

Setting up an eBusiness website

Main topics

- First steps to setting up an eBusiness website
- Planning an eBusiness website
- Setting up an eBusiness website
- Customer service and marketing
- Staying within the law

The basics:

- make sure you build a site your business really needs and can support
- plan your site before you build it
- build a secure site: customers generally prefer secure sites
- make sure you understand the legal requirements

First steps to setting up an eBusiness website

What can eBusiness websites do for my business and customers?

An eBusiness website can be a simple homepage or an online store with complex ordering, payment and delivery systems. An eBusiness website gives your small business a new tool to promote, inform and sell. Yet, the best website solution is not always the biggest. An effective eBusiness website makes it easy for customers to do business with you, adds something to your business and has something your competitor's website doesn't.

Some possible benefits to your business are:

- reduced costs, time and effort to make and process sales
- better customer service and more sales to existing customers
- attract new customers

Benefits to your customers are:

- 24-hour access, accurate and fast transactions, convenience
- can do some things not possible or easy to do elsewhere
- a way to find information about you and your product or service

Do I need a simple website or a website with transactions?

Your first step is to decide what sort of website you want to build.

■ **What can a simple eBusiness site offer?** A simple site lets customers find out about the business and how they can contact you by email, fax, phone or personal visit; get product, pricing, location, service or technical information to read or print; and print an order form to fax, email, post or order with by phone.

■ **What can a site with eCommerce transactions offer?** Transactions allow customers to research a catalogue product, add their choice to a shopping cart, complete an online order, pay online or offline for what they buy - securely and privately. There are many ways to set up an eCommerce site.

■ What are the main steps in creating a website?

1. Create a blueprint or the 'web development brief'.
2. Check your chosen web address (domain name) is available and register it.
3. Make sure your business can support your website and its customers.
4. Find an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and website host.
5. Decide how to build it: a) DIY, b) use a template site, or c) find a web developer to build it for you. If hiring a developer, find one who can build it within your budget, has the skills and can support the site when it grows.
6. Make sure your website and business meets its legal and other obligations
7. Test the website.
8. Promote it and maintain it.

Step-by-Step Guides

■ You can get step-by-step help with key aspects of setting up an eBusiness website by using interactive step-by-step guides.

Go to: business.vic.gov.au/stepbystep



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Planning an eBusiness website

Your website blueprint: the 'website development brief'

One of the best ways to save time and money is to stop and plan out the website before you start. It's not that different from building a house - the builder won't start work until they see a set of plans. If you do it yourself or hand the job to a web developer, your brief will help you avoid building a website that is wrong for you, and keep the costs and effort down.

What is a website development brief? A website development brief is a six-step tool used to decide and describe what you'd like your customer to do on the website and how the website will provide it. The table below outlines each step. If you're handing the job to a web developer, follow steps 1-3 below (and possibly step 6). If you're building the site yourself follow all steps.

Table 1: Six steps to building a website: outline of a 'website development brief'

Step 1: work out the website's main goals	Your website needs to support your main long-term business goals e.g. a five-year goal to make the business your main source of income. One way to decide a website's purpose is to use it to tackle your business's main weaknesses. Each business has at least one. Common weak points are: enquiries not turning into sales, too few repeat customers and too few large sales.
Step 2: analyse the customers you want to reach and what the website will do for them	Your next step is to work out who you want to use the website and what to offer them when they are on the site. Talk to your customers What do they want? Information? To communicate? A transaction? The best way is to get proof: ask them. Present the website as a solution to their problem. First, determine what the problem is. Show them what their world would be like once the problem is solved. Tell them how you can help them get to the solution. Check out your competition Look at what customer services the website should offer which competitors don't.
Step 3: content and functions	What information will my website have? Examples are: newsletters, product descriptions, reviews, specifications, order forms, contact details, product photos or diagrams, pricing and availability information, delivery, privacy and disclosure notices. What transactions will I offer? Examples are: look for a product, fill in a form, order something, pay for something, check if I have it in stock, bid for something, book a course, arrange delivery and subscribe to a newsletter. What other tasks do I need to consider? Do you want to let your customer pay you online or offline? When? The instant they order or after? How? With a credit card? Using BPay or other method? Do you need to adjust your customer service and other business systems for your new website customers?
<i>If you're giving the job to someone else, you may hand over what you've prepared in steps 1-3. You may also want to be involved in preparing the content at step 6.</i>	
Step 4: develop the website map and navigation	Once you know what main content and functions you want offer, you'll need to find the best way to arrange these as a website. A simple way to design a website structure is to use large Post-it notes and lay these out in different ways until you have a logical structure.
Step 5: page design and graphics	How do I design pages and graphics? Keep page layouts simple and follow the lead from other websites you like. Some web-publishing packages have templates. Adding graphics The purpose of using graphics on a web page is to help the reader get the message more quickly. Designing professional looking web graphics needs specialist skills, but you may be able to add acceptable graphics yourself.
Step 6: prepare content and choose links	By this stage you'll have a structure and have prepared the page layouts and graphics to add later. You'll also need to have ready any other material you want to add to the website e.g. PDF files or other documents for people to download. Your writing style should be concise, plain language, as most website readers scan pages and rarely read in detail.

Further action	
Getting advice to get started	
Task	To do
	✓
Contact my local council to find eBusiness support groups in my area	✓
Search the web for free online tutorials	✓
Look for a course at my local TAFE, community centre or the Council of Adult Education (CAE)	✓

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<p>Checklist <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Register a new web address</i></p>	
Task	To do
check the web address is:	
not a business name with Consumer Affairs Victoria	✓
not registered as a company with Australian Securities and Investments Corporation	✓
not a registered trade mark with IP Australia, or register it as one	✓
free with auDA and register the web address with an accredited domain name reseller	✓
See the last page for contact details	

Choosing and registering a web address (domain name) A web address (domain name) identifies your website not just to the world, but to search engines. You will also add the address to the end of your business email address. A good web address is relevant to your business and has three syllables or less. It's also easy to remember, say, spell and type. Before you register it, make sure the name is free (see the checklist to the left) and doesn't infringe a trade mark, business or company name.

Different ways to set up an eBusiness website This table lists some common ways to build websites with cost estimates. Prices are indicative only.

Table 2 Different sites: what they cost and offer. Use the costs as a rough guide only.

Price (indicative only)	Description	Good for
Free to build, but commission on all sales	Online store with advanced eCommerce features, but commission on every transaction.	A quick start, pay as you use and if having your own site is unimportant.
\$500 (no website publishing package) Self-built	Simple pages with email link to your email. Web pages are the catalogue.	A starting point to learn about web technology.
\$500-\$2000 Template website, one-off or monthly fee	Generic design. Simple website with online store, feedback forms, payment processing, email and other eCommerce options.	Removing technical complexity. Acceptable design and mature technology.
\$1,000 - \$10,000 small professionally built website	From a simple website to basic eCommerce features shopping carts, online catalogue, booking system.	People with the time to plan, quality design and writing.
\$50,000 and above – sophisticated eBusiness	Takes time to build, advanced page-creation features, sophisticated databases, and personalised customer accounts.	Businesses with access to project management expertise.

Finding someone to build it Building a website needs skills in security, business development, graphic design, writing etc. Try to find someone who has already built your type of website. If you've written a detailed development brief you will have a better chance of getting an accurate cost estimate.

Ways to choose a website developer:

- find local websites you like and find out who built them
- check the Yellow Pages or the Multimedia Victoria website for a list of Victorian developers (contact details on the last page)

How do I choose an Internet Service Provider (ISP)? An ISP supplies your internet connection and usually your email account. A smart investment is fast (broadband) internet access. You'll spend less time waiting, and if you maintain your own website you can work quickly. Wireless access may be the only option in Victorian country areas. A good dial-up account is also practical if there's no other ISP, and you rarely send or receive files over 5MB. Computer magazines review ISPs, and one independent community Australian website (contact details on the last page) devotes itself to ISP broadband reviews. Read the fine print: some ISPs count the data you send as well as what you download.

Security and spam: how can I protect my customers? Part of setting up an eBusiness website is to make sure you can protect your customers' information and your own, and to make sure the website runs 24/7. The credibility of your business is at stake, as is your legal and financial liability. (See the list on the next page for definitions of common security threats.)

<p>Checklist <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Choosing an ISP: what to look for</i></p>	
Feature	To do
speed, reliability, price	✓
a plan you can understand	✓
contracts you can upgrade or cancel without a big penalty	✓
effective spam email filtering	✓
customer support when you need it	✓
good security, complies with privacy legislation	✓
can host and support business websites	✓

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Definitions

Examples of common online security threats and nuisances

email scams: false offers of money.

spam: mass mail outs.

identity theft: using stolen personal details.

viruses and trojans: harms files, slows down networks or steals vital information.

phishing: an email or a website designed to trick the user into giving personal details e.g. fake bank website.

hacking: illegal access to another computer system, often with intent to damage or steal information.

spyware and adware: gathers different kinds of information from a computer and sends it to others without the user ever knowing.

- **Web hosting company protection:** Web hosting companies as a rule use effective protection against security threats and spam.
- **Protection at your office:** Your office will need separate protection, including up-to-date virus software and spam filtering software if your hosting company or ISP doesn't effectively filter your email. You'll also need spyware, adware and an effective firewall for the security threats listed in the definitions box to the left. Do a web search for free versions you can download, and fully licensed versions will have more features.
- **Adding a digital certificate or 'SSL':** An SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) digital certificate encrypts sensitive information as it passes over the internet, for example, credit card details. A website with an SSL digital certificate has a web address with https:// instead of http://. You can apply for a digital certificate online or your website hosting service can help you get one.

■ **Should I accept payments offline or online?** You can set up your website so customers pay you while they're on the website, after they leave the website or both. You'll need to decide how many orders per week justify an online payment processing system and how you want this to work.

■ **eBusiness payment options vary** There are many options to choose from. Your payment system could be supplied by your web host, a third party (e.g. PayPal) or your financial institution (merchant account). You can also limit orders and payments to customers in Australia (e.g. PayMate). To accept Visa, Mastercard etc, you'll need to set up an arrangement with a financial institution.

■ **What is an online store?** Online stores, (also known as eStores) let customers search for a product or service, research it, order it, pay for it and arrange delivery. Store systems can be rented often from a website host. A range of options are offered e.g. real-time credit card processing.

Table 3: Common types of online stores

Store Type	Description
sales via email:	A way to sell without an online store is to send an email (written in HTML format) with a link in the email the customer can click on, taking them to a PayPal-type payment system.
simple online store	Uses simple web pages as the catalogue with a link to a page where the customer can fill out an (SSL secure) order form. You receive and process the order. Good starting point if stock range is small. Easy to set up but you may need expert help with forms and security.
larger volume sales	Searchable catalogue, using a database to store all the product or service information. The customer chooses and adds items to a shopping cart and then pays online. Complex versions work with ordering, payment, delivery, accounting and warehousing systems.
in another larger website	An alternative to setting up your own online store is to set one up within a larger website. A well known example is eBay, or simple grouping of a seller's online ads on a classified website such as the Trading Post.

Tip

Tax deductions for website development

The ATO allows the cost of website development to be written off over 2 ½ years if it is built in a certain way. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.

■ **What are online catalogues and shopping carts?** Online stores let customers to find a product in a catalogue, check the details and add what they need to a 'shopping cart', then go the 'checkout' and pay. The price updates if they add or remove an item. You can run your catalogue from a computer at your office, from your web host's site, or from another site linked to your site.

When choosing the type of online store your main criteria should be:

- how many stock items you list and are likely to sell
- how important customising the design and other features are
- how much time you have to update the catalogue: some are easy to use
- how it will work with a payment system and your accounting software

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Customer service and marketing

Tip

Measuring site traffic with 'page impressions'

When you measure your website traffic, use 'page impressions' instead of 'hits'. A 'hit' is a measure of every element downloaded to a browser from a single web page, including links, photos and graphics. One web page might therefore have many 'hits'. A 'page impression' is more reliable as it counts a single page including any photos, links or graphics as one page impression.

■ **Building your online credibility takes a little extra** Online customers are security conscious and value eBusinesses offering good customer service, an ethical approach and crystal-clear communication. You can improve customer confidence in your eBusiness if:

- your website shows it takes security and customer privacy seriously
- you supply your contact details and a business street address
- transactions give full information, with no hidden costs
- your website spells out what you'll do if something goes wrong
- you state which laws you base your customer policies on

■ **Promoting your eBusiness with search engines** Every business wants to be the first in a search engine's list of results, but how do search engines rank your website? Search engines periodically search the web to build an index of websites and record several types of information from each website's pages.

Three main ways to improve search engine results:

- For 'natural' search engine results, include keywords or phrases on your page and in the 'metadata' (keywords 'behind' the webpage) you expect people will type into a search engine; use descriptive, unique content.
- Optimisation: if the budget allows, hire a web search engine optimisation company who understand how search engines build their indexes.
- Pay a search engine for keywords or phrases you know people will type. If people type these, your website will be listed as a 'sponsored' link. When someone clicks your sponsored link, you pay a small fee (thus 'cost per click ads'). Many small businesses rely heavily on this approach.

Staying within the law

Which laws apply to eBusiness websites?

Example

An online purchase vanishes into thin air, so who pays?

A NSW customer buys a camera from an online store in Victoria, but the courier company loses the camera. The Victorian *Fair Trading Act 1999* applies as the retailer accepted the contract in Victoria to supply the camera. The retailer must replace the camera, not the courier company. Why? The customer has a contract with the retailer to supply a camera, not the courier. Check with your legal adviser about contracts to supply.

Business law (federal and state) makes no distinction between electronic and normal business transactions. eBusiness law is mix of standard business law and self-regulation. Some federal acts specifically cover eBusiness: the *Spam Act 2003*, the *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Electronic Transactions Act 1999*.

■ **Fair trading laws** Victoria's *Fair Trading Act 1999* also applies to how you do business online. For example, your website must give your full business address or telephone number, the total price, postal or delivery charges. All the other legal requirements of the *Fair Trading Act* apply to an eBusiness.

■ **Privacy laws** The *Privacy Act, 1988* specifies how you can collect, store and distribute information. It applies to private organisations with a turnover of more than \$3 million (or health service providers, trading in personal information, related to a larger business, or a contractor to Commonwealth agencies). Adopting privacy guidelines adds credibility to your eBusiness.

■ **Copyright and intellectual property** The laws for digital copyright are evolving. Make sure your website doesn't infringe copyright and protect your own online materials - or just don't make them easily available. The same applies for intellectual property. Add a copyright notice to your website.

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Get more information about:

Victorian fair trading laws (<i>Fair Trading Act 1999</i>)	Consumer Affairs Victoria Visit the Consumer & Business Centre Ground Floor, 113 Exhibition Street, Melbourne VIC 3000 (03) 9627 6200	consumer.vic.gov.au
All small business enquiries	Small Business Victoria Visit the Victorian Consumer & Business Centre, Ground Floor, 113 Exhibition Street, Melbourne VIC 3000	business.vic.gov.au
Complete the online guide Planning a Business Website	For your nearest Victorian Government Business Office call Business Victoria 13 22 15 TTY (telephone typewriter) Service (03) 9651 7596	business.vic.gov.au/stepbystep
Tax deductibility of software and websites	Australian Taxation Office Casseldon Place, 2 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC 3000 Business tax enquiries 13 28 66	ato.gov.au
Check online if a web address ('domain name') is available or look for an auDA accredited registrar to register a web address	Australia Domain Name Administrator 114 Cardigan Street, Carlton VIC 3053 1300 732 929	auda.org.au
Check online if a web address is already registered as a trademark. Lodge your application at an IP Lodgement Point	IP Australia (Intellectual Property Australia) In person: Melbourne GPO 250 Elizabeth Street Melbourne VIC 3000 By mail: Locked Bag 9854 Melbourne VIC 3000	ipaustralia.gov.au
Check online if a business name is already registered in Victoria	Consumer Affairs: Business Licensing Authority 113 Exhibition St, Melbourne VIC 3000 1300 135 452	online.justice.vic.gov.au
Check online if a web address is already registered as a company	Australian Securities and Investments Commission 485 La Trobe Street, Melbourne VIC 3000 (03) 9280 3200	asic.gov.au
Look for a Victorian web development company at Multimedia Victoria or the Yellow Pages	Multimedia Victoria Level 20, 80 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000 (03) 9655 1000	mmv.vic.gov.au yellowpages.com.au
Read reviews on Australian broadband ISPs	Whirlpool.net.au is an independent community website aimed at keeping the public informed about the state of broadband in Australia. You can use the site to compare broadband plans or find a local ISP by typing in your phone number	whirlpool.net.au
Read the <i>Spam Act 2003</i> (Federal) online	ComLaw - Federal Register of Legislative Instruments Attorney-General's Department Central Office, National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600 1300 726 631	comlaw.gov.au
Read the <i>Electronic Transactions Act 1999</i> , (Federal) online		
Read the <i>Privacy Act 1988</i> , (Federal) online	The Office of the Privacy Commissioner GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001 1800 620 241	privacy.gov.au
Read <i>The Australian Guidelines for Electronic Commerce</i> on the Treasury website	Look under the main topics for 'eCommerce'	treasury.gov.au

For more information:

- call Business Victoria on 13 22 15
- visit the Business Victoria website at: business.vic.gov.au
- visit a Victorian Government Business Office (VGBO). For a list of locations go to: business.vic.gov.au/vgbo

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