

How to know what your website should cost in 2021

The purpose of your website

Make an outline of what your website should do. This will help you decide which options to choose, how much money you will pay for your hosting, and what professional help you might need along the way.

- Who is your website for?
- What is the #1 thing you want your website to do?
- How much money will your website make you?

Websites are important

There is only one thing you care about, and that's your customers.

You need to make sure you have a place for them to go. Don't waste time on the latest shiny app or social network until you've done the basics. Social media is not as important. Billboards are not as important. Your website is your HQ on the internet. You need to take it seriously.

A place for your content and your customers

Most people look online for answers now. They search it right in Google. They use Alexa and Siri to find a solution. People judge your company based on your website. They care about what it looks like and how easy it is to find stuff. If they search "Home construction Indianapolis" will they find you?

You should know enough to be dangerous

I wish this wasn't the case, but most marketing companies will do as little work as possible for as much money as possible. I am so sick of hearing tragic stories where someone paid \$30k for a hideous website that they could have done themselves with three cups of coffee and an extra weekend.

You can't let marketing agencies know everything. Too many web designers and developers rip off small businesses with a \$30,000 piece of garbage. This guide will show you what you need to know, what your costs should be, and where to get started based on the type of business you are.

What your costs should look like

Everyone wants to know how much a website will cost.

Websites are like everything else. You get what you pay for. A beautiful 30 page e-commerce website will cost \$50,000 and a mom and pop 3-page website for a bakery clocks in at \$5,000.

Time

A website takes time. **Most of the time on a website should be spent on the content.** That means the copywriting, the graphics, icons, and actual "meat" of the website. If you're going to spend any money, spend it on a good copywriter.

Design and development are secondary. The website itself is just a container. People aren't coming for the container, they're coming for the content.

If you have the time, do it yourself. You will save a lot of money doing the work yourself. However, if you are one of those business owners doing the website yourself, you need to accept it will take 4x as long as would take to have a professional do it.

A good way to decide on how to proceed is calculate what your “hourly rate” is as a business owner or marketing director. It may be worth paying someone else so you can focus on what you’re good at and let someone else build the website in 1/4 of the time it would take you to build it.

Your Time

$\$100/\text{hr} \times (80 \text{ hours to complete your website}) = \$8,000$

Marketing Agency

$\$150/\text{hr} \times (60 \text{ hours to complete your website}) = \$9,000$

Freelancer

$\$70/\text{hr} \times (40 \text{ hours to complete your website}) = \$2,800$

Money

If your website needs a lot of cool features and functions, it is going to cost more.

For a basic website that does the job for most small businesses, you’re probably looking in the \$3,000-\$5,000 range.

Pro-tip: Many marketing agencies do very little work and will charge you a lot to set you up something very simple. So make sure you know what the deliverables are. We’ll talk more about how to avoid a situation like this.

The best way to protect yourself from getting ripped off is asking questions. Ask a lot of questions. Most of the time building a website should be spent on the **website content**, and that is where you’ll need most of the help.

A commercial real estate company is going to need way more development work to make sure they can host property listings, job postings, and press releases. They have a lot of content to share, so they need a system that can handle that.

If you own a small lawn mower rental company and you want a place for people to find you, a landing page should be good enough. A landing page is a one-page website that tells people what you do and how to get in contact. You can set up a simple landing page for less than \$1,000 if you're smart and focus on what matters.

Pro-tip: If your business requires a custom coded website, it should be expensive. Good developers cost more money.

Size

The bigger your site is, the more it's going to cost you. More pages, more sections and more content take more work.

Most websites have a structure like this:

- Home
 - About
 - Process
 - Services
 - Contact
 - Privacy Policy

Operation Homepage: The one-page website by Skymouse Studios

If you look at the above pages, most of the time you don't have enough content to justify making a whole page for your services. And here's the real kicker: most people won't even see your other pages, they simply don't have the time or interest to explore your whole website.

With a one-page website all the important content is boiled down to concise headlines, allowing users to effortlessly find what they need and get in touch with you faster.

Not only does it make things simple, it trims the fat so you can quickly get a website up and spend more time and money on other things, like payroll and driving traffic to your new website.

[Learn more about Operation Homepage on our website.](#)

Where to start with your website

Start simple and improve over time

Don't try to make this more difficult than it needs to be. Like a kitchen remodel, websites can get way too big and way too expensive if you're not careful to hire the right people and keep your budget firm. Also realize that if you have a small budget, you're going to get a really small website. It's the name of the game.

There's a warped view that, because it's "virtual," a website doesn't take work or time to build. The best websites out there can rake in millions of dollars a day, BUT they have teams of people adding to it and optimizing it every day.

If you don't have a lot of money on hand, start with a \$3,000 website and 6 months later add a couple more pages. The beauty of a website is that it can (and should!) evolve and grow with your business.

Keep control of your website

Don't hand over all your website matters. Make sure the domain name and the hosting accounts are in your name and that you have the passwords. It's better to be on the safe side and keep your digital investments under your control and not in the hands of Sly Joe Marketing Co.

Marketing companies will come and go. Your own employees won't stay forever. Ensure you have good documentation of your website.

You can't afford to lose control of your investment.

Be content-focused

Content is king. Spend time making sure your customers understand what you do. Your webpage should make it STUPID easy for them to buy whatever you're selling or do whatever you're asking them to do.

You can't make something too simple and easy to understand on the web. Most people are on their phones and in a rush. They don't have time to hunt for what they are looking for.

Hey!

Connect with
John here!

Your website options

Building a website on your own

You can do this. It takes time, but you can do it.

There are a lot of tools out there that help you build websites without any knowledge of coding or design. This option makes sense for a LOT of small businesses. The hard part here is writing the web copy for your site and making sure the technical things are all working together.

P.S. It's usually worth it to hire a copywriter to make sure the content is killer. If you need a copywriter, just [shoot us a message](#). We know some great copywriters!

How to build a website

There are two main technical parts to a website. Your domain name (i.e. SkymouseStudios.com), which is just the name itself and the hosting, which is where the website files are kept on the internet.

The process is simple, but so many people do it backwards. Most people want to start designing right away, but you can't design something until you know what content you're going to have. You can't make a blueprint for a house until you know how many rooms you want. It will be faster and more inexpensive if you follow these steps.

1. Outline your content and structure
2. Write your content
3. Design the layout of the page. This doesn't have to be perfect, you can do it on paper or the computer. The point is you are now deciding how you want to present the content and information that is important to your audience.
4. Develop or build using a drag and drop builder on your website. This is where you can do the work or hire a developer to do the work for you.
5. Tweak and optimize your website for desktop and mobile devices. Chances are most of your users will be on mobile. Now is your chance to make sure the site looks great on mobile and loads fast.

Hosting your website

Managed WordPress

You've probably heard of WordPress at this point. WordPress is server software for managing website content. For most people, it's a great, easy-to-use solution with the potential for growth and customization. If you want **Managed WordPress Hosting** it means the hosting provider will make sure things are set up and working for you no matter what; but keep in mind this option is more expensive because you're paying for them to set things up for you.

All-in-one site builders

The fastest and most user-friendly options, like Wix and Squarespace, are great if you want to get up and running fast. The benefits are that you don't have any development or designing to do, but the downside is it can be difficult to customize it to your exact liking. You can be limited in the design options you have when using a site builder.

- Squarespace (\$18-\$26 / month)
- Wix (\$13-\$22 / month)
- Webflow (\$12-\$16 / month)

Setting up your server

Your server is basically a computer somewhere else that **hosts** your website content. It's hardware that your website is running on. There is a monthly fee for most website servers that we refer to as hosting your website. When looking at hosting options, the expense goes up the more powerful the server is and the more space you want on the server.

You only need a couple gigabytes (GB) when you're selecting a host, they will try to up-charge you for more storage. If you're just building a small website you really only need a gig or 2 to start. Video takes up a lot of storage. On an average website, all of the pictures together (if formatted correctly) shouldn't take up more than 1 GB of storage. We'll talk more about this later.

The second thing hosting providers charge you for is the bandwidth you expect to use. Again, the more media you have the more bandwidth a month it will require. Most small business sites don't need unlimited bandwidth. I would recommend starting with a smaller package and increasing the amount you need when that time arrives.

Hosting multiple sites on one server

If you plan on making multiple websites, it might be worth hosting it on your own because you can pay \$13 month for hosting on your own and host up to 20 websites on that one server. As long as these aren't huge websites with tons of content, that will be a great way to save money.

Godaddy vs. Hostgator vs. bluehost

Choosing a host can be difficult. At this point there are a couple top contenders. I don't think it really matters much, although there is a correlation between really cheap hosting and the speed of your website.

Godaddy is pretty popular, but they are known to have some serious lagging, and they charge a lot of money for their SSL certificates. They don't allow you to buy it somewhere else.

Shared hosting is what most people go with. Shared hosting is when the hosting provider puts multiple websites on the same server. The upside is that the cost is pretty cheap for you. The downsides of shared hosting is that speeds can be affected, and there will be times where your site might be unavailable for a couple minutes if there is a spike in internet traffic on that server.

If you don't have thousands of website visitors, shared hosting is the best way to go. This usually ranges from \$5-\$14/month based on what your bandwidth and storage allowances are.

Pro-tip: A lot of web hosts try to make it sound like they are giving you a ton of value in their \$24/month packages. Most of the time it's just trickery. Most people shouldn't be spending more that \$13/mo on their hosting.

Installing WordPress by yourself on a server.

Most servers have scripts that let you install WordPress very easily and get up and running in no time. CPanel is what many servers run in order to control what is on your server.

Web domain

Buying a domain that is easy to say out loud is important. Most websites end in a **.com** but your desired domain might already be taken. We also live in a time where having a **.co** or a **.us** isn't a bad thing. It's my personal opinion that **.net** sounds outdated. I would advise picking a couple options that you like and asking some people for their opinion on it.

Hey!

Check out our new podcast on Spotify.

Buying a web domain

A web domain is a separate cost from your hosting (although some hosting companies will offer the first year free to entice you to host with them). Most domain names cost somewhere between \$9 and \$15 dollars depending on where you buy it.

Pro-tip: Look at what the renewal costs are, many hosting providers will trick people into buying a domain at \$5, but then it renews every year after that for \$15 a year.

Making the domain name and the website work together

You control where the domain name points to in the **DNS** (Domain Name System). This is where you point your domain name to a string of numbers called an IP address.

Once you've bought a domain name you need to tell the domain where to go when someone types in your url (like skymousestudios.com) Usually you type in an IP address of the hosting service that you are using. It may seem complex but, it's really pretty simple.

The importance of SSL

Google announced websites will be penalized for sites that do not have SSL Certificate. This is a certificate guaranteeing the

information sent between user and the server is `encrypted` (this makes it so bad guys can't see the information). This is critical for websites that ask users for private information like credit cards.

Some hosting/dns providers will sell you \$100 SSL certificates, but I know where you get one for free. Cloudflare offers a free SSL if you move your website over to their service for DNS. I recommend this option to all of our clients. It's a pretty painless process.

If you would rather pay for one you can usually pick up one for about \$10 dollars.

Installing the SSL certificate can be a bit of a pain, but it isn't hard.

Content Management Systems

Content management is for everyone. It's how you manage where your content goes and how it changes over time on your website. This can be done in a spread sheet or a word document for smaller websites, but nowadays most website builders and website platforms have it baked right in.

To illustrate, we're going to do a quick run-through of WordPress.

WordPress

WordPress is the standard for websites in many ways. Some of the downsides are that it is slow, sometimes prone to getting hacked, and usually requires more developmental work. The benefits are that it's very customizable and can be used for small sites or massive, well-engineered sites.

WordPress allows multiple users to access the site and make changes.

- An editor might review all blog posts before they are published.
- Your designer might upload new graphics to your service pages.
- The developer might edit your template to add a new search feature to your homepage.

Understanding how to use WordPress

Posts are things like blogs, articles, or ongoing content. Press releases are another example of a post. Posts usually have a significant publication date. They are similar to food or firewood - they are tangible elements that are consumed by your users.

Pages are considered static, in that they don't change much. This would be furniture to a house. It can be deleted, changed, cleaned up, but it's part of the general aesthetic and meat of what the house looks like.

Media includes videos, PDFs, images and the like. You upload it to your site, and then you can link to it on your posts and your pages.

Plugins are like your heating system, security system, or internal intercom. They are cool features that help to change aspects of your house and how it works. Plugins range from adding a Google map feature to adding a podcast feature on your website. They can be dangerous; however, because they are made by outside developers. This means they could create a vulnerability in your website that would allow bad guys to hack your site.

The Theme Template governs how your website looks. It's the blueprint for your house. It determines everything from the way your pages look, to the types of posts, to the color of your text. A theme is made up of php (Server language) HTML, CSS and usually Javascript. There are many free themes available from WordPress third-party developers. Some cost money.

Many themes feature drag and drop builders that make it easy for non-technical users to make a website (similar to Squarespace or Wix). You can also have a custom theme built, but this would be an area for a professional developer to get involved.

Make content for your website

If you're not creating quality content, why bother? Content is the bait to the fishing line. The meal to the plate. Don't spend money on a website. Spend your money on the content.

When working on your website make sure you're putting most of your time and money into the content. If you're working with a marketing agency find out what their plan is for content and where they plan to source their images, copy, blogs, or downloads. Hold them accountable. **Many agencies will offer to build you a website but hold you responsible for the content, which is most of the work.**

Determine your content before you begin making a website.

It's very easy to jump in and start designing something only to realize you don't have anything on your naked website. Here are some varying examples.

- A clear outline of your service offerings
- A pricing page for your mindfulness app
- A blog post on the top 12 reasons businesses get sued
- A video on the Alaskan cruise experience

Copywriting

Copywriting is all of the text on your website. From headlines to descriptions of your services. Copy is a large factor of what Google scans when looking at the content of the page. It's also a crucial aspect of how your website visitors understand what the website is about.

Rule #1 for website copy is that LESS is MORE. People don't care about all the details of your services. Most people scan headlines quickly to determine their next step. Extraneous content confuses and slows your visitors down. Web copy is not the same as it is in print. It's a different beast and needs to be treated as such.

Try to be clear and concise in every way. Eliminate words.

Hey!

Sign up for our free livestream trainings here!

Graphics and Illustrations

Don't tell them. Show them.

The visual aspect of your site is also important. People learn a lot about what type of company you are by images and graphics.

Stock photos are overused. People are tired of the same fake smiles. The more you can be unique and intentional with your website, the better it will be received. You can pay a photographer to take some photos of your office, your employees on the job, or the city you live in. Original images are powerful.

All websites look the same. It's work paying a professional designer to make header images or icons that separate you from the competition. It shows your audience you're different.

Pro-tip: Make sure your images are compressed so that they don't take up much space. Most large images shouldn't be more than 350kb in size. The bigger the image the slower your site is.

Video

Video makes up most of the internet now. It's by far the most engaging and captivating thing outside of perhaps Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR). A video appeals to the emotional responses of your audience. It appeals to their need for peace of mind. A well-crafted video can increase conversions.

Videos are expensive. You can expect to pay between \$1k-\$5k for a live action or animated video, depending on the level of production. Like a bad website, a bad video can turn people away by misrepresenting who you are.

Rule #1 Make promotional videos short and sweet. A video over 1 minute and 30 seconds is already too long and has lost the interest of most people.

Starting your own video podcast or video show is a pretty inexpensive way to grow your audience. However, it's crucial that you're telling them new things and blowing their minds.

Blogging

Articles are a great way to help grow your audience. People start in Google with questions. Ideally they end on your website with the answers. Well written content that solves a problem is the best way to make your customers happy.

Rule #1 Make it robust and helpful. Giving a weak opinion or telling people how great you think your own business is is not good content. Show people how to solve their problems. Make content that delights them.

Downloads

Offer free downloads. This can be a PDF cheatsheet, ebook, or some other thing that actually helps your customers and future customers get things done. The more time and work you put into the digital download, the more likely your download is worth to your customers.

Integrations

There are a lot of awesome tools out there that help you make a great experience for your customers.

Mailchimp is a marketing platform offering website landing pages, email marketing, and email automation tools. We use Mailchimp to create our Skymouse newsletter. They offer a free version that will help you get started with up to 2,000 subscribers.

Drift Live Chat is a resource that helps customers get in touch with you as soon as possible. People are tired of online forms. They're ready for the future. Drift has a FREE version that lets you do more than enough. The live-chat messages can get sent straight to your phone so you never have any downtime.

Google Analytics shows you how many visitors you get, where they came from, and how they are spending their time on your site.

Hotjar is the obsessive girlfriend version of Analytics. Hotjar shows you specifics of how people interact with your site. They create awesome heat-maps based on what your users are clicking on and how far down they scroll.

Search Engine Optimization

Search engine optimization makes your website friendly to search engines like Google.

If you make your site easy to use, Google rewards that by helping you float to the top of Google Search. Making your site optimized for search is not that hard. It's a slow process, but if you are methodical and intentional you can rank #1 in Google Search.

Speed

Speed is huge. You need to make sure you have a fast website. If your website doesn't load faster than 3 seconds you've already lost 70% of your audience. The number one thing slowing you down is probably your images. Most websites have images that are way bigger than they need to be. Test the speed of your site on GTmetrix.com.

Backlinks

A backlink is a link to your website from someone else's blog or website. It's how Google measures how popular your website is. You can get backlinks by writing articles for other websites, by appearing on other people's podcasts or using a referral program. Backlinks aren't easy to get, it's one of the most overlooked aspects of search engine optimization.

Content

Keep making content. Work on growing your site so that it's a place people want to share and come back to. Google rewards sites that are continually growing and building.

Get started on your new website!

Websites can be a lot of work. Take it a day at a time and focus on the most important aspects first before you go on to other things. Start small and add new pages later. Simple and done is better than complex and 8 months away from going live.



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