



# 75 of the Best Small Business Website Secrets

A Simply Business Guide

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Did you know that according to the [Small Business Administration](#), there are 30 million small businesses in the United States, but only 64% have a website? This is a major gap, considering that [97% of people are learning about local, small businesses online](#) (yes, you read that right — 97%).

That means if you want to be found by clients, you need a website for your small business. But if web design isn't your forte, you're not alone. Many small business owners understand the power of a great website but don't have the time and resources to invest in one — or in improving their online presence.

If you need to improve your website (or launch a new site), our guide can give you a huge head start.

We've collected 75 of the best-kept secrets to planning, designing, and creating a stand-out small business website that can attract new clients and keep your current clients coming back for more.

So grab a cup of coffee, settle in, and get ready to learn what to do to take your website to the next level.

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## Chapter One

# Website strategy

The best websites aren't built ad hoc. They start with a smart strategy that's designed to achieve business goals. Remember, your website isn't just a place to post contact information. It should address your clients' pain points and questions — and convince them that your business is their best choice.

Here are tips to help you create a solid website strategy before you roll up your sleeves to design and build.

## 01 Define your target client

Look at who your current clients are and who is hiring or buying from your competition. Then think about who you would like to hire or buy from you — and why. Consider details like demographics, location, and even personality and interests. Create a document that maps out your target client. Having this information on-hand will help as you plan your website's structure, design, and content.

## 02 Create 3 to 5 website goals

Design your website with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely) goals in mind. For most small businesses, this includes attracting new leads and converting them into clients. Take time to think about your yearly business goals and how your website can best serve you. Then write down 3 to 5 SMART goals to work toward.

## 03 Learn what's working — and what's not

If you currently have a website, take time to learn how it's performing. Understanding what's working and what's not can help you plan future changes. Look at your website's bounce rate (how often visitors get to your site and then quickly jump off), as well as your site's conversion rate (the number of visitors who complete a desired goal, such as filling out a form). Make a list of areas that could use tweaking.

## 04 Check out the competition

Your competitors can teach you tips and techniques that resonate in your industry. They also can show you “what not to do.” Write down 3 of your top competitors and then search for them online. Evaluate how quickly they appear in search results, and evaluate their designs and content. Do they have a blog, ebooks, or other content downloads? What are ways they can improve?

**Apply your learnings to your own site. See tip #49**

## 05 Create a site map

Whether you're starting a website from scratch or you're making yearly enhancements, you want to continually evaluate your site map. This is the structure of your website. Ask yourself if your site map aligns with your goals. Does it have content that meets your target clients' needs? Is the content easy to find? Do you have a clear call to action (like a form) that's prominently featured?

## 07 Define your brand

Your website should reflect your business's brand, meaning its identifying logo, visuals, tone, and personality. Not sure what that is? Spend a few hours outlining its key characteristics. What do you want your business to look, feel, and sound like? What resonates with clients? Then define your logo, a color palette, and even guidelines for the voice and tone. If you need help, consider hiring a designer or copywriter.

## 06 Read up on content strategy

Back in the day, website content was an afterthought. The focus was purely on design. Fortunately, now we know that great content can elevate websites in search results and attract new clients. Take time to learn the basics of content strategy. One helpful book to read is [Content Strategy for the Web](#) by Kristina Halvorson.

## 08 Assign resources

Redesigning, and even enhancing, your website can be a lot of work. Determine if you have the bandwidth to make changes. If not, consider outsourcing some of the work. If you prefer to do it on your own, set aside a focused period of time for website work. If you don't assign resources now, you can risk pushing off the workload indefinitely.



## Chapter Two

# Website design

If you tell someone you're building a website, they'll probably think of web design. But as you can see, there's a lot more that goes into the process. Even so, design can bring your site from good to great — and help you achieve business goals. Whether you're new at website design or you've been a pro for a while, here are a few tips that can help you create a beautiful, user-friendly site.

## 09 Don't be overwhelmed

Most of us aren't artists, so the idea of designing a website can be overwhelming. Fortunately, there are a ton of website templates online, and many of them are free. You can connect them to a website builder, like Squarespace, Wix, and Wordpress, and adjust colors and images to set your website apart. If you don't want to rely on a template, try hiring a professional designer.

## 10 Put the user first

Choosing colors and photos is fun. But it's most important that a visitor can get around your website. Ask your friends, family, and clients for feedback on your current website, as well as any new site you're designing. Observe them clicking through pages. Can they find what they need? What's their opinion of your site? Take what you learned to improve your site's user experience (UX).

## 11 Prioritize white space

What do your favorite websites look like? Chances are, they have a significant amount of white space around images, headers, and content. White space can help readers focus on your message. It also can make your site look modern, clean, and more attractive. Remember, the goal isn't to cram as much information together as possible. Prioritize adding white space throughout your site.

## 12 Use high-quality images

Images on your website need to be the right size and resolution. This prevents them from appearing fuzzy and avoids slowing down your website. First, save all photos as JPG files and graphics (designs, logos, icons, and infographics) as PNG files. If you have an image file editor, like Photoshop, choose "save for web" to convert your image to a lower resolution for computer monitors (about 72 dpi or 92 dpi).

**Keep large images less than 1 MB and small graphics 300 KB or less.**



**13**

### **Avoid stock-like images**

Cheesy, stock-like images make you — and your clients — laugh. Not only do they appear fake, they can actually hurt your business. But not all stock images are bad. In fact, there are a ton of fantastic stock image services available, and several are free. Check out [Unsplash](#) and [Pixabay](#) for free, quality stock images that look realistic.

**15**

### **Create user-friendly navigation**

Your site's navigation is one of its most important functions. Make sure it's easy for visitors to find content on your site, and most importantly, take actions. This includes designing a simple menu that's easy to find and use, including on mobile devices. You also can add navigation elements in a few different places, such as the footer and header. This gives visitors multiple ways to browse your site's content.

**14**

### **Make sure the site is mobile friendly**

In 2019, mobile devices, but not tablets, [created about half of all global website traffic](#) (Statista, 2020).

Consumers are on their mobile phones more and more. To keep up, make sure your website is mobile friendly, meaning it displays well on a phone or tablet. A responsive template will automatically adjust your site's design for mobile. [Check that your site is responsive](#), and if not, make changes to ensure it reads well on various devices.

**16**

### **Apply the 3-click rule**

Can your site's visitors find what they need in 3 clicks or less? If not, it's time to reconsider your content strategy and navigation. Keep your site's navigation as efficient as possible. Otherwise, you risk losing your visitors to another website. Keep the most important content at the top of the page (above the fold), so someone can quickly find what they need.

**17**

### **Use visual hierarchy**

Have you ever noticed how websites use headers to display the most important information first? Then as you scroll down the page, less important information is displayed under smaller headers and paragraph-size fonts. Using a visual hierarchy can help visitors scan your webpage for important details and get what they need fast.

**18**

### **Choose your color palette wisely**

Colors can evoke different emotions. For example, warm colors, including red, orange, and yellow, can communicate energy, optimism, and happiness. Cool colors, such as blue, green, and purple, can be calming and provoke creativity. Choose a color palette carefully and pick colors that not only look good together, but also convey the emotions of your brand.

**19**

### **Make sure the body copy is readable**

Don't make your website visitors squint to read. Instead, design body copy so it's at least 16 pts. This also will make your content easier to read on mobile devices. Headers can be larger sizes to help them stand out.

**20**

### **Limit your fonts**

Avoid using more than 3 fonts on your website. It can make your website appear inconsistent and even chaotic. Just like a color palette, fonts communicate emotions and messages, so it's important to choose them wisely. Serif contents appear more traditional and sophisticated, while sans serif fonts are modern and informal.



# Search engine optimization (SEO)

What good is a website if it can't be found?

Considering there are about 3.5 billion searches on Google every day, it's critical to invest time and resources in search engine optimization (SEO). This is the practice of ensuring your website is found and prioritized by search engines such as Google (the most popular search engine).

Here are a few tips to bring your website to the top — and get new clients rolling in.

**21**

## Install the right SEO tools

[Google Analytics](#) can help you learn how much site traffic is from organic search. You also can see which websites refer traffic to you, meaning they're referencing or linking to your site. Meanwhile, [Google Search Console](#) helps you find keywords, improve your rankings for them, and troubleshoot any issues that may hurt your SEO. Check them both out by following their easy-to-use installation instructions.

**23**

## Spend time on keyword research

Do you know what words and phrases your clients are searching for on Google? Most small business owners don't, unless they do keyword research first. Once you know the top keywords, you can incorporate them into your website — in page titles, descriptions, headers, and body content. To uncover your top keywords, try using tools built by [Moz](#), [Google](#), and [SEMrush](#).

**22**

## Google My Business and Google Maps

Help your business get found by creating [Google My Business](#) and [Google Maps](#) listings. This can give your business prominence in search results and offer buttons to your website and phone number. It also creates a place for clients to write reviews. The more reviews you have, the better for your SEO.

**24**

## Launch a blog and write regularly

The more useful content you have, the more Google will prioritize your website over others in your industry. That's why many small businesses create blogs and regularly publish content for clients. Think about your clients' 5 most common questions, then write blog posts addressing each of those questions. It'll position you as a thought leader in your industry, and Google will start ranking your posts with keywords.

**25**

## Engage on social media

If you're not on Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn, now's the time to get social. Posting regular social media content and engaging with followers can improve your search result rankings. Not only that, but it allows you to quickly address your clients' questions and concerns, and promote events, discounts, and other offerings. Simply put, social media is an excellent customer service tool when used correctly.

**27**

## Try creating an Adwords campaign

Have a little budget? It can't hurt to launch a Google Adwords campaign using top keywords. Pay per click (PPC) advertising elevates your website above organic search results, but it also labels the link and description as an advertisement. You pay a designated amount of money each time someone clicks on your ad and visits your website. Although Adwords doesn't truly boost SEO, it can drive more traffic to your site.

**26**

## Logical URL structure and SEO-friendly

Take a look at your URLs. Are they made up of random letters and numbers? Or do they show a logical progression of your website's navigation and keywords? If they're randomly generated, you should create a logical, SEO-friendly URL structure. Here's an example: <http://www.yourbusiness.com/shop/womens/blouses/small>

**28**

## Write keyword-rich page titles

Page titles display on Google search results as the larger, linked headers above brief descriptions. As you build your website, write keyword-rich page titles that will help Google rank your site. Try to keep them 55 characters or less.

**29**

## Ask customers for reviews

In recent years, people rely on word-of-mouth recommendations to find products and services. Ask your clients to post reviews of your business on Google, Yelp, or Facebook to increase your customer base and boost SEO.





## Chapter Four

# Content strategy and writing

Ever heard the phrase “Content is king?”

Coined in 1996 by Microsoft’s founder, Bill Gates, the phrase describes content’s importance on the web. Content has the power to improve your business’s search engine rankings and persuade customers to buy. Here are a few tips for creating outstanding content that sells, whether you’re a professional writer or not.

**30**

### **Tell visitors who you are right away**

Cute and clever headlines are fun, but they don't always sell. Look at your website's homepage. Does it clearly state who you are and why a client should hire or buy from you? If not, it's better to be direct than witty. Rethink your messaging to make sure a potential client knows what your business offers.

**32**

### **Write keyword-rich headlines**

If you've done keyword research already, pat yourself on the back. Now's the time to start using the keywords you gleaned. Include strong keywords in your headers and subheaders, but make sure they make sense. You want to sound like a human!

**31**

### **Write short sentences in the active voice**

Writing pro tip #1. Keep your sentences concise and stay in the active voice, rather than passive. The active voice is more direct and easier to read, and involves a subject that acts on its verb.

**33**

### **Keep paragraphs 3 or 4 sentences long**

People don't like to read long paragraphs on the web. Computers strain our eyes, and on most websites, visitors have a clear goal in mind. They want to get what they need and then leave. It helps to keep your paragraphs brief (3 or 4 sentences), so they're scannable and quick to read.

**34**

### **Break apart long content**

Not every webpage has to be short and sweet. In fact, you can deliver large chunks of content to readers. You just need to break it apart using subheaders and bulleted lists. Subheaders and bullet lists can help your readers scan and quickly get the message you're writing.

### **35** Learn the inverted pyramid

Ever heard of the inverted pyramid? It's a concept taught to journalism students, but it should apply to your website too. Put the most important information upfront. Then, as the copy goes on, describe other details, and finally, put the least important information at the end.

### **36** Speak like a human

Your clients don't want to engage with a "robot" or read content that's cluttered with industry jargon. Instead, write the way you would speak to clients. Stay professional, but sound approachable and friendly too. This can be tricky to do when you're trying to weave in keywords.

### **37** Drive readers toward calls to action (CTAs)

What would you like visitors to do when they visit your website? For many people, it's complete a contact form or find your business's location. If you have an e-commerce site, you may want a visitor to click to purchase. Write content that guides your readers toward these "calls to action." Keep CTA links front and center, and explain why someone should click.

### **38** Hyperlink to sources

If you reference a statistic on another website, hyperlink to it. This helps give credit where it's due. Remember, you don't want to get accused of copyright infringement. And, if you do, you should carry [business insurance](#) to help cover legal costs.

### **39** Identify with your readers

Get to know your target clients so you can identify with their needs. What are their biggest challenges? What do they enjoy doing? Where do they live? Once you know this information, address it on your website. Your copy should resonate with clients and evoke positive emotions.

### **40** Proofread everything

Just one spelling error can make you look bad. Proofread your website content several times. It helps to ask a friend or co-worker to review the content too. The more eyes reviewing your website, the more likely you are to catch a mistake before it's published.

### **41** Aim for 6th- to 8th grade reading level

Did you know that [the average American reads at a 7th- to 8th-grade reading level](#)? Keep your content simple by avoiding big, unnecessary words and using concise sentences. Even if your target client is highly educated, people today are used to reading website content at a 6th- to 8th-grade level. It takes less time to read.

### **42** Create a content download

Position yourself as an industry thought leader by creating a helpful content download, such as an e-book, white paper, checklist, or guide. Gated content downloads also are helpful lead generation tools because visitors have to enter their contact information in exchange for the download. Try it out — you may start collecting contact information for potential clients!



# Reduce your risk

Building a website takes careful thought and creativity, and it also requires you to consider your risks and comply with the law. Follow these tips to help you adhere to legal guidelines and protect yourself from a costly lawsuit.

And without a doubt, talk to a lawyer about your website's needs and remember to secure business insurance for extra financial protection.



**43**

### Secure your domain name

Pick a unique domain name that describes your business. Then check into its past before making a purchase. If your domain name is too close to another business's name, you could open yourself up to a lawsuit and the costly legal fees that go with it.

**44**

### Show readers you're insured

If you carry business insurance, promote it on your website. This is especially helpful if you're in a high-risk profession, such as construction. Potential clients will be pleased to know you've taken steps to cover your business in the event of an accident, injury, or loss.

**45**

### Include information that you're insured

If you're licensed and insured — and you should be! — make sure this information is prominently displayed on your website. Business insurance can be a HUGE draw for clients, as you're essentially showing them you'll be good for the money in case they need to file a claim. Learn more about [the benefits of business insurance](#) here.

**46**

### Feature your certificate of insurance

Displaying your certificate of insurance (COI) on your website can give your clients reassurance that you're both protected in case something goes wrong. If you purchase business insurance through **Simply Business**, it's easy to [request your COI](#).

**47**

### Create a website privacy policy

These days, people are very concerned about protecting their privacy online. And in most states, it's legally required to display a privacy policy if you collect any information about visitors. This includes using third-party apps that collect data. Here are some more [tips for writing a website privacy policy](#).

**48**

### **Display terms and conditions**

Here's another page to include in your website's footer, [terms and conditions](#). This page describes whether and how visitors are allowed to use your content, thereby protecting your intellectual property.

**50**

### **Encrypt your website to protect data**

Website security is a major issue today. Hackers are out there, trying to steal data from your website about your clients. Help protect your business by encrypting your website. This is especially important if your website deals with financial transactions (i.e., an e-commerce site) or personally identifiable data.

**52**

### **Make your website accessible**

If your website uses cookies to collect information about visitors, you should display a cookie banner first. This brief piece of content asks visitors' permission to use cookies to collect their information. It's one more way to be honest and upfront with visitors.

**49**

### **Avoid copyright infringement**

If you're not careful it can be easy to infringe someone's copyright, which is the use of someone else's work without their permission. If you have photographs you'd like to use, ask for permission first. Or, better yet, purchase an image through a reputable stock website. And always avoid using copy and ideas from another business's website.

**51**

### **Tell website visitors how you use cookies**

If your website uses cookies to collect information about visitors, you should display a cookie banner first. This brief piece of content asks visitors' permission to use cookies to collect their information. It's one more way to be honest and upfront with visitors.



## Chapter Six

# Technical tips

Unless you're a programmer, you may not know a ton about building websites. The good news is, today, you can create your own website without having a lot of technical experience. Look at some of the tips below, and make use of Google and Hubspot's webmaster tools for the everyday business owner.

**53**

### **Use Website Grader to judge your site**

Once you build your website, run it through [Hubspot's Website Grader](#). This simple tool is free and can help you measure your site's speed, mobile performance, SEO, and security. In just minutes, you can learn the key technical areas you need to improve upon.

**55**

### **Check your website's speed**

Do you know how fast your website loads? The speed in which your site gets up and running is important for SEO and user experience. Try to make your website at least 20% faster than your competitor's site by limiting high-resolution images. Clients comparing businesses online will be more likely to stay on your site if it runs faster.

**54**

### **Rely on a website builder instead of coding**

Gone are the days when you needed coding knowledge to build a website. Today, anyone can rely on a website builder to create a high-performing website. Check out sites like Wix, Squarespace, and Wordpress. They offer templates you can customize, and make it easy to manage and upload your content.

**56**

### **Learn what devices your clients use most**

Imagine your ideal client. When they visit your website, are they on a mobile phone or sitting down at a laptop? Find out what devices they use most often, and then *make sure* your website displays well on those devices. For example, if 90% of your customers visit your website using iPhones, ensure your site looks perfect on Apple products.

**57****Keep images and videos a reasonable size**

Images that are too large will slow down your website's load speed. But images that are too small will appear blurry and pixelated. Your best bet is to use high-quality images, but save them for the web to avoid impacting your site's speed.

**59****Avoid large animated gifs**

Animated gifs are pretty popular, but they can greatly slow down your website. Keep your site's speed working fast by avoiding large animated gifs altogether. Remember, there are other creative ways to communicate to clients.

**61****If coding isn't your thing, outsource**

Web design isn't for everyone. It can be downright overwhelming. It's OK to outsource the technical side to a skilled coder or web designer. Better yet, rely on a tool or website builder to simplify the process for you.

**58****Make images responsive**

Responsive website design involves adding code that changes how your site displays on different devices. Making your site responsive can help you avoid images that stretch or disappear. If you use a template from Wix, Squarespace, or Wordpress, you probably won't have to worry about this. Most of their templates are already responsive.

**60****Make sure your fonts are optimized**

Have a unique font? Make sure it's optimized to work on multiple devices and browsers. Better yet, check out its load time too. If you use [Google Fonts](#), you may risk slowing down your site if you don't put in the extra work. Fortunately, if you use fonts provided by a website builder, you won't encounter this problem.





# Software and tools

No matter how you build your website, you'll need to rely on software and tools.

Choosing the right tools can make the process easy, and even enjoyable, especially if you're not a professional website developer. Here are a few tips to make executing your website hassle-free and fast.

**62**

## Plan your website build first

Don't build your site aimlessly. Instead, create a site map and structure first. [Gliffy is a low-cost tool](#) to build site maps and other diagrams. If you don't want to spend money on an online tool, get a large piece of paper and pencil. Then draw your site's structure.

**63**

## Create a unique domain name

If you rely on a site builder, like Wix, Squarespace, or Wordpress, you may get automatically generated URLs. Remember to change these URLs to a logical and SEO-friendly structure. It'll impact your site's search performance, as well as user experience.

**64**

## Compare website builders

Just because your friend used a particular software, doesn't mean you should. [Research popular site builders](#) to find out which one would work best for you. Remember, they offer different functionalities and costs. Choose one based on your budget and how much time you're able to manage your site.

**65**

## Consider outsourcing

Even if you rely on a site builder, you can still outsource the work. You don't have to "DIY" your website, especially if you're short on time. There are many small agencies that specialize in designing Wordpress or Squarespace websites. Find a reputable one and trust them with the workload.

**66**

## Track your expenses

You may rely on a few different softwares and tools to build your website. Some of them charge a one-time fee, while others have an ongoing subscription. Keep track of these expenses. At tax time, you may be able to deduct them to lower your taxable income.

**67**

## Adjust your template to stand out

If you're not careful, your website can end up looking like everyone else's. Take note of your competitors' sites first. Once you download a template, make adjustments in the website builder or code to change the color palette, images, and other design elements.



## Chapter Eight

# Measuring your website

Once you launch your new website (or make improvements to an existing website), the work isn't over yet. It's important to measure your site and make needed improvements. Here are a few ways you can measure how well your site is performing.

**68**

### Identify key performance metrics

How does your website support your business's goals? Make a list of [key performance metrics \(KPIs\)](#) that measure how well your website supports your business's goals. For example, if you want to attract new clients, measure your site's conversion rate (how many visitors who "convert" into leads).

**69**

### Create a dashboard

A [dashboard](#) is one place where you can store and track your website's analytics over time. Google Analytics, a popular measurement tool, actually has a built-in dashboard that you can customize to meet your needs. Just add the [Google Analytics tracking code](#) to your website and start tracking KPIs over time.

**70**

### Learn your top pages

Google Analytics is a go-to software for measuring page performance. Once you install the tracking code, you can easily see which pages of your site perform the best. Knowing this information can help you understand the content your visitors respond to — and help you create more content that meets their needs.

**71**

### Uncover traffic sources

It's helpful to know where your visitors come from. For example, is another website or news article referring to your site? Are visitors searching a particular term and finding your site (hopefully)? Or is most of your traffic direct, meaning people know your domain name and type it in a browser? Google Analytics can help you understand your traffic sources and if you need to boost your SEO efforts.

## **72** Check your bounce rate

Your website's bounce rate shows the percentage of people who click on your site and leave right away. This can happen if visitors don't find what they're looking for. It can also happen if your site attracts the wrong type of client or if visitors aren't ready to hire or buy. Normally, the goal is to improve your bounce rate over time.

## **73** Measure new versus returning visitors

Sure, you want more visitors, but you want people to return to your website too. When people return, it shows your content works well, and perhaps, customers are making repeated purchases. As you build your dashboard, remember to track the percentage of new versus returning visitors over time.

## **74** Make ongoing improvements

Measurements are good only if you act on what you learned. Once you create a dashboard, take time to reflect on your findings. Write down the key areas where you can improve your site and celebrate what's been working well. Then keep up your great work!

## **75** Document changes you made

Once you make changes to your website, document them. Include this information in the notes section of your dashboard, so you can remember what happened and when. This will help you see if your changes impact metrics in the future.

# About Simply Business

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Simply Business is an online business insurance brokerage that specializes in one thing: protecting the business our customers are working hard to build. We make it possible for our customers to choose the [small business insurance policy](#) they need, so they can get back to growing their businesses.

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