

WEBSITE ESSENTIALS

# 7 ESSENTIAL THINGS YOU NEED FOR A SUCCESSFUL WEBSITE



# 7 ESSENTIAL THINGS YOU NEED FOR A SUCCESSFUL WEBSITE

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WEBSITE ESSENTIALS

# DOMAIN



# DOMAIN

**Your domain is your website address (www.yourdomain.com). In order to have a website you need a domain. Domains can be purchased from a range of providers (such as TSO Host) and prices start from around £5 per year + VAT for a .co.uk and £10 for .com**

Generally speaking, it's a good idea to have the name of your company or your services within your domain, although this isn't a hard and fast rule. Essentially, a memorable domain name that can be associated with your brand is recommended.

As the internet continues to expand and more domains are registered it is becoming more difficult to find a desired name that hasn't already been taken. In addition to this, new website owners should consider the possibility of another company trading under the same or similar name, so it is recommended that you purchase more than one domain. For example, if your company name is My Company and the domain my-company.co.uk was available, it would be advisable to purchase my-company.com too. This will minimise confusion when site visitors search for your brand but discover the 'other' company instead.

The choice of suffix (.com .co.uk etc) will depend on the country you are based in, so companies based in the United Kingdom should purchase the .co.uk version of their domain as the primary domain and the .com version as the secondary. The secondary domain can then be 'pointed' to the website so that using either domain will result in the website being shown.

***We can purchase domains on your behalf or make suggestions on how to carry out the domain purchasing process.***

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# HOSTING



# HOSTING

**Hosting is effectively renting a space for your website. You need hosting in order to have a website, as your website will consist of various files including pages, posts, images, various code files and a database - all of which need 'somewhere to live'.**

These files must live on a hosting company's server (a large computer) with a domain name pointing to them to enable your website to be visible on the World Wide Web.

Hosting can be purchased from any one of a number of companies such as TSO Host, Go Daddy, Fasthosts, 1&1 etc. in packages.

The packages vary in price according to the functions and facilities required to run your website, but for most companies the basic package will be sufficient to start with. You can always upgrade the package should the website expand and traffic increase beyond that allocated to the package.

A key factor that determines which company you use for hosting is not cost but the quality of the service and technical support offered. Even with the best will in the world, all website owners will require the assistance of hosting support engineers at some time or another. If you need to make any changes to the website (beyond the updating and modifying of the content) it helps to have a knowledgeable, friendly voice at the end of the phone or live chat to help with technical issues. One of the main reasons Black Hen use TSO Host is due to the excellent customer support offered by their polite, helpful and extremely knowledgeable support staff who are available on the phone or via Live Chat between 7 am and midnight.

*We have used a huge range of hosting companies over the years, but we are currently using TSO Host as we find their support, easy to use control panel and competitive prices good value for money.*

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# FAST LOADING, MOBILE FRIENDLY



# A FAST LOADING, MOBILE FRIENDLY SITE

**When customers visit your website it needs to load quickly. If your site's pages take too long to load, then even the most patient visitor will give up waiting and will head off to the next site - probably your competitor's site.**

Not only will a slow loading site frustrate visitors, but it will upset Google too. The search engine giant recently stated that slow loading sites will now be penalised, so having a fast loading site is essential.

As well as penalising slow sites, Google has also announced that websites that are not optimised for smart phones and tablets will also suffer lower rankings in search results pages. This means that even if your website is fast loading and full of valuable content to your visitors, your site will not be shown within the search engines when people search for it if it doesn't display correctly on smart phones and tablets. This rule is probably informed by the fact that more than 50% of website traffic is now via a smartphone or tablet and Google want the user to be able to easily navigate around a website that adapts to suit to all environments.

*In order to achieve fast page loads, we use pages that employ very little code and avoid certain functions (such as large image sliders) that can have a negative impact on your site's speed performance. All the websites we build employ a 'responsive' page layout meaning that the pages of the website adapt to fit the environment they are being accessed on. This means that all our websites look great and work perfectly on desktop, laptop, tablet and mobile platforms.*

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# SSL CERTIFICATE



# SSL CERTIFICATE

**Historically, only websites that offered a purchasing facility or those handling sensitive data required an SSL certificate. Recently, however, Google stated that all sites now need an SSL certificate to ensure safety for all web users.**

The certificate is a security measure that encrypts the data that a site visitor is inputting onto the site (adding credit card details for example) so that the information cannot be intercepted and taken by others. SSL certificates can be purchased from hosting providers or 3rd party companies and then added to your website.

Google initially recommended that all sites have them installed, but they are now making it compulsory and threatening to stop listing sites that don't display the 'little green padlock'.

Browsers like Chrome are now displaying warnings that a site is not safe if it doesn't have an ssl certificate in place. This message can have a detrimental effect on your website traffic as, even though your site isn't harmful, a warning of it's potentially unsafe state will be enough to send many of your site visitors away from the site.

SSL certificates come in 3 versions - basic, intermediate & heavy usage. Most small business websites only require a basic SSL certificate, costing around £50 per year.

*At Black Hen we include an SSL certificate, for one year, as standard with all our websites.*

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# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION



# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION

**At the end of the day, all website owners are at the mercy of Google when it comes to their website being found via the search engines. To increase the chance of being found, websites need to be optimised to satisfy Google. The optimisation process is a complex one, but there are a few standard procedures to follow when creating web pages to help with 'organic reach'. Organic reach is the label used for sites that connect with an audience through being optimised as opposed to being sponsored.**

In the old days getting to 'number 1 on Google' wasn't too difficult but now, with the internet being so densely populated and the search engines clamping down on spamming and bad practice (black hat techniques), writing page content that is optimised for Google is an essential element of website creation.

As a rule of thumb, when someone searches for a product or service in a search engine the resulting websites that are shown are based on how relevant the search engine deems those sites to be in relation to the words used in the search. Google will display paid/sponsored websites at the top of the search results page, but those shown below these are well optimised sites that Google deems to be 'relevant' to the words that the searcher has used.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is a huge topic. However, there are some basic steps that all sites should include in order to adhere to Google's suggested code of good practice. These practices impact on how you write the content of your site, how much you write, the keywords you use, the images you use and the links you include. This means that writing text for a promotional brochure or flyer for your business is not the same as writing optimised web page content.

***We ensure that all our websites are written with SEO in mind and provide guidance and support to all clients advising them on how they can easily modify text to adhere to this.***

WEBSITE ESSENTIALS

# BLOG/NEWS FACILITY



# BLOG/NEWS FACILITY

**To ensure your website is ‘relevant’ in Google’s eyes (and the other search engines for that matter) you need to regularly add content. For all the negative talk about Google, the rules it sets out for website owners do all point to an improved experience for the user. So, should we choose to adhere to their rules, we know that not only are we ‘staying in their good books’, but the result will be a better website for the user.**

Being ‘relevant’ can be achieved by adding regular, engaging content to your website for your visitors to read and watch. The idea being that if your website is a constantly expanding resource, full of useful, insightful, helpful and interesting blog/news items, then visitors are more likely to not only keep returning to your site but stay on the site for lengthy periods of time. Google will look favourably on this and you will start to build trust, respect and loyalty from your site visitors who are in turn more likely to convert to paying customers.

With this in mind, let’s think about what happens when someone searches for the kind of products or services you offer on Google. The words that are typed in are called ‘keywords’. The first thing the search engine does is cross check the websites it has in its index with the keywords that are being searched for, it then decides which of the sites it will present within the results page and in which order. Now if your website has a multitude of blog items, each using the relevant keywords throughout, your website will be considered ‘relevant’ as Google will identify the fact that your website has these keywords in abundance and is therefore more likely to offer valuable content to the viewer.

***The task of coming up with regular, engaging content needn’t be a headache either. We have a range of excellent prompts and guides to help you create a plan and then start writing interesting and engaging news items about your company in no time.***

WEBSITE ESSENTIALS

# SOCIAL MEDIA INTEGRATION



# SOCIAL MEDIA INTEGRATION

**Gone are the days when simply having a website was enough. In today's overcrowded market, website owners need to be using Social Media Marketing to reach out to their audience and have the search engines look upon their presence favourably in order to rank high in search results pages. Put simply, the wider you spread your brand across the World Wide Web, the more visible you will become to the search engines and your audience.**

With billions of people using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, LinkedIn and many more each day, it makes sense to maintain a visible presence on the relevant social platforms to help your customers and clients find you more easily.

This requires business owners to regularly use a range of social media platforms, adding content for the purpose of raising awareness of the brand and helping to send traffic to the website. Each social platform is used differently and will be more or less relevant to your industry. For example; Instagram is a photo sharing site and so a jeweller might find it more suitable for promoting their work than say a legal firm.

*Although this may sound like a daunting task, it's incredibly easy to integrate the regular usage of social media to keep sending out the message that you are here and ready for business. However, if you struggle to find the time to dedicate to publishing content regularly to your social media sites, we are happy to manage a campaign on your behalf.*

# BLACK HEN

Here at Black Hen we understand the importance of having a website that works. That's why we include all the items listed in this handbook as standard with all our websites.

If you have any questions about any of these topics or would like to know more about how we can help you, then call us today to see how we can create a website that works for you.

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