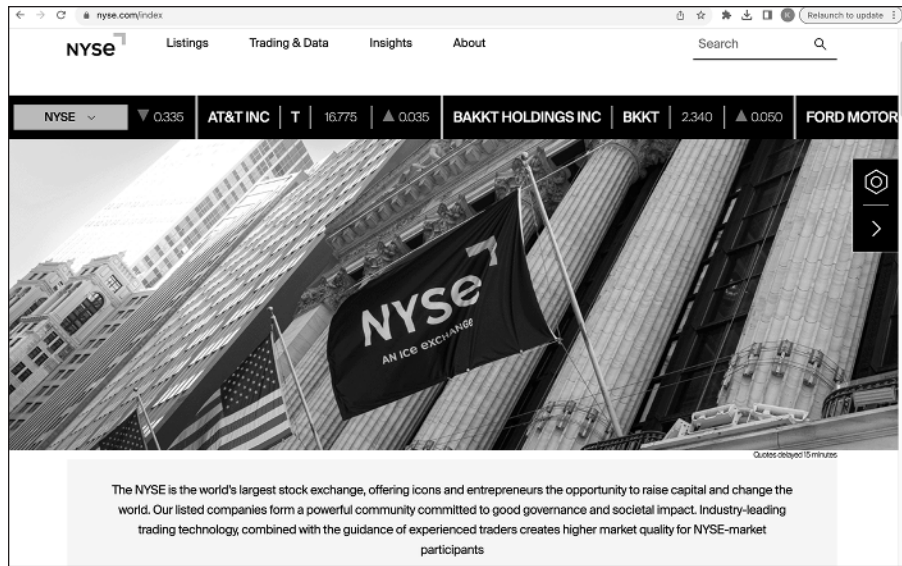
Search engines measure how long visitors stay on your website. The longer people stay on your website, the better search engines view your website. Therefore, you want to lay out your content so that visitors feel comfortable and happy when they are viewing your pages. It's kind of like creating a home or a business that is very welcoming. You want visitors to virtually come in the door and sit down, snuggle up, and feel really comfy with your website.



REMEMBER

You might end up deciding that you want to have a professional web developer lay out your website, which is fine. You still need to know and understand your audience, have an understanding of your messaging, and get your content ready. A good web developer will be happy if you come to them with all of your content well-crafted, optimized, and ready.

FIGURE 1-4:
The NYSE site
conveys a more
serious and adult
aesthetic.



If you decide to lay out your own content, Chapter 10 includes concrete tips that help you with the layout process. With the tools available nowadays, as well as other examples of beautifully laid out content, anyone can make a website that looks beautiful, appealing, and modern!

Getting and Analyzing Results

Once you have built your website and brought it live, you'll feel a huge sense of relief and accomplishment. You have completed this giant project, and you should be proud of yourself! But the process is not over.

Your website is not a project that you check off and never revisit. Think of your website as a living, breathing tool that is constantly getting potential customers through the door.

To get the best results, you need to measure your website. Just like after almost any contest that you enter, you can measure how well you performed.

At the end of the year when you are tidying up your books, you likely measure how your business performed. Did you do better compared to last year? What are your goals for next year? What changes are you going to make? Where did you have waste? Where did you excel?

At this point, you want to put software in place so that you can measure the results. You can measure so many things, such as which devices people use when they browse your website, how long people stay on your website, how far they scroll down a page, which pages are visited most frequently, where people leave your website, and more.

You can use the Google Search Console to measure results such as which search terms Google returns your website for, what position your website is returned in, and how many times people click on your listing, as shown in Figure 1-5.

Top queries	Clicks	Impressions	CTR	↑ Position
biofeedback near me	1	1	100%	1
brain waves chart	0	269	0%	1
brain frequency chart	0	24	0%	1
local guide program	0	24	0%	1
brain wave graph	0	7	0%	1
brainwave assessment near me	0	5	0%	1
how are brain waves measured	0	5	0%	1

FIGURE 1-5:
The Google Search Console returns information about how visitors visit and use your website.

Just like your accounting due diligence, you can and must measure the success of your website. Remember that the longer people stay on your website, the better search engines view your website. Chapter 15 explains a few tools you should put into place now so that you can measure success later.

Your basic steps to building a great website are getting set up the equipment you need, thinking strategically about messaging and design, and remembering who is judging you (the search engines). This is your pathway to success!