



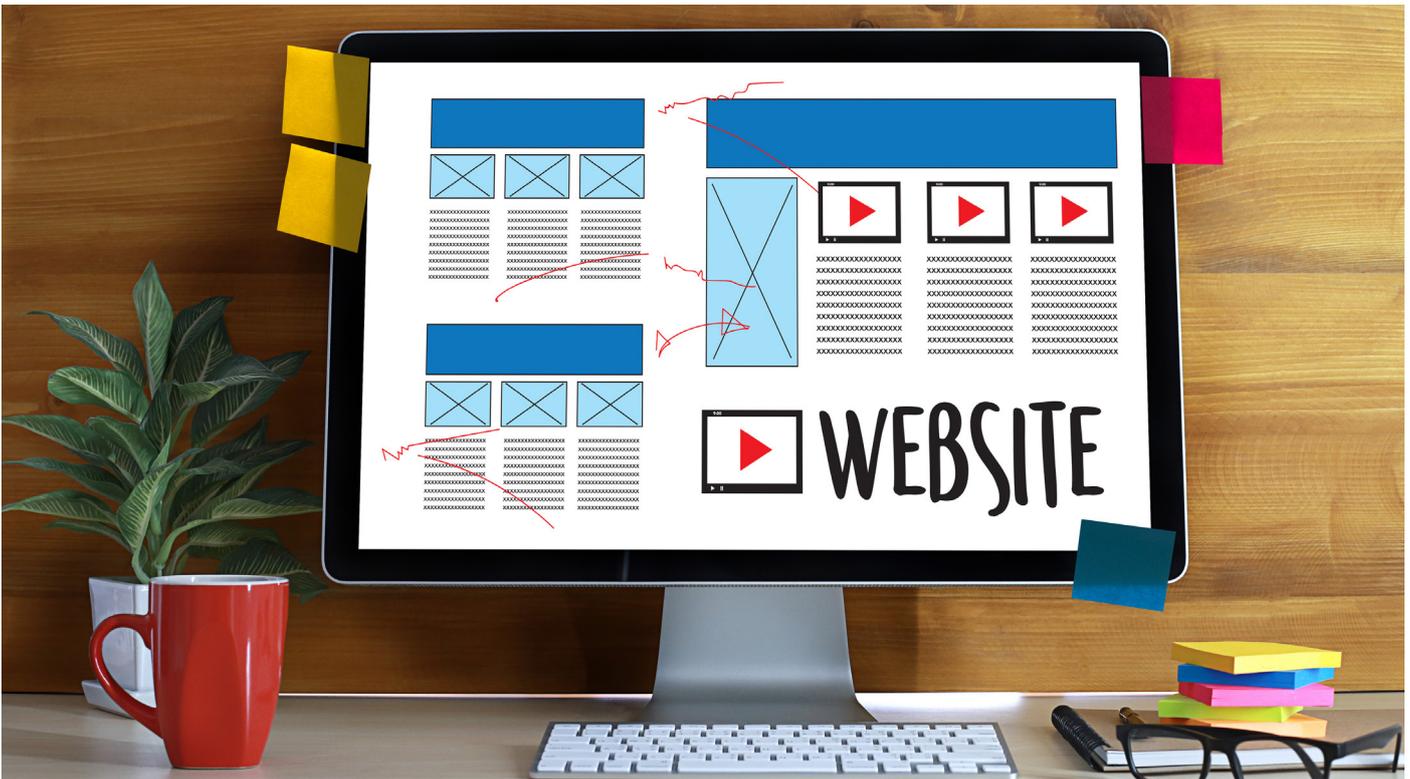
WHY SMEs NEED A WEBSITE AND HOW TO APPROACH BUILDING IT

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There are numerous low-cost online services to help you build a website, and as there is no longer the need to understand code or the intricacies of design, it is easier than ever for you to build one. So, why does your business need a website?

Customer expectation

Who doesn't turn straight to the web to find out more about a business, or discover one in the first place? Customers and potential customers expect to be able to learn more about you and if they can't find you online, they will look elsewhere. That's lost business for you and more business for your competition.

You're in charge

It's very difficult, if not impossible, to control what others say about you on social media, but with your own website you are able to control the messages you share. You can influence people's perception by telling your business's story, and use customer comments and examples of your work to show your business in the best possible light.



You don't need to be a web coder

The days when you needed to employ someone or find an expensive marketing agency to build a basic website from scratch using code are a thing of the past. The proliferation of website-building platforms has resulted in almost anyone being able to design and launch a company website. Wordpress and Wix, amongst others, offer thousands of templates for you to take advantage of and they also provide low-cost hosting

solutions, so you can keep all your web spend in one place. If you want to build an online shop you can use their shop widgets that walk you through the process step by step to get your products online.

Their templates are business specific as well, so if you run a beauty salon, travel agency or building firm, you'll be able to find a template that suits you.

It doesn't cost much

When you use one of the website-building platforms the cost is all but negligible. Not only that, you are creating something that can potentially reach thousands of people for a far lower cost than traditional marketing methods. If you've previously spent significant money on direct mail, you can never avoid the niggling thought that your beautifully crafted flyer or brochure has very likely been used to line someone's paper recycling bin. A website gives you a more cost-effective way to get your messages out.

Your competitors all have websites

It is likely that your potential customers will start their purchasing journey online, armed with research and recommendations from their friends and social media connections. Following



recommendations potential customers can use your website to carry out their own research on your business. If you're not online and demonstrating your competitiveness, then you've already lost.

Social proof counts for a lot

The way we buy things has changed significantly over the last few years. Users can now look for reviews and comments from like-minded people with similar needs within seconds. Hosting your reviews and customer comments on your site makes sense. Of course, you could rely on review sites, but the real power lies in presenting your reviews in the same place as your product or service. By placing your customer comments front and centre, you can ensure they won't be missed.

You'll never be closed again

Having a web presence means that you can sell your products or your services 24/7. And if you normally treat yourself to a day off on bank holidays you're still open for business.

It becomes the centre of your marketing world

Having a website also creates a place for all your other marketing efforts to point to. If you want to create email marketing campaigns, social media campaigns, even a local flyer, having

somewhere for people to visit and take action is critical. Generally, people don't want to pick up the phone to find out more, they want to feel in control and allowing them to do that by browsing your site improves their customer journey and increases the likelihood that they will buy.

Make your business a national business

Many small businesses are at the heart of a community, and that means your customers are likely to be located near you. A website opens you up to many people who would otherwise not know that you exist, allowing you to generate business nationwide and potentially worldwide too.

Google rules the world

As most of us know, and experience daily, Google is in charge. It's well-known that more than 4 in 5 consumers perform online research before making a purchase; they open Google and type in some key words to find businesses. Therefore, if you're not online you've got no chance of appearing in those search results. If you have a site, you can spend time optimising your content to increase your chances of being displayed in the results. Most of the website-building platforms offer specific Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) widgets that walk you through optimising your site. This increases

your likelihood of appearing in the top search results and the next time someone searches for "local builders" your business might well be there.

Showcase all your products and services

We've talked about new customers finding you online, but are all your current customers aware of everything you do? Getting more business from existing customers is often a lot easier than getting new customers. Having a website that shows everything you do is likely to increase your business from those that already know you.

Create your customers of the future

A good proportion of the time, consumers are using the web to research products or services without a genuine purchasing intention at that time. If you build an email capture form into your site, as part of an email marketing campaign, you can create a list of prospects to keep in touch with. This will grow your brand awareness and when the customer is ready to purchase they are more likely to come back to you.

Hopefully you now see the importance of building an online presence for your business and the benefits it can bring. It's relatively easy, low-cost, opens you up to lots more customers and will help your business grow. And who doesn't want that?

If you are a trade association and would like to find out more about how working with Miles Smith can benefit you, please email Ian Cook, Interim Managing Director of Miles Smith Insurance Solutions - icook@milesmith.co.uk or call 020 7977 4800.

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