In association with

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Getting an online presence

If you're a business owner or self-employed, having a digital presence — a website and matching email address — makes you look more professional and means customers can always find you.

Here's how to get your business online and avoid common mistakes.

A website can be your shop window, retail outlet, information centre and marketing tool. It's available 24 hours a day to customers around the world.

No business, whether you're part-time, self-employed, a start-up or you have a large staff, can afford to be without a digital presence.

Getting your own domain name — your unique online address — can also give you matching email addresses. Studies show customers trust emails that match the business name over those with generic email addresses, for example, sales@smithsplumbing.co.nz instead of sales.smithsplumbing@gmail.com.

Before you start

Think about why you want a website. To keep costs down, your site should only do what you need it to. Ask yourself if your business is:

- local or national
- national or international
- in retail or a service provider.

Also, think about the people you're selling to. Ask yourself:

- Who are my ideal customers?
- What will customers want from my website — to make contact, find out more about products or services, buy something?

The answers will help you work out what you want your website for, including:

- marketing your products or services
- generating sales leads
- selling products or services
- telling people outside your area or country about you and your business.

The first thing you'll need is a domain name — a unique online address — before you can have your own website and branded email addresses. Ideally, this will be your business name or a keyword related to your business. If you are self-employed, it could be your own name and what you do, for example, Johnsmiththebuilder.co.nz.

To get a domain name:

Use our ONECheck tool to see if one that matches your business name is available, then register it (do an online search to find a provider).

If you want to operate overseas or attract overseas customers, think about a domain name ending in .com or other country code, for example, com.au or co.uk.

If you haven't done so already, now is a good time to think about your company's brand and business name.

[How to research your market and competitors (/getting-started/taking-the-first-steps/how-to-research-your-market-and-competitors/)](/getting-started/taking-the-first-steps/how-to-research-your-market-and-competitors/)

[Building your website or online store (/do-business-online/building-your-website-or-online-store/)](/do-business-online/building-your-website-or-online-store/)

[ONECheck tool (/onecheck/)](/onecheck/)

[Creating your brand (/getting-started/building-a-brand/creating-your-brand/)](/getting-started/building-a-brand/creating-your-brand/)

[Choosing a business name (/getting-started/building-a-brand/choosing-a-business-name/)](/getting-started/building-a-brand/choosing-a-business-name/)

What is web presence?

Your business' web presence is anything about your business that lives online. This includes things that you create, such as your website or social media pages, as well as what other people say about you, such as customer reviews. Actively crafting your presence puts you in control of how you're perceived online.

Watch: What is web presence?

Video Transcript: What is web presence?

[Audio/Visual: Upbeat music starts playing as the presenter is shown in the centre of the screen with wording the "What is a web presence?" displayed in white text centrally at the bottom of the screen. The text "What is a web presence?" disappears from screen. Music plays throughout the video.]

[Visual: The screen zooms out slightly to show the presenter at a wider angle. An animation of the earth representing the internet inside a circular green background appears on the left-hand side of the presenter and stays in place.]

0:01 What is a web presence? The internet, this guy's been around for a wee while now.

[Visual: The text "1991" appears in white text beneath the animation of the internet and stays in place.]

0:06 In fact, it became publicly available in 1991, but it's not going anywhere anytime fast.

[Visual: The animation and the text "1991" disappear from screen. Screen changes to show a network of lines representing the high-speed communication capability of the internet.]

0:12 The percentage of the population connected to the internet has rapidly grown over recent years,

[Visual: The screen changes to show the presenter in the centre of the screen.]

0:17 as even the most disconnected communities became connected through new forms of satellite connections and cheaper Wi-Fi.

[Visual: The screen changes to show a person sitting inside the back seat of a moving vehicle taking a picture of themself with a cellular phone. The screen changes to show two people sitting at a table and talking while looking at a laptop. The screen changes to show two people sitting on a couch while smiling and laughing at a laptop. The screen changes to show a person sitting with a laptop on their lap and using the mousepad to scroll through online goods, the laptop screen shows the website Amazon.com. The screen changes to show a zoomed in picture of a computer mouse pointer hovering over a "search" button. The screen changes to show a person's hands holding a cell phone and scrolling though a list off online applications.]

0:25 These days we're working via the internet, socialising via the internet and more of us than ever before, do our online shopping there too. Food shopping, clothes shopping, Christmas shopping, the internet just provides us with more convenience and more choice.

[Visual: The screen changes to show the presenter in the centre of the screen.]

0:40 Small businesses must adapt to this new way of doing business and the foundation of how they do this is by building a web presence. But what is a web presence? Well, your business's web presence is everything and anything about your business that lives online.

[Visual: An animation of a computer screen attached to keyboard inside a green circular background appears on the right-hand side of the presenter. The animation disappears from screen.]

[Visual: An animation of a website home screen inside a purple circular background pops up on the left-hand side of the presenter. An animation of a cell phone with a bubble speech and a thumbs-up icon inside a pink circular background pops up on the right-hand side of the presenter. An animation of a speech bubble and a three-star review inside a green circular background pops up underneath the presenter. The animations all disappear from screen.]

0:57 This includes things you create such as your website or social media pages, as well as what other people say about you, such as customer reviews. Taking an active role in crafting your presence puts you in control of how you're perceived online and this, in turn, helps you influence consumer behaviour and ultimately sales.

[Visual: An animation of a bar graph with an upward arrow and a dollar sign figure inside a circular orange background appears left-hand side of the presenter. The animation disappears from screen.]

1:18 Businesses that don't have an online footprint, on the other hand, miss out on that opportunity to capture attention, expand their reach, build trust, and grow sales.

1:30 The one important thing to remember is that different facets of your online presence serve different purposes. Your website is the heart of your web presence and should be home to everything your customers need to know about your business.

[Visual: The screen changes to show an example of a website homepage showing the business name, a link to the company's social media, and images of their business. The screen shows the user navigating to the tab named "contact", the "contact'' page shows the company's email, phone number, google map location, address, and additional notes about access. The screen changes to show another example of a website homepage with the option to "book now" in the menu. The screen changes to show the "book now" page which shows rates, information, and the dates available to book a tour.]

1:43 From your basic information, such as where you're located or who you are, right through to a booking system, ordering a parcel, tracking details.

1:53 Your web presence is likely to include online ads you put out to the worldwide web through social media to help you reach new customers and stay relevant to existing customers.

[Visual: The screen changes to show the presenter in the centre of the screen. Two animations appear on either side of the presenter. The animation on the left-hand side of the presenter shows an open laptop screen and a megaphone inside a circular blue background. The animation on the right-hand side of the presenter shows an open laptop screen with a thumbs-up icon, two speech bubbles with "#" and "@" inside, inside a circular green background. The animation both disappear from screen.]

[Visual: The screen zooms out slightly to show the presenter at a wider angle. Four circular animations appear of the Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter logos, two on each side of the presenter. The logos all disappear from screen.]

2:06 And then there are your social media pages, which are great ways to build a real connection and relationship with customers,

[Visual: The screen zooms in slightly to show the presenter at a closer angle.]

2:14 strong relationships that make them choose you over the competition even when the offer may be better in some way elsewhere.

[Visual: The screen zooms out slightly to show the presenter at a wider angle. The screen changes to show an example of a business Facebook page. The screen shows the user navigating through the page's Facebook timeline, showing online comments and reviews from customers. The screen changes to show an example of a company's Google My Business listing, showing google reviews and ratings from customers.]

2:22 And another facet of your web presence are online reviews, which can be found on social pages or your Google My Business listing.

[Visual: The screen changes to show the presenter in the centre of the screen.]

2:30 These reviews serve as social proof that your brand is legitimate, active, and good at what it does. So, there you have it, your web presence is everything you do to take your business to the world. Make sure your first impression is the one that makes a great impact.

[Visual: The screen changes to show a blue background with the Digital Boost logo in white in the centre of the screen and the text "Want to know more? Visit digitalboost.co.nz" in white below. The New Zealand Government logo is in white in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen.]

[Video ends]

Digital Boost

If you are looking for more content like this visit Digital Boost, a free online skills and training platform, providing everything you need to get moving on your digital journey.

Digital Boost has over 1,000 videos, including how to:

- develop a website
- register a domain name
- create an email account
- get started on social media.

Sign up here(external link) (https://digitalboost.business.govt.nz/s/?language=en_NZ) — Digital Boost

Selling to someone overseas is exporting, so you'll need to follow exporting rules.

What you need to know about exporting (/how-to-grow/exporting/what-you-need-to-know-about-exporting/)

[E-commerce: online selling of product overseas(external link) (https://www.mpi.govt.nz/export/selling-through-e-commerce/)](https://www.mpi.govt.nz/export/selling-through-e-commerce/) — Ministry for Primary Industries

Is your name available?

Use ONECheck to see if your business name, web domain, trade mark and social media usernames are available — it only takes one search.

[Is your name available?, Is your name available? Get started (/onecheck/)](/onecheck/)

Case study

Beauty of email

For years Debbie has used the same email address for home and for her beauty products company Organic Beauty — debs21@hotmail.com. When her business takes off, Debbie realises she needs more professional-looking email addresses for work.

So she registers the domain name organicbeauty.co.nz, and sets up separate email addresses for sales (sales@organicbeauty.co.nz), admin and invoicing (accounts@organicbeauty.co.nz), and one for each staff member.

She sets up a website at organicbeauty.co.nz for local sales and also registers the domain name organicbeautynz.com to sell products around the world at a later date.

Self-assessment: Your business website

Having an up-to-date website is essential for modern businesses. Use this tool to reflect on how well your website is meeting the needs of your customers and how you could improve it.

At the end of this assessment, you'll get:

- a better idea of your website's strengths and weaknesses
- practical tips and links to expert advice.

5 - 10 minutes

Self assessment: Your business website

☐

Get started

☐

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Online presence

Did you know...

75% of users judge the credibility of a business based on the design of its website, according to research from Stanford.

Next

How important is your website to your business?

○ Our business doesn't have a website ○ We have a website but we're not sure how important it is ○ Our website makes our business look credible ○ Our website makes us look professional and ensures customers can find us ○ Our website is essential for promoting us and driving sales

Submit

Online presence

Did you know...

As of January 2018, around three-quarters of people in New Zealand aged between 16 and 64 had recently searched for a product or service to buy online, according to Statista, The Statistics Portal.

Next

How much does your business use a website (your own or another) to sell products or services?

○ Not at all — we don't sell anything online ○ A little — we have a few key things available online ○ Quite a bit — we're increasing our focus on online sales ○ Getting there! — we're selling more online to increase our productivity ○ A lot — selling online gives us access to limitless customers, 24 hours a day

Submit

Search and discovery

Did you know...

Consumers feel that companies with brand-specific email addresses are more likely to be professional, credible, responsible and trustworthy, research by Colmar Brunton shows.

Next

How important is your domain name to your business?

○ Not at all — we don't have a domain name ○ Sort of important — we have a domain name for our website but use default email addresses from our provider ○ Quite important — our website and email both use our domain name ○ Very important — all our online presence ties back to our domain name ○ Extremely important — our domain name is our brand

Submit

Search and discovery

Did you know...

If you're not at the top of the search results, you're missing out. Websites listed on the first Google search results page get 92% of the interaction from an average search, according to Chitika, Online Advertising Network.

Next

When someone searches online for your type of business, how well do you rank in the results?
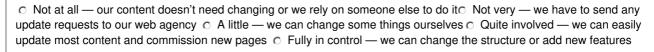
○ Poorly — we're not even on the front page ○ Not very well — we're listed among several less-relevant results ○ Fairly well — we're listed among our competitors but not as top pick ○ Very well — we're high up in the results and readers can see we meet their needs ○ Extremely well — we're usually top of the list and users click through to our site

Submit

Up to date

Did you know...

Around 40% of people will stop engaging with a website if the content or layout is unattractive, according to research by Adobe.

Next

When was the last review of your business website?

○ Never — our site has hardly changed and it feels old ○ Over 2 years ago — our site has a tired design and out-of-date features ○ 1 to 2 years ago — it still looks OK and gets reasonable visitor statistics ○ 6 months to 1 year ago — we love our new site and so do our customers ○ Less than 6 months ago — it attracts visitors with the latest features

Submit

Up to date

Did you know...

The majority of internet searches come from mobile devices, even if a desktop device is available, according to Google.

Next

How mobile-friendly is your business website?

○ I'm not sure if our website is mobile-friendly ○ Our website needs upgrading — it's not mobile-friendly yet ○ We're planning to make our website mobile-friendly ○ The main features work on mobile but a few don't ○ Our website works for any customer on any device

Submit

Content

Did you know...

Nearly 40% of people will stop looking at a website if the images won't load or take too long to load, according to Adobe.

Next

How would you describe the content on your business website?

○ Basic text — we don't use images or other content much ○ Basic text with a few images for decoration ○ Carefully written text with well-chosen images ○ Best-practice web writing, professional photos and other graphic elements that support the text and layout ○ As well as great text and images, we're considering videos and user-generated content

Submit

Content

Did you know...

Google encourages website owners to produce original, high-quality content, since that's what's best for web users.

Next

How involved is your business in managing or editing the content on its website?

○ Not at all — our content doesn't need changing or we rely on someone else to do it ○ Not very — we have to send any update requests to our web agency ○ A little — we can change some things ourselves ○ Quite involved — we can easily update most content and commission new pages ○ Fully in control — we can change the structure or add new features

Submit

News, blogs and social

Did you know...

Businesses that blog 11 or more times a month get more than four times as many leads as those that blog half as much, according to HubSpot.

Next

How important are regular news stories or blog posts to your business?

○ We don't post news or blogs — we have other priorities ○ We rarely post anything — just to announce anything important ○ We post news or blogs when we find the time and think of something to say ○ We post news and blogs regularly ○ We post to fit our strategy and position ourselves as a leader in our field

Submit

News, blogs and social

Did you know...

Almost half of the world's population is on social media, according to Hootsuite.

Show my results

How well is your business website linked with your social media accounts?

○ Not well — we haven't even thought about linking them yet ○ Not well — we've thought about it, but they're quite separate at the moment ○ Fairly well — we've added some links, but we could add more ○ Quite well — we know linking everything helps build our audience ○ Very well — everything's fully integrated to boost engagement and increase sales

Submit

Explore tools and tips for doing business online.

Use our tool to get advice that works for your business.

Do business online(external link) (https://www.tools.business.govt.nz/do-business-online)

Developing your website

Your first website doesn't need to be expensive. If you're self-employed or a small business, you may only need a simple, clear and attractive homepage to start with. Several online services offer free and low-cost templates ideal for a site with just a few pages of information and images.

As you grow, you'll want your website to grow too. When it's time to build a new site, for example, one that can take orders or requests for quotes, get a professional developer and designer involved. Before they start work, be clear about what you need the site to do and how much you can spend.

Whatever the size of your site, there are rules it pays to follow. Your customers and search engines will thank you for it.

- Keep all information up to date.
- Add new content regularly to keep the site fresh — search engines like Google give higher rank to sites that do this.
- Make content useful — not everything should be an advertisement for your business.
- Use good quality images of what you do and sell — avoid generic stock photos.
- Keep words to a minimum and use them wisely — it may be worth paying a professional writer.

[10 common website mistakes(external link) (http://www.digitalresources.nz/article/UVFiEoy)](http://www.digitalresources.nz/article/UVFiEoy) — Digital Journeys

[Creating online classes(external link) (https://www.tools.business.govt.nz/digital-boost/spotlight-series/creating-online-classes/video/video-1008?_gl=1*nr3mzc*_ga*MTU1OTY2ODI1My4xNjE1MzIwNDUz*_ga_GYLE0HQMGJ*MTYyNjA1Mjk2NS4zODguMS4xNjI2MDU1MjgyLjA.)](https://www.tools.business.govt.nz/digital-boost/spotlight-series/creating-online-classes/video/video-1008) — Digital Boost

[Building your website or online store (/do-business-online/building-your-website-or-online-store/)](/do-business-online/building-your-website-or-online-store/)

Put important information — like your contact details — in an obvious place.

If you offer after-hours services, for example, for plumbing emergencies or IT support, include a call-out number on your homepage.

Social media

Social media can be a great way for small businesses and self-employed people to talk to customers. Sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram help you reach a vast potential audience, often more intimately than through your website. No wonder companies big and small use it to build their brand.

Social media can help you:

- contact customers quickly with important information, for example, competitions, offers, product recalls
- get instant customer feedback
- quickly grow customer numbers
- sell through a business account, for example, on Facebook.

Plan how you want to use your social media account, for example, to offer daily specials or to encourage people to visit your website. Also think about how much time you or an employee can give to it, for example, once a day or week.

Think about the tone of voice for your social media posts, for example, a law firm may use a more serious tone than a party planning company.

Over-using social media can be seen as invasive, for example, posting too many company updates or information customers can live without.

It's worth remembering everyone sees feedback posted by your customers — good and bad. Also, you may have obligations if you're collecting information about customers and storing it digitally.

[Creating your brand (/getting-started/building-a-brand/creating-your-brand/)](/getting-started/building-a-brand/creating-your-brand/)

[Protecting customer and employee information (/risks-and-operations/it-risk-and-avoiding-scams/protecting-customer-and-employee-information/)](/risks-and-operations/it-risk-and-avoiding-scams/protecting-customer-and-employee-information/)

[Advertising to online customers (/do-business-online/advertising-to-customers/)](/do-business-online/advertising-to-customers/)

Don't delete negative social media comments out of hand. A business page with no complaints can raise suspicions.

But one where customer complaints have clearly been resolved can build trust.

[Step-by-step: Handling complaints on social media (/risks-and-operations/dealing-with-customer-complaints/reducing-risk-of-complaints/#e7509)](/risks-and-operations/dealing-with-customer-complaints/reducing-risk-of-complaints/#e7509)

Mobile-friendly websites rank higher in search results.

Design your website from the outset with both mobile and desktop users in mind. Think about what they will do on your site, for example, quick visits to find contact details or longer sessions to compare products.

Tips for being found online

Customers want to find you easily online — if they can't, your competitor is just a click away.

- **Complete all the data fields on your New Zealand Business Number (NZBN) profile and set to public:** Having an online presence on New Zealand's biggest register means other businesses and customers can easily find you and adds to your business' credibility. You can update your NZBN profile by logging into MyNZBN on the NZBN website.
- **Check your stats:** Google Analytics is a tool to help you understand how people use your website, which pages are most read, and who reads them. It's easy to use and free.
- **Review and tweak:** Ask customers what they want from your website — and what they like and don't like. Be prepared to change what's not going down well.
- **Promote your website**: Look for opportunities to get your domain name in front of customers. You can promote yourself or your business with your website, address, and opening hours with Google's Business Profile.

Analytics(external link) (http://www.google.com/analytics/#?modal_active=none)— Google

Business Profile(external link) (https://www.google.com/intl/en_nz/business/) — Google

Keeping track of key metrics (/getting-started/business-planning-tools-and-tips/keeping-track-of-key-metrics/)

Update your NZBN(external link) (https://www.nzbn.govt.nz/) — NZBN

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Your business name is a fundamental part of your brand. Find tips and a great tool for deciding on that perfect name

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Developing your unique selling point

(/getting-started/building-a-brand/developing-your-unique-selling-point/)

This includes the competitive factors that differentiate your business from others. Learn how to do it effectively.

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Strengthening your online presence

(/getting-started/building-a-brand/strengthening-your-online-presence/)

The world is online and so is your business — at least, it should be! Learn how to make the most of being online.

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Creating your brand

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Here are some tips on how to build a strong brand that works for you.

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