

10 Step Website Planning Guide

1. Define the Objective of your Site: Is it to generate qualified business leads? Offer resources and information to your current customers or the public? Are you launching a new business? Do you want to sell your product or service on the web? Defining your goals will help shape the design, functionality, and marketing plan for your web site.

2. Consider your resources: Are you a computer buff that likes to do stuff on your own? Are you busy with other obligations and a bit overwhelmed by the internet? Are you an experienced internet user or a novice? Regardless of where you find yourself on the spectrum of internet expertise and the time you want to invest, there is a optimal solution that will work for you.

3. Make a Budget for your Website: Your website budget needs to include the costs for initial setup and design, monthly website hosting fees, future changes and enhancements, and marketing of your site. Consider what level of return you'll need on your website investment. As with many investments, you should expect that it will take some time to recoup your costs. You'll find a general idea of the costs and options we offer by looking at our Pricing page.

4. Decide on a Service Provider: Depending on what conclusions you reached on the above considerations, choose a service provider. If you have a low budget and like to do things yourself, you can create your own website and have your web pages hosted by your ISP or a low-cost host such as godaddy.com. If you have more ambitious goals for your web site, you'll want to hire a professional.

5. Decide on and Register a Domain Name: You'll need to find a Domain Name that is available and pay the nominal annual fee (\$25 a year or less). The best domain names include a keyword that describes your business, are somewhat short, end in .com, and do not contain dashes. Examples: alliedbingo.com, blackberryquilts.com, johnsmithaccounting.com

6. Consider Site Features: Make a list of features you want on the site. Do you want to provide estimates, let visitors shop, accept catalog requests, or publish a calendar of events? Search the web for businesses like yours to help you clarify what your own website might provide.

7. Think About the Content For Your Web Site: Write a short paragraph or sketch a simple drawing of what you want on your home page and how you want it to look. You can use your current print materials if you have them, or simply write out your business ideas and plans. Think about what you want to communicate to website visitors. Come up with topics to cover, such as 'About Us', 'Services', or 'Industry Resources'.

8. Assemble Site Content: Gather together any text, graphics, your business plan, your product database, or other materials you want on your website. If you haven't developed these materials, now is a great time to hone your message for both online and offline marketing.

9. Research the Competition: Perform searches for similar website businesses. Make notes about features you like or dislike. If you see an appealing design, share it with your designer to give them an insight into your preferences.

10. Develop your Marketing Strategy: When your website is ready to go, you'll want to let the public know about it! You need to get the word out in as many ways possible. Add your website address to any printed material you have. Send a letter to all your contacts telling them about your website. One important way to get traffic to your website is through search engines. Think of search keywords and a site description that will help your customers find you in the search engines. Consider paid advertising like Google's Adwords.