

Why a website

Why is it important to have a website?

Everybody knows a business needs a website – but nobody tells you why. What's the benefit? Why bother? Do businesses need websites or just big companies?

If you know you will always have enough business, then you don't need a website nor do you need to read any further. For the rest of us, it's pretty simple really. If you're in business, you need current and future clients to contact you. Today, almost all of your clients and prospects are on the Internet.

Like the swift Australian take-up of mobile phones, Internet usage is still growing rapidly. With the Australian population at 20 million, there are 6 million ISP accounts with 2.5 million of those broadband (fast, permanent connections). The broadband connections have doubled in the past year alone. The trend continues with cheaper computers, wireless connections and broadband speeds set to increase up to 16 times. The faster broadband speeds go up to 24,000 kbps and are in some locations in Queensland already. They may already be available in your own area.

The important thing is that your clients, the home owners and the business owners, are using the net at a higher rate than the general population. Internet connections that are always on at home and work mean it's easy to check a website. People are on line daily for tasks such as Internet banking, stocks, looking up movies and so on. Many people prefer to read websites at work - it looks like they're working when in fact they may be researching a product and/or service that they require.

Businesses DO need websites for the simple reason that many clients prefer to find out information that way. A website doesn't replace a the telephone, but adds to the reach. If a prospect can find out from your website the services you provide and your contact details, you're ahead of the game. So if you don't have a website, get one. By the way, if your website points to a mass directory service like City Search or says "Under Construction" on it, you don't have a website. "Under Construction" on a website does not give the right message.

First task for you, if you don't have a domain name get one. A domain name is how an Internet user reaches a website, e.g. thatwebplace.com.au. Domain names are useful for email, as well because people can remember them more easily. Compare info@thatwebplace.com.au to joeblogs64@hotmail.com Australian domain names are less than a hundred dollars for two years. It's often best to talk to a web design company as they can advise you on the best name for your business as well as register it for you. You can get a domain name now and a website later if you wish. It's good practise to have the domain though – it can be disappointing if someone registers it before you.

The drive by test will show why domain names work. Have a look at commercial trucks or signs while driving around and try and memorise the web address versus the mobile phone number. Typically, a well chosen domain name can be remembered much longer than a series of numbers. If I have to remember a phone number, I have to mutter it under my breath until I can pull over and write it down.

Do you find you answer the same question over and over again? If so that should be on the home page of your website. A website should tell people what you do and how good you are. If clients know what you do before they ring, the conversation will be shorter and more productive.

When you get to building the website, just use common sense. Important facts such as your company name, contact details should be on the site. And why not add testimonials from pleased clients, pictures of projects and yourself, business location and other items to help promote your business. Use a web design company so the job will be done faster and better. Make sure that you will be able to update the website yourself without a lot of technical knowledge.

The website should be built to work in the search engines. Though, don't worry about being flooded with requests from Alabama to Zambia, it doesn't happen that way. Concentrate on local promotion and put your web address everywhere.

Put your web address on:

- The side of work vehicles (remember the drive by test?)
- Business cards
- Signage at work sites, etc.
- Clothing
- Tattoos
- Anywhere where people can see it.