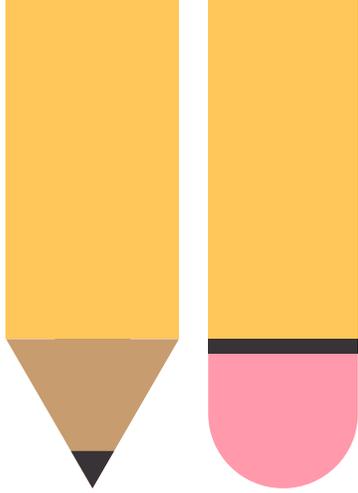


Website Design & Development

A FEAST FOR THE EYES

Where to start with a web-based startup?

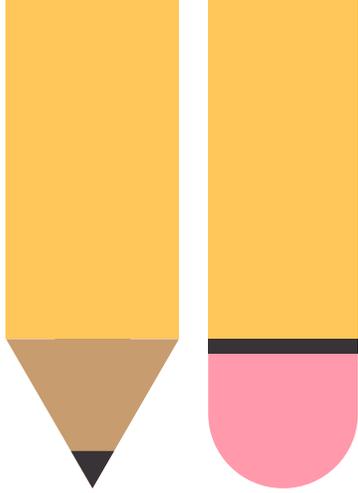




VU ONLINE

Helping businesses take the next
step in their digital growth.

BUSINESS
PLANNING
ADVICE



INTRO

Business plan - Why prepare one at all?

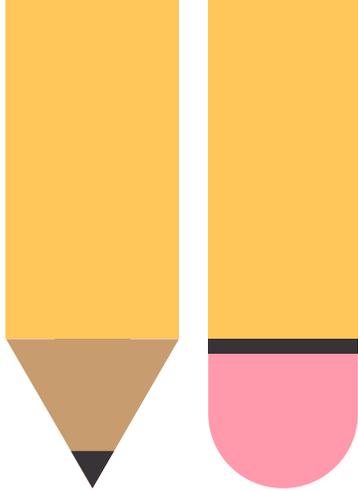
Before you consider the system you need, you should think more broadly about the business you are creating. What do you need to do to get it started? How much time and money is required?

To start with, you will need to do some research on business planning: what it takes to run a business and if your business idea exists. Then, if you are satisfied you are going to give it a shot, have a look on the [government website](#) and Prince's trust website for help and business plan templates.

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1. ACCESS FUNDING

So where's the money coming from?

Never my favourite starting point, but the fact remains you are going to need to invest financially to get started. Maybe you have some funds tucked away to make your dream a reality, or you may be able to convince uncle Frank it's worth parting with just a small fraction of your nephew's inheritance to get to you started. But if that isn't the case then perhaps you will have to seek investment. There are a few avenues to pursue, all of them will require risk from either you or your investor, so think carefully about how you proceed...

Loans will often need offsetting against assets or excellent credit history. You could consult the [money saving expert](#) for the latest information and offers from the banks.

You may be eligible for a [government grant](#), you can borrow up to £25,000 at a fixed-interest rate.

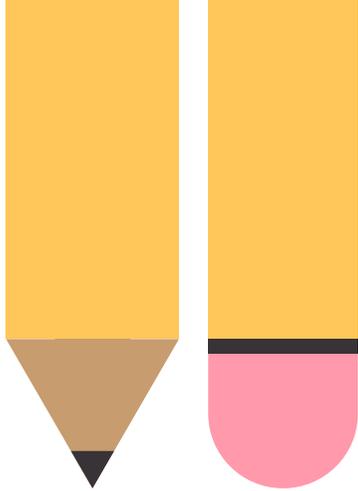
You could start a [crowdfunding campaign](#). They really work! We have worked with clients who have funded tens of thousands to get their businesses off the ground. You will need to consider what you can give back to those supporters who get behind you.

Think about the services you have to offer and will need as part of your new business. You may be able to exchange management of services with other startups or build a referral network, exchanging potential leads.

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2. HELP AND ADVICE

Who can I get trustworthy advice from?

There are lots of useful sources of information available. A good read or listen is [Robin Waites Online Business Startup](#); it will help identify where you spend your time and give you advice on how to choose the right agency to work with.

Forums can be influential as they have people who can respond to a specific need or challenge you are facing and will help grow your network. Try the [startups.co.uk](#) forum - they can also give you feedback on your site when you get it going.

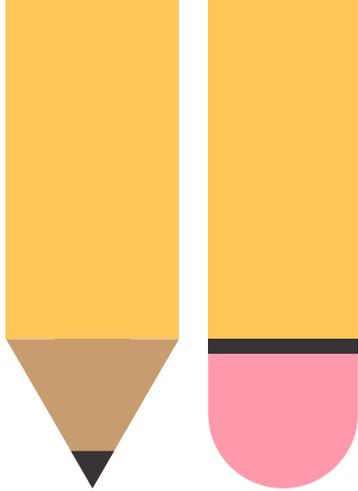
And if you choose to take on the project yourself and want to learn the skills and techniques then we find places like [Lynda.com](#) & [treehouse](#) have been invaluable learning portals to our development.

As well as these, we do offer introductions into these skills ourselves, so pop over our [training page](#) to learn how to get your site set up or develop your skills.

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3. PROJECT SPEC

Building your specification

So you should now have a decent understanding of what you want to achieve. Now its time to think in depth about the specification required. And the age old adage “fail to prepare and prepare to fail” is very relevant in the web industry because everything hinges on your agency trying to work out how they will achieve something and how long it will take.

If you don’t understand what you are trying to achieve, then how to can you translate that to the agency you choose to work with? What parameters are you going to judge them on? What does success look like if you don’t set yourself some targets?

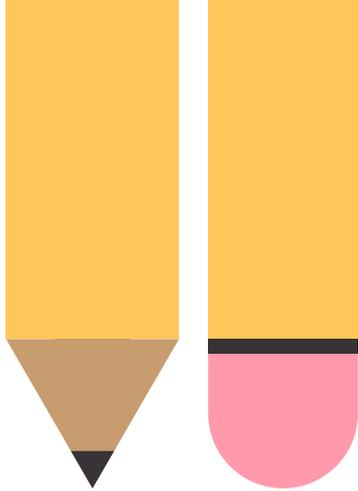
A wedding doesn’t just happen, a tremendous about of thought and planning goes into planning someone’s special day. Multiple experts put their skills together to make something wonderful, to ensure nothing is missed. All the hard work in preparation is the difference between success and failure on the day.

So look to partner up with an agency that values planning what you need, instead of selling you what they have.

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3. PROJECT SPEC

But I dont understand the technology!

You don't need to know how it's done. In fact, if you do, you you will likely find yourself spending an awful lot of time learning the basics of website design and development which won't help you run a successful online business.

You need to really understand what you are trying to achieve from your website, the clearer you can be about your target market, the functionality required, the amount of content you need to generate, the more accurate your quote will be and the quicker you will get to your goal.

Okay I have a grand plan...

Great, however If you are just starting out, we would advise a staged process to get to your finished product or you will end up with a very costly quote and a system that may not bend and devleop with your new business.

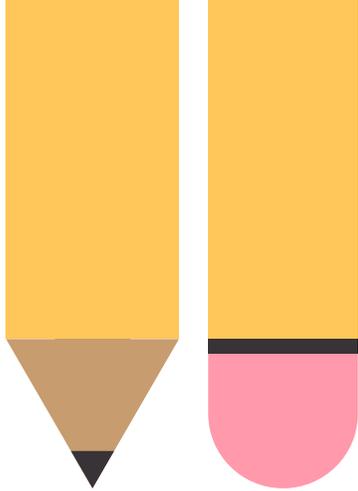
We suggest you take your grand plan, and reduce it down to the minimum viable product to get to launch (it may just be a holding page), then you can put your ideas in front of people get some feedback, analyse some data and make informed decisions about developing the site further.

This will help you understand that you are building something for an audience, and actually the most vital thing right now is better understanding your marketplace.

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4. UNDERSTANDING YOUR MARKETPLACE

Okay, so how do I find out more?

Okay, brace yourself, your website isn't for you. Well it may be, but only in the circumstance that you are the type of person that you are targeting to use your website - in which case, brilliant! You will have valuable input. If not, then begin to get inside the mind of your user.

Think about the customer, the kind of person they are. Try and build a persona to which you can solve a problem, then think about where they are and how to bring the solution to them.

If you follow this line of thought long enough you'll find yourself thinking like a marketer. Until you can afford to identify and develop all the functionality you need, your website is a vital marketing tool for your business.

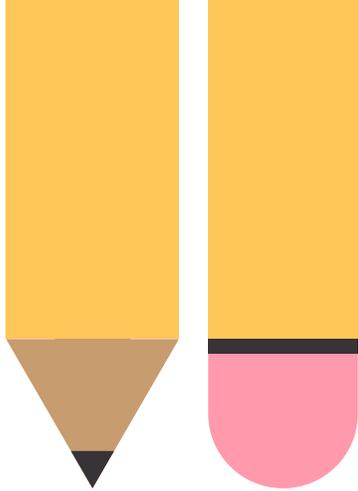
This will help structure what kind of pages you need to start with. For example, a business with one main service may only need one page to educate the user and offer them an option of getting in touch. Then attention can be turned to set of targeted advertising to bring users to it.

This will be far cheaper than someone who has developed the functionality for a catalogue of their best case-studies, or some bespoke automation that may look great but isn't being found by anyone yet.

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4. UNDERSTANDING YOUR MARKETPLACE

Asking the right questions

At the start of a project, your agency should be talking to you about your goals and marketplace not putting glossy designs under your nose. We can all appreciate and understand what looks nice (and we know it takes time to achieve and adds tremendous value) but at this point, spending large chunks of your budget polishing something is money wasted, compared to investment in growing your marketplace reach.

Different marketplaces will have a different idea on how you visually represent yourself. Your new business will need to bend and flex as your ideas develop. It won't hurt to research and read up though...

What are the big boys doing?

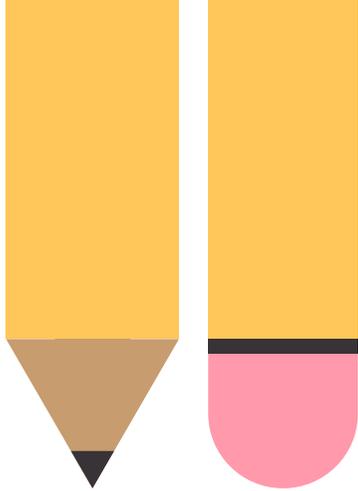
Start having a look at the market leaders, browse the web, make notes of what you are searching for, where you are going, shortlist a few competitors, write down some sites you like the look of, or bits of sites you think may work well.

Chances are, they are addressing the questions you will have to. Look at the language they use, the FAQs, try and gather as many problems and solutions as you can. You will begin to look at websites in a new way. They can ask and answer questions, corralling you towards an action they want you take. How can you apply that to your new business?

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5. BUILDING CONTENT

What about this website I am meant to be building?

Patience, you have started the right way and will be able to make educated answers to all the tough decisions you will now have to take. Imagine we haven't discussed your marketplace and you have to build content. You will end up staring at a blank piece of paper and providing a list of generic spiel. By now you will know who you are talking to and can go about best choosing how...

Content isn't just words... it can be images, icons, pdfs, embedded videos, or information streamed from social accounts or feeds, all of which you will want to the highest standard to show your new business in its strongest light, which will require expertise and time.

But it's not just time in implementing the content, it's the tone you set too. That time you spent understanding your marketplace now gives you some parameters for the type of copy and tone you are going to use to interact with them.

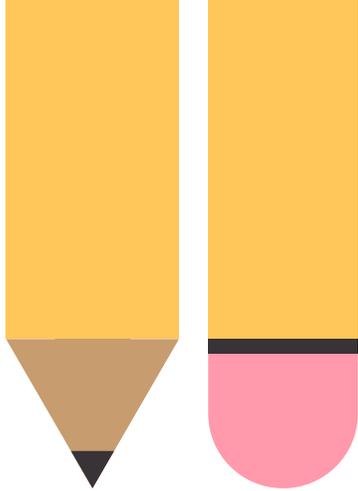
Video testimonials, a brand introduction or a quirky video funny are all right in the correct context, or equally wrong to the wrong audience, and they can be expensive to implement.

Think about the big picture, but start with a word document, formulate your vision in words for your target market, don't worry about selling it to them, just explain it to them.

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5. BUILDING CONTENT

Ask for feedback from friends and family, and get a copywriter from Vu to run over your work. If you are really struggling we can generate the copy for you. After you have something you are proud of, you will have been thinking about the different ways to relay the message, and you can bring your vision to life...

Pictures tell a thousand words

Our emotive brains love a picture. Vu will advise you as part of your website project to chunk up your text into small, manageable paragraphs, surrounded by a small amount of quality images. Ideally they would be unique to you, getting the right photographer for web is vital, so do consult an expert.

Images for web are often used in banners, which are often wide-angled shots so that the image doesn't take up all the above-the-fold content (what you see before you scroll). Without guidance, photographers often produce images that are rectangular.

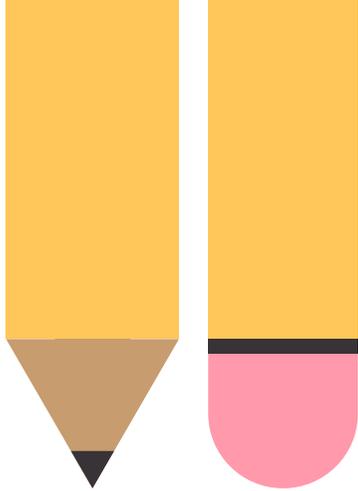
If you have clear goals in mind from your shoot and your photographer understands them, then one photoshoot could capture the same image for use through your social portals, web banners, posters or other promotional material, saving you the cost of another shoot down the line.

Where a photographer or shoot isn't practical, you may well be able to find or could use some guidance on getting the message across through stock photography. There are many free and paid sites that vary in quality. We have a repository of free and previously-paid images ready to go, so let us help guide you through your visual storytelling.

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5. BUILDING CONTENT

So with the business plan together, finances sorted, a website specification and a start on the content required, you're in pretty good shape to begin your journey.

One last question then...

Do you have it in you?

One last thing to consider is the time and energy you are going to have to invest. Don't underestimate how lengthy the business planning process takes just to find out all the reasons your idea may not be viable.

Don't underestimate the late nights required filling out tax returns, the early morning networking breakfasts and the quiet trading days considering where the next customer comes from or sleepless nights worrying about overdue invoices or wages to pay.

But it can be hugely rewarding. With the many options available in today's digital age, there is no excuse for not living your dream, rather than dreaming about living.

We hope that this free download has given you some good starting points for your digital startup.

If you have any questions, or to discuss taking your project further you can reach us on 01803 866430.

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