Starting a Small Business: The Basics from A to Zen

web.com
The Enlightened Path to Being Your Own Boss

You’ve dreamed about being your own boss for years. Perhaps you’ve already started a business, formed a Limited Liability Company (LLC), partnered in a joint venture or bought a franchise. Maybe you’re dissatisfied with your career path and need a new direction. You might wish to accomplish more professionally while making additional income. Whatever the case may be, you know it’s time to move forward.

You have the drive and creativity. You believe you have an in-demand product or service. The only question is what to do next. Read on to learn how to achieve small business bliss.

We’ll Help You Build Your Business

Starting a new business requires commitment and dedication. Nearly 70 percent of all U.S. workers are disengaged from their jobs and want to be self-employed but only seven percent are. If you’ve started a company, congratulations on realizing your vision and becoming one of the 58.9 million small business owners nationwide.

Here’s where you begin. Take advantage of proven expertise from a company that has helped more than three million businesses get started online. From website domain selection to LLC formation and small business loans, we’ll help you gain a complete understanding of what’s required to get your small business up and running. We’re here to help you build much more than a website – we’ll help you build your business.

Ready to start on the path to becoming your own boss? Let’s begin.
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Determining the Viability of Your Product or Service

There’s an old saying that goes, “Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life.” This spirit of freedom and excitement over your big idea may be what inspired you to start your business. Now you’re taking important steps to make it happen.
Making sure your product or service concept will have market appeal is a key part of realizing your small business vision. Here are some things to consider:

**Conducting Market Research**

**Do you understand the marketplace?** You can hire a market research firm to help you, but there's also a lot you can do on your own. Get online and research the size, characteristics and buying habits of your target audience. Size up the competition and see what they're doing in your industry. Also, check out trade publications and sites that are specific to your field.

**Is there demand for your product or service?** Get to know your paying customers. How are you fulfilling a specific need or solving a problem for them? What is their typical income, what are their buying habits, where do they make purchases and what factors influence their purchase decisions? To gather this information, you can conduct online polls, interview potential customers or search for information on your customer demographic. Understanding market demand will help you determine your marketing approach.

**What are your startup and ongoing costs?** What will your costs be for office rent, phone and internet bills, heat and electricity? Will you have material costs for things such as
production, ingredients and inventory? What is your cost of labor – will you be doing the work yourself or hiring employees? Once you make these determinations, you can come up with a price for your product or service to help ensure you cover your costs and begin to make a profit.

**What is your marketing approach?** How will you reach your customers and how will you inspire sales? What methods and mediums will you use – an internet site, social media, business networking, event attendance or a sales team? Determining a marketing strategy will help shape your overall business approach to ensure potential customers know how to find you.

**Gathering Family Support**

You have the idea, you have the drive and you have all the potential for success. You’ll be devoting a lot of time and focus to your new venture, so have a discussion with your family to make sure they understand your passion for your business and the challenges involved. Obviously, it can be a stressful time for you, your loved ones and even your friends – but it doesn’t have to be.

Having open and honest conversations with your loved ones and close friends helps everyone understand your new focus. Engaging them early in the process eases the transition from having a job to running a business, and makes things a lot easier on everyone involved.
Writing a Business Plan

Business plan. These two words can spark apprehension in many new business owners, but creating a business plan is easier than you might imagine.

Think of it as the starting point of your adventure. Words and graphics help set the course for your new business moving forward, and you can always reference your plan along the way. Even if you never need your business plan for attracting capital or investors, it will help you answer critical questions about your company.
Here are the key elements of a business plan:

1. **Executive Summary**
   - The most important part of your plan, where you describe your business, target market, marketing plan, products and services.

2. **Company Description**
   - Your company's purpose, mission and vision.
   - All relevant company details.
   - Accomplishments thus far.

3. **Products and Services**
   - Definition of your core product or service.
   - Current stage of development and future vision.
   - Product test results, as well as screenshots, diagrams and other graphics.

4. **Marketing Plan**
   - Market research, elevator pitch and profile of your competition.
   - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis.
   - Target market research, brand and product positioning.
   - Marketing mediums and budget.

5. **Operational Plan**
   - Facilities, equipment, space and technology needs.
   - Supply chain management, logistics and distribution plans.
   - Quality Control (QC) checks.
   - Accounting and legal requirements.

6. **Organization and Management**
   - Founders and executive team.
   - Owners and shareholders.
   - Board of directors.
   - Special advisors and consultants.
   - Other key team members.

7. **Financial Plan**
   - Current balance sheet and past two years of financials (if applicable).
   - Financial projections for 12 months and annually through your fifth year.
   - Break-even analysis, cash flow projections, income and expenses.
find one example here) and many business consultants that can help you create one. Relax - you've got this!

**Finding a Mentor**

When it comes to business, everyone can use a little extra guidance from time to time, no matter their level of expertise. Finding a mentor can go a long way toward helping you achieve your business goals. They could be someone you've worked with in the past, a friend who is experienced in the business world or even the owner of a business you admire.

The key is to be clear about what you are hoping to gain from the mentor relationship. You will find that most people will be happy to help you in your journey as long as they understand the time and commitment you expect from them.
Many small business owners feel a little apprehensive when thinking about the legal aspects of forming a business. The good news is there's a lot of great information available to help you easily navigate the process. Here's how to get started.
Selecting and Registering Your Business Name

You’ve got the perfect name for your business, and you’re ready to put it on business cards, letterhead and online, for your customers and the world to see . . . but hang on a second. Is that business name available?

Every state requires you to register your business name before doing business. But if your name idea has already been taken or is too close to another, you may need to find an alternative. Where to begin?

Start by making sure your name idea is available as a domain name for your website and email address. Too often business owners register their business names with the government only to find out later that a corresponding domain name they wanted is not available. Details on selecting a domain name can be found in the “Your Online Identity” section of this eBook.

Once you have determined your domain name is available, check with your local Secretary of State website about registering your business name. You’ll typically find details on how to research your prospective business name – often through a searchable online database that contains all state business names.

**Pro Tip #1:** If you don’t have an idea for your business name but still want to move forward, you can file as a “Doing Business As” (DBA), then choose and register a name later.
When you think your business name is available, you can apply online to your state business division. Even if you’re not ready to operate your business, this process establishes your intent to use the name and prevents others from claiming it for a specific period. When your state contacts you and lets you know the name is available, they will provide you with information on how to register it. This is usually an easy and painless process that you can complete – for a fee – online.

Pro Tip #2: Be sure your business name idea is available as a domain name before completing the registration process.

Forming Your Small Business

Ready to officially set up your business? Here are three solid options. Let’s find the one that best fits your needs:

**Limited Liability Company (LLC)**

- When you are just starting out, protecting your personal assets is important. Your home, vehicles and personal banking accounts will not be at risk should your LLC face legal challenges such as bankruptcy or lawsuits.
- An LLC is not affected by corporate taxes. LLC members are responsible for paying self-employment tax contributions toward Medicare and Social Security.
- This option is preferred for partnerships due to its flexible nature, and for business owners who won’t have outside shareholders and who are not building a business for the purpose of selling it.
Corporation (C Corp)

• This legal entity is completely separate from its owner’s personal assets, has shareholders, can make profits, can be taxed and is held accountable in any legal disputes.
• A corporation is subject to corporate income taxes; however, the owners do not pay self-employment taxes.
• This option is preferred for small business owners who may plan to have shareholders and someday sell the business for a profit.

S Corporation (S Corp)

• This entity is similar to a C Corp in terms of structure. It has shareholders, does not pay corporate income taxes and has many of the benefits of an LLC.
• S Corp owners can take advantage of pass-through taxation, which means profits and losses are reported on the owner’s personal tax returns.
• This option is preferred by small business owners who will have shareholders and want the general benefits of an LLC. Some states have specific laws that make it easier to form an S Corp rather than an LLC.

Remember that this is just general information to get you started. Be sure to contact legal counsel to understand all of your options, so you make the best choice for your small business.
Obtaining Permits and Licenses

After you have registered and officially formed your business, the next step is securing the necessary permits and licenses to do business. Depending on your business, you may need any or all of the following:

**Business license** – This gives you the right to operate your business. You may also need to get various business licenses from your state, county or town. For example, you may need a zoning permit, a home occupation permit, a permit from the health department or another type.

**Seller’s permit** – Many states require this permit for LLCs, partnerships and corporations that sell taxable goods and services.

**Employer Identification Number (EIN)** – Think of this as a social security number for your business. The IRS uses this number to identify your business and track your transactions. If you plan on having employees, an EIN is mandatory. If you will be working alone, it is still a good idea to have one so you can use it for business tax purposes, and for clients and vendors instead of using your social security number.

There are many other types of licenses and permits that may be specific to your business type and industry. If you have questions, contact your local and state governmental business departments to make sure you are in compliance and have everything you need to operate your business.
Protecting Your Business

You’re putting a lot of thought into your business and following the necessary steps to get it up and running. Now you need to protect your investment. Here are a few ways to avoid roadblocks when conducting business:

File for patent, trademark and copyright protection – Patents, trademarks and copyrights are designed to protect the intellectual property (IP) of your small business – things that are unique to your company and help to give you a competitive advantage. Here’s how each one helps:

• **Patent** – Protects ideas, such as a new product, process, method, plan, software or other invention.

• **Trademark** – Protects words, symbols and indications of origin. This may include your website domain name, your brand name, your product or service names and more.

• **Copyright** – Protects original works of authorship, including your website (if you so choose) and other things such as books or articles, photos, music, written brochures and materials and videos.

If you would like to pursue a patent, trademark or copyright for your business, we recommend contacting the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) or the Small Business Administration (SBA) for complete details and directions. You may also want to contact a local legal expert who specializes in these areas.
**Understanding employee laws** – If you have employees or plan to, federal labor laws and related state laws can affect your business. These laws govern workplace practices such as sick leave, employee breaks, minimum wage, overtime, on-call pay and discrimination prevention. Depending on how many people you employ, additional laws and regulations may apply, including:

- **Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)** – Designed to ensure that all employees are paid fairly.

- **Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)** – Ensures that your employees have the right to work in the U.S.

- **Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA)** – Requires you to withhold social security and Medicare taxes from your employees’ wages and to contribute a matching amount of these taxes per employee.

- **Occupational Safety & Health Act (OSHA)** – Governs workplace safety and health.

- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** – Protects employees with temporary or permanent physical and mental disabilities.

For more information on federal and state laws and regulations that may affect your small business, we recommend you contact the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) or a local small business legal expert.

**Rights your small business has with vendors** – If a vendor fails to complete a job as promised, delivers unacceptable results or breaks any other terms and conditions of a mutual agreement, you have legal rights. The best way to protect
yourself is to create a detailed contract with each vendor so there is no room for misinterpretation. You can find examples of these contracts and agreements on sites such as LegalZoom.com, or you can contact local legal business experts for more details.

**Business insurance** – Whether you have an online presence, a brick and mortar location or both, you will need liability and property insurance at the very least to get your business started. You can read more about business insurance in the “Funding Your Dream” section of this eBook.

While protecting your business may seem like a lot to think about, doing a little research with some of the online resources suggested in this eBook and working with a local legal partner you trust will go a long way toward moving your business in a healthy and productive direction.

“Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life.”

- CONFUCIUS
If you’re looking for financial resources for your small business, you’re not alone. Don’t worry – there is a great selection of small business loans and funding options available to fit your needs today and help you plan for tomorrow.
Small Business Financial Options and Resources

Startup and small business loans

- **Small business bank loan** – Provides you with a lump sum upfront that you pay back over a set period along with interest fees.

- **SBA loans** – These government-guaranteed term loans offer low-interest options for small business owners who do not yet qualify for a bank loan.

- **Startup business loans** – Offers newer businesses capital and can include lines of credit, equipment loans and business credit cards.

**Small business grants** – If you meet certain qualifications, you might qualify for a small business grant that can fund your business with no payback required. One popular option is the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) that provides a variety of small business grants.

**Crowdfunding** – This option connects small businesses with the people and resources they need to raise capital. It is typically free to solicit funding on one of the many crowdfunding websites – you create a project campaign and people decide if they want to invest. You have to meet the financial goal amount you set within a certain amount of time or everyone gets their money back. If you are successful at raising the capital you need, a fee may be collected by the crowdfunding site.
**Business credit cards and credit lines** – Most banks offer credit cards and credit lines designed for small businesses. Your local bank is a great place to begin your search – they know and trust you as a personal customer. Also, there are many online options for securing credit resources.

**Business bank accounts** – Whether your company is incorporated or not, it is important to keep your business and personal funds separate. Look for a business bank account that offers a good interest rate on your funds, unlimited free transactions and deposits and no monthly service charges.

**Business insurance** – Most small businesses should have general liability and property insurance (if you have a brick and mortar location) at the very least. If you have employees, most states require you to have workers’ compensation insurance, and commercial auto insurance is important if you have employees that operate vehicles for your business. To develop a complete plan designed for your specific needs, contact a small business insurance specialist.

**Financial reporting** – Small businesses and startups depend on financial reports to measure organizational health, set benchmarks and make operational decisions. Common reports include:

- **Balance sheet** – Liabilities and owner equity are combined to equal all assets.

- **Income statement** – Indicates your profitability over a quarter or year.
• **Cash flow statement** – An indicator of how much money is going in and coming out of your company each month.

• **Accounts receivable aging report** – Helps you to identify delinquent accounts and slow-paying customers.

• **Budget versus actual report** – Compares actual spending to the budget and revenue versus sales projections to help determine how budgeting can be improved.

While you may not have an in-depth business financial background, there are many financial reporting software options and professionals who can help you, so you don't have to worry.

“Whatever is worth doing, do it with all your heart.”

- UNKNOWN
YOUR ONLINE IDENTITY:
Securing a Domain Name

Finding the Best Available Domain Name

A domain name is much more than just an internet address – it is a powerful online calling card that uniquely identifies your business. Unlike other physical aspects of your business – renting or buying office space, printing flyers and brochures, building a warehouse – a domain name is a low-risk, high-reward method of gaining instant credibility.
Think about it – the business landscape has changed. By securing a domain name, your little online store gains an online presence comparable to major retailers. For a relatively low investment, your domain name is linked to a website that attracts customer interest and sales at a fraction of the cost and time it would take to open a physical store location.

Ideally, your domain name should be:

**Short** – It will appear on everything from your business cards and letterhead to your company truck. Less is more.

**Easy to remember** – A web address should be much easier to remember than a phone number. Keep it simple.

**Easy to spell** – Stay away from unusual words and phrases, or anything similar to your competitors’ addresses.

**Descriptive** – A descriptive name will help customers understand what you do before they visit your site. For example, JillsRoses.com or BestRoses.com quickly tells prospective customers what your business is about.

**Brandable** – A brandable domain means visitors quickly associate the name with your company, your website and its content.
Registering a Domain Name

Have a business name or angle that you are passionate about? Great – it’s a good idea to secure a domain name that is unique to your brand when you register your business so you don’t miss out. Too often business owners register their business names with the government only to find out later that a corresponding domain name they wanted is not available.

To register a domain name, you typically need to find a registrar to help you with the process of choosing and securing a web address. When you begin the web building process at Web.com, we make it quick and easy to select and register a domain name for free. We also register the domain in your name so you always own the rights to this web address until you sell or relinquish it.

If you’re not quite ready to build your site, you should still register your domain name for future use. Web.com can do this for you and create an “under construction” placeholder web page to prevent anyone else from buying your new domain name. To protect your domain, Web.com also offers renewal terms of one, two, five and 10 years.

Choosing Between .com and Other Options

With all of the millions of domain names online, an alternative generic Top-Level Domain (gTLD) offers you alternatives to the traditional .com suffix and helps ensure you get a domain name that fits your business. Other examples include .org, .net, .info
and .biz. You can even get more creative with options such as .plumber, .service and .attorney.

In fact, Web.com can provide you with over 600 gTLD variations. It’s a great way to stand out and attract more attention to your small business website.

**Buying an Existing URL Address**

A word of caution: if you buy a domain name that was previously used, it’s a good idea to run a background check on the address and review its history. Too often, people find that the address they purchased was previously owned by a disreputable organization or in some way has negative connotations for a large audience.

The domain name professionals at Web.com can run a search on any name that you choose to ensure that it is not associated with anything that could have a detrimental effect on your business.

**Establishing a Business Email Presence**

Once you’ve registered your domain name, a business email address will instantly give you a highly professional and credible way to communicate with your customers and vendors. Web.com can provide you with a **branded email address** (melissa@bestroses.com, for example) that allows you to establish and promote your brand with every email.
With a Web.com Business Email Account, You Can:

- Add a layer of professionalism with a business email address that matches your brand.
- Efficiently manage business contacts, a calendar and files.
- Access your account anytime, anywhere, through mobile, a laptop or desktop devices.
- Create targeted emails to your customer base.
- Utilize cloud file storage.
- Safeguard your account with spam and virus protection.

“There are two fatal errors that keep great projects from coming to life: 1. Not finishing. 2. Not starting.”

- Unknown
Building a Site That Builds Your Business

Having an online presence is critical to the success of your business. Your website is a living and breathing entity, the nucleus of your brand and your pathway to your customers.
What Can an Online Marketing Presence do for Your Small Business? It Can:

• Give you instant credibility with a website and email address.
• Provide you with an online storefront that can be constantly updated.
• Help your customers find you through online site directories.
• Give you a mobile presence for customers on the move.
• Utilize social media to lead customers back to your site.
• Enhance your sales with eCommerce opportunities.
• Offer your customers timely and valuable information about your business.

Do It Yourself (DIY) Website Builders Versus Do It For Me (DIFM) Website Design Services

You understand the value of a strong online presence for your business and you’re ready to design a website, so what’s the next step? At Web.com, we make it easy for you to get up and running with two website design options:

DIY Website Builder – If you’re a hands-on type business owner, our DIY website builder is for you. We make it fast and easy to design your website and get online with intuitive tools that guide you through every step of the process. This includes free domain name and email address selection and a wide variety of industry-specific web page design templates that are ready to be customized with your specific information and messaging. It’s the best website builder for small business. Our builder is fast and easy – no design or programming experience is required.
DIFM Website Design Services – If you would like professional design assistance to build your website, you’ll appreciate our comprehensive DIFM services. Talk to our web-building professionals and they will take you through a brief presentation that explains the complete process. Next, a Web.com team member will interview you to find out details about your business, what is unique about your brand and even review web design templates with you to find out what style you like best. Our writers and designers will take this information and weave it all into an attractive, impactful and effective website that you and your customers will love.

Determining the Right Personality and Functionality for Your Site

After helping over three million small businesses get up and running online, one of the design secrets we’ve discovered at Web.com is that your small business website should have a unique look. Your site’s style should instantly associate it with your industry while projecting a unique and intriguing image that sets you apart from the competition.

With a large selection of industry-specific templates available, it’s easy to create a unique website that helps your business stand out in a crowded marketplace, while providing your customers with the information they need.
Tips for Creating Effective Website Messaging and Content

Your website should be targeted to your customer base and unique to your brand. However, there are a few key points that most effective websites have in common, including:

**Provide value** – Your website needs to provide information about your products or services, but also put your customers first and show why you are the right solution for them. For example, “You'll benefit from our unique dry-cleaning services that keep your shirts wrinkle-free so you'll always look great in the office and everywhere you go.”

**Promote your brand, not just your product or service**
- Your customers care less about advertising messages and more about why your brand is unique and can solve their specific challenges.

**Speak their language** – Avoid big words and marketing jargon. Feature content on your website that creates an online conversation with your customers, just as you would in person. And be sure to promote the benefit to the end user.

**Guide your customers** – Create easy-to-follow headlines and subheadlines that quickly lead readers through your key messaging at a glance. Make it easy for them to quickly discover who you are and what you can do for them.

**Be a thought leader** – Include ongoing content updates (such as blog posts) to give your customers reasons to keep coming back to your site and to provide expert insights into your industry. Consistently updating your site ensures your customers find what they need.
Protecting Your Customer’s Personal Information

If your website is designed to handle eCommerce purchases, you’ll need to protect your customers’ personal information. Customers will look for the little lock icon on your website next to your URL to be sure it is safe to buy from you online.

Web.com can help you earn your customers’ trust by helping you design your site with a secure connection and a Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) certificate. This step will protect your business data as well. Contact Web.com to learn more about this important website safeguard.

Website Hosting for Small Businesses

Once your website is designed and created, it needs a place to live and thrive. Web.com offers safe and easy hosting options. You’ll benefit from our guarantee that ensures 99.9% uptime performance and an ample amount of storage and email accounts.

Mobile Sites for On-the-Go Searches

To help your customers find you when searching on the go, Web.com helps you optimize your website so it works well with smartphones and tablets. It’s another important way to connect with your target audience.
SPREADING THE WORD:

Promoting Your Product or Service Online

Reaching Your Target Audience and Growing Your Website Traffic with SEO

The facts are eye-opening: 93% of all online experiences begin with a search engine. Over 57% of all business-to-business marketers claim that SEO generates more leads than any other marketing initiative.³ And 81% of all people conduct some form of online search before making a purchase.⁴
When your prospective customers access search engines like Google or Bing to search for a product or service, they are provided with a ranked listing of business website links. The rankings are determined in large part by Search Engine Optimization (SEO) keywords that are found in website content. Web.com helps you create content that is rich in SEO keywords that are specific to your business and industry, so you attract more people to your website.

When you frequently update or “refresh” your website content with a new blog post and new SEO keywords, search engines take notice and you can move up in the search rankings. **Small Business SEO Services** is an outstanding resource when you want to raise your position and make it easier for your customers to find you.

**Creating Email Engagement and Nurturing Campaigns**

Emails to your current and prospective customers help you build a stronger connection with your target audience and inspire them to take action – like making a purchase. Consider having a pop-up message on your homepage that promises news updates about your latest products and services, or a discount on a first purchase, in exchange for an email address.

Consistently contacting your target audience via email messages can yield outstanding benefits, including:

- **An easy and highly targeted way to promote your products and services.**
- **Minimal budget required with a high potential for return on investment.**
• Helps you build your brand through thought leadership.
• Learn more about what your customers like and dislike.
• Reach new customers with online blogs and other content.

Sending customer emails is a low-cost, low-risk proposition that can yield great results, and it’s one of the many great marketing ideas for small business. Determine what type of message you want to highlight: a sale, a new product or a new blog post are a few examples. The key is that this email links your new and existing customers back to your website – and back to your brand.

Developing and Maintaining Social Media Campaigns

Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn can be effectively utilized for your marketing messages and campaigns. Each platform has varying demographics so choose the ones that best fit your target audience.

“A jug fills drop by drop.”
– HINDU SAYING
Once you've established accounts for your business, a social media campaign can help you build website traffic and enhance engagement with your brand. It also allows you to grow your email marketing lists, gather feedback from your customers and inspire them to action.

Facebook and Twitter also give you the option of “boosting” a post – for a fee, your post will receive priority placement and be repeatedly posted to maximize exposure.

**Here are some ways you can use social media to promote your business and drive sales:**

- Offer discounts and exclusive content in exchange for your followers’ information.
- Invite followers to participate in polls, provide reviews and enter contests.
- Respond quickly to any comments and questions within your posts.
- Stay consistent and post regularly to stay relevant to your followers.
- Promote your messages across all of your social media accounts whenever possible.

Best of all, social media is trackable. You can find out what your customers respond to, and what they don’t – and adjust your messaging accordingly. Web.com also features small business social media services that enable you to build a community on Facebook. We’ll help you develop content for your audience and engage with your customers using social media to drive visitors to your website and inspire them to take action.
Determine if Blogs, Podcasts, and Videos Are the Right Fit

You’re excited to get the word out about your business and attract more customers to your website. Blogs, podcasts and videos give you an opportunity to continually update content on your website, keep your target market informed and inspire action.

Let’s take a closer look at these messaging vehicles:

**Blogs**
- Position you as a thought leader and expert by focusing on specific topics and interests.
- Are a low- or no-cost investment that only requires your time.
- Convey important news and announcements.
- Provide valuable, timely information that your customers are looking for.
- Give you an opportunity to include SEO keywords in content to draw attention to your website.
- Offer trackable analytics, including unique page views and time on page.

**Podcasts**
- Connect you with your audience in a personal way.
- Provide you with an opportunity to add a voice (or voices) to your brand.
- Highly accessible and allows your audience to listen on the go.
- Alerts subscribers when new episodes are available.
- Can be housed on your website and distributed through podcast directories, such as Apple Podcasts (for iPhone) and Stitcher (for Android).
- Offer trackable analytics, including total episode listens and time spent on episodes.

**Videos**
- Can be the most personal way to connect with your customers.
- Allow you to show and tell viewers about your products and services.
- A dynamic and engaging way to convey information.
- Alerts subscribed viewers when new episodes are available through sites like YouTube.
- Offer trackable analytics, including total episode views and time spent on video.
Which medium is right for you? It depends on your specific goals and you may find that you use a combination of any or all of the three.

Podcasts and videos often require a production budget, but you can find experienced groups in your area to help you with this. Or, if you want to get your feet wet, you can shoot simple videos and record basic podcasts on your smartphone. There are plenty of online apps available, such as Filmmaker Pro and Splice for videos and Spreaker Podcast Studio and Chirp for podcasts.

**Measuring Prospect and Customer Activity with Online Analytics Tools**

After you build your beautiful website, implement your strategic social media plan and follow up with well-designed email campaigns, how can you tell if your target audience is engaging with your brand?

Web analytics tools measure your web and mobile traffic to see who is responding to your online messages so you can track and understand your target market’s behavioral – and buying – patterns. You can use this information to see what areas of your online marketing are working best, what segments need improvement and how you can best reach your customers.
So you can get a better understanding of all of this detailed data at a glance, most online analytics tools will provide you with graphs and charts to document progress in all areas of your online marketing efforts. Check out Google Analytics (it’s free!), Spring Metrics, and Woopra for starters. These tools are easy to learn and can add a lot of value to online marketing plans – and who doesn’t want that?


4 https://junto.digital/blog/seo-stats/

“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.”

- ANCIENT PROVERB
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