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## Web Presence Begins With a Marketing Strategy

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Building a business website is much like any other construction project: The better the foundation, the better the results — and the savings in time and money.

While laying the groundwork for an online debut, the business owner should consider how a website furthers the overall marketing strategy and how much of a website presence is needed to accomplish the company's goals.

A simple, highly navigable website with key information is essential when starting out. If the foundation is laid correctly, the website can expand as the company grows.



### Good First Impressions

While a web platform allows a business to introduce itself and its products and services to a wide world of potential customers, many businesses overextend themselves by trying to be full-service sites.

Delivering multiple web-based services — a blog, a chat helpline or an online store — requires a substantial commitment of human and financial resources. If that commitment isn't there, customers will know, and their frustration can create the perception — founded or not — that the business' services are as unreliable as its website.

That's why it's important to create a web strategy that flows from the business and marketing plans of the company. Potential clients don't just visit a company's website to get hours and offerings. They check to see if the business has its act together.

### What to Ask

A basic website can be created at little to no cost by anyone who can follow directions at do-it-yourself web-building sites like Squarespace or Wix. A more sophisticated site usually requires hiring a website designer. Either way, a website plan is essential.

To maximize the collaboration with a professional web designer, the business owner should become literate in the basic language of web marketing and electronic commerce before interviewing candidates. He should research his competitors' websites and note the features that appeal to him and those he doesn't like or need.

Armed with a vision for the site, the owner can approach the pros. The resulting contract should specify what's being created, when it needs to be ready and who's responsible for managing content once it goes live.

It is important to have a structural plan for the site. The owner needs to participate in the planning of the site architecture — how it's laid out in sections and subsections and how the user will navigate the menu of options. He needs to know what type of analytics will be run on the site to measure traffic and results and who's responsible for this monitoring.

The business owner should ask how much the website developer will charge to expand the site by adding pages and social media icons that allow visitors to share links to or visit the business's social media channels. He needs to know who owns the website and who's responsible for registering the domain name.

By building on this sound foundation, the business owner will end up with a website that doesn't add to the workload without adding to the bottom line.

WESST, a nonprofit economic development organization and lender, is offering a three-part series of seminars to help businesses maximize their website presence. The workshops, beginning June 10 and continuing on consecutive Tuesdays, will address website options, content marketing and how to use analytics to measure effectiveness. The two-hour sessions begin at 5:30 p.m. at 609 Broadway Blvd. N.E., Albuquerque. Register online at [www.wesst.org](http://www.wesst.org) or call 505-246-6900.

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