MO VING YO UR  
BU SINESS O N L IN E  
SBDC TAP CHECKLIST

GENERAL

☐ Name Your Business: Consider the name of your business from these perspectives:
   - Legal perspective (are you legally entitled to it?),
   - Branding perspective (will it help attract the kind of customers and clients you want to attract?), and
   - Search engine perspective (is it unique, simple, memorable?).

☐ Primary Service: Define your primary service (or product) in 1-2 sentences.

☐ Secondary Services: Define any secondary services in 3-5 bullet points.

☐ Tagline: Your tagline should be a single phrase that encapsulates your business, motivates and inspires new customers, and creates loyalty in existing customers.


☐ Elevator Pitch: How would you succinctly describe your business to a stranger in an elevator in 30-45 seconds?

☐ USP - Unique Selling Proposition: Why should potential customers/clients select your business over your competition’s?

REGISTER ACCOUNTS

☐ Domain name registration: Eg: YOUR-DOMAIN.com. Generally, this can have an annual cost of $8-12/year. If the domain name you want is available, register it right away. Ideally, your domain name should be your business name. Best to keep it short, simple, and memorable.

☐ Domain hosting: This is where your website will be hosted. Costs can range from $4-15/month, depending on storages, features, length of contract.

☐ Email hosting: This is where your email accounts will be hosted. Frequently, this is included in the domain hosting so start with domain hosting.

☐ Email marketing: Do you want to send out any newsletters or any email marketing? If so, three popular options for small businesses include:
   - Constant Contact: www.constantcontact.com
   - Vertical Response: www.verticalresponse.com
   - Mail Chimp: www.mailchimp.com

☐ eCommerce: Decide if you will be selling anything from your website. If you’re working with a web developer, they will likely have recommendations for this. The simplest way for you to do this yourself is with PayPal: www.paypal.com

☐ Social Media: Decide if you will be using Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter or any other social media, and set up your pages or accounts.
BRANDING/DESIGN/GRAPHICS

- Logo for print and website: Do you already have a logo, plan to create your own, or plan to hire a designer?

- Banner: This is the top graphic banner in most website, and it can be used on your business letterhead, as well. Do you plan to create your own, or hire a designer?

- Graphics: This typically includes icons, illustrations, and any artwork. What graphics do you already have and what will you need to produce?

- Photographs: What do you already have and what will you need? Stock photos can be purchased very inexpensively from online sources such as www.istockphoto.com

- Video: What do you already have and what will you need?


WEBSITE CONSIDERATIONS & PLANNING


- Designer/developer: Do you have the skills to create the website yourself or will you need to hire a web designer/developer?

- Budget: If you are going to hire a web developer, consider your budget before you start interviewing potential candidates.

- Schedule: How quickly do you need the website to “go live”? If you’re hiring a web developer, this should be part of the initial discussion, before you hire them.

- Custom Design or Template: In general, a custom web design will cost more than one created from a template. There are many professional looking templates to consider. A WordPress solution will allow for many free and low-cost templates.

- CMS: Will your web developer update content for you or will you be doing this yourself? If yourself, then a CMS (Content Management System) will allow a “less technical” person – yourself or your staff – to make simple updates to your website. If in doubt, go with a CMS. WordPress is the most popular CMS these days for small business websites and blogs. Others CMS include Drupal and Joomla.

- Search Engine Optimization SEO - keyword research: What are your most important keywords? What words do you think your typical new customer will put into a search engine such as Google in order to find you? There are a variety of keyword research tools to help you define yours.

- Information Architecture IA: How do you want to organize the information in your website? For example, if you’re a school, you might want to have separate sections for students, teachers, and parents. If you sell clothing, you might want to have separate sections for men’s and women’s clothing.

- Wireframing: What pages do you want to have in your new website? It’s helpful to layout the structure of the website, to determine how the pages relate to one another, before starting on design.

- List 3-5 websites that you like and be specific as to why (eg design, graphics, whitespace, specific functionality, humor, etc.)

- List 3-5 website URLs that you consider to be your competition, review them, and describe strengths & weaknesses of each.
WEBSITE CONTENT, FEATURES, FUNCTIONALITY

If you’re just getting started, and aren’t sure yet of your content, consider starting with these basic pages and features:

- Home Page
- Services Page
- About Us Page
- Contact Us Page
- Resources / Links Page
- E-commerce
- Social Media
- Blog
- Newsletter
- Testimonials
- Other

LOCAL SEARCH

If your business has a local physical presence with a local address, it’s important to claim your place in local listings, many of them free:

- Google Places (start with this one): www.google.com/places
- Yahoo Local: listings.local.yahoo.com
- Bing Local: www.bing.com/local
- Yelp: biz.yelp.com
- YellowPages.com: www.yellowpages.com
- Thumbtack: www.thumbtack.com
- Others...

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Consider starting with these popular social media platforms:

- Facebook: facebook.com/pages
- LinkedIn: linkedin.com
- Twitter: twitter.com
- YouTube: youtube.com
- Others...
RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION & HELP

GENERAL

5 Tips To Get Your Small Business Online:
blog.crowdspring.com/2011/08/tips-to-get-your-small-business-online

BRANDING

CrowdSpring – an online marketplace for logos and graphic design:
www.crowdspring.com/how-it-works

WEB DESIGN/DEVELOPMENT

Top 5 Web Design Mistakes Small Businesses Make:
mashable.com/2011/04/10/5-web-design-mistakes

Successful Small Business Websites:
samirbalwani.com/small-business-website

SOCIAL MEDIA (GENERAL)

Mashable’s 10 of the Best Social Media Tools for Entrepreneurs:
mashable.com/2009/10/26/social-media-entrepreneurs

Mashable’s Social Media News:
mashable.com/social-media

Social Media in Plain English (video):
www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpIOClX1jPE&feature=player_embedded

Hotdesign’s Getting Started with Social Media:
blog.hotdesign.com/2008/12/getting-started-with-social-media

Hotdesign’s 5 Reasons for Social Media Marketing:
blog.hotdesign.com/2009/03/5-reasons-for-social-media-marketing

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn’s website: linkedin.com

What is LinkedIn:
learn.linkedin.com/what-is-linkedin

What is LinkedIn (video):
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVlUwwgOfKw&feature=player_embedded

LinkedIn Learning Center:
learn.linkedin.com

LinkedIn Webinars:
learn.linkedin.com/training

LinkedIn Help:
linkedin.custhelp.com

LinkedIn Learning Center:
learn.linkedin.com

LinkedIn Webinars:
learn.linkedin.com/training

LinkedIn Help:
linkedin.custhelp.com

LinkedIn for Dummies (video):
www.youtube.com/watch?v=tV_7yAPnkFw

FACEBOOK

Facebook’s website:
facebook.com

Facebook Pages (with step by step instructions):
www.facebook.com/advertising/?pages

Facebook Pages Product Guide:
www.facebook.com/advertising/
FacebookPagesProductGuide.pdf

Facebook’s Help Center:
www.facebook.com/help

Facebook Pages Help:
www.facebook.com/help/?page=175

Mashable’s Facebook Guide Book:
mashable.com/guidebook/facebook

Hotdesign’s Getting Started with Facebook:
blog.hotdesign.com/2008/12/getting-started-with-facebook

32 Ways to use Facebook for Business:
webworkerdaily.com/2009/07/21/32-ways-to-use-facebook-for-business
RESOURCES, CONT.

**TWITTER**

Twitter’s website: [twitter.com](http://twitter.com)

Twitter 101 for Business – A special guide: [business.twitter.com/twitter101](http://business.twitter.com/twitter101)


Twitter Best Practices: [business.twitter.com/twitter101/best_practices](http://business.twitter.com/twitter101/best_practices)

Twitter’s Help: [twitter.com/help/start/](http://twitter.com/help/start/)

Twitter Search: [search.twitter.com](http://search.twitter.com)

Mashable’s Twitter Guide Book: [mashable.com/guidebook/twitter](http://mashable.com/guidebook/twitter)

Mashable’s How to Make the Most of Your Twitter Profile Page: [mashable.com/2010/05/10/organize-twitter-profile](http://mashable.com/2010/05/10/organize-twitter-profile)

What is Twitter?: [webtrends.about.com/od/socialnetworking/a/what-is-twitter.htm](http://webtrends.about.com/od/socialnetworking/a/what-is-twitter.htm)

TweetDeck: [www.tweetdeck.com](http://www.tweetdeck.com)

Hotdesign’s Getting Started with Twitter: [blog.hotdesign.com/2008/12/getting-started-with-twitter](http://blog.hotdesign.com/2008/12/getting-started-with-twitter)

**BLOGGING**

Wordpress: [wordpress.org](http://wordpress.org)

Blogger: [blogger.com](http://blogger.com)


Blogging Best Practices: [www.echoditto.com/blogging](http://www.echoditto.com/blogging)

Six Reasons Every Brand Should Blog: [www.huffingtonpost.com/paula-berg/6-reasons-every-brand-sho_b_894004.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paula-berg/6-reasons-every-brand-sho_b_894004.html)

**SEO AND LOCAL SEARCH**

This is an easy to follow video to give you the basics on SEO: [www.wordtracker.com/academy/seo-your-web-page-for-google-video](http://www.wordtracker.com/academy/seo-your-web-page-for-google-video)

[seomoz.org/beginners-guide-to-seo](http://seomoz.org/beginners-guide-to-seo)


This article for Search Engine Land will give you some advanced Local Search ideas: [searchengineland.com/nifty-hard-core-local-seo-tactics-from-smx-advanced-81099](http://searchengineland.com/nifty-hard-core-local-seo-tactics-from-smx-advanced-81099)

Use this tool to rate your local search presence and use their handy links to fix what is missing: [getlisted.org](http://getlisted.org)

Use Yext to review the top 9 local search directories and any inconsistencies in how you are listed: [yext.com](http://yext.com)

**REFERENCE BOOKS:**

Don’t Make Me Think, A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability, By Steve Krug.

Rocket Surgery Made Easy, By Steve Krug.

Letting Go of the Words – Writing Web Content that Works, By Janice Ginny Reddish.

The Non-Designer’s Design Book, By Robin Williams.

Net Words: Creating High-Impact Online Copy, by Nick Usborne

Hot Text: Web Writing That Works, by Jonathan and Lisa Price