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What you need to know before spending a dime on a website...

1. Alignment to your Business Goals

While it seems like a no-brainer, it's often overlooked. Your website strategy must be aligned with your business vision and goals. If you don't know what your business vision and goals are, now's the time to fix that! Your vision guides your goals and provides the overall direction of your business, so it's well worth investing a good amount of energy to get it as closely aligned to your truth as possible. I encourage all my clients to create their "ideal life" before creating a business vision. Starting and running a business is hard work – best to make sure it aligns with the rest of your life before you're in too deep.

2. Know Your Audience

This is arguably the most important step in any marketing activity. You need to put yourself in your user's shoes to understand what they want and how to give it to them. All too often our marketing efforts are clouded and biased by our own opinions and assumptions. Do some research and brainstorming to get as clear as possible about your audience, their personalities, their inner dialogue, their challenges, and their emotional triggers.

Knowing your audience will help you to:

- identify the key features of your website
- speak to the problem(s) that your audience is facing
- choose the most appealing design, colors, and fonts
- establish high-conversion calls-to-action
- assess & address connecting emotional triggers
- create high-value content



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- identify keyword phrases

3. Pricing & Packaging Strategy

Figure out how you are going to price and package your services or products into high-value offerings before you make a start on your website. Every business owner should have a pricing strategy – this is not something to figure out on an ad hoc basis in the middle of a website project. Once you have your packages identified and priced, feature them on the home page of your website with a very short summary and links to more information on the services/product page (which also helps a little with SEO).

4. Google Ranking

If it's important that your website rank highly in Google (meaning: if it's important that people find your site on Google when they enter the keyword phrases you are targeting), make sure you perform SEO research **before** you start your website strategy. If you're in a highly competitive market, your website strategy must take that into account. If you want to take the DIY approach to SEO, this [Beginner's Guide by MOZ](#) is still the best one out there (and yes, you need to read it all!).

5. Include a Home Page Statement

Your ideal client has come to your website to solve a problem. If you don't show, within 3 seconds, that you understand the challenges they face, you will likely lose them. The home page statement should be a 10-15 word statement (roughly) that is prominently displayed above the fold on your home page. Keep it succinct and completely free of buzzwords or sales jargon.



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6. Guide the Journey

A purchase is a process and your website should guide your prospects through the buying process and how they should move forward. Do not assume that what seems obvious to you is obvious to other people.

Ask yourself what you want the visitor to do when they reach the home page, and continue to ask yourself the same question for each page of the site that you are guiding them through.

7. Make it EASY!

Make the steps to your conversion goal as SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE. For example, if you are offering a subscription or opt-in, use as few fields as possible for the sign-up. If you are trying to get people to an event, your website calendar should be flawless, beautifully designed, shareable, and easy to navigate. If you're selling a product, don't make the buyer sign in or create an account unless they want to. If you have an appointment based business, make sure you use a great online booking service integrated into the website.

8. Page Purpose & Call to Action

Each page of your website should have an overall purpose (what is the point of this page, why should my audience even bother to look at it) as well as a Call to Action (CTA). CTA's help to guide people through the customer journey and advise them on the next steps. A few examples:

- Download a free report
- Schedule a consultation



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- Listen to a podcast
- Get my free e-book

Knowing your audience will help you to create CTA's that are of value to your prospects and to your conversion rates.

9. Keep it Simple, Clear, & to the Point

Nine times out of ten, website visitors couldn't give a hoot about flashy graphics, animation, and super custom design (but your web designer would love you to think otherwise because these things cost a lot of money!). We are all busy people and we want to get to the information we are looking for as quickly and easily as possible. Don't put anything on your website that isn't necessary and, whatever you do, don't make people have to think! You've got about 3 seconds to convince someone to stay and browse for a while – if you make it difficult for them, you'll lose them. My vote every time is for simple, clean, minimal design with super-rich, well thought-out content.

10. Images

Do not use poor quality, amateurish, or non-contextual images just to fill space or to make your website look pretty. High-quality, well-chosen, contextual images are fine. You can do amazing things with good typography and blocks of color in lieu of crappy photos.

11. No Logo, No Sweat

Don't get your knickers in a twist about a logo. A simple, creative text logo is all you need and often far better than some complicated graphical image that



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nobody understands or cares about. Save your money towards more important things, like help with writing content or keyword research.

12. What We Measure, We Improve

If you want to improve conversion rates (how many website visitors you are turning into a sale, or whatever it is you want them to do on your site) you must install tracking tools. My favorites are Moz Campaigns (friendlier than Google Analytics) and Screaming Frog heatmaps and recordings, the latter of which allows you to see exactly what website visitors are doing on your site (trust me – it’s very enlightening and small changes can make significant improvements to your conversion rates).

13. Your First Website? Stick to the Basics

If this is your first website, and especially if this is a new business, it makes far more sense to start off with the very bare basics and then ADD features and functionality as you learn and grow. Yes, you still start with a strategy, but part of that strategy is “I don’t have answers to this yet so I’m not going to make any costly assumptions by adding features and functionality that don’t fall into the “must have” list for my ideal client.

14. Keep Going

To get the most out of your website investment, keep it fresh and updated so that it continues to appeal to your audience and the search engines. Unless you’re only in need of a “brochure website,” hitting the publish button is just the beginning of your online marketing journey.



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Need help? [Schedule a FREE 20 minute chat with me.](#) I'm happy to give you advice about building a website with beauty & brains, whether you're taking the DIY route, hiring me, or even hiring someone else.

Strategy-driven affordable websites for new and existing businesses. FREE download: the top ten things to know before spending a dime on a website.

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