.JH DESIGN

PREPARE FOR YOUR WEBSITE DESIGN PROJECT

Before your website design project can begin, a number of things need to be in place. It may seem obvious to you, but believe me when I say that some people get completely lost beyond knowing that they need a website for their business. Below I outline the critical things you need to get started. Having these in place will make the design and development process run smoothly, and will prevent hold ups that have the potential to cost you more money in the long run (many website developers will charge a "restart" fee to book you back into their calendar if you are running behind schedule and they have to push you back).

At the bottom of this file is a checklist, so you can check off your website design project "to-dos' as you get everything organised.

THE DOMAIN

Your domain is the address of your website, or the URL. It is an important piece of real estate, because a difficult domain will make it hard for people to remember and type in. Likewise, it needs to reflect your business. Is your business focused around your name, or are you running a business that has the potential to grow into a full team? There are few things to consider when deciding on the domain name. Traditionally, a .com was considered the key to the end of a domain, but now .co and .net addresses are commonly used when a .com is either not available or is excessively expensive. It is also important to consider if your business is local to your area, or whether your business is likely to be more national or international. If you live in New Zealand, for example, and service the local area, a .co.nz or .nz domain is far more appropriate.

There are thousands of websites that offer domains, and the two that I usually use are [Namecheap](#) or [GoDaddy](#), both of which offer domains at a reasonable price. When purchasing a domain, it is a good idea to find a site that will allow you to purchase in your own currency, because purchasing in US Dollars can add quite a bit to the bill after the currency is converted. GoDaddy, for example has a website for nearly every country, so you can get accurate pricing.

HOSTING

Next up is hosting. Some people buy a domain and then completely forget about the hosting. Think of the domain as the address, and the hosting as the house that sits on the property. The house (hosting) holds all of the important information and is what people see when they visit the address (domain).

So you must purchase hosting. Some people find it easier to keep their domain and hosting within a single provider, so that they don't get so confused. Often you can purchase your hosting and get your domain for free for the first year, which can save you $20 or so. Most hosting providers will also give you a heavy discount for your first year, which is great if you are just getting started and are tight on cash flow.

It's not as simple as just picking any company to go with. Some hosts, while providing unlimited storage and bandwidth, which will seem like a bargain at face value, will actually be detrimental to your business, because their servers are slow. Slow servers = slow website. And no one has time for a slow website! The slower your website, the more likely someone is to get frustrated (especially on mobile, which most users are on these days), and just go elsewhere. The bigger your website, the more resources it will use to load, and that will slow it down further.

I personally recommend, and use, [Siteground](#) (referral link) for self-hosted Wordpress websites. I have switched a few of my clients to Siteground after using other companies (such as Bluehost!), and their website loading times have dropped by half. By *half*. One of my clients was using cloud hosting on a different company, which is supposed to be faster than shared hosting, and Siteground's shared hosting blew them out of the water. This is due to their SSD servers, which respond to the initial request quickly, and deliver the content really fast. For a brand new

website most people can get away with their [StartUp plan](#) with no problems. Forget the size and bandwidth - 10GB is a lot of space for a brand new website, as is 10,000 visits per month. If you are concerned about it, The GrowBig plan is ample, and also has the added benefit of their SuperCacher, which will help your site run even faster.

If you are eyeing up using Squarespace, carefully think about the long game for your website. It is better to think about your growth strategy so that you can get your website right the first time around, rather than having to re-do your whole site later on, or use a number of external companies to do what you want. Make sure that Squarespace is going to offer everything you will need.

Squarespace (at time of writing) is good for sites with simple needs, and can also do e-commerce. If you are planning on building a membership site Squarespace limits you to using [Memberspace](#) or an external provider such as [Teachable](#) or [Memberful](#). This isn't necessarily a bad thing, aside from being quite a bit more expensive than what you are likely to spend on a Wordpress plugin.

THE CONTENT

Great, so now you have your domain and hosting, it is time to think about what you need on your website. If you haven't thought about a theme for the design, don't worry, that is what your designer and/or developer is for. Your primary concern is to think about what you want your website to say and convey.

What do you want your website to do? Why?

If you have multiple products or services to offer, **which is your *primary* product? If someone is not ready to purchase that service or product, what do you want them to do instead?** Do you want them to sign up to your list? Do you want them to reach out for further information?

Who are you targeting?

Men? Women? Teens? Mothers? The demographics play a part in what colours should be used on your site, and how the design should flow. For instance, men are

more likely to favour strong colours and favour blues, whereas more feminine women will respond strongly to softer colours. Teens may favour a "fun" website design over something that will appeal more to a businessperson.

How many pages do you need?

At the very least you can expect to have a home page, a contact page, an about page, most likely a sales page for your primary product, and maybe a blog page. You may also want a separate opt-in page. Make sure you know exactly what you want, because this will factor in your overall cost. Suddenly realising you need a couple of extra pages part way through your project is going to add a significant amount to your budget.

What images do you need?

Book that photographer if you are using images of yourself, and allow plenty of time in advance for these to be edited prior to your website project being started. The majority of designers/developers will ask for your content up front. If you are using [stock photography](), do some research on which images you want and consult with your designer with what is appropriate for the site. Purchase those images in advance, or if the option is available, arrange for your designer to purchase them as part of your package.

What copy do you need on each page?

Say what? By copy I mean text. How short or long your text is will help determine the overall design of each page. Designing a web page without the copy is difficult, because if the text doesn't fit in the designated area, then the page has to be redesigned to fit it all. So have the copy written and finalised first. If you aren't sure how to convey what you want to say, a copywriter is your best investment. It is better to have a very simple website with well-written copy, than it is to have a fancy-schmancy website that says nothing.

CHECKLIST

Use this quick checklist to make sure you have everything ready for your web design project.

- ❏ Purchase domain
- ❏ Purchase website hosting
- ❏ Organise content
    - ❏ How many pages?
        - ❏ Home page
        - ❏ Sales page
        - ❏ Opt-in page
        - ❏ About page
        - ❏ Contact page
    - ❏ What needs to be on each page?
        - ❏ What images do you need on each page?
            - ❏ Images purchased or photography session completed.
        - ❏ What copy do you need on each page?
            - ❏ Copy written or copywriter booked.