



VisitEngland™



# Online Marketing Toolkit

## Building a Website and SEO

### Websites Module 2



## Building a website

As discussed in the previous module, your website is the online shop window for your business and you will only get one chance to make a good first impression.

It is worthwhile investing time and resource to ensure that your website looks as good and professional as possible. Remembering the three rules discussed, here we will discuss whether to build a website yourself or to engage the services of a professional web designer.

### Should you build your own website?

The primary motivation for building your own website is to save on additional expenditure. If you have the resources and technical know-how, you can easily buy your domain name (which may come with a free hosting package) and create a simple template website in a few hours. However, you should be aware of the possible issues and challenges you may face during the process and consider whether it makes sense to invest your time in website building or whether the time would be better spent working on other parts of the business. It is possible that you may be better off engaging someone who is more qualified to produce a professional website for your business.

There are many companies providing website builders that allow you to quickly build your own website based on a template design. You can use 'drag and drop' tools to create a design, which suits the style of your business, but be aware that they can be very limiting from a creative viewpoint. This creative limitation means that many websites look almost exactly the same and it can be difficult to gain that positive first impression which is so valuable.

Once the website has been built, all the widgets installed, images properly sized and keywords and meta tags sorted out (see Glossary of Terms below) you will then have to maintain the site. This may mean that you spend considerable time focusing on one specific aspect of your marketing to the detriment of other marketing activity.

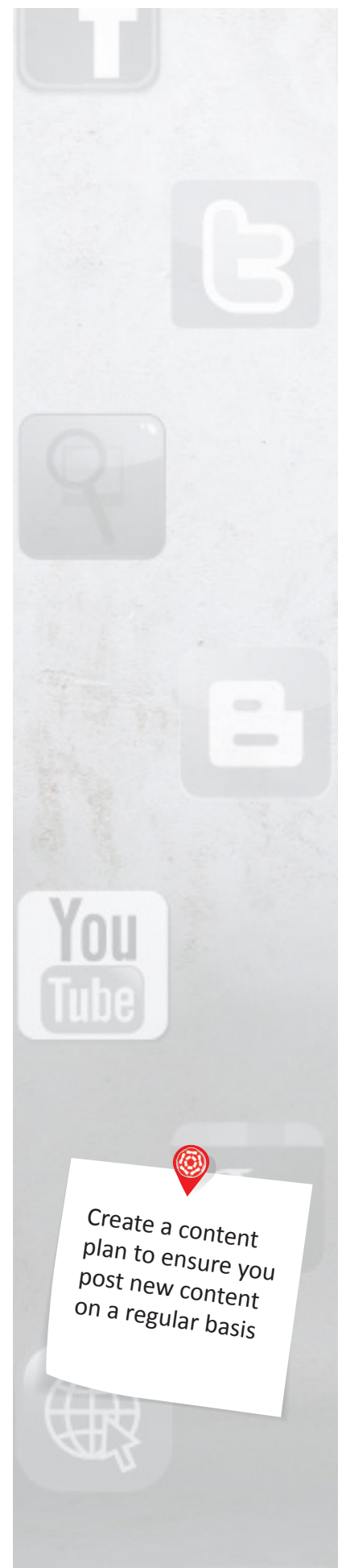


## Building a website yourself

If you choose to build your own website, follow these six steps:

- 1. Decide on your domain name and hosting** - Module 1 contains some suggestions of the larger domain name purchasing sites which you can use to choose a name for your website. Many of these companies will offer free hosting for your website. Be aware that sometimes there may be limits on the bandwidth (see Glossary of Terms below). You may also find that 'free' hosting providers add charges for maintaining your website.
- 2. Start with a plan for your website** - Spend as much time as possible looking at other websites you like and get a feel for how a potential customer will use your website. This is called the customer journey. Work out in advance what information you would like to have on various pages of the website and how the pages fit together.
- 3. Build your website page by page** - Familiarise yourself with how the website builder works at an early stage. Whether you have chosen to use WordPress, Joomla, Wix, GoDaddy, Moonfruit or any of the other website builders, invest time in learning how to build a single page properly before moving forward to any further pages.
- 4. Publish your website** - This is a matter of getting the pages you created uploaded to the host you chose in step 1. You should be able to do this with the tools provided on your website builder's website. Most will have a help centre which you can contact if you run into any problems.
- 5. Promote your site** - This can be done through search engine optimisation, which is discussed later in this module. Other ways of promoting your new website are through word of mouth, social media and email campaigns. You should include a link to your website in any professional correspondence, and include a link in your email signature.
- 6. Maintain your website** - Testing your site as you're building it and then after it's been live for a while is important. New mobile devices come on the market all the time and search engines are always improving their browsers. You should also work on content development on a regular basis. The more fresh content you create and add to your site, the more visitors you will get.

Be sure to update or remove content relating to a particular time period e.g. displaying Christmas offers in January or your 2014 tariff in 2015. It may suggest a poor eye for detail or at worst that your business is no longer open.



## Hiring a professional website designer

Finding someone to build a website can be a daunting prospect but it doesn't need to be. If you have been researching other people's websites to find a style you like, it is very likely that the web designer will have put a credit at the bottom of the homepage with some form of contact information.

Ask your fellow operators who they have used – a personal recommendation is a good place to start.

When you have identified potential candidates to build a website for you, consider these issues:

1. Do they have a portfolio of work which you can view? If they have built a number of websites for other tourism related businesses they should have a feel for the type of design which is most effective.
2. Do they offer hosting packages? A good web designer will offer you a 'turn key' solution. This means that they will organise the domain name and hosting, design and build the website and maintain it for you.
3. Are they a 'one man band' which could disappear, or an established business? If they are hosting and maintaining your website it is helpful to be reassured that their business is on a solid footing.
4. Have they worked with other providers where they have integrated a booking engine onto a website?
5. Can you make updates to the site yourself or can only the designer make updates?
6. Most importantly, are they cost effective? Many small businesses invest what they perceive to be a reasonable amount in creating a website only to discover at a later date that any updates are very expensive. Ensure that you have an agreement upfront that you will only be charged a reasonable fee for any required updates to your website.
7. Do they have a graphic design capability?

Be careful of engaging with someone who has limited knowledge of the template building websites, as you may run the risk of ending up with a template-style website which will not stand out.



**TOP TIP**

Ensure your website can be easily updated at little or no cost

## Search Engine Optimisation

SEO is the process of making sure that your website is found via 'organic', rather than 'paid', searches on a search engine.

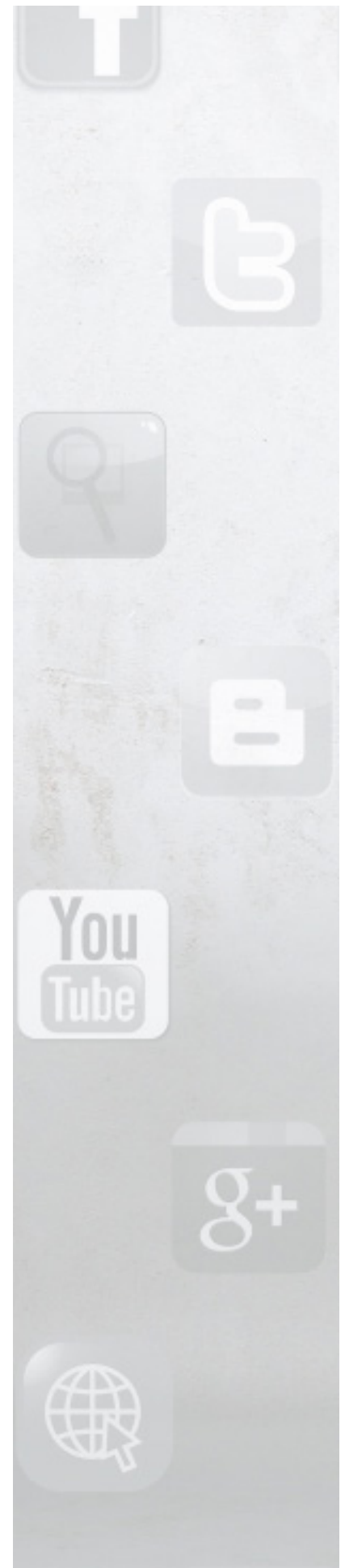
Some consider SEO to be a 'black art' that only highly specialised individuals or companies can master. Although it is true that some areas of SEO need a comprehensive understanding of how both websites and the various search engines actually work, there is quite a lot a business owner can do without incurring significant cost.

Where a business owner can have a positive effect, without any technical knowledge, is on the human side of SEO. All the search engines wish to deliver the most accurate results possible for any search query and there are ways to demonstrate to the search engines that they should put emphasis on your website. To some degree it requires the business owner to step into the head of a potential customer and work out what that person might look for online when researching their travel plans.

SEO is a long term strategy, not a quick fix. It requires an ongoing and diligent effort to reap the rewards.

Here are nine steps to implementing effective basic search engine optimisation (SEO):

1. Keep the visitor or user experience in mind at all times. This relates to how your website is laid out, the content on the website and content on any other platforms.
2. Make sure that your website has regular, unique, well-written and fresh content. One way to do this is to write a monthly blog.
3. Make use of pictures and videos.
4. Your site must be well structured (the search engines take notice of this), load quickly and be easy to navigate. The website must respond to all screen sizes i.e. be mobile and tablet friendly.
5. Make sure that your local SEO is in place. This means ensuring that you claim and correctly categorise your Google+ page, so that you the have a correct marker on Google Maps. Also make sure that your name, address and phone is consistent across all platforms.
6. Ask for and respond to online comments, for example on your blog.
7. Link social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Google+ to your website using widgets.



8. Comment and post articles on well-trafficked, relevant websites, ensuring that you include a link back to your own website.

9. Install Google Analytics on your website and monitor it regularly. Change what doesn't work and maximise what does.

Although the steps above may seem overwhelming, you can break them down and address one step every week. You will see the benefits in terms of your search engine ranking if you persevere.

### Glossary of terms

**Bandwidth** - This is the amount of data which can be transferred to a computer from a website within a specific time. Therefore the amount or strength of bandwidth you have determines the efficiency and speed of your internet activity – that is, when you open web pages, download files and so on. This can have an adverse effect on how quickly your website will load on a potential customer's computer.

A useful analogy is a pipe with water running through it – the wider the pipe, the greater the volume of water that can flow through it. The same applies to bandwidth strength and the flow of the volume of data.

Bandwidth is generally measured in 'bits per second' or sometimes 'bytes per second'. Some hosting companies will limit the amount of data which can be transferred, so if your website becomes popular, you may exceed your bandwidth limit and incur additional charges.

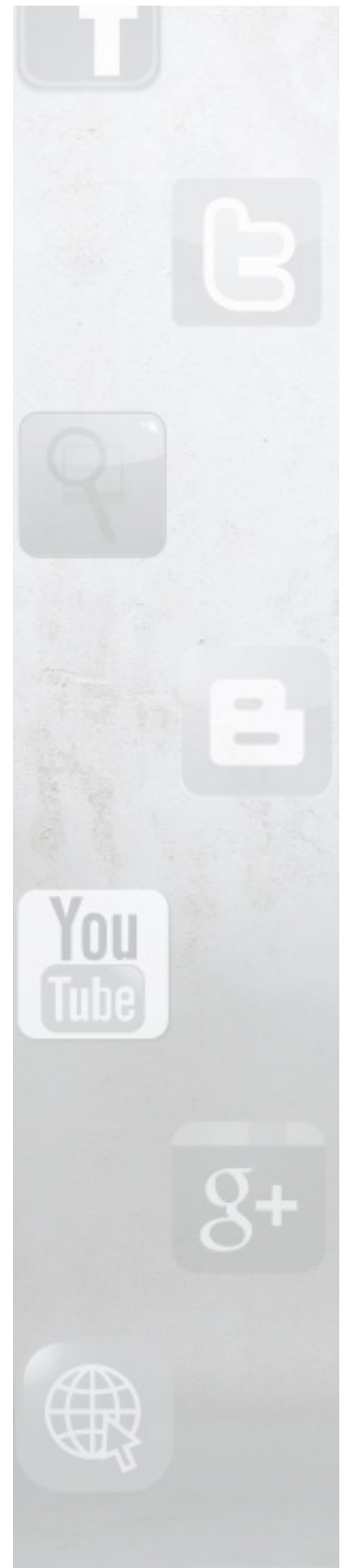
**Drag and drop editor** – Design elements can be simply dragged using a computer mouse and dropped into the correct location in a design template.

**Domain name** – A unique name which identifies a website.

**Web Hosting** - is the service providing space on the Internet for websites. When you make a website and want other people to see it, you will need to publish (or upload) it with a web hosting service.

**HTML** - Hypertext Markup Language, a standardized system for tagging text files to achieve font, colour, graphic, and hyperlink effects on World Wide Web pages.

**Keywords** - Search engines use keywords when they include your website in their search results. Keywords which relate to your business contained within your website are how the search engines decide which category to put your website into.





**Maintain a website** - With regular website maintenance your site will run smoothly, for example by ensuring links remain up to date. Regular visitors are looking for what is new, so provide them with new and exciting information, products or features. Websites are also subject to being hacked and by using a proper website maintenance program you can try and avoid being hacked by keeping everything up to date.

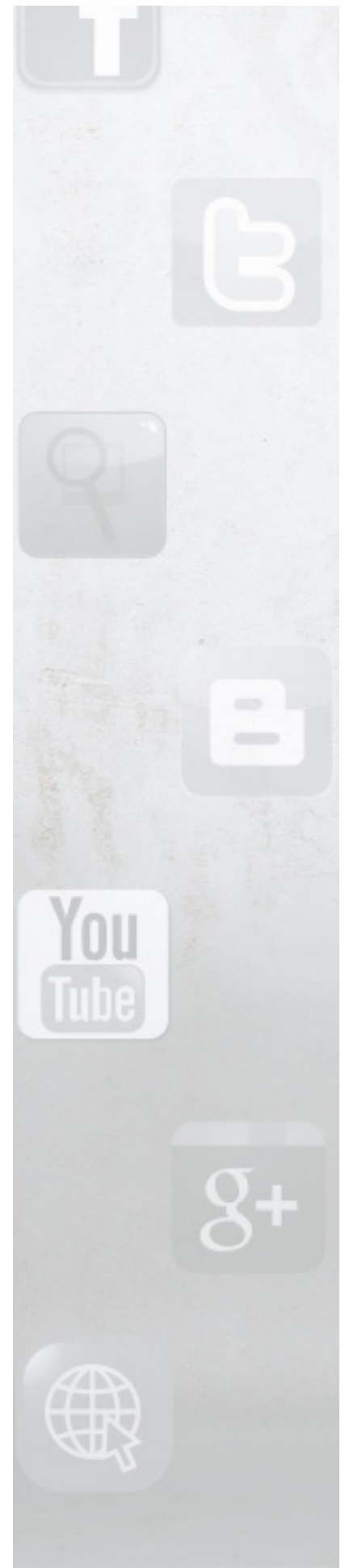
**Meta Tags** - A special HTML tag that provides information about a Web page. Unlike normal HTML tags, meta tags do not affect how the page is displayed. Website builders such as WordPress will automatically convert keywords into HTML tags. Meta tags help the search engines decide whether to display a website when a user conducts a search.

**Search engine optimisation** – This is the process of increasing the visibility of a website, or a specific page of a website, in a search engine’s ‘natural’ or un-paid (‘organic’) search results.

**Template designs** - A website template is a webpage, or set of webpages, with a pre-designed layout that anyone can populate with their own content and images to set up a website.

**Website space** - Web space is the amount of disk space on a web server that is assigned to website owners by hosting companies.

**Widgets** - They are applications you can embed on your website that link to content published by a third party. For example, a weather widget could report weather by accessing data from the Met office. They are also called components, gadgets or elements. Website builders will have widgets ready to add to your template design without the need to understand or write the coding.





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