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Web Design | Web Development | SEO

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## New Website | The Essential Guide

I believe that all websites should be built on a solid foundation that can grow alongside your brand or business forever, or as long as today's technology will allow us to prepare for tomorrow's innovations.

I advocate for every penny spent on a website at any stage being an investment in the future. The website that you build at the beginning of your digital presence "just for now while I'm getting started" can and should be something that will grow as much as you want it to.

### STEP 1

The first thing anyone should do before building a site themselves or getting a quote from a designer is to try and look as far into the future as possible.

> Are you a coach who wants a simple site with your contact details and an about me section now, but imagine that one day you'll grow and have a membership site that creates a substantial passive income?

> Do you want to launch your capsule clothing line of two t-shirts but hope that eventually you'll be the CEO of the next ASOS?

> Or are you a writer who needs a website to direct people you meet in your industry to, so they can view your catalogue of work, but know that your website will never be more than a few landing pages. Your work is not focused in the digital world now and never will be.

If, after doing this exercise, you find yourself in the same category as the writer, I highly recommend using a template to build a website yourself. Wix and Squarespace are the market leaders for this at the moment, both are good value and easy to use options.

Personally I vote for Square Space, their interface is slightly more intuitive for someone who has little knowledge of building websites, and their help section, guides and resources are the most comprehensive and easy to understand currently available.

### WORD PRESS

If you see the future of your online presence as anything bigger than a few simple pages I suggest starting with Word Press.

Word Press has in the past had a reputation as providing clunky designs and being difficult to use.

Real talk, Word Press isn't a simple platform to build on if you don't have any web design experience and there are unimaginable amounts of templates available, if you choose the wrong one your site may not look as slick as you would have hoped and you may find the build process constricting and frustrating.

*However, Word Press is the best open source framework currently available and trends point to this being the case for the foreseeable future.*

Word Press is essentially a readymade framework that provides a website Front and Back End that you can design and add functionality plugins.

You can use a template, and build the front end of the website yourself or employ a web designer to build a custom visual framework for you that, once built, with some minimal training, can be updated easily by anybody, regardless of their technical experience.

Adding functionality plugins to a Word Press back end is something that I recommend employing a web developer to do for you, these are the things that make a website take action such as processing payments or sealing off a members area.

Word Press is very flexible and you can have a simple framework of a few pages built now and add new sections or functionality at any point in the future when needed.

*Get a quote*

If you think this is the right option for you, regardless of whether or not you are going to take the initial build on yourself, I always recommend asking for a quote from a web designer explaining clearly what you want from the website now and in the future. You may be surprised how affordable a bit of support and a simple Word Press framework can be.

Going with a custom built Word Press site you will know that you are building the beginning of your future site now, not wasting budget on a temporary platform that will need to be rebuilt when you want to grow.

## HOSTING

It is essential to consider the cost of hosting when making a budgeting decision on your web presence.

I always recommend that hosting is something you should set up and manage yourself.

If you are working with a web designer they should be able to recommend exactly what hosting you need for your project and support you in setting it up for small fee (£30 - £50).

*Beware of packages that offer hosting, email, functionality and site management for a regular monthly fee.*

> If you pay for any functionality hosting on your site over and above basic domain hosting this should be constantly flexible.

> If you wish to use different designers or developers for different projects you should be free to do so without changing your hosting or reviewing a maintenance contract.

> You must be able to get third party technical advice at any time.

> You need to be able to make major changes to the overall ownership of your domain without the risk of losing your email history.

## BASIC HOSTING FRAMEWORK | RECOMMENDED PROVIDERS\*

<b>Domain Purchase</b>	<b>GoDaddy</b>	<b>£10 per year</b>
<b>Domain Hosting inc. Word Press</b>	<b>GoDaddy</b>	<b>£5 per month</b>

GoDaddy are excellent providers for your domain name, basic hosting, an SSL certificate and further site back up and security if needed.

They are the best value on the market, give independent technical advice and have outstanding customer service.

GoDaddy also offer alias sign in, so you can easily hand over the management of your website to your web designer and if they have a GoDaddy account (which they should) they can manage your site and contact the GoDaddy technical team on your behalf without issue.

## **Business Email**

**Google**

**£3 per month per address**

Google are the very best business email provider on the market today. I urge anyone setting up business email to do it separately from their domain host. If you host your email with your domain provider you will lose your complete email history if you ever change provider.

*A business email is one that includes your domain name for example [hello@johamlyn.com](mailto:hello@johamlyn.com) as opposed to [hello@gmail.com](mailto:hello@gmail.com)*

## **Functionality Plugins**

**E Commerce**

**Woo Commerce or Shopify**

**Payment Portal**

**PayPal or Stripe**

**Mailing List Management**

**Mail Chimp**

The amount of functionality plugins on the market is exhaustive so I can't provide a full list of the market leaders here. I highly recommend getting some support and advice from a web designer to help you choose the best providers for your specific project.

One key thing to note here is that most functionality plugin providers offer a basic package for free and charge for increased usability. It's recommended to start paying providers for advanced services, however this is the main reason I recommend managing your hosting yourself.

Nearly all functionality providers offer a flexible service where you can stop paying when you are not using their service. When managing hosting yourself you can easily turn functionality on and off as and when you need it and not be tied into a hefty monthly hosting fee that where you can't control what you are paying for.

*\*Please note that all fees listed are estimates and you should contact each provider directly for an exact quote.*

## **JARGON BUSTER**

Whilst I always hope to be as succinct as possible it's almost unavoidable to use some jargon when talking about websites. Included below are the words I say that cause a "you wah?!?" moment most often.

Feel free to contact me at [hello@johamlyn.com](mailto:hello@johamlyn.com) if I've missed anything out.

### **Front End Web Developer**

A Front - End Web Developer is someone who can write code in languages CSS, HTML and JavaScript at the very least. These developers build everything on a website that you can see.

### **Back End Web Developer**

A Back - End Web Developer builds everything that a website actively does and tends to work using code languages such as Ruby, Python or SQL. These developers manage databases and create bespoke functionality for things like payment portals, shopping carts and booking systems.

*A good developer in each of the categories will be a specialist in their end, but be able to understand and sometimes edit/write basic code in the other. I am a Front - End Developer, but by proxy have a good understanding of back - end functionality and tend to find myself in the realms of back - end code when adding overall updates to a website.*

## **CMS // Content Management System**

This is the part of website that you can access yourself and use to make changes and updates. When getting a quote from a web designer I highly recommend being clear that you want one of these if you want to have control over updating your own website.

## **Mobile Responsive**

A website that is mobile responsive is one that looks great and has complete functionality over all devices from desktop computer to mobile phone.

It is important to discuss this with your web designer as the the level of responsiveness can vary with each design and it will affect the cost of a website.

*If you plan to get a lot of mobile traffic on your site you must ensure that every aspect of your content is visible and usable on a mobile phone.*

If the majority of your users will be coming form a desktop computer you may only need the mobile version to be simple and to point towards a desktop version, this option will be less expensive initially and can be changed at any point in the future.

## **Landing Page**

This is the place where a user first arrives when they click a link to your website, this is not necessarily the home page and will of course change depending on the link you are sharing and promoting.

## **SSL Certificate**

Having an SSL certificate is becoming increasingly recommended for all websites and is a factor in SEO. Currently it is only essential to have SSL security if you are taking payments through your website.

An SSL certificate serves to encrypt information such as usernames, passwords, payment details and other sensitive information when passed between servers adding an essential layer of security.

*As a user it is recommended not to make payments through websites that do not have an SSL certificate. A site with an SSL certificate will show https at the beginning of its address as opposed to http.*

## **Copywriting for Web**

Writing for the web is ensuring that everything is concise and ordered in a way that makes sense for user experience so customers see the relevant information at the optimum time.

## **AND FINALLY**

### **Web Designer // Graphic Designer // Branding Consultant Whats the difference, really, and when do I need them?**

All three of these are specialists in their field and in my opinion its not possible to be an expert in all three. Even someone who has spent a substantial amount of time in each industry independently will have to work hard to keep up with the ever changing trends and innovation in all three industries.

However, its is common to find specialists in these fields who have a good working knowledge of the other two fields.

I will use myself as a platform to explain clearly;

As a Web Designer I am focused on design being functional. The websites I build will represent a message and brand clearly and creatively whilst ensuring a user can navigate the website easily and find the information they need quickly.

I have a good understanding of artistic design and can use advanced design software such as Adobe Photo Shop to a high level so am therefore able to create good graphics and logos that represent a brand.

*Producing intricate digital artwork that might be used in poster or closing design for example is beyond my skillset and a Graphic Designer should be included in a project to produce advanced and innovative artistic content.*

When building a website I will create a brand that includes colour scheme, fonts and tone of the product or services message if I am completing the copywriting.

*I am not a branding specialist. If your website is representing an organisation that has a physical presence, a restaurant for example, you will need interiors, staff uniforms and external signage design advice to produce an all encompassing brand, this is where a brand specialist should be included in a project.*

### **Why are websites so expensive and why do they take so long to build?**

The eighth wonder of the world huh?

I understand that even when you are sure that it will increase your revenue or visibility and are excited about the ideas you have, choosing the right option, finding a designer you can work well with and investing in a digital presence can feel like a huge financial commitment and can seem like a slow and arduous process that you have to be 100% sure will give you the results you imagine.

I hope that this guide has gone somewhere towards explaining how much consideration is involved in creating a good quality website and helps you feel empowered to make a more informed decision about where and in who to invest your time and money.

Thanks for reading  
Jo