

# Website Project Fundamentals: Considerations for Developing and Improving

May, 2022

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# Introduction

Over the past number of years, there has been an increasing shift towards digital solutions to meet the needs of consumers. Many clients are exploring how to offer an online solution for their customers. This may be through eCommerce, social media or an improved online user experience.

One key challenge that many companies face is optimising their website. This is essential if the website is a few years old, dated, or requires an eCommerce aspect to better meet your customer's needs

We've set out to explore how our clients can adopt some simple, best-practice fundamentals and optimisation to help them with this challenge. This document outlines some of the fundamental principles for web optimisation applicable to all business sizes. Whether you're about to start your web design journey or need an upgrade, we hope to provide you with some helpful information.

This eBook is divided into two sections.

- **PART A:** Focuses on the knowledge you will need to have to hand before embarking on your website build.
- **PART B:** Considers other elements to ensure that your website project is successful.

This guide is part of the **Bord Bia Think Digital programme**. This programme seeks to enhance the digital capabilities of Irish food, drink and horticulture companies whilst equipping businesses with the resources and supports needed to deliver best in class digital activation. Find resources, webinars and more on the [Think Digital](#) page. This is one of a range of **Client Capability** services available, find out more about our additional resources and offerings [here](#). For further support please reach out at [clientcapability@bordbia.ie](mailto:clientcapability@bordbia.ie)

# PART A

## Section 1: Website Fundamentals

### Why do we need a strong website presence?

In 2022 your business must have an active and robust web presence. Your website should be considered another channel for your business to meet customer needs. Your online presence is the starting point for most customer interactions, and unlike social media, your website is the one thing over which you have complete control.

Given the shift in consumer behaviour over the past two to three years and the acceleration of digital transformation, your website should be a tool for your business to increase revenue.

Having a solid website presence is essential for the following reasons;

- **Digital Marketing:** Digital marketing is essentially about two factors - brand awareness and website traffic. 80% of your digital marketing efforts should be about driving traffic to your site to drive business outcomes.
- **Customer Service:** Your website can become a hub of important customer information and manage customer relationships.
- **Credibility:** Your site gives customers and potential customers the reassurance that your business is credible and trustworthy.
- **Brand:** Your website gives you an ideal opportunity to showcase your brand and products and, in return, drive revenue.

The following eBook gives you a solid basis for embarking on a website project - whether that be a new build or an upgrade on your current website. Website fundamentals contain three significant elements.

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1. *Website Development: The building blocks*

2. *Website Optimisation: The next steps*

3. *User Experience (UX): The finishing touches*

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## Website Development

You may be in a position where you need a new website, require an eCommerce add-on or need some improvements to your existing site. Whatever it is - the fundamental questions when considering web development are the same:

- How easy is it for my customer to get what they want from my website as quickly as possible? Customers nowadays are time poor and want to achieve results on your website in the fastest time possible.
- What kind of website do I need or have the ability to manage? Depending on the size and scale of the website you need, it will require resources to update it to ensure it's serving customer needs and adding value to your business.

Before you embark on your website journey, you must research to focus on the type of website required.

### 1. Types of Websites

There are two common types of websites:

- **Brochure Site:** A brochure site gives an overview of you and your business. Brochure sites are most commonly used where you don't have an eCommerce offering or sell a service. As your business grows, a brochure website can be a good stepping stone to an eCommerce site.
- **eCommerce Site:** An *eCommerce* site is exactly that! You are selling and offering your products for sale online.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What kind of websites do you like to use and why? Having a sense of the style and functionality of the website you select will assist you in deciding what you want from your website.
- What kind of websites are others in your industry using? Use a tool like [BuiltWith Technology Lookup](#) - it will tell you what platform a site is built with.
- What kind of website will my customers need? Understanding what customers want will aid you to serve their needs more efficiently.

- Do my customers need eCommerce functionality? Some businesses use their websites as brochures, and others have an eCommerce functionality. It is vital to ascertain if your customers will utilise eCommerce functionality before going to the added expense of an eCommerce site.
- Do customers need a member login area? Personalisation of web content is a hot topic. In certain instances, having a login or member area makes the customer journey more accessible and promotes repeat purchases.
- Will my customers access the website predominantly on mobile or desktop? Mobile accounts for approximately half of the web traffic worldwide (Statista). Bear this in mind when developing your site.
- Who will build my website? Do I go with a web development agency, freelancer or do I have the capacity to build it myself?

## 2. Website Requirement Checklist

You will need a clear vision of what you want to be included in your site. A good starting point is to develop a list of what it needs to cover. The following are some suggestions.

- No. of pages
- Imagery
- Video to include
- e-Commerce - Product details and descriptions
- Contact form
- Location map
- Social media integration
- Google Analytics (or similar)
- Appointment booking
- SEO
- Booking engine
- Payment system
- Blog
- Search facility

### ***3. Website Content***

What type of content do I want on my website? Video, copy, imagery, blog etc.?

Do I have content that I can use, or do I need to create it? Most website projects are delayed by clients preparing content. It's helpful to understand what you need in advance.

### ***4. Website Budget***

What budget do I have available for my website project? Are there any grants available to support my project? We will address budgetary issues later in this eBook.

## **Website Optimisation**

Maybe you have an existing website and are unsure whether it needs to be upgraded or replaced. In many cases, it's more cost-effective to build a new website rather than upgrade what already exists. If you decide to improve your current website, there are a few factors to consider:

- How quickly does it load? Slow load times are a turn off for potential customers. It is vital that your site loads in 2-3 seconds or less.
- Is it mobile-friendly - most internet searches are now on mobile devices.
- Are your images and graphics consistent with your brand? Ensure consistency in design by using content that is in line with your brand.
- Can your customer reach their point of purchase with ease? Assess the site design to allow customers to get to where they need to ASAP.
- Can your customer have a seamless experience with your company online? Customer Experience is crucial; ensure your site is designed for a seamless customer journey.
- Are we findable online? (Refer to the Bord Bia Think Digital eBook on [SEO](#))

A simple starting point is to run your website through a tool such as HubSpot's Website Grader [Hubspot Website Grader](#) or Test my site - [Google Test My Site](#).

## **User Experience**

Your website should be viewed as a 'value add' for your business. You should consider that your customer (or potential customer) needs to derive value from your site. Approach your

web project assuming that your customer cares little about your brand or company but is concerned with WIFM ('what's in it for me')? Consider that your customers' approach to your website is, 'how can I get where I want to go as quickly as possible?' We will focus on user experience (UX) in section 7.

## Section 2: Project Commencement

Starting or embarking on an upgraded digital/website journey can be a daunting prospect. There are a few things that you need to consider:

### Pre-Build Considerations

- Who will build the site? Can we do it in-house, or should we outsource it?
- If we do it in-house, what will the time cost be?
- If we choose an agency or freelancer - who do we choose?
- Who will maintain the website following the build?
- What platform will the site be built on? (See platform choices later in this eBook)
- What is our timeframe?

### Budgetary Considerations

- Is there a budget available for the build? See the budget section later in this book, but suggested budgets range from €2k-€15k+
- Is there a budget available for ongoing maintenance and upkeep?
- Do we need training on the site following the build?
- Are there grants available for website development?
- Who will manage the ongoing maintenance, e.g. website updates, security and plugin updates etc.?
- Do we need to invest in content, or do we have videos, photography and copy we can use already?

### Domain & Hosting

- What domain name will you choose (the www.compnayname.ie/com )?
- Is that domain name available? If so, how much will it cost?
- Using sites such as [Hosting Ireland](#) will allow you to determine if your domain name is available and how much it might cost.

- Is the domain name SEO friendly? Using your company name or a term that customers will search for is an excellent way to boost your SEO and help drive traffic to the site.
- Do we have web hosting (The virtual domain where the website is located)?
- If not, what is the best hosting provider to use?

## Content Considerations

- Do I have a brand identity or logo? Having a clear brand identity is crucial to consistent design across your website.
- What content do we want on the website, and what content do we have readily available (video, photography, copywriting etc.).
- Do we know what content I should include? What quality are the images and how well-crafted is our written content? Do they match best in class?
- How much of the content we have is of a quality representing your brand? E.g. high-quality photography and videography. In many cases, the answer is not much!
- What social media channels need to be linked to the new website? Give your customers every opportunity to do business with you. Always link your site to your social channels and vice versa. It also helps with SEO.
- Do we need to integrate our website with other platforms, e.g. CRM tools, online marketplaces etc.? Perhaps you are already using a tool for CRM, e.g. Hubspot, and you need to integrate it into your site? If you are already selling on marketplaces (Amazon, eBay etc.), you will need to integrate these.
- If we are selling via eCommerce, what products do we want to be listed? A good starting point is to choose a few essential products to start online and build as you go.
- What information do we need to convey about those products? E.g. price, multipack prices, packaging information, shipping details etc.

## Marketing Considerations

As you launch your new website, it will sit idly on the World Wide Web unless you have a proactive marketing plan in place to drive traffic to the site.

- How do I intend to drive traffic to the website? Consider what channels and tools you will use, e.g. social media, email marketing, webinars.
- What social media channels might we use? Choose your social media channels based on your potential customers' channels.

- Is my site optimised for Search Engine Marketing - ensure customers can find your site when they search for it. Some other Think Digital content on SEO is available [here](#).

You must be clear on what you want to achieve with this project before you brief anyone else to work on it. If you are briefing a freelancer or an agency, they will need the following information:

- An overview of you and your business
- Your current website and other digital activities
- Your mission statement or the core values of your business
- An overview of your key customers - the ultimate users of the website
- The business outcomes you want to achieve with the site
- A timetable for completion

## Section 3: Website Design

### Website Design Considerations

Some core website design principles need to be considered as you embark on your website design project (or brief someone to do the same). That should be your starting point. That should be your starting point if your brand has a logo or brand identity guidelines. If not, it would be worth considering investing in a logo or a simple set of brand guidelines. There should be consistency across all marketing materials. Your website is no different.

By consistency, we consider;

- Colour
- Typography
- Imagery
- The tone of voice (for written content)

#### *Colours*

Colour can communicate messages and evoke emotions. It's crucial to develop a palette of colours that work with your brand, on your website and across all marketing collateral. Complimentary colour combinations increase customer engagement and assist with user experience.

#### *Typography*

Typefaces and fonts on a website should be legible and used consistently across the site. It is recommended that you use no more than three fonts on a website.

#### *Imagery*

In an age where 'customer attention span is less than that of a goldfish', you must be selective in the imagery that you use on your website. Use imagery across the website consistent with your brand that helps tell your story - as the saying goes, 'a picture paints a thousand words'.

#### *Tone of Voice*

Whilst not directly related to design, the way in which you communicate your message to your target audience is important. Use phrases and language that your customers are used to

hearing, which build familiarity with your brand and tell your stories.

Other factors need to be considered when assessing your web design.

- **Simplicity:** Keep it simple! Remember, your website is for your customer and **not** for you! Make it simple for them to find what they are looking for. Don't overcomplicate or try to do too much.
- **Navigation:** Ensure that your site is easy to navigate. Make sure that the flow is logical and users can get from point A to point B quickly and know where they are on their user journey. Confusing navigation will drive users away from your site.
- **Memorability:** Make your website memorable. Ensure that users can remember how to use your site. Customers shouldn't have to relearn or be confused every time they visit.
- **Visual Hierarchy:** The importance of some elements in respect to others is crucial. The arrangement or presentation of elements needs to be in a way that implies importance and influences the order in which the human eye perceives what it sees. The structure of features in order of importance is crucial - This is done by size, colour, imagery, contrast, typography, whitespace, texture and style.
- As mentioned throughout this text, the content you choose to place on your site - images, video and copy are crucial elements in effective web design.

## Section 4: Website Project Budget

Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to budgeting for a website. As mentioned earlier, you must know what you want to achieve from your site before the commencement of work. It is also essential to understand what you have to spend. Gartner research shows that in 2019 SMEs in the USA allocated 10.5% of revenue to marketing activities. The average small business owner in the UK will dedicate around 16% of their annual budget to marketing efforts (Affilinet). This will vary depending on the industry, individual business and budget availability. A website is an investment, but over time should add real value to your business.

If using an external 3rd party to develop your site, it is critical to create a website brief. A clearly defined project brief and scope helps keep everyone on the same track and lessens the chance of confusion and scope creep. Included in this document should be:

- A description of your target audience and key customer personas
- The objective of your site
- The domain name and hosting requirements
- Content requirements
- Images, visuals and logos - do you have these, or do you need the agency to supply these?
- Product information
- Functional requirements - see website checklist in section 1
- Level of post build support required - will you manage the site yourself, or do you need external help?
- A plan for driving traffic following the website launch

### Choosing a 3rd Party

When choosing a third party supplier, you need to identify a company that works for you. Different suppliers will charge from €100- €100k+ for a website! It's about finding the right individual for your level of business and one that can deliver within your budget. Consider asking others within your professional network who would they recommend? Ask others that work in the sector, and sometimes it is preferable to use someone who knows the food industry.

Always review the previous work that an agency or freelancer has carried out and seek external reviews or testimonials. It is also good practice to develop an RFP (request for proposal) and invite 2 or 3 parties to respond.

Although web development costs will vary depending on the specification of the site and the development company. The following is a rough outline of what you can expect to pay.

- DIY - build it yourself, and some website packages start for as little as €15 p/m
- Micro Business (brochure site, no eCommerce) €1,500 - €3,000
- Small Business (brochure site, some limited eCommerce functionality) €4,500-€8,000
- eCommerce focused - starting at €8,000 - the budget will be dependent on the number of products, spec and functionality

## Timeline

In most instances, you are looking at a 10-12 week development period. This assumes that you have your research done and have started working on your content. In most cases, website delays are caused by the client and not the agency! Ensure that you test your new site thoroughly before launching.

**Week 1 & 2** | Research phase

**Week 3 \*** | Wireframe presentation

**Week 4-6 \*\*** | Mock-up presentation

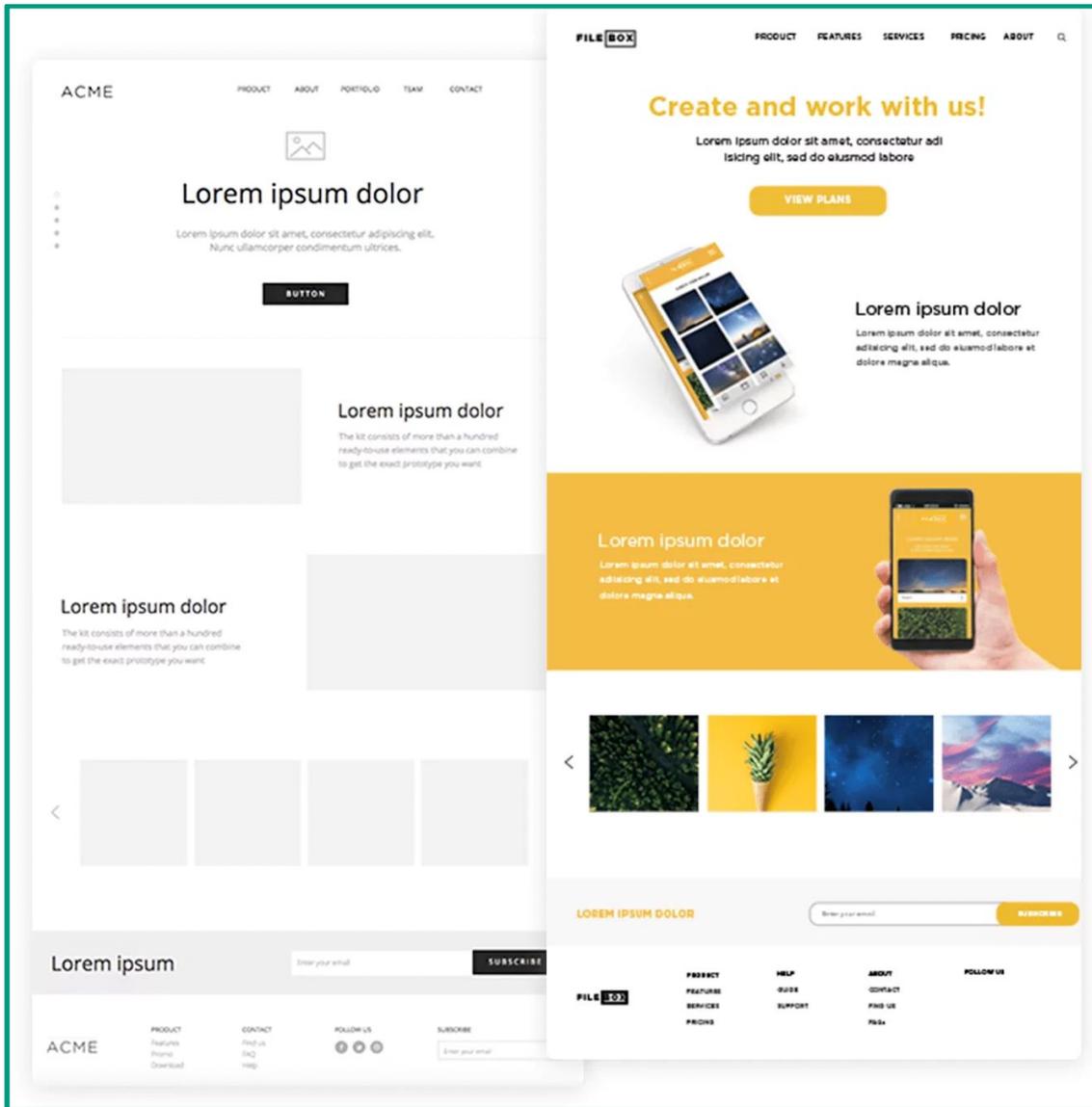
**Week 6-10** | Test site development and presentation to the client

**Week 11** | Testing & QA

**Week 12** | Site Live

\*A wireframe is an outline of what the site will look like.

\*\*A mock-up is an image of the site's appearance. It includes colours, fonts and imagery.



Wireframe & Mock-up

## Set it Live!

The work doesn't stop once the site is complete. It's up to you to drive traffic to the site and make it work as hard as possible for your business.

## Section 5: Website Platform Choice

There are many routes you can take when choosing how to build your website. The vast majority of the websites you see today are prebuilt templates on existing web platforms, i.e. Wix, WordPress, Squarespace, Shopify etc. It is most likely that you will choose one of these platforms. However, you may decide to have a custom-built website. In that case, a developer will code the website from scratch based on your needs. The following section outlines the pros and cons of both and gives an overview of the main off the shelf platform.

### Off-the-Shelf Platforms

'Off-the-shelf' or 'out-of-the-box' solutions come with the software and the website ready to install. Millions of sites worldwide are built on Wix, Weebly, WordPress, Squarespace etc.

#### *The benefits of this route are:*

- The platform providers constantly update and improve the product according to current trends
- Customer support is readily available
- They are very cost-effective, with some starting for as little as €15 p/m
- Developers are ALWAYS on top of the latest security issues and will install these as part of your fee
- You don't need to worry about backup and maintenance of your site, and this is done automatically
- The developers have their finger on the pulse with the latest UX developments
- You will have a range of 'add-ons' available to you if required, e.g. appointment booking, email marketing tools, cart abandonment, eCommerce add ons etc.
- You have a range of preinstalled templates to choose from
- They can be built and launched quickly

#### *The downsides are:*

- The templates can restrict individuality and brand personality
- Depending on the platform you choose, it might not integrate with existing legacy systems or have the 'add ons' that you require to run your business successfully.
- Costs can rise depending on how you use the site, and it's good practice to check this out in advance.

### ***Some of the most widely used solutions are:***

- [Squarespace](#)
- [Wix.com](#)
- [WordPress.com](#)
- [Weebly](#)
- [Shopify](#)

It is good practice to explore which platform works best for you and your business and your budget. If you are a micro-business, then a simple free [Wix.com](#) or a starter package on [Squarespace](#) page might be for you. This may allow you to build the site yourself. As you grow and begin to sell more online, a platform like [Shopify](#) or [WordPress.com](#) may be more suitable. You can find more information on the pros and cons of each [here](#).

## **Custom-Built Platforms**

Custom-built websites are developed precisely to the specification that you want. You get to choose the design and features that you want. Going this route means you need to engage a developer or agency to carry out the work on your behalf.

### ***The advantages are:***

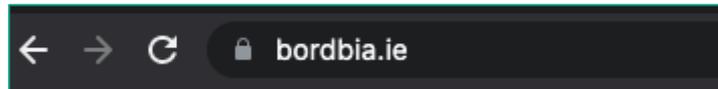
- The look and feel are unique to your brand
- There will be no extra frills or add-ons on the site that are unnecessary
- You can add specific features as your business grows and changes
- As your business grows, you can add whatever functionality you require

### ***The downsides are:***

- They are time and labour intensive to build. As a result, these sites are far more expensive than out of the box solutions
- The more complex your site, the more support you will likely need from your development agency. The relationship with the agency must be strong
- You will be responsible for backups, security and maintenance

## Section 6: Website Hosting

All sites on the internet require what is known as 'hosting'. Essentially, hosting is a server on which your website lives. Many of the off the shelf solutions mentioned in the previous section have a hosting solution built into your monthly or one-off fee.



*Example of a Domain Name*

The starting point is your domain name. You must choose and purchase a name for your URL (uniform resource locator). This is your web address. When doing this;

- Try and secure a .com domain, if available. This gives gravitas to your business and aids SEO
- Secure your local domain also, e.g. .ie (you can direct this to your .com or vice versa. Also good for SEO)
- Make the domain name easy to pronounce and spell
- Use your brand name if possible
- Ensure you can get email addresses that match the domain name

You can purchase web domain names from sites such as:

- [Hosting Ireland](#)
- [Register365](#)
- [GoDaddy](#)
- [Blacknight](#)

Each of the above offers similar services; it's a good practice to choose one that works for you - in terms of affordability, hosting space etc. Many of these domain holders also offer website building templates.

Once you have your domain name secure, you need to find hosting for your site. The type of hosting you require depends on the size of your business and the volume of traffic to your site. Before you decide on hosting, ask yourself:

- What type of site are you building? Blog, brochure, simple eCommerce etc.
- What type of hosting is available to you and what will it cost?
- Ensure your chosen provider offers security certificates (SSL) - An SSL certificate is a digital certificate that authenticates a website's identity and allows encrypted connections.

Most SMEs will opt for shared hosting where a 3rd party organisation will host many websites, and as a result, it will be more affordable. Shared hosting platforms are easier to use.

Depending on the size and complexity of your website and budget, you might opt for dedicated hosting. With this option, all of the hosting space you purchase is yours, and you have complete control over it.

Cloud hosting has been very popular in recent times. With cloud hosting, you can add cloud space as you require it. There is no danger of a server going down as the hosting is cloud-based.

Some hosting providers:

- [HostGator](#)
- [Bluehost](#)
- [Hosting Ireland](#)
- [Register365](#)
- [Blacknight](#)

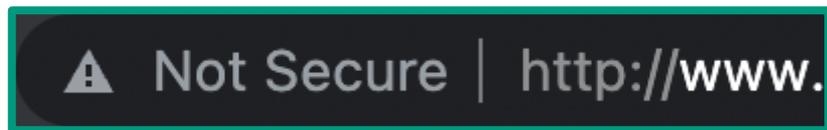
There is a more detailed guide on hosting available here via [TechRadar](#). Ask others in your industry what they use and consider reviews from other customers.

## Security

When choosing hosting and a domain name, ALWAYS ensure that a security certificate (SSL) is included. An SSL certificate is a digital certificate that authenticates a website's identity and

enables an encrypted connection. At a basic level, an SSL denotes trust for the user. If your SSL certificate has expired, customers are less likely to

- Feel safe using the site
- Login to member areas
- Add a credit card or payment information



*Website with SSL certificate missing*

## PART B

### Section 7: Website Traffic and Analytics

You should view your website as a value-add to your customer and, in turn, to your business. It is your shopfront online, so treat your site like a physical shop. Your focus should ALWAYS be on your customer.

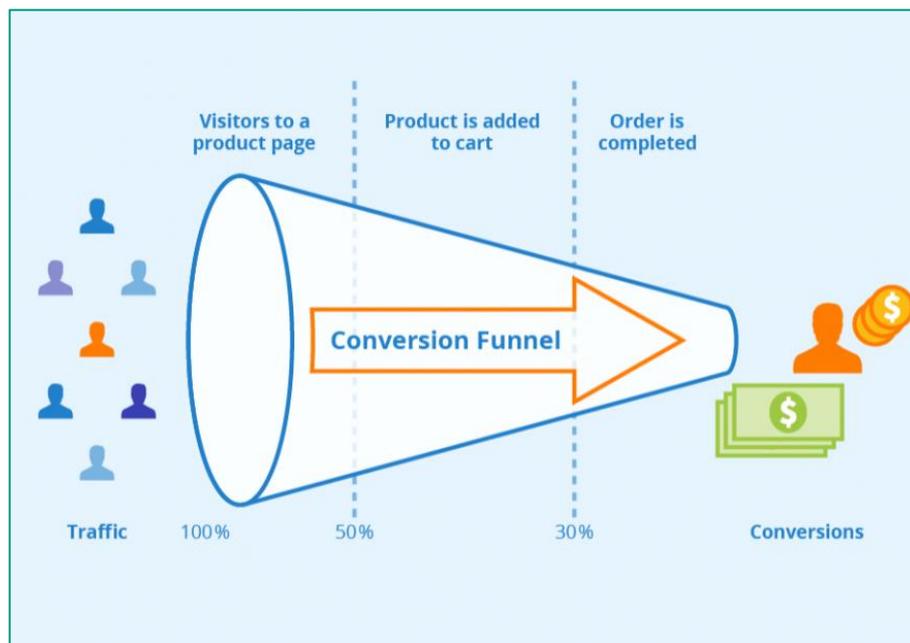
- Can they find products, sizes, quantities etc., easily? Keep an eye on the design of the site at all times. As you add new content and products to the site, you are likely to adjust the UX (user experience) without knowing it.
- If your site is eCommerce enabled, how easy is it for them to get product details, add to basket and check out? Ensure your site is designed in such a way that allows ease of use.
- What do you want your customers to do if it's a brochure site? Contact you?; find out more about the company; get location details via a map etc.

There is no passing trade online, and your customers are unlikely to stumble upon your site. The critical question here is - how will I get traffic to my website? Once you have your brand new shiny website, you must plan to drive traffic to it. Once the traffic lands, your user experience should guide the customer where you want them to go!

Some key ways to drive traffic are

- Social media (paid and organic)
- Search engine marketing (see Think Digital eBook on [SEO](#) and [PPC](#))
- Content creation - video, blogs, photography, news etc.
- Email marketing
- Offers & promotions
- QR codes
- Online PR
- Traditional marketing methods - press, radio, outdoor, flyers etc.

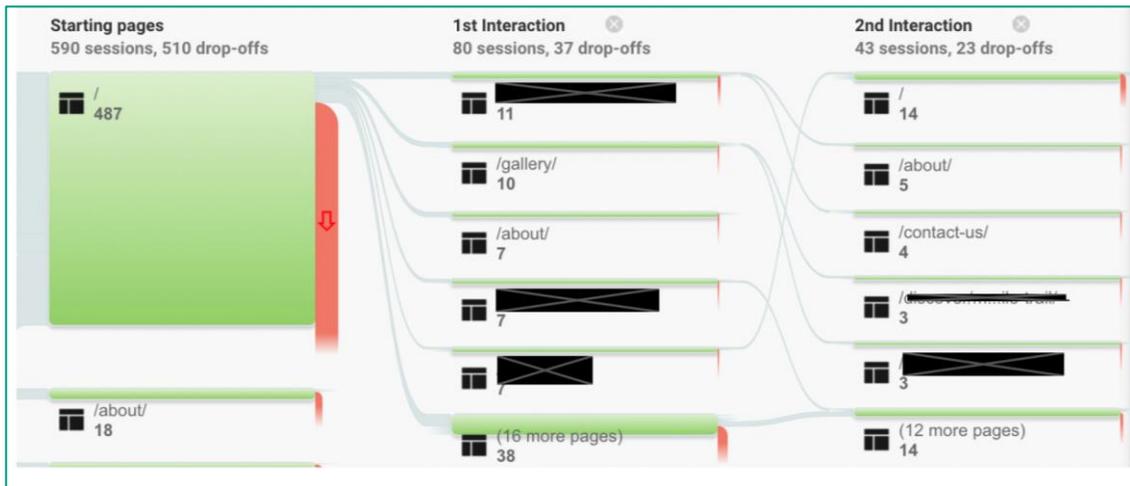
Your website isn't complete once it goes live. You must have your finger on the pulse concerning how your website performs. You will need to review your analytics regularly. What pages are customers arriving on my site? Are they following a path to purchase? You should view your website like a 'leaky bucket'. Like water being poured into the bucket, not all your customers will reach the point of purchase. It's up to you to find out why. (Bord Bia [SEO guidebook](#))



*Conversion Funnel - Author: Seobility - Licence: CC BY-SA 4.0*

*This demonstrates the conversion funnel on a website.*

The following image shows 590 visitors arriving on a website and 510 leaving immediately. Forty-three users had a second interaction on the website. This instance there you lost a lot of potential customers on the page they land - Examine your site further and ascertain why you might be losing them.



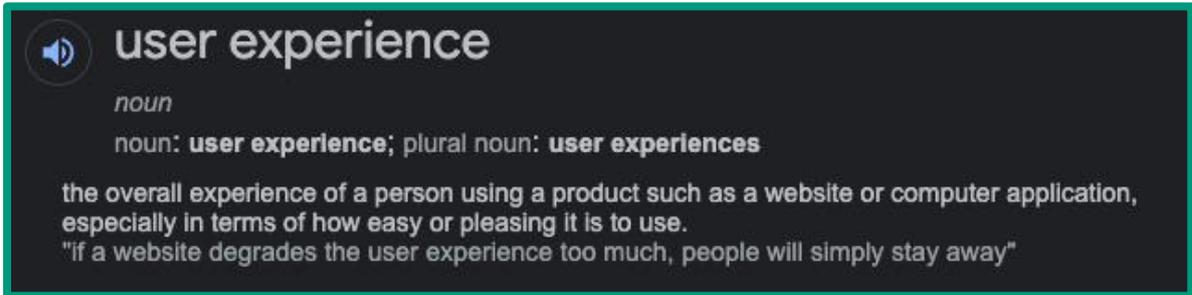
Website Drop Offs

## Analytics

You must access and review your analytics regularly. You may opt to use a tool like [Google Analytics](#), or in most instances, the platform you build your website on will give you some basic (or advanced) analytics.

Another useful tool is [Hotjar: Website Heatmaps & Behaviour Analytics Tools](#) - This uses heatmaps to see where a customer is interacting on your site with their cursor.

## Section 8: User Experience



**user experience**  
*noun*  
noun: **user experience**; plural noun: **user experiences**  
the overall experience of a person using a product such as a website or computer application, especially in terms of how easy or pleasing it is to use.  
"If a website degrades the user experience too much, people will simply stay away"

### *Definition of User Experience*

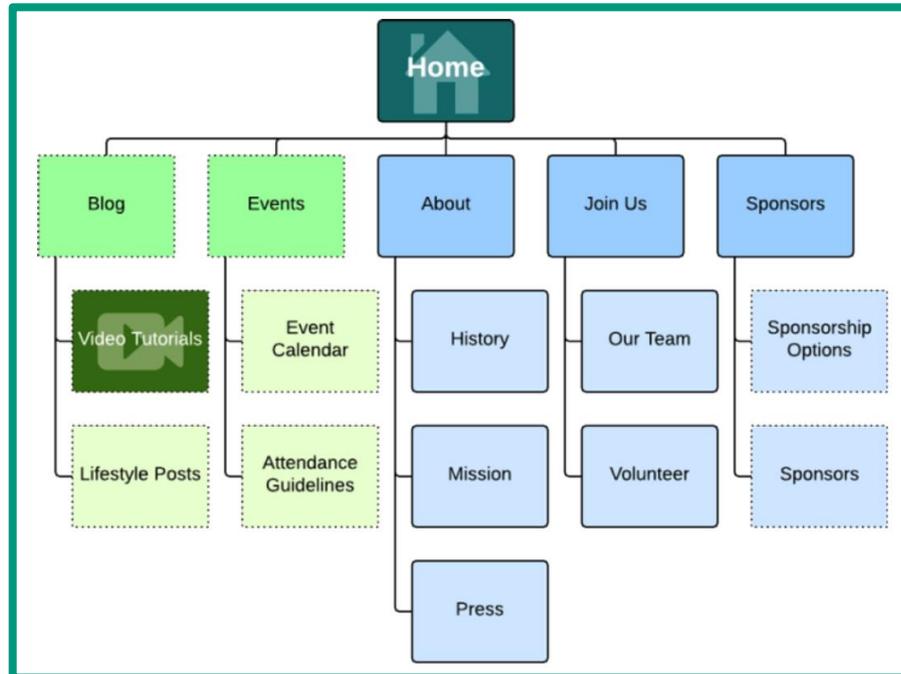
User experience (UX) is a crucial website design, development and optimisation concept. The UX of your website can mean the difference between a converted customer and a lost one. The modern customer expects the user experience to be fast, intuitive and personalised. If this isn't the case, they are likely to go elsewhere, more than likely a competitor. A positive user experience is a win-win for both the customer and the business.

It is vital to have some clear conversion goals in mind for your customers when designing your UX. A conversion goal doesn't necessarily mean a sale. Typical conversion goals include

- White paper download
- An e-form submission
- Account creation
- A content share
- A message via chatbot
- Sign up to email newsletters
- A blog read
- A contact request
- A product purchase (in an eCommerce setting)

Having clear goals which you want customers to achieve allows you to construct a 'flow' that traffic on your website will follow. Your customer must have a clear navigation pathway through your website. They must be able to get from point to entry to the point of conversion as quickly as possible. A muddled path leads to a confused customer.

The key to that flow is the creation of a site map. The site map will give you a clear hierarchy and the basis for information architecture. It also allows you to map out the flow as mentioned above.



Source (lucidchart.com)

Winning at UX means optimising your site so that users can achieve what they want in fewer clicks and in less time.

The following videos, whilst ten years old, still demonstrate the need to have excellent UX on your website and what poor UX feels like in real life!

- [Google Analytics In Real Life - Online Checkout](#)
- [Google Analytics In Real Life - Site Search](#)
- [Google Analytics In Real Life - Landing Page Optimization](#)

## Testing the UX

Most 'off-the-shelf' website platforms are built by experienced UX professionals, so as a result, the experience tends to be optimal. However, in some instances, you may decide to make the changes to the site, and therefore you'll need to test your user experience.

Depending on your budget, testing the UX of your website can be done in many ways. You can opt for paid, in-depth UX and UI (user interface) testing. Here is a list of some of the best ones [13 Affordable Usability Testing Tools for Better UX](#)

### ***Other elements that customers look for in a website's UX:***

- Customer reviews
- A consistent look and feel
- Context - the customer should know where they are at any given point on the site
- Video content
- Clear and consistent calls to action (CTA) on your site.
- Being able to find what they are looking for

### ***From your point of view:***

- KISS - Keep it simple stupid! Don't make the website UX convoluted or confusing.
- Test, test, test the UX on independent people who don't know the site
- Ensure that the site works on all devices
- Make sure that the site loads relatively quickly

A good source for further reading on UX - [UX Design Courses & Global UX Community | Interaction Design Foundation \(IxDF\)](#)

## Section 9: Website Optimisation

This section will consider how to optimise your website for success. Website optimisation is thought of as a technical way to ensure that your website works well and serves customers' needs. There are also content marketing elements that you can add to your website to optimise it.

### Technical Factors

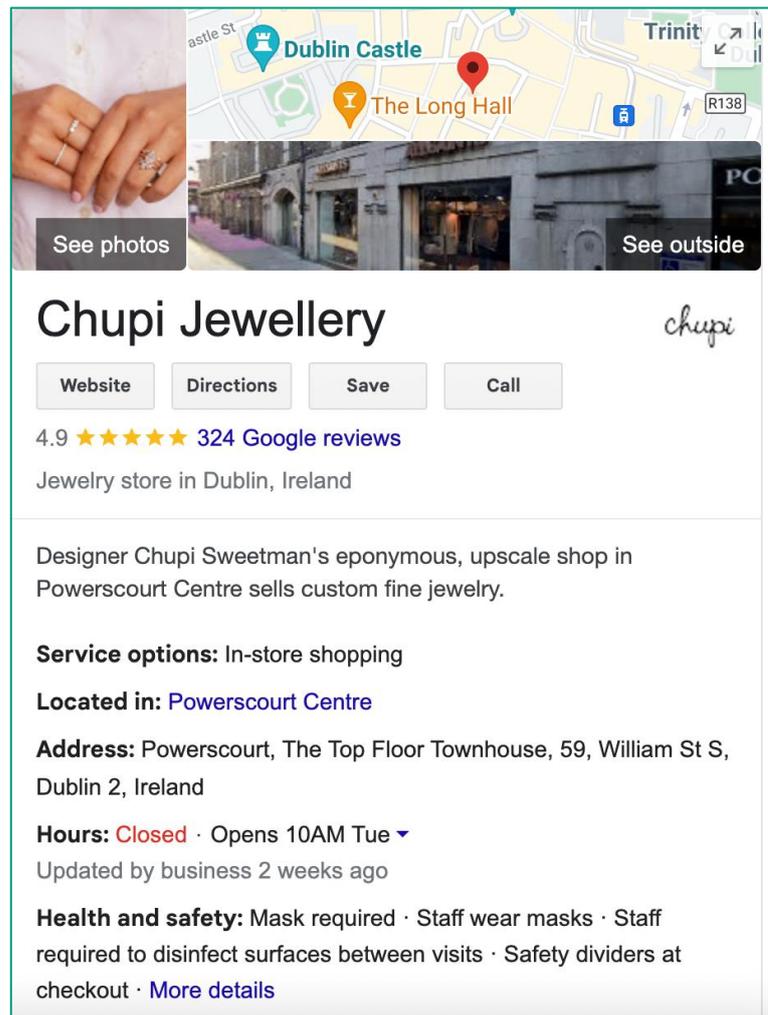
As part of their Think Digital programme, the Bord Bia Client Capability team has an entire eBook on [SEO](#), and it includes a detailed section on optimising your website for success. There are a few things to consider at a more fundamental level. Essentially optimising your website ensures that your website works. The user can find it and navigate with ease with the goal that your website adds value to your business.

#### 1. Search Engine Optimisation

Search engine optimisation is the process of ensuring that customers can find your website on the SERPs (Search Engine Results Page). Words (known as keywords) are the bedrock of your findability. SEO is done in three ways;

- **Technical SEO:** Ensuring that your website loads quickly. Refer to the website testing tools in section 1.
- **On-Page Optimisation:** Developing content consistent with what users are searching for concerning your product or business. This also means updating your on-page content regularly and using your keywords in all of your content. Google likes fresh content, so it is vital to update blog and news sections.
- **Off-Page Optimisation:** Make sure you have links from reputable websites linking back to your site. This is done by building relationships with these sites. Google (and other search engines) see links from these sites as a 'vote of confidence' in your site, which aids your rankings.

A good idea is to submit your website (and business details) to [Google My Business \(GMB\)](#).



(GMB for Irish brand 'Chupi')

Populate GMB with as much information you have about the business - opening times, services, social media platforms and contact information.

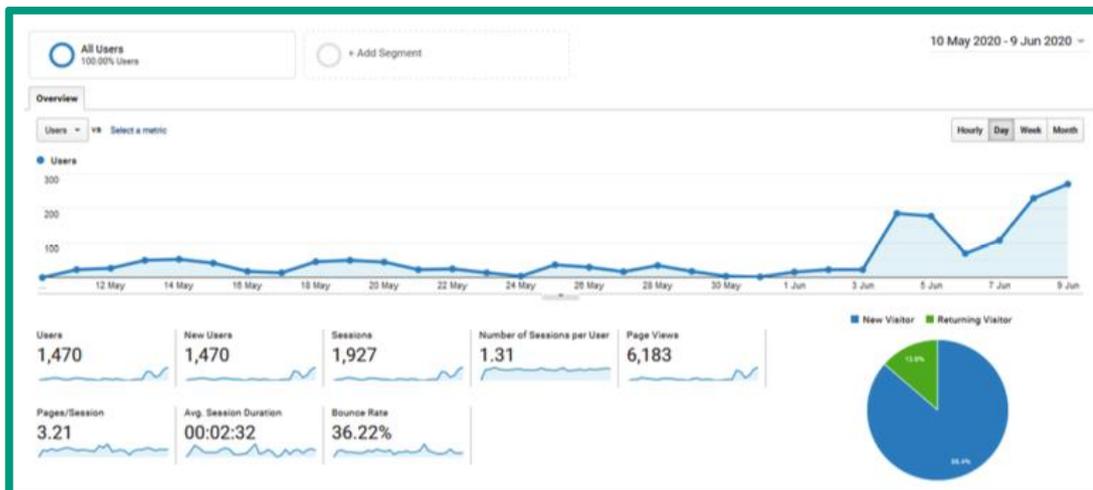
## 2. Analytics

For your website to work well, you must know how well it performs now and improve performance. The most commonly used analytics tool is [Google Analytics](#); this is a powerful tool and can offer you a wealth of information that will help you;

- Understand your sources of traffic - where your traffic comes from
- Understand your audience better - who they are, what devices they browse your site on, how long they stay on each page

- Track how your user navigates your website
- Track conversions
- Customise your data and reports
- Determine where you are losing users
- Ascertain user time spent on-site and on individual pages
- New users vs returning users
- Assists in setting marketing KPIs

All of the above will help you improve your website experience and Google analytics is free to use.



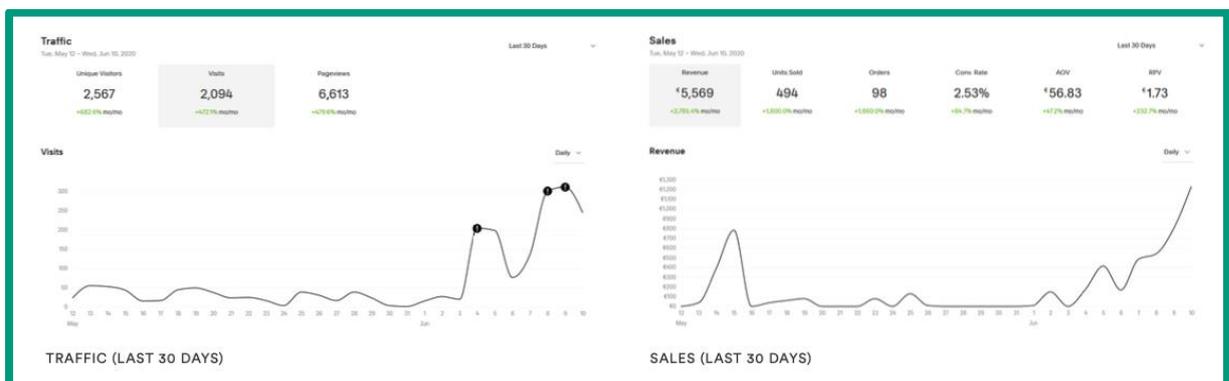
Sample Google Analytics dashboard for a small business

## Google Analytics benefits at a glance

-  Fast web insights and access to custom reports
-  Tools for reporting and predictive analysis
-  Customizable dimensions and metrics
-  Integrates with other tools, platforms
-  Free, user-friendly

ILLUSTRATION: ALEXDNDZ/ADOBE STOCK  
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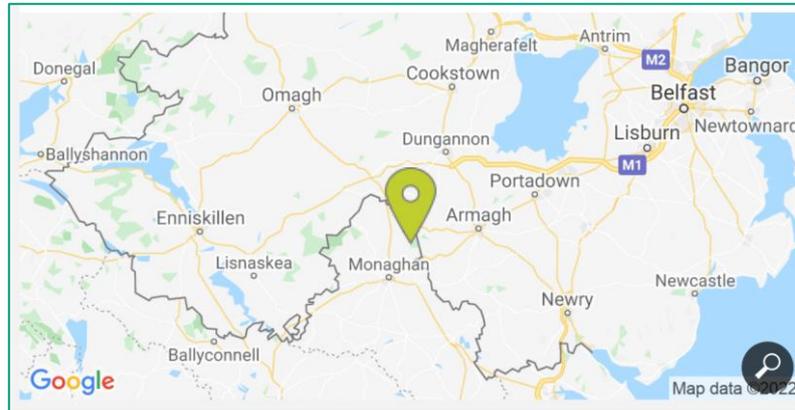
Some of the off the shelf website builders will have analytics built-in. Depending on the size of your business, this level of analytics may suffice.



*Squarespace traffic and sales report for a small business*

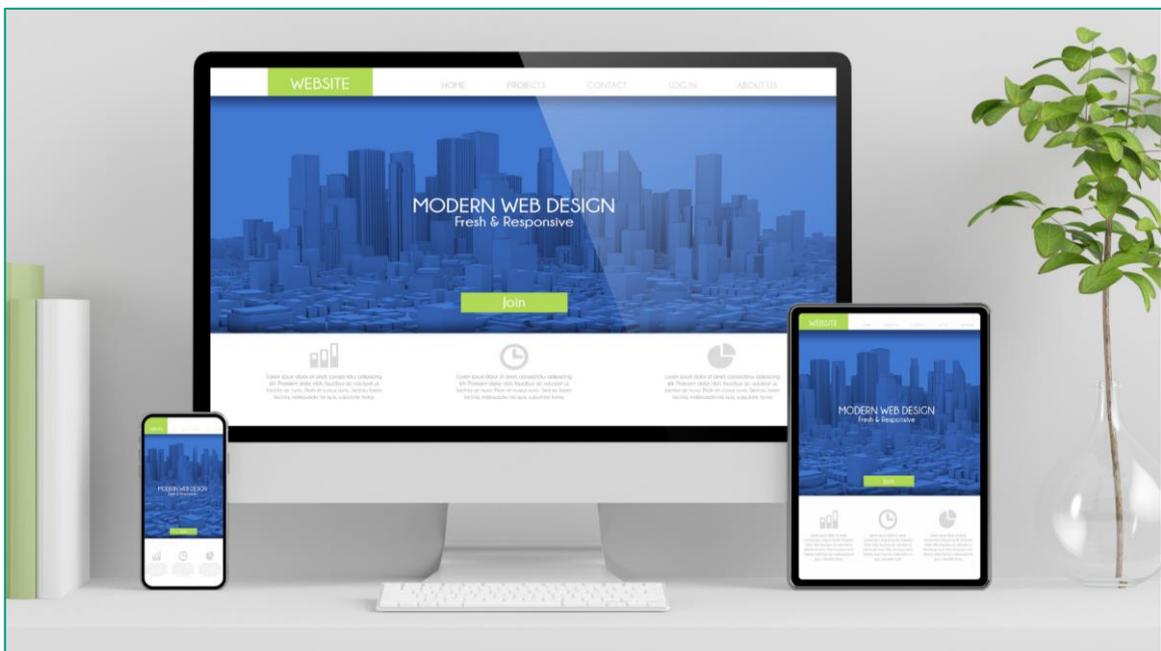
### 3. Location Map

It's good practice to include a location map of your business, and it is essential if you have a physical store.



### 4. Mobile Optimisation

54.8% of global web traffic is mobile devices ([Statista, 2021](#)). Your website and your content must work well on mobile.



## Content Factors

### *Website Content*

Consider the user in all aspects of your content. We read less and want more concise and visual content.

- Ensure the content you provide is relevant to your target audience. Provide content that offers value and answers to them. What do my customers want to know? What news do I want to share with them?
- Break text down into smaller paragraphs and bite-sized information. Don't overwhelm the user with lengthy copy. Consider using bullet points and lists
- Use imagery and graphs to illustrate what you want to say, where possible
- Ensure that those image file sizes aren't too heavy and slow the site speed down
- Add relevant calls to action (CTA's) at strategically chosen points on your website
- Conduct thorough keyword research and ensure you use keywords relating to your product and your niche in your content efforts

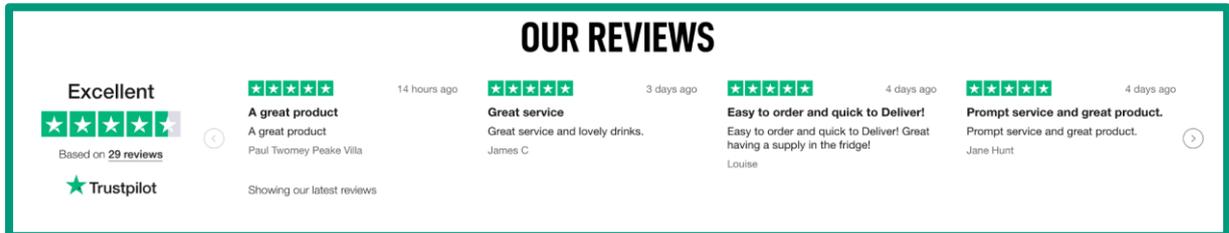
### *Reviews*

Over the past few years, customer reviews and testimonials have become vital in the customer journey. Customers trust the views and opinions of other customers far more than they do any of your company advertising or social media posts. Procurement of reviews is now essential. Your website shows customers what other customers say about your products and services.

You can do this via testimonials on your website like this:



An even more interactive way to do this is via a third party plugin (a simple add on) on your website like TrustPilot. This shows reviews from recent customers and gives you a rating based on those reviews.



Each of the major website building platforms makes it easy to add reviews to your website. Generally, it’s a case of adding a piece of code to the back end of your website.

It is also vital to encourage reviews on Google and your social media channels.

### ***Memberships and Associations***

If applicable, it is good practice to show that you are a member of associations and industry bodies. It gives your customers confidence in who you are and what you do. Try to ensure that you get reciprocal listings on websites of industry bodies. Your website listed on these websites are an example of ‘backlinking’ as mentioned on page 30.



### ***Payments***

If your website has an eCommerce element, you must show customers that;

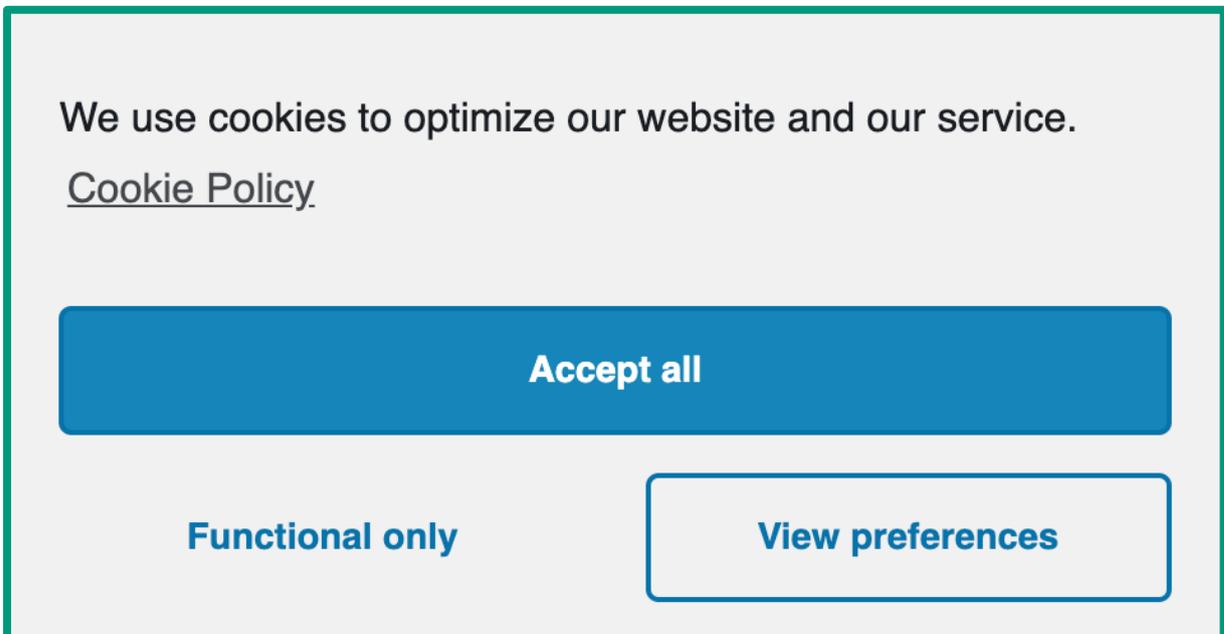
1. Payments are safe and secure
2. The payment options they have



Customers need confidence when purchasing, especially given the prevalence of phishing and other web scams.

### *Privacy Settings*

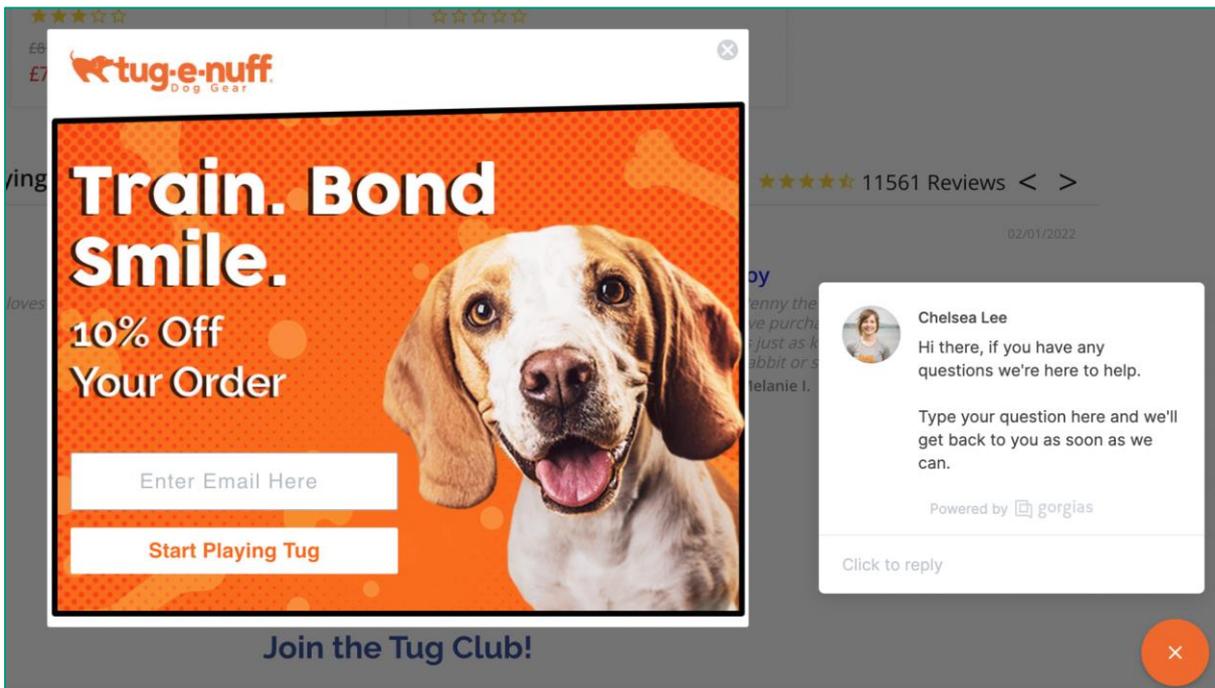
Since the introduction of GDPR in 2018, it has been essential to ensure that your privacy and data policies are up to date on your website. Most off-the-shelf website builders will include the same, but it is important to ensure relevance to your industry, country and customer.



A complete guide on Data protection for SMEs is available here: [Guidance Note \(via Data Protection Commissioner\)](#).

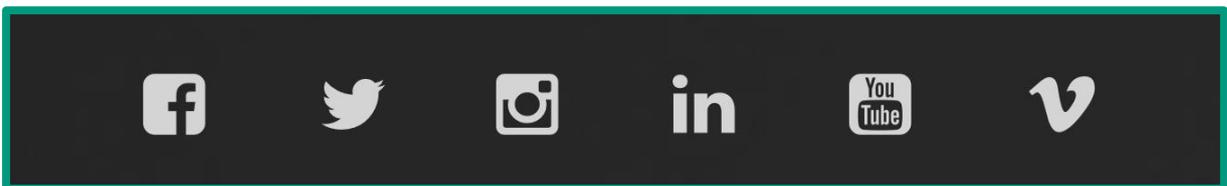
### *Email Subscription*

Use the landing page of your website as a chance to capture customers' email addresses. On entry to your website, consider offering them a discount code off their first order or a similar incentive.



## Social Media

Always include links to your social media channels - this allows your customers to find out more about you and aids SEO.



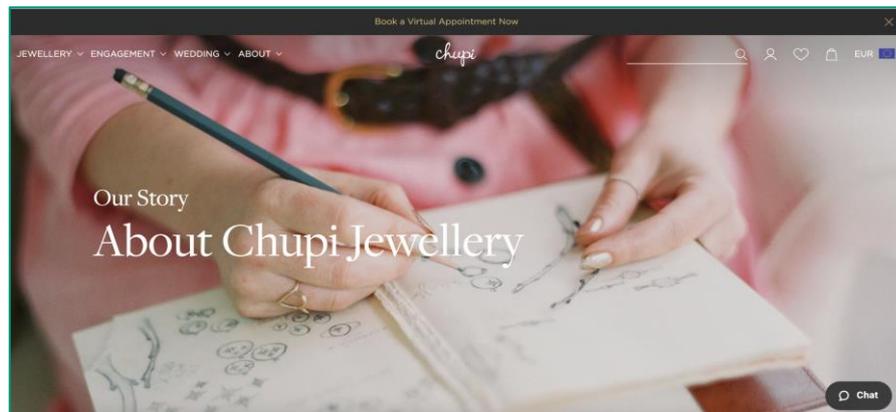
## Content Marketing

Treat your website like your shop window. The content you place there is an opportunity to talk to your customers. Ensure that your content is premium and professional and showcases your products well. The images, graphics and video used should ALWAYS be of the highest quality available to you.



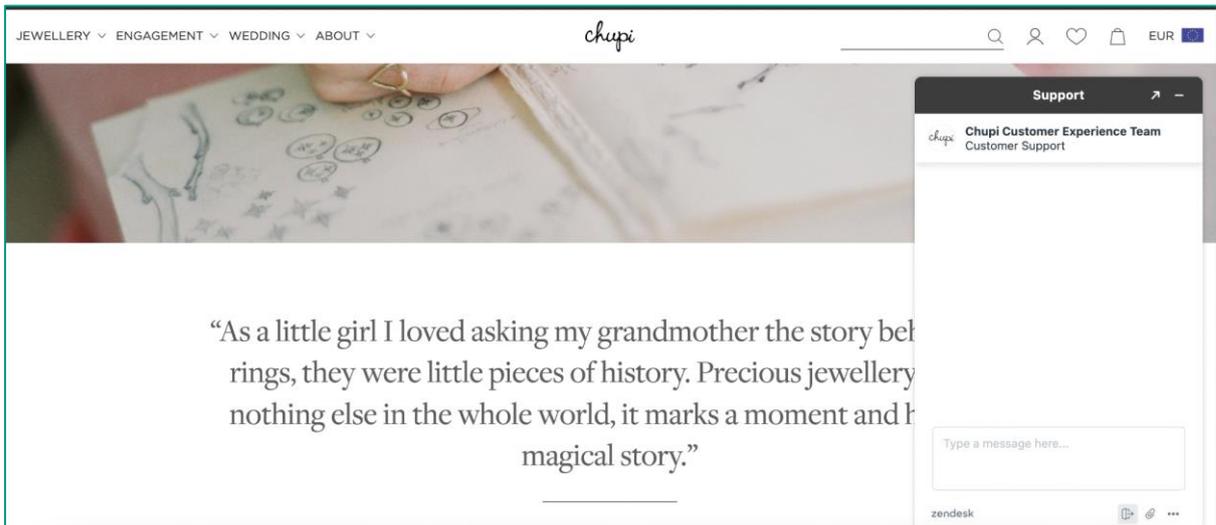
Use your website to tell your brand stories. Give customers a reason to believe that you are the correct choice. Your copy, videos, photos will assist get your core values across on the site. Consider telling customer success stories and your company stories.

Your brand story is the rational (who, what, when) and the emotional elements (why). Tell the world what you stand for. Telling the brand story helps build authenticity and trust - two essential parts of modern marketing.



## ***Customer Service***

If you anticipate that you will have many customers visiting your website and need to offer customer service, consider offering customer service via the site. The installation of a chatbot is a cost-effective way to manage the same. It can also help manage customer expectations.



## Section 9: Current and Future Trends

Over the past number of years, there have been a few trends that are worth paying attention to as you embark on your web development project.

### Personalisation

Customers have come to expect a personalised web experience. This means creating customised experiences for visitors to a website, ensuring that customers are served up content relevant to them and their buyer journey.



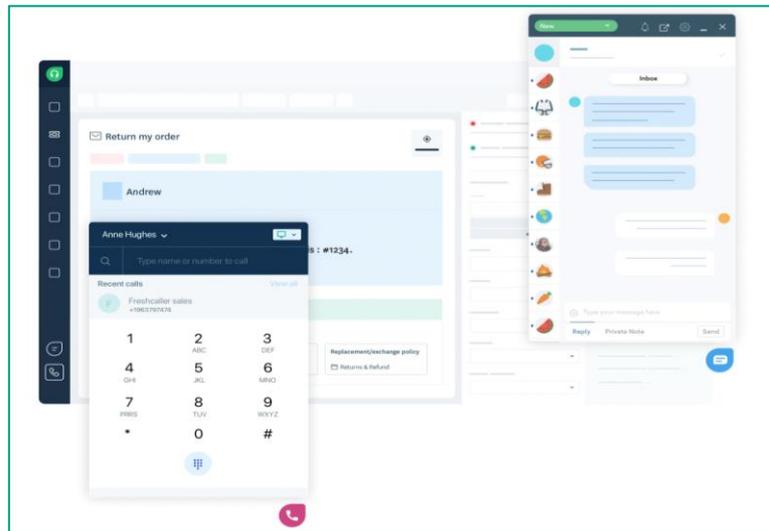
### Keep it Simple

In recent years there has been a move towards simple, sleek and elegant websites. This trend will continue as simplistic designs lead to simpler UX, and simpler UX delivers more conversions.



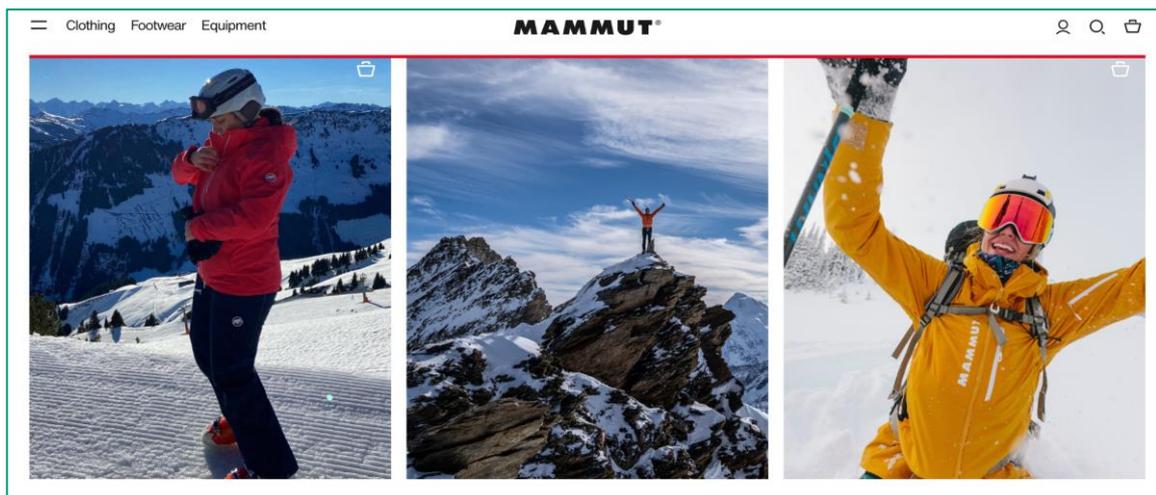
## Chatbots ... only more human

Chatbots have been with us for many years now. A chatbot allows you to filter customer inquiries and questions based on those inquiries. Most of us know when we are interacting with a 'bot'. However, AI (artificial intelligence) is developing where chatbot conversations will appear more natural. Consider chatbot integrations when choosing your platform.



## More Human Imagery

We are at a saturation point with generic stock imagery. There is a move towards more 'real' images that tell the brand or company's story. Focus on your photography and use imagery to tell your brand story.



*(Mammut Outdoor uses photography submitted by customers throughout their site)*

## Marketing Automation

Marketing automation allows you to automate marketing operations on your website (and beyond) without the need for human interaction. [HubSpot](#) defines automation as:

Software that handles routine marketing tasks without the need for human action. Common marketing automation workflows include email marketing, behavioural targeting, lead prioritisation, and personalised advertising. By automating these tasks, teams can work better together, provide more personalised, relevant content to prospects and customers, and save time.

Consider which marketing tasks you can automate to make your business more efficient.

**Add Your Contacts in 3 Easy Steps**

It's easy to do and we'll walk you through the process. Your data is safe and secure and will never be shared.

[Start import](#)

Or start an [advanced import](#) if you're adding more than contacts.

**Invite a teammate to try HubSpot with you**

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[GET STARTED](#)      [HOW CONTACTS WORK](#)      [CRM BASICS](#)

## Section 10: Best in Class

In this final section, we've collated a selection of best in class websites for you to review. We've also made some commentary on why we believe they work so well. Hopefully, they will assist you in your website development journey. Good luck!

### [George Nakashima Woodworkers - New Hope, Pennsylvania](#)

- Premium sleek design
- Tells the brands story
- Showcases the product

### [Mammut Outdoor](#)

- Strong visual background throughout the site
- Sleek user interface
- Showcases the products very well
- Links to community by showing 'fan photos'

### [PROTEST Official Shop | Since 1993](#)

- Strong visual identity
- An easy path to purchase
- Chatbot functionality
- Portrays trust

### [Jones Bar-BQ](#)

- Crisp, clear use of typography and imagery
- Natural photography
- Brand story included

- Showcases the product

### Supernatural Kitchen

- Email sign up
- Strong brand imagery
- Showcases the product well
- Uncomplicated path to purchase

### Minna

- Modern, clean user interface
- Product information uncomplicated
- Links to Amazon.com for international shipping
- Strong brand values

# Website Project Checklists

We have created Website Project Checklists that you can use when approaching a website creation or revamp – either internally or externally. These checklists include:



[Find all the checklists here](#)

## Additional Think Digital Resources

Click on any of the below guidebooks to find out more:



**[Contact our Think Digital experts on the Client Capability Team here](#)**

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*This guide has been produced in conjunction with Joe Wilde of Mac Digital.*

***Joe Wilde** ([LinkedIn](#)) is founder and CEO of [Mac Digital](#), a Dublin based consultancy specialising in digital strategy, eCommerce development and customer experience (CX).*

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