THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS WEBSITE

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR BEGINNERS

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Welcome to the 20th century, where everything that is worth noticing happens online. If you are thinking of starting your own business, whether big or small, it is essential that you establish an online presence in the form of a professional, trendy, and trustworthy website .

Let's sketch a scenario to get started…
Meet Grace. She is a young lady with a passion for all things relating to health and wellness. With her studies completed she dreams of owning her own business and building her brand within the industry. She is savvy with excellent entrepreneurial instincts and already has a small mobile spa operation running. She knows that she needs to expand, but competition is fierce. With that she realises that she needs to establish herself as a legitimate service provider in the eyes of potential customers, and the next step is to create a professional online presence in the form of a trustworthy and functional website.

Below are some essentials she needs to tick as she kicks off her website building strategy.

1. **Register a domain.**

Consider this the online parking space of your website. This is what people will type into their search engines in order to find your website, for instance: www.gracemobilespa.co.za. Your business needs to have a name that is unique but also in line with the service that you are offering, and this will be reflected in the domain's name. It's kind of like choosing a name for your baby… You really need to be invested, so choose wisely. If your business isn't officially registered yet, I suggest that you first check to see whether the domain name is available for use. A great platform to use is https://za.godaddy.com/

You might have an amazing name for a mobile spa business, but 2 years ago someone else also might have had the same idea and already registered it, then it's back to the drawing board for you. Not fun. Let's stick with "*Grace Mobile Spa*" as an example. Ideally you would want your domain name include your full business title, but if it is already taken, you will have to sacrifice or add a new word, or characters. Ideally you would want to include the words, "mobile spa" or "spa" so it's easy for clients to identify what services you offer - it also helps with SEO.

When trying to find the perfect domain name, remember that you don't want your name to sound too similar to your competition, as your customers might get confused and end up visiting your competition's website, especially if they do a random Google search.

Possible options for Grace would be:
-   www.gracemobilespa.co.za
-    www.gracemobilespa.com
-   www.gracespaonwheels.co.za
-   www.graciespa.co.za or
-   www.1grace.co.za I think you get the picture.

FIY
-   ● .com is classic, with an international feel and a bit more expensive to register.
-   ● .co.za refers to South Africa, and
-   ● .org is usually associated with non-profit websites.

** Once a domain is registered, it is valid for one year and has to be renewed annually.

2. **Setting up hosting**
Once the domain is registered in your name, you need to set up hosting. This is the process of parking your site on the domain once it is ready to go live. In other words, this is what is needed to make your website visible on the internet via servers owned by various companies. Depending on how big your site is, your hosting costs will differ, but hosting is usually paid in monthly installments and also enables you to access DNS records and create and access new email accounts that are linked to your website.
For instance, Grace will be able to create the following email accounts for her mobile spa:
-   info@gracemobilespa.co.za
-   bookings@gracemobilespa.co.za
She is looking more professional by the day!

3. **Get your content ready**
Content refers to the written text as well as the visuals that are displayed on the website. Ever heard of the phrase, *Content is King?* Your website's content can be the make or break factor with regards to converting visitors into paying leads. Usually within seconds of viewing someone's Home Page the visitor should have a clear sense of what you are offering and the content needs to be attractive and engaging enough to keep them browsing on the site.

For Grace, she will have to determine her corporate identity and this should be evident by looking at her logo and colour scheme. Spas usually reflect the idea of tranquility and relaxation, so a great look and feel to go for would be soft, pastel colours and high quality images of massage oils and people relaxing while getting various treatments.

People nowadays don't want to read a lot, they are more visually inclined, so the text needs to be concise, enticing and to the point. You also need to consider the formatting and make it attractive to read.

You always need to take into considerations the user experience of your visitor. Therefore navigation needs to be easy and clear. Before writing the actual content you wish to use on the site, determine the amount of pages that you want to include and how you want to structure the content to make the navigation effective, for instance:
- Home Page
- About Page
- Services Page
- Contact Page

Now take each of those pages and map out the flow and start writing your content. Remember to include headings & subheadings and most importantly, Call to Action phrases & buttons. Check out below for an example:

Once your content is clearly set out - page by page, it makes it so much easier and faster for a designer to start building the site. Simply send the text in a format where the designer can easily copy and paste. Google Docs, Word or PDFs are all great for text. Also remember to send high quality images in PNG, JPG or PDF format and in a zip file for them to use. If you struggle to find images, just communicate this to the designer - they should have accounts where they can source appropriate images for your website. Some designers should have a clear enough idea of how the look and feel of the site should be just by looking at the logo & content that you

provide them with, so you can either tell the designer to trust their instincts and build as their creativity leads them, or you can be very specific with the layout and specify the effects you would like to include, for instance: having a heading with a pop-up effect, etc. The options are never-ending!

These are the basic building blocks to consider when thinking of starting a website, but it doesn't stop here. The online world is constantly expanding and creating new trends and it's important to keep your finger on the pulse and stay up to date. If you don't have the time and energy to do research and implement the necessities yourself, consult with professionals in the industry who can lead you in the right direction. Of course it is so much more convenient to find a company who can provide you with all the **essentials**, like:
- Domain registration
- Hosting
- Website building
- Designing
- Digital marketing & SEO services &
- Website maintenance... Kind of like a *"One-stop Website Shop"*.

Whatever path you decide to take, remember that your website should reflect who you are and what you have to offer - it's marketing for the 2st century customer and it keeps on evolving.

Exciting times ahead - hope to see your website up and running soon!