FREE EBOOK · WEB DEVELOPMENT

Planning Your Business Website: A Step-by-Step Guide

A practical roadmap from first idea to a secure, fast, well-maintained website that works for your business.

DAD Technologies

dadtechnologies.com

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Goals and Audience
3. Choosing a Platform
4. Domain Names, Hosting and SSL
5. Essential Pages, Sitemap and Content
6. Design, Mobile-First, Speed and Security
7. Legal Pages, Analytics and Search Console
8. Working with a Developer
9. Launch Checklist and Maintenance Plan
10. Quick-Start Checklist

© 2026 DAD Technologies. This eBook is free to download and share in its complete, unmodified form. Platform features, policies and prices change over time, so always check the latest details on each platform before acting. This guide is general information, not legal, tax or financial advice.

Introduction

This guide is for small business owners, shopkeepers, freelancers, startup founders and anyone who has been told "you need a website" but is not sure where to begin. You do not need technical knowledge to use it. You only need a clear idea of what your business does and a willingness to make a few decisions in the right order.

Many website projects go wrong not because of bad code but because of poor planning. The owner chooses a platform before knowing what the site must do, pays for features nobody uses, forgets legal pages, or launches without any way to measure results. Planning first saves money, time and frustration.

By the end of this guide you will be able to:

- Define clear goals and a target audience for your website
- Choose a platform with an honest understanding of the trade-offs
- Pick a domain name, hosting type and SSL setup with confidence
- Plan your essential pages, sitemap and content
- Understand the design, speed and security basics that matter most
- Add the right legal pages and set up analytics and Search Console
- Brief a developer properly, agree a budget and timeline, and ask the right questions
- Launch with a checklist and keep the site healthy with a maintenance plan

Work through the chapters in order. Each one builds on the decisions from the previous one.

Chapter 1: Goals and Audience

Start with what the website must achieve

A website is a business tool, so it needs a job. Before thinking about colours or platforms, write down the one or two main things the site must do. Common goals include:

- Generating enquiries (calls, WhatsApp messages, contact form submissions)
- Selling products online
- Taking bookings or appointments
- Building trust so people who hear about you can check you are real
- Sharing information, such as a menu, price list or service area
- Attracting new visitors through search engines

Pick a **primary goal** and, at most, one or two secondary goals. If everything is a priority, nothing is.

Make your goals measurable

Turn each goal into something you can count. For example:

- "Get more customers" becomes "receive enquiries through the contact form and WhatsApp button, tracked every month"
- "Sell online" becomes "process online orders and track how many visitors complete checkout"

You do not need to set exact targets on day one. You simply need to know what you will measure once the site is live.

Understand your audience

Write a short description of the people you want to reach. Answer these questions:

1. Who are they (age range, location, type of business or household)?
2. What problem are they trying to solve when they find you?
3. What device will they most likely use? For many local businesses this is a mobile phone.
4. What questions do they ask before buying or contacting you?
5. What would make them trust you (photos, reviews, certifications, clear prices)?

Worked example (hypothetical): A home bakery in Lahore wants a website. Its primary goal is custom cake orders through WhatsApp. Its audience is local families and office teams ordering for birthdays and events, mostly browsing on phones. Their key questions are: What designs do you offer? What do they cost? How many days' notice do you need? Do

you deliver to my area? This tells the bakery exactly what the site must show: a gallery, a price guide, an ordering process, a delivery area and a prominent WhatsApp button.

Goals checklist

☐ One primary goal written down

☐ How each goal will be measured

☐ A short audience description

☐ The top five questions customers ask

Chapter 2: Choosing a Platform

The main options

There is no single best platform. The right choice depends on your goals, budget, skills and how much control you need. Here is an honest overview.

Platform	Best for	Main strengths	Main trade-offs
WordPress (self-hosted)	Content sites, service businesses, blogs, flexible stores with WooCommerce	Very flexible, huge plugin and theme ecosystem, you own your files	You are responsible for updates, security and hosting; too many plugins can slow it down
Shopify	Online stores of most sizes	Hosted, secure checkout, easy product management, app store	Monthly subscription plus app costs; some design and checkout customisation is limited; transaction fees may apply depending on setup
Website builders (such as Wix or Squarespace)	Simple brochure sites, portfolios	Quick to set up, drag-and-drop, hosting included	Less flexibility, harder to move away later, advanced features may need higher plans
Custom-built	Unique functionality, web apps, large-scale needs	Built exactly to your requirements	Highest cost and longest timeline; you depend on developers for changes

Features, plans and pricing on all of these platforms change regularly, so check current pricing and features on each provider's website before deciding.

Questions that point to the right platform

1. **Are you mainly selling products online?** If yes, a dedicated ecommerce platform such as Shopify, or WordPress with WooCommerce, is usually the starting point.
2. **Will you publish lots of articles or guides?** WordPress is strong for content.
3. **Do you want to edit the site yourself without technical help?** Builders and Shopify are generally easier for non-technical owners. WordPress is manageable once set up well.
4. **Do you need something no existing platform does?** Then custom development may be justified, but confirm that a plugin or app genuinely cannot do it first.
5. **What can you afford every month, not just at launch?** Include subscriptions, apps, plugins, hosting and maintenance.

Think about the long term

Ask yourself how easy it will be to move away from the platform if your needs change. With self-hosted WordPress you can usually move your site to another host. With builders,

moving often means rebuilding. This is not a reason to avoid builders, only something to know in advance.

> Tip: Payment gateway availability matters. If you sell in Pakistan or another specific country, confirm which payment methods the platform supports in your country before you commit.

Chapter 3: Domain Names, Hosting and SSL

Choosing a domain name

Your domain is your address online. A good domain is:

- **Short and easy to spell** after hearing it once
- **Free of hyphens and numbers** where possible, since they cause confusion when spoken
- **Close to your brand name** so people can guess it
- **On a suitable extension**, such as .com for an international audience or a country extension such as .pk for a local one

Steps to choose and register a domain:

1. List three to five name options based on your brand.
2. Say each one out loud to someone and ask them to type it. If they get it wrong, consider another option.
3. Check availability with a domain registrar.
4. Search the name online and on social platforms to avoid confusion with an existing business or trademark.
5. Register it in your own name and with your own email address, not your developer's.
6. Turn on auto-renewal and keep your login details secure.

That fifth step is important. Owning your domain account means you stay in control even if you change developers.

Hosting types explained

If you use Shopify or a website builder, hosting is included. If you use WordPress or a custom site, you need to choose hosting. The main types are:

- **Shared hosting:** Your site shares a server with many others. It is the cheapest option and suitable for small, low-traffic sites, but performance can vary.
- **Managed WordPress hosting:** The host handles updates, backups, caching and security for WordPress specifically. It costs more but saves effort.
- **VPS (virtual private server):** You get a dedicated slice of a server. More power and control, but it usually needs technical management.
- **Cloud hosting:** Resources can scale up and down. Flexible and powerful, but setup and billing can be more complex.

For most small businesses starting out, good shared hosting or managed WordPress hosting is enough. Look for daily backups, a server location close to your audience, responsive

support and easy SSL setup. Check current plans and renewal prices, since introductory prices are often lower than renewal prices.

SSL certificates

An SSL certificate encrypts the connection between your visitor's browser and your site. It is what makes your address start with https and shows the padlock in the browser. Browsers often warn visitors when a site is not secure, which damages trust.

Many hosts and all major hosted platforms include a free SSL certificate. Make sure:

☐ SSL is active on your domain

☐ All pages load on https, not http

☐ Old http addresses automatically redirect to https

Chapter 4: Essential Pages, Sitemap and Content

The essential pages

Most small business websites need these pages:

1. **Home:** A clear statement of what you do, who you serve and how to contact or buy from you.
2. **About:** Your story, your team and why customers should trust you.
3. **Services or Products:** What you offer, with details and, where possible, prices or price ranges.
4. **Contact:** Phone, WhatsApp, email, a simple form, address and a map if you have a physical location.
5. **Legal pages:** Privacy policy, terms and, where relevant, cookie, refund and shipping policies (see Chapter 6).

Useful additional pages include FAQs, a portfolio or gallery, customer reviews (real ones only), a blog or resources section, and individual pages for each main service or location.

Building a simple sitemap

A sitemap at the planning stage is just a map of your pages and how they connect. Write it as an indented list.

Example sitemap for a hypothetical plumbing company:

- Home
- About Us
- Services
- Leak Repairs
- Bathroom Installation
- Water Tank Cleaning
- Areas We Serve
- FAQs
- Contact
- Privacy Policy
- Terms of Service

Keep your main menu to around five to seven items. Put legal pages in the footer.

Planning and writing content

Content is usually the biggest cause of website delays. Owners wait for the developer, the developer waits for text and photos, and launch slips by weeks. Start content early.

For each page, note:

- The main question the page answers
- The key message in one sentence
- The call to action (what you want the visitor to do next)
- The images needed

Writing tips for business pages:

- **Lead with the customer's problem**, not your company history.
- **Use plain language.** Write as you would explain it to a customer in person.
- **Keep paragraphs short.** Most visitors scan, especially on phones.
- **Use headings** that describe what follows.
- **Be specific.** "We deliver within Karachi, usually the same or next day" is better than "fast delivery".
- **Include a clear call to action** on every page, such as "Message us on WhatsApp" or "Request a quote".

Worked example (hypothetical): Compare two versions of a service introduction.

Weak: "We are a leading provider of world-class solutions committed to excellence."

Better: "We repair leaking pipes, taps and water tanks in homes across Islamabad. Message us a photo of the problem and we will reply with an estimate."

The second version tells the visitor exactly what you do, where, and what to do next.

Photos and media

Use real photos of your products, premises and team wherever possible. If you use stock images, choose ones that look natural and relevant. Check that you have the right to use every image. Compress images before uploading so they load quickly.

Chapter 5: Design, Mobile-First, Speed and Security

Design basics

Good design for a business site is about clarity, not decoration. Focus on:

- **Consistency:** Use one or two fonts and a small colour palette based on your brand.
- **Contrast:** Text must be easy to read against its background.
- **White space:** Leave breathing room between sections so the page does not feel cramped.
- **Visual hierarchy:** The most important element on each page (usually the headline and call to action) should stand out first.
- **Trust signals:** Contact details, real photos, genuine reviews and clear policies.

Mobile-first thinking

For many businesses, a large share of visitors arrive on phones. Mobile-first means designing for the small screen first and then expanding for larger screens. In practice:

- Buttons should be large enough to tap with a thumb.
- Phone numbers should be tap-to-call and WhatsApp links should open the app.
- Menus should be simple and easy to open.
- Text should be readable without zooming.
- Forms should be short, with only the fields you truly need.

Always review your site on a real phone, not just a resized desktop browser.

Speed

A slow site frustrates visitors and can hurt search visibility. Common ways to keep a site fast:

1. Compress and resize images before uploading.
2. Use a modern image format where your platform supports it.
3. Limit the number of plugins or apps to those you actually need.
4. Use caching, which many hosts and plugins provide.
5. Choose a lightweight, well-coded theme.
6. Avoid auto-playing videos and large sliders on the home page.

Free tools such as Google PageSpeed Insights can test your pages and suggest improvements.

Security and backups

Security is not optional, even for a small site. Basic protections include:

- **Strong, unique passwords** for hosting, domain, platform and email accounts, stored in a password manager
- **Two-factor authentication** wherever it is offered
- **Regular updates** to your platform, themes and plugins
- **Minimal user accounts:** give team members only the access they need and remove old accounts
- **A security plugin or service** for WordPress sites
- **Automatic backups** stored somewhere separate from the website itself

For backups, follow a simple rule: back up regularly, keep more than one copy, and test that you can actually restore a backup. A backup you have never tested is a hope, not a plan.

Chapter 6: Legal Pages, Analytics and Search Console

Legal pages you should have

Legal requirements depend on your country, your customers' countries and what your site does. This guide is not legal advice, so for anything complex consult a qualified professional. As a starting point, most business sites need:

- **Privacy Policy:** Explains what personal data you collect (for example through forms, orders or analytics), why, how you store it, who you share it with and how people can contact you about it.
- **Terms of Service or Terms and Conditions:** The rules for using your site and buying from you.
- **Cookie Policy and cookie notice:** If you use cookies for analytics or advertising, many regions require you to explain this and, in some cases, get consent.
- **Refund and Return Policy:** Essential for online stores.
- **Shipping or Delivery Policy:** Delivery areas, timeframes and charges.

Write these to reflect what your business actually does. A policy copied from another site may promise things you do not do, or miss things you do.

Setting up analytics

Analytics tells you how many people visit, where they come from and what they do. Google Analytics is a widely used free option, and many platforms include their own reports.

Steps:

1. Create an analytics account using a business email you control.
2. Add the tracking code or connect it through your platform's settings or a plugin.
3. Set up tracking for your key goals, such as form submissions, WhatsApp clicks or purchases.
4. Check that data is arriving by visiting your own site and looking at real-time reports.
5. Make sure your privacy and cookie information mention analytics.

Google Search Console

Search Console is a free Google tool that shows how your site appears in Google Search. It helps you:

- Confirm that Google can find and index your pages

- See which search terms bring visitors
- Spot errors such as broken pages or mobile usability issues
- Submit your XML sitemap

To set it up, add your site as a property, verify ownership (often through your domain settings or a code from your platform), then submit your sitemap address. Most platforms generate an XML sitemap automatically.

> Tip: Set a monthly reminder to look at analytics and Search Console for ten minutes. Small, regular checks are more useful than an occasional deep dive.

Chapter 7: Working with a Developer

Writing a clear brief

A brief is a short document that explains what you want. A good brief prevents misunderstandings and makes quotes easier to compare. Include:

1. **Business overview:** What you do and who you serve.
2. **Goals:** Your primary and secondary goals from Chapter 1.
3. **Audience:** Your audience description.
4. **Pages:** Your sitemap from Chapter 4.
5. **Features:** For example online payments, booking, WhatsApp button, multilingual support, blog.
6. **Platform preference**, if you have one, and why.
7. **Content:** Who will provide text and photos, and when.
8. **Design references:** Two or three sites you like and what specifically you like about them.
9. **Budget range and deadline.**
10. **Ongoing needs:** Will you need maintenance, updates or marketing after launch?

Budget and timeline

Website costs vary enormously depending on scope, platform and who builds it. Rather than looking for a "typical" price, budget for these categories:

- One-time design and development
- Domain registration and renewal
- Hosting or platform subscription
- Paid themes, plugins or apps
- Content creation such as copywriting or photography
- Ongoing maintenance and support

Phase	What happens	Your role
Discovery	Goals, brief, sitemap agreed	Provide information and decisions
Design	Layout and look created	Review and give clear, combined feedback
Build	Pages and features developed	Supply final content and images
Testing	Checks on devices, forms, speed	Test and report issues
Launch	Site goes live	Approve and announce

Delays most often happen when content or feedback is late. Agree deadlines for your side too.

Questions to ask a developer or agency

- Can you show me sites you have built that are similar to what I need?
- Which platform do you recommend for my goals, and why?
- What exactly is included in the quote, and what would cost extra?
- How many rounds of design revisions are included?
- Will the domain, hosting and all accounts be registered in my name?
- Will I be able to edit content myself? Will you provide training?
- How do you handle speed, security and backups?
- What happens after launch? Is there a maintenance option?
- Who owns the design and code once the project is paid for?
- How do we communicate, and how quickly do you usually respond?

Get the agreed scope, cost, payment schedule and timeline in writing before work begins.

Chapter 8: Launch Checklist and Maintenance Plan

Before you launch

Work through this list on both desktop and mobile:

☐ All pages have final text with no placeholder content

☐ Spelling and contact details checked

☐ Every link and button works

☐ Contact forms send messages to the right inbox

☐ WhatsApp and phone links open correctly

☐ Checkout and payments tested, if you sell online

☐ SSL active and http redirects to https

☐ Legal pages published and linked in the footer

☐ Page titles and meta descriptions written for main pages

☐ Images compressed and given descriptive alt text

☐ Analytics and Search Console set up

☐ Backups running

☐ A favicon (small browser tab icon) added

☐ Old website addresses redirected, if replacing an existing site

After launch

1. Submit your sitemap in Search Console.
2. Add your website link to your Google Business Profile and social media profiles.
3. Tell existing customers about the new site.
4. Watch analytics for the first few weeks to catch problems early.

A simple maintenance plan

A website is never truly finished. Use this rhythm:

Weekly - Check that forms and orders are arriving - Respond to enquiries promptly

Monthly - Update platform, themes and plugins (after a backup) - Review analytics and Search Console - Check site speed on a main page - Confirm backups are running

Quarterly - Review and refresh key page content and prices - Test restoring a backup - Remove unused plugins, apps and user accounts - Check that legal pages still match how

you operate

Yearly - Confirm domain and hosting renewals - Review whether the site still meets your goals - Plan improvements based on what you have learned

Quick-Start Checklist

☐ Write your primary website goal and how you will measure it

☐ Describe your target audience and list their top questions

☐ Choose a platform after comparing trade-offs and checking current pricing

☐ Register your domain in your own name with auto-renewal on

☐ Select hosting (if needed) with backups and good support

☐ Confirm SSL is active and https redirects are in place

☐ Draft your sitemap and essential pages

☐ Start writing content and collecting real photos early

☐ Plan for mobile-first design and fast loading

☐ Turn on two-factor authentication and automatic backups

☐ Prepare privacy, terms, cookie and store policies that match your business

☐ Set up analytics and Google Search Console

☐ Write a developer brief and ask the key questions before hiring

☐ Complete the launch checklist on desktop and mobile

☐ Put a monthly maintenance reminder in your calendar

About DAD Technologies

DAD Technologies is a Pakistan-based digital agency helping businesses grow with ecommerce, digital marketing, web development and AI automation. Explore our free tools and guides at dadtechnologies.com, or contact us for a free consultation.