



Websites 101:

Intro to Building Your Own Small Business Website

Presented by Lisa Li

A Bit About Me...

- I've been building websites and designing graphics for over 20 years
- I graduated Southeastern Oklahoma State University in December 2023 with a bachelor's degree in Computer Science
- I started my business, Making The Impact LLC, in 2018 where I provide web development, graphic design, and marketing services
- I live in Oklahoma, but I'm from Washington state
- I'm happily married to my awesome husband, Yawei, and I'm blessed with a wonderful teenage daughter



Class Agenda

- **Lecture Part 1: Terminology & Website Essentials (~55 minutes)**
 - Brief introduction, basic terminology, web hosting, domain names, website builders, essential features and elements of websites, and the best platforms for building your website
- **10-Minute Break**
 - Grab a drink or snack, take a restroom break, or simply engage in the class live chat
- **Lecture Part 2: How to Build a Great Website (~55 minutes)**
 - Keys to good design, content, and optimization, what makes a good website, tools and strategies that can save you both time and money, and how to find and hire help
- **Q&A Session (Optional) (~30 minutes)**



Introduction

- **Why this class?**

- The purpose of this class is to equip you with the knowledge you need to know to make informed decisions about building your online presence
- Help enable you to pursue your passions and ventures more easily by reducing your costs and saving you time, removing some obstacles standing in your way
- You get straight-forward, easy to understand breakdowns of a complex topic, presented with honesty and insights about the current tools and services currently available at your disposal
- I'm not here to sell you something, I'm here to help you :)

- **Key takeaways**

- I hope that you will end the class with a better understanding of what you need to build your own website, what it costs, the pros and cons of DIY and hiring help, and what you need to do



Domain Names

- **What is a domain name?**

- A domain name is like a digital street address for your website that makes it easy to find

- **How does it work?**

- People open a web browser and type in the domain name to get to your website

- **Where can I get a domain name?**

- There are numerous companies that sell domain names. They are called domain name registrars. When you “buy” a domain name, you are actually renting it for one year (or more if you pay for additional years)

- **What is privacy protection?**

- It keeps your contact information private and reduces the amount of spam emails and calls you get after registering a domain name (***YOU REALLY NEED THIS, trust me!***)



Web Hosting

- **What is a web hosting?**
 - Web hosting (or website hosting) is like digital property that you build your website on
- **How does it work?**
 - When people go to your domain name, they are taken to your digital property
- **Where can I get web hosting?**
 - You can get website hosting from a wide variety of companies. Some companies sell or give away web hosting with tools that you can use to build your own website
- **What kind of web hosting do I need?**
 - Most small business websites can use shared hosting plans (it's typically the least expensive of all the hosting types) - *Shared hosting plans are kind of like an apartment building or a housing complex where you have your own space that is isolated, but within the same zone with others, and the utilities are shared*



Email Hosting

- **What is a email hosting?**

- Think of it like a mailbox you rent that you can use to get and send mail
- Makes it so you can use your domain name instead of using a free service like gmail or yahoo

- **Do I need email hosting?**

- It can give your business a more professional presentation online, make it easier for people to contact you, provide you with security so scammers can't as easily pose as your business

- **Where can I get email hosting?**

- A lot of shared hosting plans INCLUDE free email hosting
- If you use a website builder, you may need to purchase email hosting separately
- There are lots of options, it will depend on your needs and budget



IP Address

- **What is an IP address?**

- You can think of an IP address as being similar to the latitude and longitude coordinates of a map that you can use to pinpoint a specific location
- In terms of your website, it is the specific address that takes people to the virtual property where your website is hosted

- **How does it work?**

- It works behind the scenes to help connect your domain name to your website hosting
- When you buy website and/or email hosting, it typically has an IP address associated with it
- When you get a domain name, you may need to enter the IP address you get from the website hosting or email hosting provider into the settings



DNS & Name Servers

- **What in the world is DNS?**

- Think of it as the GPS of the Internet – it works behind the scenes directing internet traffic
- It makes it so that your domain name will take people to your website

- **What is a Name Server?**

- You can think of a name server as being like a contact list in your phone, where you have names that are associated with numbers that direct your call where it needs to go

- **Why is it important?**

- When you buy a domain name, you may need to set the DNS and/or Name Servers so that your domain name will point to your website hosting
- The website hosting provider will give you the Name Servers or an IP address to enter into your domain name DNS settings



SSL Certificates

- **What is an SSL certificate?**

- It adds a layer of protection on your website, think of it like adding a padlock to your property to help keep out thieves and bad actors

- **Do I need one?**

- Yes, but you may not need to buy one
 - Most website hosts provide a free SSL certificate (typically it's called "Let's Encrypt") and it is usually sufficient for most small business websites
- If you are going to have a lot of personal information (ie. Social Security Numbers, etc.) processed through the website, then it is best to invest in a paid SSL certificate



Website Builders

- **What is a website builder?**

- Think of it as if you were constructing a building or house...
- It's like the materials and tools you use to build your website with

- **How does it work?**

- It creates a framework that you customize with your content, styles, graphics, and designs

- **Which website builder should I use?**

- It depends on your needs and budget
- Each has different features, limitations, and costs (both short-term and long-term)
- The most popular one is WordPress, but there are many others and there are now many AI-powered website builders



How It All Works Together



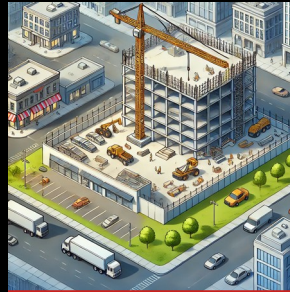
Domain Name

(it's like a street address where people will find your business)



Website Hosting

(it's like a parcel of land you build on)



Website Builders

(it's like the materials, tools, and equipment you build with)



Email Hosting

(it's like where you send and receive your mail)



DNS & Name Servers

(it's like the GPS of the Internet that runs behind the scenes)



SSL Certificate

(it's like a padlock to help protect your property)

Here's an interesting fact... the images on this slide were generated using AI! I used ChatGPT.

I gave it some basic instructions and it used the built-in "DALL-E" image generator.



Online Shops

- **What is an online shop?**
 - It is a digital storefront where people can purchase your products and/or services online
- **What is the difference between a regular website and an online shop?**
 - Websites usually provide information or serve some other kind of purpose, while an online store primarily sells physical or digital products
 - A website can be an online shop and vice versa – they can have elements of both
- **Which online shop platform should I use?**
 - There are plenty of options – if you have a WordPress website, you can use WooCommerce or Ecwid, you can also use ecommerce platforms like Shopify or LaunchCart



How Much Does a Website Cost?

- **Anywhere between \$0 and \$10k+**
 - The real cost depends on your goals, needs, budget, tools, and methods you choose
- **Where can I get a free website?**
 - Use a free website builder like Wix, LaunchCart, etc.
 - Find a company offering free website hosting
- **What can make a website expensive?**
 - The hosting, premium domain names, design, customization, features, platform or website builder, content, marketing, freelancer/agency you use



DIY Steps to Build a Website

1. Plan your website

- Determine your budget, purpose, required features, goals, and time/effort commitment
- Consider your long-term goals and what features you may need later

2. Research website builders and hosting companies

- Look into the website builders and companies that meet your budget and goals
- Some hosting companies include a free domain name (be careful, it may only be for 1 year)

3. Buy a domain name

- Choose a domain name that is easy to spell, memorable, short, and related to your business
- Domains with .com and .net are best – they've been around the longest and what people are most used to



DIY Steps to Build a Website

4. Buy the website hosting

- Once you buy website hosting, they may send you details like the IP address, Name Servers, etc.

5. Connect the domain name to the website hosting

- If you bought hosting and the domain name from the same company, it should automatically be connected (skip to the next step), otherwise...
- Go to the place you bought the domain name and enter in the Name Servers and/or other details - the exact steps to do this vary (depends on the companies you choose for your domain and hosting)

6. Start building your website!

- Install a website builder like WordPress or if using a website builder, use the tools they provide to build your website



Future of Website Development

- **Mass tech layoffs + the advancement of AI**
 - The market is flooded with talent – it's a buyer's market with tons of people eagerly competing for your business
- **The AI Revolution: Faster, Easier, and Stunning Websites**
 - Thanks to AI, websites are faster and easier to build, lowering the cost and making it more user-friendly for the general public
 - With the rapid advancement of AI tools and powerful software solutions, you don't need a tech background or design skills to build a simple website or online store for your business
 - Most (if not all) businesses are incorporating AI into their business practices and solutions to cut costs, be more efficient, and improve their effectiveness



Hiring VS DIY

- **DIY (Do-It-Yourself)**

- **Advantages:**

- Lower cost
- More control

- **Disadvantages:**

- May take more time and effort
- The result may not be as effective or good

- **Hiring**

- **Advantages:**

- More likely to get a professional website
- Convenient - saves you time and effort

- **Disadvantages:**

- Less control
- Higher cost



Freelancers VS Agencies

- **Freelancers**

- **Advantages:**

- Lower cost
- Lots of freelancers to choose from

- **Disadvantages:**

- May lack long-term support
- Work quality may be poor

- **Agencies**

- **Advantages:**

- Typically better results
- Long-term support

- **Disadvantages:**

- Much higher cost
- May push you to buy features and services you don't need



Where to Find Help

- **Freelancers**

- **Freelance sites** like Fiverr, Upwork, Freelancer, Toptal, PeoplePerHour, and Guru
- **Design competition websites** like DesignCrowd or 99Designs where you set the prize and take your pick of the design submissions

- **MySmallBusinessWebsite.com**

- Online classes and tutoring, plus resources, tutorials, and articles

- **Agencies and Businesses**

- Chamber of commerce websites
- Network referrals
- Business directories
- Footer credits for websites you like
- Business review sites



Be Careful of Scammers

• Spam Emails & Messages

- Amazing website or not, you will get emails and messages from people offering you all manner of services – they may or may not be legitimate
- You are likely to receive many emails from people overseas with various service offers
- People have been scammed by people posing as web designers who then take the money and run – this may surprise you, but web designers can get scammed by fake clients too!

• Trustworthy Businesses will:

- Have a portfolio of past work
- Provide details about what services will be provided and what exactly is being offered
- Have support and contact details
- Have reviews/testimonials
- Be able to demonstrate knowledge and answer your questions
- Have a functional website with a legitimate domain name
- Be a legally registered business entity



DIY With AI Website Builders

- **Unicorn Platform**

- Easy AI website builder

- **ZipWP**

- Creates a WordPress website for you in 60 seconds

- **CodeDesignAI**

- Create a website with their AI tools and export it to host it anywhere

- **AppyPie**

- Creates websites and apps with AI

- **Advantages**

- It's super quick and easy
- Does most of the work for you, including the content

- **Disadvantages**

- May be difficult to move your site later
- Platform limitations or may lack features
- Long-term cost may be higher than other options
- May be difficult to customize



Saving Time & Money

- **Whatever you do, AI can make things faster and easier**
 - Generate content for websites, social media posts, product descriptions, and more
 - Get step-by-step instructions or information on a wide variety of topics
 - Brainstorm ideas and get feedback
 - Generate scripts and materials
 - Come up with marketing strategies specific to your business
- **Use free tools & resources**
 - WordPress.org is a free website builder that is widely supported on most web hosting platforms
 - Use free stock media sites like Pixabay or Pexels for images, videos, and other media that you can use on your website and in your marketing materials
 - Use open-source (free) software and online tools to edit graphics and video for use on your website



Design & Content Strategies

- **Responsive design**
 - Make it look good across devices
- **Easy and clear navigation**
 - Keep menus and links simple and easy to understand
- **Use traditional layouts and pages**
- **Include links throughout**
 - Have multiple links with a call to action instructing people what to do
- **Make your website content easy to read**
 - Break up large blocks of text
 - Organize your content, use clear headlines and lists
 - High contrast (*dark text with light background or light text with dark background*)
- **Use words your audience looks for**
 - Craft your content to include the keywords your target audience is looking for
 - Create content that delivers value



Design & Content Strategies

- **Compress & resize images**
 - Improves website loading speed
- **Use AI editing tools like Hotpot AI**
 - You can easily remove backgrounds and edit photos with AI
- **Real photos and videos are more effective than stock or AI generated ones**
 - Use your own high quality photos wherever possible
- **Make sure your homepage has a compelling headline and call to action**
 - Use good visuals (backgrounds, colors, etc.) that complement the message
- **Video has been proven to have much higher conversion rates**
 - Having a great video on the homepage can increase sales
- **You must market your website constantly**
 - If you build it, people ***WILL NOT*** come **UNLESS** you invest time in marketing!



Media Resources

- **Pixabay**
 - Free stock photos, videos, and audio
- **Pexels**
 - Free stock photos and videos
- **Unsplash**
 - Free stock images
- **Videezy**
 - Free videos and motion graphics
- **Storyblocks**
 - Download unlimited photos, videos, and audio files
- **Canva Pro**
 - Large library of stock photos, videos, and design templates with a user-friendly graphics editor
- **Envato Elements**
 - Large library of stock photos, videos, music, and design templates



Q&A



MYSMALLBUSINESSWEBSITE.COM

Can I change my domain name later?

- Short answer, no.
- Once you buy a domain name, you have it for a year or more (depending on the term you bought it for)
- You can't change the domain name, even if you have a typo
- Domain name registrars don't give refunds, but if you really don't want it, you can try to list it for sale after a period of time
- You can own multiple domain names and have them point to the same website, but one domain serve as the primary domain for the website



Is it worth having multiple domain names?

- It can be beneficial, but it's not required.
- Some reasons you might want to use multiple domain names:
 - Target keywords people are looking for
 - Use the domain names for different purposes
 - Get different domain extensions such as .com, .net, .store, etc.
 - Use for email marketing
 - Use for branding or marketing efforts
 - Prevents others from buying the domains and posing as your business



Are premium themes or plugins worth it?

- Yes, if it...
 - Provides features you need or want
 - Is well maintained and kept up-to-date by the developer
 - Is highly rated
 - Doesn't slow down your website or hinder your website's function or performance
 - Is reasonably priced
 - Looks and works like it's supposed to across devices
 - Doesn't break parts of your website when it is installed



What is SEO and why is it important?

- SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization
 - SEO makes it easier for search engines like Google to index your website for certain keywords
 - When a website is indexed, it can show up in the search results when people search for a business, topic, or question
 - The algorithm which determines what order (rank) the websites appear in the search results is kept secret, but it is influenced by the text content and keywords in the site
- SEO can help drive free, organic (people naturally looking online) traffic to your website
 - Free traffic means you can lower your marketing/advertising costs



How long does it take to build a website?

- The amount of time it takes varies greatly, but typically it will take a few days to a few weeks, but complex and/or custom websites can take months
- DIY solutions can use templates to create a website instantly – the initial setup usually doesn't take that long, the most time consuming part is putting together the pages of the site, creating content, and styling it
- AI websites can generate websites rapidly within minutes, whereas an agency may take a lot longer
- The methods, tools, amount of content, graphics involved, technical setup, design, and numerous other factors can all affect the amount of time required to create a website



Can I build a website without coding?

- Yes, there are numerous tools and website builders that you can use to build a website, customize it, and make it look the way you want all without having to type a single line of code
- If there is something you need to customize, you can use tools like ChatGPT to help generate code for you to style specific components to make your website look the way you want
- Most website builders and AI tools have user-friendly controls that make it easy for you to customize the colors, styles, and look of the website so long as what you want fits within the template limitations



What happens if my site goes down?

- Sometimes websites go down and you just need to wait it out
 - Web hosting companies typically advertise 99.9% uptime
 - 99.9% uptime means the website will be online 24/7 99.9% of the time
 - There may be times when it goes down temporarily where it might be out for a few minutes every now and then
- If your website is down for an extended period of time, there may be a technical issue, domain name problem, billing issue, maintenance, or another cause responsible –
 - You may need to contact your website hosting provider or the website builder platform for assistance
 - Look for service status notifications and maintenance notices

