



Websites for Small Businesses

IT'S OUR VIEW that creating a website for a small business should be easy and affordable. We've done it thousands of times for all types of small businesses. We offer this guide to help small business owners understand the process and get the most out of their website.

- 1. Cost.** More than ever, a small business website does not have to be expensive. The creation of a basic site should cost no more than several hundred dollars, and the monthly fees to host the site should be less than \$10. At OLM.net, our fee is \$199 to create a basic site and \$6.95 per month to host it. There are many attractive, pre-made templates that can achieve a professional look for your company without having to hire a web developer to create it from scratch.
- 2. Choosing a domain name.** If you haven't already done so, purchase a domain name (e.g., Samplecompany.com) for your business. Give this some thought, and choose a domain that is similar to your business' name. You'll be providing this domain name to customers and prospects over the years (when they ask, "What's your website?"), so visualize a name that is easily understood, both in person and over the phone. Registering a domain name is inexpensive (typically less than \$20 per year), and we can help you search and choose a name that appeals to you. Domain names are free when you host with us.
- 3. Basic information to include in your website.** Your website should include everything you would include in a printed yellow page ad. This includes your business name, address, phone and fax number and directions. More than a yellow page ad, however, you should also include photos of you, your employees and your storefront location.
- 4. Include downloadable brochures.** Consider including downloadable brochures of your business, products and services you offer, product guarantees and so forth. If you frequently mail information about you or your business to customers and prospects, you can almost certainly produce this in a manner that can be downloaded by them from your site. This can save you time and mailing costs while, at the same time, provide instant information your prospects need. We can explain this further to you, and we can design the brochure if you need it.



5. Audio and video files. Many business owners include audio and video recordings on their site. Your prospects can listen or watch these recordings, and it could enable them to connect with you and your business. You could simply introduce yourself in such a recording. You can provide a video tour of your business and introduce your employees in the video. You can show work samples, customer testimonials and more in audio and video files. The recordings are easy to make, and we can assist you in uploading them and placing them on your site.

6. Selling products online. If you have a physical location that sells products, you can easily create a store to sell them online. This has become increasingly easy to do, and it can compliment your physical presence. There are many online shopping carts from which to choose. We offer Miva Merchant, due to its ease of use, flexibility and affordability. We also offer OS Commerce, which is a free, open-source cart that requires a little more programming expertise to install and set up. These days, many consumers will first “window shop” for products online before they enter a physical store, and we encourage you to consider opening an online store to supplement your physical location. We are experts at ecommerce, and we invite you to call us to ask whatever is on your mind regarding an online store.

7. Ideas for service businesses. If your business offers a service, your website can offer coupons, schedule appointments and explain your pricing. Restaurants can upload menus, which can include calorie and ingredient information. You can state your professional qualifications on your website and list upcoming speaking engagements, for example.

8. Market and publicize your website. Once your site is up and running, be sure to include the domain name on your business cards, stationery, cash register receipts, estimates and voice mail. Be prepared to add to your site and develop new ideas to enhance it.

9. No expertise required. You don't have to be a programmer or have any special computer expertise to create a website. Call us and we'll carefully explain the process of getting started. We'll answer whatever questions you have in a manner that's easy to understand.



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