GETTING YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE

first steps

Presented by
lpdesign**help**

hello!

I'm Laura Peragallo, a freelance designer who is very passionate about design

How devoted to design am I? I spend a lot of time comparing fonts. I will move a line pixel by pixel until it's in the perfect position. I know CMYK from RGB. I take too long ordering food at restaurants because I get distracted by the fonts on the menu. I know if I'm going to like a movie by just looking at the opening credits. I pay attention to white space. Finding new color schemes is exciting to me. I have a huge library of images. I'm always looking for inspiration.

All this makes me a great graphic designer. And I'm excited to share what I've learned over the years to help you launch your business.

I've prepared this guide to explain the steps to get your business online. It may look like a lot, but the steps are simple... by the end you'll fully understand why these steps are important and how to do it yourself.

first steps

GETTING YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE

Three simple steps. Let's go over them in detail.

1. Register your domain name
A domain name is the unique name that people use to find you. It is also known as a URL. Even if you're not ready to start on your website at the moment, secure your domain name.

Do a search on your domain name to check its availability first using any web browser. No reason to get too attached to a name only to find out it's already taken. Type the name you want into your web browser (Chrome, Edge, Safari, FireFox) to see if it's already in use. If it's available, register it! In most cases, using your name or business name is probably the best option for a domain name.

What if the name I want is taken?
You may still be able to get the name by using a different extension. You may check to see if it is available as a .co, .net, .biz, .info, etc. Keep in mind however, that sites with these other extensions aren't as strong as having a .com extension. Consider making a slight change, adding "LLC" for example to get a .com.

Many times, a registrar might try to convince you it's necessary to buy other domain extensions besides .com. .com is referred to as a "top-level domain," which makes it the highest level in the hier-archical Domain Name System of the Internet. What does all that mean? Simply that .com domain names (along with .edu and .org) are the most sought after.

In my opinion, spending extra money buying the .info, .net, .org, or any other extension of your domain name is unnecessary.

How do I register a domain name?
There are many reliable sites where you can register your domain name, like register.com, networksolutions.com, or godaddy.com for example. You sumbit your desired domain and they'll check on its availabilty. Make sure you spell the domain name correctly!

Don't hit that button until you've checked it two, three or four times. Once you have registered a domain, that's the URL your site will have.

Whichever company you choose save all your account info in a safe place. Make a note of when your domain name expires. That's right, domains expire. Once you lose your domain name you may not be able to get it back. If the company offers an auto-renewal service, take it. It's one less thing to worry about. Domains are registered for a minimum for one year and up to 3, 5, or more years. Usually there is a savings the longer your contract is for.

2. Get hosting

After you have the domain name, you need hosting. It provides a secure place to store the files that comprise your website. The code, images, videos, and text all have to be stored somewhere. It's not necessary to use the hosting services of the company where you registered your domain name. But many times they will offer a free domain registration with a hosting plan.

Most hosting companies offer a basic plan which should be more than adequate for any website. The majority of websites are low-maintenance and have static pages that don't require routine updates or are with heavy multimedia content.

[Namecheap](#) is a widely used web hosting option. [DreamHost](#) is another. [HostGator](#) offers fewer pricing options but still keeps the bar high for service. [BlueHost](#) is a company I personally recommend.

Do some research, read user reviews. It's often helpful to read through others' experiences to know what kind of service you can expect.

3. Have an SSL Certificate

Simply put, a SSL Certificate secures your website. It encrypts any info that might get submitted through a form and gives you extra protection from hackers. Just because your site doesn't have any credit card or other sensitive information doesn't mean that it's automatically safe from hacking attempts. Small sites are often hacked because they are unsecured. As a bonus, a certificate also helps with search engine ranking.

That's it! Three steps to getting your business online. And you didn't have to know an SSL from an ISP to do it.

the extras

WHAT YOU NEED FOR YOUR WEBSITE

Privacy
When you register your domain name the only add-on I strongly-suggest getting is Privacy. When you register your domain all your contact info is public. Registrars also sell your info to third-parties. Privacy keeps all of your personal information off the Internet which is always a good thing. It also helps reduce the numbers of emails and calls you might receive from companies offering web-related services.

What not to spend money on
Once you have registered your domain you'll start receiving offers from all types of companies. They will help you design your logo, design your site, get you on the first page of Google. One email I consistently receive is notification that I must submit my website to search engines. Submit or face the dire consequences! For a fee, of course.

You can ignore these submission emails. Search engines crawl through millions and millions of web pages. Eventually, they'll find your website. Also, search engines give no guarantee of ranking your page just because you have submitted your website.

If you are ready to start building your site, don't start getting any additional services from your registrar or hosting provider until you speak with a design professional. Don't start spending money on email accounts, extra storage, email marketing, calendars and other services until you are certain that you need them. While the services are useful, not every website needs them.

Some advice
If you are looking for website/logo design, do your research. Don't go with the cheapest offer or the lofty promises. Find out all you can about any potential company you might use. If you don't know a design professional and you're considering using someone that has sent you an email, research them. Ask questions. Be thorough.
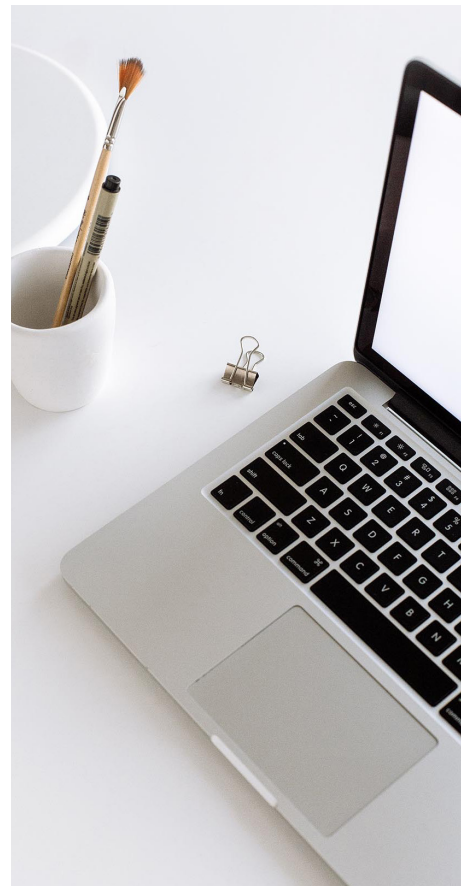
the cost

OF GETTING YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE

You have the steps, but how much will it all cost? Let's break it down.

Domain name:
Ranges from $0 to $25/yearly. Some website hosting providers will include a free domain name usually for the first year of your hosting plan. Most registrars fall in the $20-$25 range for a two-year term. The longer the term, the lower the cost per year.

Hosting:
Ranges from $2-$15/month for a shared hosting plan. The length of your contract influences the monthly price. Many web hosting providers give discounts for longer subscription periods.

SSL Certificate:
Ranges from $0 to $200/yearly. Many hosts offer a free SSL certificate with their plans. What causes the range in pricing is the type of SSL your website might need. Most sites can be secured with a Domain Validated SSL. If you're looking for more security for an e-commerce store an Organizational Validated SSL is required which is more expensive. A registered business is necessary for a Organizational Vaildated (OV) certificate since they are validated by a third-party.

Privacy:
Ranges from $10 to $40/yearly.

Website Building Platform:
Ranges from $0 to $150/yearly. Website builders provide out-of-the-box functionality for building a website without any coding. Most have page builders that create your website with pre-made elements and templates.

Remember all these services do need to renewed. The good news is that paying for all these services are usually simple, especially if you go with the same company.
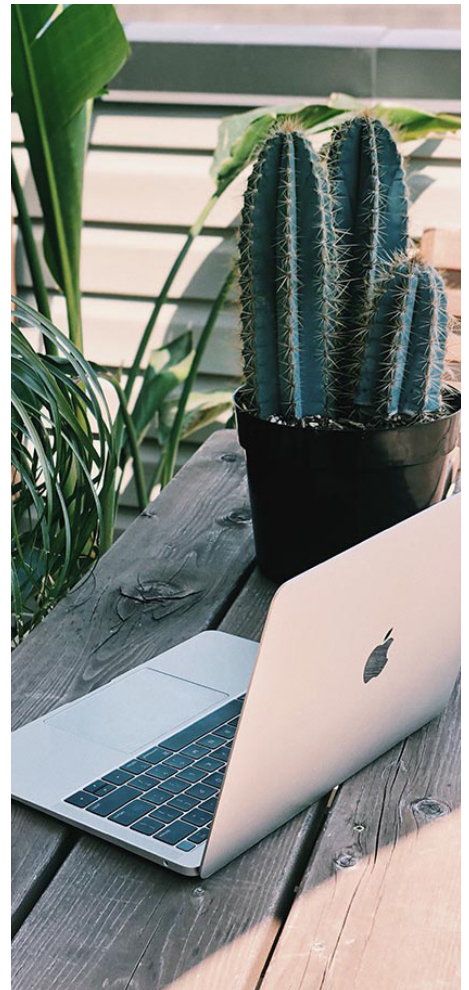
the designer

HELPING GET YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE

Design Costs:
Don't assume working with a design professional is out of reach. Do your research, read testimonials and get referrals. A good designer will spend time with you and answer all your questions. You shouldn't be afraid to ask questions or give feedback and feel like you're being heard. Being comfortable is important in the client/designer relationship.

Graphic designers, like other creative people, make connections and wonder about the meaning behind what they see. There's a desire to make something that didn't exist before. To watch an idea move from a thought, to a sketch, eventually to a final image is exciting and drives my passion for design. It's in your best interest to work with someone that is driven to communicate your message to others.

The majority of the work I've done has been with small business owners or people just starting out. My goal is to give people great websites and not let money be an obstacle.

Still have questions? Let's talk! Consultations are free.
Contact me at laura@lpdesignhelp.com or call me at 917.881.7343.