

THE 5 STEPS YOU NEED TO SET UP A SMALL  
BUSINESS OR SIDE HUSTLE WEBSITE

# STRAIGHT TALK WEB GUIDE

DEMYSTIFYING THE PROCESS  
OF CREATING A WEBSITE FOR YOUR SMALL BUSINESS  
OR SIDE HUSTLE PROJECT

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[www.straighttalkwebguide.com](http://www.straighttalkwebguide.com)

## Welcome and Thank You

Hello and thank you for downloading the Straight Talk Web Guide:

*The 5 Essential Steps You Need To Create A Website For Your Small Business Or Side Hustle Project.*

By the end of this E-Guide you will understand the simple, but most important elements you need to set up a professional looking website for your small business or side project.

By sharing this knowledge with you, I hope to give you a clear picture on what it takes to get your site set up, so you can undertake the basic tasks yourself, without any feeling of overwhelm or feeling that it will be too techy for you.

On the other hand, if you are going to get a web guy or gal to build a website for you, this guide will help you speak their language so you won't feel intimidated when talking to them.

I know what it's like to talk to super tech folks and be unsure of yourself, so if you need to get some clarity on what's involved before you talk to you website person, this guide has you covered.

Bribe alert!!

You may be wondering why I am giving away this “inside knowledge” to you for a flat rate of zero charge.

Well, I help solopreneurs and small business owners build websites and digital marketing plans. So, if you find value in this guide, you might want me to help you.

Now, before you think that this E-Guide is sales pitch in disguise or there are some underhand shenanigans at play here, I promise I will not pressure or pester you in any way whatsoever.

Nope.

Right now, you just want some intel on how to get started with your website, so this guide will help you ‘clear the fog’ and get you on the right track – no strings attached.

With that being said, please let me make it clear that getting a website will require some work and some new learnings.

In this E-Guide I share the basic tools and processes I use to create pro looking websites, but please understand that I cannot guarantee that you will match these same results.

Such a claim would be fool-some.

We (almost certainly) have never met, so I don't know your business or how much available 'bandwidth' you have to undertake a web project, which will include some investment of your time in order to do a good job.

What I can say with some confidence is that after reading this guide, you will be a lot clearer on how a small business website is put together, so that you can at least have an understanding of what's involved to get the essential stuff up and running.

Right, let's get started...

## The Basic, Basics

Before we get into the meat and potatoes, I need to explain what the 5 Essential Steps to setting up a website are:

1. Getting a *Domain Name*
2. Setting up your *Website Hosting*
3. Installing your *Website Structure*
4. Apply *Styling* to your website
5. Creating your *Content*

Some of these steps can be put into place in a matter of hours, as they only involve a credit card and a few mouse clicks.

The remainder will take a little thought to make happen, but they are very achievable.

I'll explain what each step is in more detail below.

## Step 1 - Domain Name

Your domain name is your virtual 'sign above the door' in internet speak and is your business's identity online.

It is your web address in a format called a URL or *Universal Resource Locator*.

To you and me it's your www web address. For example, my website address is [www.straighttalkwebguide.com](http://www.straighttalkwebguide.com).

Your domain name tells the web browser (Firefox, Internet explorer, Chrome, Safari etc) where to go and look to find where your website is stored. This makes it a critical component of your digital real estate.

It is also probably the single most important digital asset you can own.

So you need to secure your domain name as soon as possible, even if your plans for your website are not ready yet.

## But what does a Domain Name do?

Basically the domain name or URL, from the computer's point of view, is a series of numbers that relate to an address where the files and images for the website are housed.

Think of it as the address the postal service use to direct mail to your house.

Just as you can direct mail to any location, you can also send web visitors to any website when they enter your domain name into their browser.

Once you have decided on the objectives for your website, then securing your Domain Name is the most important part of this whole process.

In fact, one of the first things I advise people to do when they ask me about getting a website done is to register their own domain name themselves.

Why do I advise this?

This piece of digital real estate is *your identity online*. It's the sign above the door and you do not want anyone else to have control over it.

If your web person or someone else offers to register your domain name for you then they will effectively own it and that is a big risk to you.

Ideally you will want to register it yourself as you don't want the hassle of trying to buy it from someone else.

## How To Get A Domain Name

Getting your domain name is as easy as doing your online grocery shop.

Of course, you cannot order a domain name that someone already has, but you can check the availability of the one you want by using a *Domain Name Registrar*.

Domain Name Registrars are companies that buy and sell domain names.

I use a company called [Namecheap.com](https://Namecheap.com) to manage my domain names.

They have a great, easy to use interface and a large range of domain names.

You can find them here: [Click to access the Namecheap website](https://Namecheap.com).

If you want to see how I get my Domain Names you can follow the guide on my website here: [Click here to see how to set up a Domain Name](#)

## Some Things To Consider For Your Domain Name

Before you go charging in to register your [www.whatever.com](#) you may need to consider a few things.

What will your domain name say about your business?

Domain Names come in many forms. They can be based on your business name, a specific set of keywords or perhaps even both.

For example, if your business was based in Manhattan and you were a plumber and your name was John Smith, then SmithsManhattanPlumbers might be a good Domain Name.

It has the location, business type and the name of the owner all wrapped into one catchy URL.

You could also opt for a keyword driven URL such as TheBestPlumbingCo or JohnSmithPlumber if you preferred a Domain Name based solely on the name of your business.

The format of your URL *is* something that you want to think about, before registering one.

## Is it easy to say or remember?

You also want to avoid any ambiguity with the spelling as some people like to enter the website address directly into their web browser. If your site name is [www.chrisplumber.com](http://www.chrisplumber.com) it could be miss-spelt as crisplummer or chrisplumer and will send visitors to a different site.

## Will your email address be too long?

It may seem a good idea to have a URL that is keyword rich, but if it has too many characters, it may cause issues with things like your email address and contact details on business cards or letterheads.

## Does it infringe any copyright?

You want to make sure that you own the rights to the name that you want to use. Many big brands and large corporate businesses are very touchy about anyone using trade names, let alone website names, that bears even the slightest resemblance to theirs.

And they have well-paid lawyers who help remind smaller businesses of this.

So to wrap up, the Domain Name for your site is the sign above the door and is something that you *must* own outright.

There are plenty of places to get your Domain Name registered, I use [Namecheap](#) as my primary supplier, but as I said a quick Google search will provide you with a list of who's who in the zoo when it comes to domain names.

### What's Next?

Once you have your domain name, you will then need to think about where your website will sit in cyberspace.

In the next chapter we will find out how this is achieved by hosting your website and the different types of options available.

### Takeaways from this section

Your Domain Name is the identity for your business online and as such, some care needs to be taken when deciding on a name and who should register it.

There are a number of Domain Name registrars, but for ease of use I restrict my domains to a single supplier in [NameCheap](#)

## Step 2 – Website Hosting

While your Domain Name is the signpost for your business, your hosting account is the physical place in cyberspace where your website is located.

Think of it as the floor space or block of land where your office, shop or shed is built.

In reality hosting is a space on a computer called a server where all the files that go to make up your site are stored. These computers are maintained by hosting companies and are designed to run all day and night to allow the content from your site to be accessed at any time.

You pay them to house your online store or "office", just like renting out office space for your bricks and mortar store or hiring a pitch in your local farmers' market.

## Different Types of Hosting

It's important to know that not all web hosting is created equal.

There are different options when it comes to website hosting and each one can impact the performance of your website.

The most frequently used are highlighted below:

### Free Hosting

Sounds inviting doesn't it?

Unfortunately, as with all things in life, you get what you pay for.

While the thought of free web hosting might be an attractive one, this is something I always strongly advise against, especially for small businesses.

The trouble with free hosting is that your account will have near zero support, slow access speeds and you will probably be landed with the name of the provider as part of your domain name.

So if you don't want your website to be stuck with a URL like [www.coolcheapfreehosting.smithsmanhattanplumbers.net](http://www.coolcheapfreehosting.smithsmanhattanplumbers.net) that could be inaccessible for hours at a time, then you need to secure your own paid hosting.

## Shared Hosting

If you are just starting out or if you are building your first website, then the chances are that you are not going to have a great deal of traffic.

This means that you don't have to go overboard with your web hosting.

In this case, the ideal solution is shared hosting.

Shared hosting means you are share space on the same web server with other websites.

It's a bit like living in an apartment block where you share all the amenities with other residents. For the most part this will not impact the speed or performance of your site, but the downside of shared hosting is that your site will be affected by the "behaviour" of the other sites around you.

Say for example, your neighbour in the unit below yours has wild parties and leaves the water and electricity on all day, the whole block is going to suffer.

This is the same for your website.

The good news is that a decent shared hosting provider will constantly monitor the performance of all the websites on each server.

They will step in when a particular site becomes unruly and starts to use more its fair share of bandwidth.

While this solution will suit the needs of most small business owners, you will need to consider moving out when your business starts to grow, as this type of hosting has finite limits to the amount of space and resources that your site can use.

Most small business websites can function with shared hosting for many years before they require an upgrade.

## Virtual Private Server

This is the next level up in hosting solutions for your website.

Perhaps you have an ever increasing stream of traffic, or your online store is starting to become a mini Amazon.

In this case, you will need to consider moving to a Virtual Private Server or VPS for short. It is like having the whole floor of the apartment block, instead of a single unit.

By using a Virtual Private Server, your website will be hosted in a more robust environment, with more bandwidth and will be free from the vulnerabilities of shared hosting.

## Dedicated Hosting

For the lucky few, their website will become so popular that they need their own tower block to house it in. In technical terms this is known as Dedicated Hosting, whereby your website is stored on a single server.

If you have a thriving site with a flow of traffic that the Wall Street Journal would be proud of then you will need to move your website to your very own server for it to remain stable.

(If you do manage to grow your site to this scale, then promise me you won't forget your friends who helped you along the way.)

As with Domain Names, getting started with low-cost hosting for your website is very straightforward. You just need to have your Domain Name and your credit card at the ready and you are good to go.

### Which hosting accounts

A quick Google search will return a list of a variety of hosting accounts offering their wares.

I personally use [Siteground](#) to run my sites.

In the 5 years plus that I have used them, I have had no cause for complaint and I have found them to be very WordPress friendly.

Please do not feel obliged to sign up for the same services as I have. (But if you do, then I will get a little compensation to help with putting this E-Guide together).

As someone who wants control over your website, you are free to choose your own hosting provider.

If you are keen on sourcing an alternative hosting account, then here are some key things to look out for.

## What type of support do they offer?

Make sure that they promote a ton of support options on their site and that they make it easy to get in contact with. Many of the top providers have a chat line and video or written tutorials to help you if you get stuck.

## What type of unbiased reviews are being written about them?

Take a look at their social media accounts and view the responses that they give to questions, compliments or complaints. Also don't forget to take a gander at their testimonials.

You can also check out review sites, but be aware that these are the places where disgruntled souls go to vent their displeasure. As always you need to use a little common sense and solicit feedback from actual users of the service.

## Summary

So for now let us recap on what we have learned over the last few sections.

We have been through the Domain Name registration process and we have now selected our Website Hosting option.

If you already have your Domain Name through [Namecheap](#) then you can get your Web Hosting account by signing up at [Siteground](#).

Again, these links are affiliate links. This means that if you click on them and purchase your domain name and hosting, I will receive some compensation.

You can, of course, go directly to their sites. The cost will be no different to you. But if you use my links you will be helping me continue to provide this type of content.

If you want to see how I set up simple website hosting, then follow my guide [here](#) on the website: [How To Set Up Your Website Hosting](#).

### *When Can I Build My Website?*

I hear you ask.

I am the type of person who likes to get stuck straight in, so if you are anything like me you'll be keen to get your site up.

But, just as Rome wasn't built in a day, your website shouldn't be a rush job and I do not want to confuse you with information overload.

So in the next section we will talk about the physical structure of your site and a piece of free software that has made it possible for

folks like you and me to effortlessly get a professional and stable website up and running.

## Step 3 - Website

By setting up the Domain Name and establishing a Hosting Account, you have created the foundations for your website.

If we were to equate this to setting up a bricks and mortar business, this is where you would have registered our business name and bought your plot of land where your shop, office or other place of business was to be built on.

So your next step is to create your website.

If you want a free demo of how this is done, then click here to watch a walkthrough on my website.

I have to tell you that for me this part of creating your own website involves one of the single most important game changers in allowing ordinary folk to get their business or side gig online.

### *Hands down*

You see, many, many moons ago a simple software program called WordPress was developed to allow a group of bloggers a clean and simple way of getting their thoughts down in digital print.

It has now become the website platform of choice for millions of websites including [Playstation](#), [Ford](#) and [The Wall Street Journal](#).

And this is something that you can easily use to create a website for your business.

And did I mention that it is free to use with *free updates*?

So, what is WordPress?

WordPress is a powerful blogging and website platform that can be installed with a few mouse clicks, with most of the popular hosting accounts.

It is maintained and developed by some very clever people from around the globe. These unsung heroes are committed to making it a licence free option for non-technical users like you and me to become website owners.

It is also very easy to use once it is set up, so you can add your own content (pages, images, stories etc) without paying someone to do it for you.

The website hosing packages offered by [Siteground](#) have very simple, step by step website set ups, that install WordPress in a matter of minutes and with only a few mouse clicks.

If you are comfortable with using a word processor, then using WordPress to add and update your content should be easy to manage.

## The Early Days Of The Web

Before WordPress came along, it used to be that you had to have some sort of computer science degree to code your website from the ground up, but these days you can have a site up and running without touching a line of code.

Now, for simple brochure sites with a few pages, this is an OK solution.

However, if your business needs a full site, this will prove difficult if you don't know how to code.

This is not so with WordPress, as it contains everything you need to have a fully functioning website with just a couple of mouse-clicks.

Going back to our bricks and mortar example, instead of getting a builder or contractor to build your store or office from scratch, when you install WordPress you are handed the keys to a workplace with running water, electricity, phone lines and some furniture thrown in for free.

All you have to do is add your design and a few extras particular to your line of business and you are good to go.

So how does this WordPress work?

Ok, I'm going to get a little technical here, but stick with me, you won't be geeked out.

Wordpress is built on a database system to create a personal publishing tool.

It will require what is known as PHP and MySQL to be installed on your hosting account.

Again this is not something that you need to worry about as most commercial hosting services will have this as standard.

Because it is a database under constant development, Wordpress has gone from being a simple text editor used for personal blogging, to a go-to tool able to handle a ton of useful tasks that do not require you to touch a line of code.

With WordPress as your website platform, you are able to do things like:

- Add and maintain your own written content
- Store images and files, provided they are not huge

- Create membership sites with private logins for paying members
- Manage comments and messages from website visitors
- Develop and publish your own training programs
- Sell your own physical or digital products

All of these tasks can be done by you or your team and not an external consultant.

Now, you may want to hire in someone to do this stuff for you. It is not compulsory that you do it yourself.

What WordPress gives you is the freedom to make that choice.

**A Note About Branding:** Even though WordPress will give you an out of the box website that you can use to publicize your business or engage with your customers, it will not give you a site that will match your brand.

There's still one more step that you need to take to get your site looking the way you want it, and that is to add a theme.

So in the following section we will be adding the icing on the cake by finding out how to make your site look more in keeping with your business.

## Step 4 - Styling

If you just use the standard installation of WordPress, then your website is going to look a little dull.

It does come with a few styling options, but not anything that will match your branding or make your site look different from the tens of hundreds of sites with the same setup.

### How to style your website to suit your brand

As I mentioned in the previous section, your WordPress setup comes with a standard look and feel when you use it straight out of the box.

While this has improved over the years and can be used as a functional website, it does come with some drawbacks.

Your website will not suit your branding and it will look like every other site that has undergone the same process.

Also, it will have a limited number of bells and whistles, although this is always being addressed with each update.

So to spruce things up a little, we need to apply a theme.

## What is a theme?

Think of a theme as the window dressing to your website. It is a design template that sits on top of your WordPress install.

WordPress themes are developed by very clever people with an eye for design who can code and integrate with the functionality of the software.

If we were compare this to a bricks and mortar business then a theme is the decoration and some of the functionality that we need for our store, factory or office to function.

## Where to get your WordPress theme.

There 2 options when it comes to getting a theme for your website

### Free

There a ton of free WordPress themes available on the net. However just as with free hosting, the support that you receive from the developer of a free theme might be non-existent or at the least not be treated with the priority that your site deserves.

Also some free themes have a habit of not being updated and can become incompatible with the latest releases of WordPress.

In some extreme and unfortunate cases, you will find malicious code hidden inside certain themes that come with a zero price tag.

That being said, if you are desperate for a free theme, then a good place to start looking is the [Wordpress.Org](#) theme directory. They have pages of themes with notes on when they were last updated and they are flagged if any serious complaint has been filed against them.

## Premium

If you are planning on building a commercial site, then you would be wise to invest in a paid or premium theme.

These are WordPress themes that you pay a licence to the developer so you can use it on your site.

You can expect to fork out between \$50 to \$125 for a decent theme. Each one is usually limited to 1 licence per website, meaning if you want to use the same theme twice then you have to buy 2 licences.

Just as with the paid hosting solutions, check the responses from the developer to the user questions, either on their sites or in their social media channels.

A good premium theme developer will offer support for his or her theme and will be active in forums set up to cater for issues and questions or in one or more social media settings.

If you can see that the developer is super helpful, even to people who have not even bought the theme yet, then this is a good sign.

**Where can you get your premium theme.**

This part of your website building process can be a real time suck.

When I first started out, I used to scour the net for the perfect theme for days on end.

While you will be tempted to do this, I urge you to exercise restraint as this can cost you hours of time looking at wonder at all the different designs on offer.

What you will find is that these themes, just like show houses, are *presented in their best light*.

The images will be super high definition and the content will be super engaging.

After spending too many hours that you did not budget for, you will be left with a list of many themes that you like but cannot decide on which one to use.

If you have the time to spare, then please feel free to indulge, however I have discovered that if I stick to 2 or 3 themes, then I can become very knowledgeable about how they work and what I can do with them.

My primary theme of choice is one called [U-Design](#) which my site at [straighttalkwebguide.com](http://straighttalkwebguide.com) site uses. Indeed, most of the websites that I build also use this same theme.

**Why did I choose this theme provider?**

After browsing many theme sites and spending too much time trying to learn the features of each new theme that I took a shine to, I decided to develop a quick checklist for selecting a theme or using a particular developer.

This litmus test has been a real time saver and only involves a few questions.

- How engaged are the developers were in helping their customers once they purchase from them?
- Are they continuously updating their themes so they continue to work with WordPress?
- Do the themes that they develop have elements of SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) applied to them?
- How customizable are their themes?
- Do their theme designs have a responsive layout (look good on mobiles and tablets) option?

- Do they have an active forum where they regularly engage with their clients and customers?

For [U-Design](#), the answers to the above were (and still are) yes.

Now you will find other folks on the net waving the flags for other theme providers, but I like I said, I like to limit myself to a select few so that;

a) I am not tempted to follow rabbit holes and,

b) I can become really familiar with all of the features of the few themes that I use to get the very best out of them.

You are at liberty to find your own provider if the goodies at [Themeforest](#) and don't take your fancy.

In your search for the perfect template, you may discover other popular theme providers, such as;

- Elegant Themes
- WooThemes
- Organized Themes

I have used these in the past and indeed I still use some WooThemes products on many of my sites.

Again you have the choice to go with what suits you. I can only pass on my experiences in using the themes I have on my hit list, which to date has been exceptional.

### The Story So Far...

So, we now have 4 out of the 5 elements needed for you to be able to set up a basic website for your small business or project.

1. Domain Name
2. Hosting
3. WordPress
4. Theme

When it comes to building websites, you will find that these steps are fairly routine as they deal with getting the “structure” in place.

In the next chapter we are going to add something that is personal to you and your business.

Your content.

After adding your branding colours to your site, your content is where you really differentiate yourself to the other players in your market.

## Step 5 - Content

Steps 1 to 4 in this process are pretty straightforward as they follow set procedures, however there is one area where you need to focus on to get your website set up properly, and that is your content.

This is because your content drives the relationship between you and your website visitors and is the bedrock of your website, regardless of what market you are in or what your site looks like.

The subject of your content can become a deep discussion with some new website owners getting a little overwhelmed when they find out how much can go into content creation.

Basically it boils down to having 2 options for the function of your website:

1. A static set of pages that never change
2. A website that is constantly being updated with new engaging content

When you are planning the content for your site, you have to ask yourself a couple of questions.

Do you want a brochure site that just sits in cyberspace like a digital promotional billboard or junk mail, acting as a 1-way messaging system to anyone who might stumble across it?

Or do you want your website to be the online hub for all the engagement with your customers, clients and prospects by being a site that is more interactive with your audience?

As you can probably tell, the scope of second point is a topic for a whole chapter, or possibly its own eBook.

However, regardless of the content policy you decide on for your website, it needs to share some basic information that your visitors want to know about you:

- Who you are
- What do you do
- How can you help them

Eager to find out more?

Then let's dive into it...

Your website content can be broken down into 2 categories.

## Standard Pages

These are the pages that web visitors have come to expect on most websites, so it is important they are included on your site and are clearly labelled.

They contain static content or the basic information about you or your business. For example, a [Contact](#) page would not require too many changes, unless you moved location or changed your contact details.

An example of a standard set of pages is as follows:

Home | Services | FAQ | Testimonials | Blog | About | Contact

You can add these pages very quickly in WordPress, although you will need to plan what type of content they will hold, so they will grab the attention of your web visitors when they land on them.

### Relationship Building Content

The second type of content is used to grow your website. This could be blog posts, articles case studies or downloads (like this one).

This type of content serves *3 main purposes*:

1. Help your visitor to overcome a problem or find an answer they were looking for
2. Help the search engines love and promote your website
3. Help your web visitors to get to know, like and trust you

By adding useful information to your website, you will give yourself more chance to attract the exact type of customers who are looking for the services you offer.

Also, the search engines give more importance to websites that have useful content.

This is because if people keep using their platform, they are able to increase their advertising revenue.

So if they, (the search engines), think your website will help them to keep web users on their platform, they will reward you by giving your site more preference in their search results.

Nice.

So, while you can get a basic, good looking site together relatively quickly, having a good chunk of *Relationship Focussed Content* is something you should be thinking about before you launch your website, and continue to do so long afterword.

## Next Steps - Launch and Promotion

Once you get all of your digital ducks in a row, you will be ready to launch your site. But this is where a lot of website owners make the classic mistake of 'set and forget'.

If you want your website to work for you, then you need to take note of the next 2-word paragraph:

Create Value.

Your website must add actionable value for your audience and it has to be relevant.

This is the foundation of every piece of content that goes on your website and is the single guiding principle that will set you straight when you are planning your next move.

If you keep this in mind, then you won't go far wrong when trying to win the favour of your customers and the search engines.

This means making sure it is updated with fresh and helpful content and the files and code that hold it all together are updated regularly.

Most small business owners may not have the time or the knowledge to do this effectively, however it does not require a great deal of technical know-how to at least create a plan for the success of your website.

If you are ready to get your business online, but you don't feel that this is something you can do on your own, don't worry, I've got you covered.

I really, *really* like doing this stuff and I get a massive kick out of helping folks get comfortable with managing their 'webstuff'.

Like I said, there is no pressure here, but if you want to get the ball rolling then contact me [here](#) to get started.

If I think I can help you, we can arrange a FREE 30-minute NO OBLIGATION chat, where we jump on Zoom and you get to fire as many questions as possible and I will give you my best answers.

After that, if you are not convinced, we can part ways with no hard feelings.

Or, if you want to move things along, we can make a start with your web project.

## Signing Off

Thank you once again for taking the time to download and read this E-Guide.

I hope it has demystified the process of setting up a website so that when you are ready to create one for your business, you know what to expect and you won't feel like you need to be a computer whizz to understand it all.

## The How To List

Just in case you needed some quick links to help you get started, the ones below are the steps I use. (These are links to my website, if you hadn't already guessed).

[How To Set Up Your Domain Name](#)

[How To Set Up Your Website Hosting](#)

[How To Install WordPress](#)

[How To Add A Theme](#)

[How To Add Your Content](#)

## List of Resources

### Domain Name Companies

- [Namecheap.com](#)

### Web Hosting Companies

- [Siteground](#)

## Website Styling Themes

- [U-Design](#)

These links can also be found on my resources page at [www.straighttalkwebguide.com/resources](http://www.straighttalkwebguide.com/resources)

Ready to get started?

[CLICK HERE For your FREE 30 minute NO OBLIGATION chat.](#)