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**MASTER
BUILDERS**

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Building a website: A guide for builders

A marketing how-to for small
and medium-sized businesses
in the construction industry

SHOWCASE YOUR SERVICES ONLINE AND WIN BUSINESS



In this guide, we'll run through what you need to do to set up a website for your construction business.

Whether you have a website that's in need of an overhaul, or you're starting from scratch, it's worth exploring your options and learning about the benefits of having a website.

Do I need a website for my business?

Before you get started, you may ask whether it's worth spending time and money on building and maintaining a website for your construction business, especially if you can use social media to attract clients.

Social media can be a really effective way to generate enquiries but having a website can give prospective clients just that bit more information and reassurance, and gives you a greater opportunity to convert that lead into a new client.

While being a social-only business has its benefits, having a website unlocks more opportunities for you online. It can help you build brand recognition and connect with more clients. It can also allow you to scale your business by increasing your visibility in search engine results and through Google advertising.

Website benefits:

- + Demonstrates that you are a legitimate, professional business.
- + Showcases your services to potential clients.
- + Allows you to attract clients through search engine optimisation.
- + Allows you to advertise on Google.
- + Can be easy to manage – no need to learn code or hire a designer.
- + Builds your brand reputation, putting a spotlight on client testimonials or awards.

Drawbacks:

- Cost of set-up and maintenance.
- Keeping up with changes to keep your website visible in Google.
- Continuing need to invest time in creating more content.

Social media benefits:

- + It's quick and free to set up.
- + Allows you to showcase your projects.
- + Brings local networking opportunities.
- + Allows you to connect with local groups and interact with people looking for builders.
- + Makes it easy for clients to get in touch with you.
- + Easy to get started with paid social media advertising.

Drawbacks:

- More difficult to build your brand and stand out in the marketplace.
- Can harm your brand if you don't act on negative comments.
- Lack of structure - projects can get lost in your feed.

Planning your website

Building a website can seem daunting, but there are tools and services available that can help to make the process easy.

Before you start...

Think about what you want to achieve and how you're going to get visitors to your website. Take time to write down a website strategy - think about:

- + Who do you want to speak to?
- + What type of information do you have to share? Think about the reasons why someone should choose your company and ensure you have information to help convince them to make that choice. Examples may include information on the services you offer, case studies of past projects, client testimonials, your company accreditations, awards, etc.
- + What action do you want someone to take when they are on your website? Eg contact you, book an appointment, etc. This is known as a 'Call to Action'. How will you convince them to do this with your messaging?
- + What other actions could a visitor take to connect with your company? Eg sign up to your newsletter, follow you on social media etc.
- + How do you want to organise your content? Consider site structure and navigation.

It can help to dive a bit deeper into how you want to promote your brand when drawing up a website strategy. Take a look at our guide **Building a Brand: A Guide for Builders** to explore this further.

Think about how you will drive visitors to your website. It could be through one or more of the following marketing channels:

Search engine optimisation (SEO) – SEO is the practice of writing and organising your website content to appeal to visitors searching for keywords and phrases in Google that are relevant to your business.

Google advertising – You can pay Google on a cost-per-click (CPC) basis to appear in search results when people search specific phrases or 'keywords' (eg 'builders in Luton') or to show your ads to people who fit your customer type and location when they're browsing online.

Organic social media – Promoting your business and services to your social media followers on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube etc.

Paid social media advertising – You can run campaigns on social media sites to show image and video ads to users who fit your client type and location.

Offline advertising – 'Traditional' advertising in newspapers, magazines, on billboards and even local radio stations. Tried and tested, offline advertising should not be overlooked!

Each of these marketing channels is a discipline in itself, but while you're building your website, it helps to keep SEO in mind when planning and building your content as your site needs to be ready for Google to find as soon as it's live.

Steps to building your website



1. Buy your domain



2. Choose a web platform to build your pages



3. Choose a hosting site



4. Set up your domain on the hosting site



5. Build and link web pages



6. Test and launch



1. Buy your domain

The first step in setting up a website is to buy your domain. You can do this at domain registration sites such as GoDaddy, IONOS, 123 Reg and similar. Here are a few tips:

- + Go for the obvious and choose your business name as your domain name.
- + Ideally, buy the **.com** version. As second choice, buy the **.co.uk** version.
- + Add email addresses to your subscription for email addresses that match your web domain, eg rob@findlaybuilders.com.
- + Be aware of renewal fees and add-ons.
- + One add-on you will need is domain protection. This protects the personal data you used to register for your domain (your name and contact information) and wards off hackers. Look for **private domain registration**.



2. Choose a web platform

Once you have your domain, you'll need to choose the software to build your website. Depending on the software, you won't necessarily need a web designer to build your website, but if you do use one, don't forget you'll need to factor in the cost to maintain your website going forward.

Software options include:

- + WordPress.org
- + Simple website building platforms like:
 - + Squarespace
 - + Wix
 - + Weebly
- + A bespoke website built by a designer

Unless you have a good knowledge of code or are happy to pay for web development and ongoing support, a web builder platform such as Squarespace or Wix can save you time and money with setting up your website. They are usually more intuitive to use and have drag and drop features to make designing pages easy. Simply pick the theme with the structure

and features you need (look at the basics like navigation and the type of content elements it offers) then customise the style with your brand colours, fonts, and add your logo and imagery. With web builder platforms, there's also a huge range of customisable themes and plugin options for features such as website security, marketing tools and enquiry form builders. Some of these are free and some will have subscription or one-off fees, but the good news is that there's typically support from the company that designed them.

Web builder platforms are also scalable and can grow with your business – you can upgrade your subscription and websites built on these systems are built to manage thousands of visitors.

Historically, marketers have preferred WordPress.org over web builder platforms as it has a better reputation for SEO, which is important when you want your business to grow, but **evidence for this proves inconclusive** and arguably, web builder sites perform just as well. WordPress.org also offers themes, but arguably they lack the finesse and intuitive feel of some of the web builder options and may need the input of a web designer to get them into shape for your brand.

Whichever option you go for, make sure it offers responsive design – that is, that your website will work well on all devices such as mobiles



MAKE IT EASY FOR
PROSPECTIVE CLIENTS TO
FIND OUT WHAT YOU DO



WordPress.org vs WordPress.com

If you're looking into a WordPress site, don't get confused between WordPress.org and WordPress.com. While they sound similar, they are actually two separate companies and offer very different platforms for your business.

WordPress.com – This is designed with individuals like bloggers or creatives in mind, rather than businesses. Hosting and editing is all done on WordPress.com. Your website will be a subdomain of WordPress.com and you'll need to pay to get your own website URL and to remove WordPress ads and branding from your pages – so it's not a hassle-free option. It also has limited storage space, offers limited themes and plugins, and can't be monetised if you want to offer online transactions.

WordPress.org – This software can be installed on any domain host and is open-sourced, giving you free rein to design your website exactly how you want to. You can upload a theme from a third-party source to have complete control over how it looks, and add unlimited plugins for increased functionality.

www 3. Choosing a web host

Whether you opt for WordPress.org or a provider like Weebly, you'll need to choose a host for your website, which essentially means you rent memory space on a server. Factors to consider include pricing and plan options, speed, uptime, and customer service.

Managed hosting might be a good option for your business. This signs you up to a service that manages the basics for you, so you don't have to worry about the speed of your website, security and maintenance tasks and updates. It's a good option if you're not very technical and don't want to pay someone to do this for you.

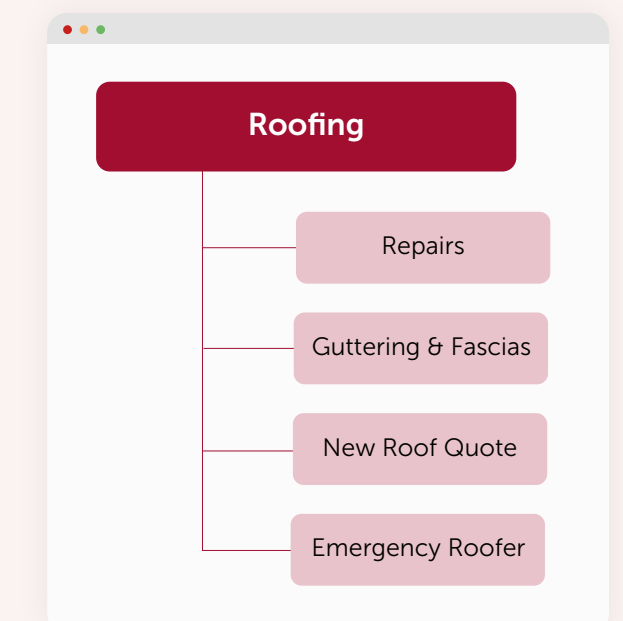
4. How to point your domain to a web host

Some set-up work is required to connect your domain with your host, but you should be able to do this yourself. How to set this up will vary by host provider, but with most you simply need to log into your website host and grab its DNS (domain name server) settings, also called 'nameservers' – one of them will start with **NS1** and the other with **NS2**. Then log into your domain account. You will typically need to look for Manage > DNS (the exact names for this path will vary by provider) and enter the DNS settings for your host.

5. Building your website

Before you get building, think about the following considerations then jot down a plan of action for your website:

- + **Think about how visitors will navigate your site.** Group pages into categories that will form the basis of your home page main menu. Grouping them by keywords can help. For example, you may have a menu heading titled 'What we do' under which you group pages that have been optimised for people looking for builders in your area – including 'about us', 'areas we cover' and a gallery of projects grouped by postcode.



+ **Make sure your pages inter-link.** Linking pages together helps Google to find your content. To do this, think about your user experience and make sure visitors have clear pathways to navigate on to the next page. For example, if your visitors click on a page about resurfacing driveways, you might want to include a quote from a happy customer praising your work that then links through to client testimonials, or a carousel of images that link to a gallery of previous driveways you've worked on. Always include a Call to Action (CTA) so you can capture leads who are ready to get a quote.

+ **Have a Sitemap page** – This lists all the important pages on your website and helps Google to crawl your site.

+ **Install plug-ins / extensions** – If you're using WordPress or a web builder tool like Squarespace, you will probably need to install some plugins (also known as extensions) to make the most of your site. These add functionality like form builders, email marketing, tools to make SEO easier and so on. But beware that adding too many can slow down your website, so be choosy. Plugins that improve site security and speed are highly recommended. The plugin provider can usually offer remote support with installation if needed.

+ **Set up legal pages** – It's a legal requirement to have the following pages.

- + Privacy policy
- + Cookie policy
- + Terms of use

You can download templates for these online, often free of charge, or your web builder platform may have its own template for you to customise.

+ **Make it easy to get in touch** – Have a 'contact us' page and consider whether you need to display your contact details anywhere else. Having more ways to contact you makes it easier for the client to reach out. As well as an email address and phone number, what about having an enquiry form?

+ **Integrate your social media** – Plan where you'll feature links to your social media pages. For example, are they icons at the bottom or side of each page, do you want to embed your Instagram or Twitter feed as a widget to encourage engagement?



+ **Consider including a blog** if you can dedicate time to posting regularly. It's an easy way to boost content on your site and add optimised pages.

+ **Set up tracking and analytics** with Google Analytics and Google Search Console (via Google Tag Manager). These are an essential, reporting on valuable site stats including number of visits, where your visitors are coming from, and how much time they spend on the page. They can help you to make informed changes to improve your site performance.

+ **Check out the competition.** Although you wouldn't want to copy them, you can learn from your competitors' websites. How often do they post blog updates and what do they talk about, have they missed any content niches that you can talk about on your website? What are they doing well or badly that you can learn from?

Don't forget

If you find you don't have time to dedicate to building a website from scratch yourself, it may be worth calling in some professional help.

The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) members can access offers and discounts on technical support from web designers and marketing agencies who specialise in helping SME businesses. Members can log into www.fmb.org.uk to find out more.

Or if you're not already a member, get in touch today on **0330 333 7777** or visit www.fmb.org.uk to find out more.

What is Search Engine Optimisation?

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is simply writing content and structuring your pages to appeal to Google search results. To understand how SEO works, it helps to understand how Google search work.

Google recognises the existence of your web pages using bits of code called Googlebots (you'll also hear these called crawlers or spiders) which crawl all publicly accessible web pages automatically on a regular basis.

Googlebots look for keywords, relevancy, and other key indicators like how the information is organised on the page. When they come across links, they follow them across the web to check whether the page you're linking to is relevant to your content and whether it comes from an authoritative source.

Google then indexes each page based on this information, filing it under each keyword on the page. So, when someone searches for 'loft conversions in Surrey', it will look for these words and pull the most relevant pages to display in its search results.

To write an optimised web page, think of who you want to target and research which keywords that this group might search for in Google (see the 'Getting started with keywords' section in the column to the right). For example, if you know you need to target clients living in Surrey who want loft conversions, you can write a web page that is optimised around those specific keywords to try to appeal to the Google search algorithm.



Jargon buster – Algorithm

Algorithms are complex sets of rules which review your content and work out it's relevancy for different search terms. Search engines present the results of searches based on these rules.

Getting started with keywords:

When you write a web page, it's best practice to choose keywords for the type of Google search you want to target first, then write knowledgeable and relevant copy around that theme, using the keywords at natural and relevant points throughout the page and in your page name and heading.

You can use Google Keyword Planner to help you identify keywords to use. To do this, you'll need to set up a Google Ads account then click through to Tools and Settings to select Keyword Planner. There are plenty of helpful guides online that can help you **get started with keyword research**.

SEO tips:

Ideally, you want your web page to appear on page one of Google search results for your chosen keywords. Here are some tips that can help with SEO:

- + Use your keywords in your page title and main page headline.
- + Use keywords throughout your content, including subheadings.
- + Be careful not to overstuff with keywords as Google penalises this. Keywords should fit naturally into the copy and not sound repetitive.
- + Include keywords in image names where relevant.
- + Use image Alt Text when uploading your image.
- + Ensure links are relevant to what you're talking about in your content – eg if your page talks about different flagstone finishes for patios, linking to a paving supplier would be relevant.



OPTIMISE YOUR WEB
CONTENT TO FIND THE RIGHT
CLIENTS IN YOUR AREA

- + If you include a link to another website, make sure it has good domain authority – which is a reputability score. Links to sites with poor domain authority can be harmful to your SEO. Free tools that check domain authority are available online. Adding links to relevant phrases such as 'find patio pavers in Aberdeen' is better for SEO than adding a link to generic text like 'click here' or 'read more'.
- + Page loading time matters – make sure your image size fits within the recommended size guidelines for your platform to reduce loading time.
- + Google crawlers favour bullet point lists, numbered lists and tables. Anything that helps the reader to digest the information easily.
- + Overall, Google likes websites that are an authority on their subject and provide readers with valuable information. Make sure this comes across in the content you write about.



6. Get ready to launch your website

Before you go live with your website, take time to check everything works on all devices. Ensure your website analytics are in place and back up your site so you don't lose your content (there's plugins to help you with this on most web builder platforms and WordPress.org).

Make sure you announce your launch on social media – and if you aren't already on any social platforms, check out our **guide to social media for builders**.



Get support for your business

Don't forget, if you're a member of the Federation of Master Builders, you can access further useful resources to promote your business, including TrustMark membership, FMB marketing materials and special offers on a range of useful products and resources like website and PR agencies. You can also save time and money by accessing expert business advice, helplines, contract templates and online learning.

If you're not already a member of the FMB, call us on **0330 333 7777** to apply today, or visit **www.fmb.org.uk** to find out more.



About the FMB

The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) is the largest trade association in the UK construction industry representing thousands of firms in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Established in 1941 to protect the interests of small and medium-sized (SME) construction firms, the FMB is independent and nonprofit making, lobbying for members' interests at both the local and national level.

The FMB is a source of knowledge, professional advice and support for its members, providing a range of modern and relevant services to help them succeed. The FMB is committed to raising quality in the construction industry and offers a free service to consumers called 'Find a Builder'.

For further information about the FMB, visit www.fmb.org.uk

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