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Guideline for your first Website Build

Below is a list of necessary assets in order to proceed with a successful website build.

- **Branding:** a logo, color scheme, style and voice. These should reflect and appeal to your intended customer/user/client/audience. Who you market to will influence the design of your site. I can help with this if you're unsure.
- **Domain Name:** Purchase the domain name that you want to have for your site. Your domain name will be your website address once the site is built. Google "domain search" to find if your business name is available and if so, register it ASAP. This is best done separately from your site hosting.
- **Photos:** High quality photos are a must. I will optimize these for the site so that they load quickly and have appropriate alt-text tags for SEO purposes.
- **Copy:** This is the information about your business that you would like to share with the world. This can be your origin story, your purpose, your vision, your services and or products and how to purchase them, your team profiles, etc. Good copy along with good photos are very important for a good website. If you have any reviews on Yelp or other platforms these will be good to showcase as well.
- **Functionality:** Write down any functionality you'd like to include in your site. This will help determine the scope (timeline and cost) of the site build. Functions such as e-commerce, appointment scheduling, newsletter forms or simple contacts forms. E-commerce requires much more time to build out as each item will need its own descriptions, photos, and pricing on top of building out the purchasing options.
- **Maintenance:** You should plan for the cost of keeping your domain name registered and for the cost of hosting your website. These are usually renewed annually. Most will offer a discount for purchasing multiple years in advance.

- A **“Maintenance Plan”** is a *contract* you can purchase with your developer to regularly check and update the software on your site and other tasks written in the contract. This can be separate from your hosting or bundled together.

Once your site is deployed to your hosting there will be regular updates (mostly for security) to the software that you can either automate or do manually. If you choose to purchase a Maintenance Plan from me, I bundle that into my hosting price so that you'll never have to look at the back end of the site. Any issues that are included in the maintenance plan will be handled without extra expense. This can (and should) include privacy policies. Yes, you will own your own site even with a maintenance/hosting plan. As soon as the site is ready to go live a copy of the site files will be uploaded to a drive of your choosing so that you always have a copy. Now you can see why registering your domain separately is a good idea- you can always take your site to another hosting if you are unhappy for any reason.

Glossary of Terms

Some terms may be new to you and confusing. Here are some simple definitions to clarify:

Domain Name- this is a website name that you purchase through a registrar such as Namecheap or GoDaddy. Once purchased no one else is **legally** allowed to use your domain name. It can be your given name, your business name, a description of your business or services, or almost anything. It should be short and make sense to what your website is about so that people can find you when they search online. The most common domain name looks like this yourbusiness.com. But you can choose .org or other options. Domain name and domain address are essentially the same thing. The domain name becomes your website address once it is attached to your website.

Hosting- this is the server database where your website lives and is shown to the world from. Your domain name is “attached” to the hosting once your site is built so that when someone uses the domain address they land on your website. This is done in the back end by your web developer when the site is ready to go live.

Copy- this is the written text content on a website, including headlines, sub-headers, product descriptions, and call-to-actions, essentially any written element used to inform and persuade visitors to take a desired action on the site; it's the primary text used to narrate a visitor through the website and communicate a brand's message.

Privacy Policy- This is very important in this day and age of people suing for anything they can find to sue for. Because there are laws that safeguard our privacy when we go online, websites must abide by these laws or risk being sued/ fined for violations. If you collect any kind of data on your site (contact forms are the most common) you must, by law, have a privacy policy that explains to the consumer what happens to their Personally Identifiable Information (PII). I recommend the auto-updating policies that I get through a reasonably priced service to protect your business from lawsuits concerning your website. You can also consult with your own business lawyer, though that can be expensive.

SEO- This stands for Search Engine Optimization. Optimizing for SEO means making sure each page of your site “ranks” well with search engines such as google. This helps your site to show up on the first page of a search for the type of services or products you offer. There is a long list of qualifiers that changes periodically but the basics are page load times, accessibility and properly titled copy. You can also pay google for higher ranking.

There are probably some terms that I haven't covered that I'd love to clarify for you so don't be afraid to ask. Most people have lots of questions. Feel free to write a list for when we schedule a chat to see if we are a good fit to move forward with your website project.

Thanks again for downloading this list. Now you can put together what you need and think about what your main goals are for your site and any questions you might have about the process. Once you have these ready, please get in touch so we can start outlining your new website build and create the timeline to make it go live!