

FREE GUIDE

The Website Launch Guide

How to plan, build and launch a website that brings in customers — even if you've never made one.

Planning

Domain & hosting

DIY vs hiring

Content

Design

SEO

Launch checklist

Thejas

Digital with Thejas

About this guide

You have decided — or almost decided — that your business needs a website. Then the questions start. What kind of website? Who builds it? What does it cost? What is hosting? Why does one person quote ₹5,000 and another ₹50,000 for “the same thing”?

This guide answers all of that in plain language. It takes you from “I need a website” to a launched site that actually brings in enquiries — with Indian price ranges, WhatsApp-first thinking, and an honest look at when to do it yourself and when to pay someone.

How to use this guide

- **Read Chapters 1–4 before spending a rupee.** Most website regrets happen because the planning and buying decisions were made in the wrong order.
- **Chapters 5–8 are the build:** what to write, how it should look, what must be installed, and the basic SEO that gets you found.
- **Chapters 9–10 are launch week and the first 30 days** — checklists you can literally tick off.
- **Every chapter ends with a “Do this today” box.** Do those ten things and your website will be ahead of most small business sites out there.

Three promises

- ✓ **No jargon.** Every technical term is explained in one line, the first time it appears.
- ✓ **No fake numbers.** Costs are given as honest ranges, because real prices vary by provider, city and scope.
- ✓ **No dependence.** You can do everything in this guide yourself. And if you would rather spend that time running your business — the last chapter tells you how I can help.

TIP

Keep a note open as you read. By Chapter 9 you will have a page list, a budget range, and a launch checklist — all in your own words.

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Do you even need a website?

Honest answer: **not every business needs one on day one**. A home baker taking orders on WhatsApp and Instagram can run happily for months without a website. So before building anything, check whether you actually need one — and what kind.

You can probably wait if...

- All your customers come from word of mouth and repeat business, and you are at capacity.
- You sell only through a marketplace (Swiggy, Zomato, Amazon, Meesho) and that channel is working.
- A complete Google Business Profile plus an active Instagram already answers every question customers ask.

You need a website when...

- Customers ask questions before buying — prices, services, portfolio, qualifications — and you answer the same things on WhatsApp all day.
- You want to run ads. Ads sent to a good page convert far better than ads sent to a social profile.
- People search for what you do (“CA in Udupi”, “bridal makeup Mangalore”) — without a site, that search traffic goes to competitors.
- You want to look established. For many customers, no website still reads as “not a serious business”.

What kind of website?

Type	What it is	Choose it when
Single landing page	One page: what you do, proof, one action (usually WhatsApp)	You mainly need somewhere to send ad clicks and Instagram visitors
Small business site (3–6 pages)	Home, services, about, contact — the standard for local businesses	Customers compare and research before contacting you
Site + blog	Business site plus articles answering customer questions	You compete on search (“how much does ___ cost”) and can write monthly
Online store	Product pages, cart, payments, shipping	You ship products and need orders while you sleep — the most work to run

Most local service businesses should start with the **small business site** — or even a single landing page — and grow from there. Starting small and launching beats planning big and never launching.

DO THIS TODAY

Write one sentence: “My website’s job is to get [who] to [one action].” If you cannot fill the blanks yet, Chapter 2 will fix that.

Plan it on paper first

An hour of planning saves weeks of rebuilding. Before touching any tool, decide three things: **which pages, what each page is for, and the one action each page asks for.**

Rule 1: one action per page

Every page should have exactly one job. The homepage gets a stranger to trust you and take one step — usually “WhatsApp us” or “See our services”. A service page gets a specific enquiry. A page that asks for five things gets none.

Rule 2: start with four pages

1. **Home** — who you help, what you do, why trust you, one clear action.
2. **Services** — one page (or one section) per service, each with its own price range and CTA. “CTA” = call to action, the button you want clicked.
3. **About** — the human story: face, credentials, why you do this.
4. **Contact** — WhatsApp, phone, map, hours. Make it impossible to get wrong.

Add more pages only when a real customer question demands one. A gallery or FAQ page earns its place; a “Vision & Mission” page rarely does.

Rule 3: steal the structure, not the words

Find two or three websites of businesses like yours (other cities are fine) that you find clear and convincing. Note their page list and the order of sections. That is your wireframe — a rough sketch of what goes where. You are copying structure, which is common sense, not content, which is theirs.

DO THIS TODAY

List your pages on paper. Next to each, write its one action. This single sheet will steer every decision that follows — including what a fair quote looks like.

Domains and hosting, without the jargon

Three things make a website exist. In plain terms:

1. **Domain** — your address (yourbusiness.in). Rented yearly, never owned outright.
2. **Hosting** — the plot of land: a computer that stores your site and serves it to visitors. Also paid yearly. Website builders like Wix bundle this in.
3. **SSL certificate** — the padlock in the browser (https). Usually free and included with hosting; never pay much for it. Without it, browsers warn visitors away.

What things roughly cost in India

Item	Typical range	Notes
Domain (.in or .com)	Roughly ₹500–₹1,500 per year	First-year offers are often cheaper; renewal is the real price — check it before buying
Shared hosting	Often ₹2,000–₹6,000 per year	Fine for most small business sites; varies by provider and plan
Website builder plan (Wix, etc.)	Often ₹3,000–₹12,000+ per year	Includes hosting; price depends on plan and features
Business email (you@yourbusiness.in)	Free to a few thousand ₹ per year	Some hosts include basic email; Google Workspace costs more but works flawlessly
SSL certificate	Usually free	Included with most hosting and all builders — be wary of anyone charging heavily for it

These are honest ranges, not quotes — prices vary by provider, plan and offers. The point is the *order of magnitude*: the basics of a small business website can cost a few thousand rupees a year, not lakhs.

The one rule that protects you

Buy the domain in your own account, with your own email and card. If a developer or agency registers it for you in their account, they own your address. Businesses have lost their domain — and years of Google trust — in a fallout with a developer. Hosting can be theirs; the domain must be yours.

DO THIS TODAY

Search for your business name at any domain registrar. If yourbusiness.in or .com is free, buy it today — it costs less than a dinner out and someone else can take it tomorrow.

DIY or hire someone? An honest answer

There is no single right answer — there is a right answer **for your situation**. The real currency here is not just money; it is your time and attention. Here is the honest comparison:

Route	Money	Your time	Makes sense when
Website builder (Wix, Squarespace, Dukaan...)	Yearly plan, often ₹3,000–₹12,000+	A weekend to a week of your evenings	You need something simple, fast, and enjoy tinkering. Easiest to maintain yourself.
WordPress, DIY	Domain + hosting + maybe a paid theme; often ₹3,000–₹10,000 in year one	A steeper learning curve — expect frustrating evenings	You want full ownership and flexibility, plan to grow the site, and genuinely like learning tools.
Hire a freelancer or small agency	One-time; often ₹10,000–₹60,000+ — varies widely with scope and experience	A few hours: briefing, feedback, content	Your time is worth more in the business than in page builders, or you need it done right the first time.

The truth nobody selling you anything will say

- **A DIY site that exists beats a professional site that never gets ordered.** Many businesses postpone for a year waiting to “do it properly”.
- **A cheap site done badly is not cheap.** If it is slow, broken on mobile, or invisible on Google, you paid for a liability.
- **The builder-vs-WordPress debate matters less than people think.** Your content, speed and clarity (Chapters 5–8) decide whether the site converts — not the tool.

Questions that expose a bad web developer

If you do hire, ask these four questions. Vague answers are your cue to walk away:

1. “Will I own the domain and have admin access to everything?” (Only acceptable answer: yes.)
2. “What happens after launch — who updates it, and at what cost?”
3. “Can I see two sites you built that are still live and fast on mobile?”
4. “What exactly is included — how many pages, who writes the text, basic SEO setup?”

DO THIS TODAY

Decide your route today using the table above — and write down your budget range and deadline. An undecided project is where websites go to die.

Writing words that sell (before design)

Content before design. Always. A beautiful site with weak words is a well-dressed salesperson who says nothing. Write the text first — in a plain document — and the design will be twice as easy.

The homepage formula

1. **Headline:** what you do + who for + where. “Affordable physiotherapy at home in Mangalore” beats “Welcome to our website” every time.
2. **Subheadline:** one line answering the biggest doubt — price, trust, or convenience.
3. **Primary button:** “WhatsApp us now” / “Book an appointment” — visible without scrolling on a phone.
4. **Proof:** two or three real reviews with names, your best work, years in business, certifications.
5. **Services strip:** your 3–6 services, one line each, linking to details.
6. **About strip:** your face and two sentences — people buy from people.
7. **Final button:** repeat the action. Many visitors decide at the bottom.

Service pages: answer, don’t announce

Each service page answers the questions a customer would ask in person: what is it, who is it for, what does it cost (a starting price builds more trust than silence), how long does it take, what happens next. End with the button.

The about page that actually sells

Nobody wants your life story — they want to know **why you are safe to choose**. Formula: what you believe (“no family should overpay for good dental care”), what you have done (years, customers, credentials), a real photo, and — yes — a button. The about page is often one of the most-visited pages on a small business site; do not let it be a dead end.

Words that work

- Write like you speak to a customer in your shop. Read it aloud — if you would not say it, delete it.
- “You” beats “we”. “You get a same-day report” beats “We provide timely reporting”.
- Ban the empty words: “best quality”, “customer satisfaction”, “one-stop solution”. Replace each with a specific fact.
- AI (ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini) can draft — you must add the local detail, real prices and your voice, or it will read like everyone else’s site.

DO THIS TODAY

Write your homepage headline now: what + who + where, under 12 words. Send it to two customers and ask, “Is it clear what I do?”

Design rules for non-designers

You do not need taste to have a clean website. You need restraint and a few rules. Follow these and your site will look better than most competitors':

1. **Design for the phone first.** For most local businesses the majority of visitors arrive on mobile. Build and check every page on your phone before you ever judge it on a laptop.
2. **One font family. Two at most.** Every template you will use already pairs fonts well — do not "improve" it.
3. **Two colours plus neutrals.** One main brand colour, one accent for buttons, and black/white/grey. Every extra colour makes you look less professional.
4. **Real photos beat stock photos.** A slightly imperfect photo of your actual shop, team or work builds more trust than a polished foreign stock image. Take 20 phone photos in daylight; use the best 8.
5. **Whitespace is not wasted space.** Empty space around text is what makes a site feel premium. When in doubt, remove elements — do not shrink them.
6. **Buttons must look like buttons.** Solid accent colour, action words, and the same style everywhere. On mobile, keep a WhatsApp button fixed on screen.
7. **Consistency beats creativity.** Same heading sizes, same spacing, same button style on every page. Boring and consistent converts; clever and messy does not.

The quickest path: pick a professionally designed template close to your business type, then **only change text, photos and colours**. Rearranging a good template is how good templates die.

DO THIS TODAY

Open your favourite competitor's site and yours side by side on your phone. Note three differences in photos, spacing or buttons — fix those three first.

Must-haves before you launch

A website is not “done” when it looks finished — it is done when the invisible essentials are in place. Run this checklist before telling anyone your site exists. One point per “yes”.

#	Check	Yes / No
1	Padlock shows in the browser — SSL active, site loads on https	
2	Every page checked on a real phone — no sideways scrolling, no tiny text	
3	WhatsApp button works and opens a chat with a pre-filled message (wa.me link)	
4	Phone number is tappable (click-to-call), address links to Google Maps	
5	Google Analytics (GA4) installed — so you can see visitors from day one	
6	Site added to Google Search Console and sitemap submitted — this is how you ask Google to list you	
7	Images compressed — the site loads fast on mobile data, not just office Wi-Fi	
8	Favicon set — the little logo in the browser tab (a blank one screams “unfinished”)	
9	Every form and button tested — submissions actually reach your email or WhatsApp	
10	Spelling, prices and hours proof-read by someone who is not you	

Items 5 and 6 take under an hour combined and cost nothing — yet many small business sites launch without them and fly blind for months. Analytics tells you what is happening; Search Console tells Google you exist.

DO THIS TODAY

Set up Google Analytics and Search Console today, even if the site is half-built. Both are free, and data from day one is a gift to future-you.

The SEO starter pack

SEO — search engine optimisation — just means helping Google understand and rank your pages. Agencies make it sound mystical. For a local business, the starter pack is five habits:

1. **Put your city in your page titles.** The page title is what shows as the blue link on Google. “Ladies Tailoring & Alterations in Udupi | Meera Boutique” can be found; “Home” cannot.
2. **Write a one-line description for each page** (the “meta description”) — what is on the page and why click, in the words customers actually search.
3. **One topic per page.** A page trying to rank for everything ranks for nothing. Each service gets its own page with its own title.
4. **Link your Google Business Profile to your website** — and your website to your profile. Google connects the dots; reviews there lift trust here.
5. **Name and describe your images.** “bridal-mehendi-udupi.jpg” with a short description (alt text) beats “IMG_2041.jpg” — it helps Google and visually impaired visitors alike.

What to expect (honestly)

SEO is a slow burn. New sites often take months to rank for anything competitive, and that is normal — do not let anyone sell you “page 1 in 7 days”. But local searches (“your service + your area”) are winnable much sooner, especially with a strong Google Business Profile. Do the five habits above at launch, keep collecting reviews, and let it compound.

DO THIS TODAY

Rewrite your homepage title as: what you do + your city + your business name. It is a five-minute change and the single most valuable SEO fix on most small business sites.

Launch week, day by day

Launching is not uploading — it is telling the world. Here is a simple seven-day plan for the week your site goes live:

Day 1–2 — Final checks

- Run the full Chapter 7 checklist. Fix every “no” before going further.
- Ask two friends to use the site on their phones and complete the main action. Watch where they hesitate — do not coach them.

Day 3 — Go live

- Point the domain at the site (your host or builder has a guide; it can take a few hours to work everywhere).
- Visit the site on mobile data — not your Wi-Fi — and test the WhatsApp button one more time.

Day 4 — Tell Google

- Add the website link to your Google Business Profile.
- In Search Console, confirm the sitemap is submitted and request indexing of your homepage.

Day 5 — Tell your people

- WhatsApp status + a short message to happy customers: “We finally have a website — would love your feedback: [link]”. Feedback framing gets clicks that “check out my site” never does.
- Instagram post + bio link update. Announce it like news, not an ad.

Day 6–7 — First data

- Open Google Analytics: did visitors arrive? On what device? Which page?
- Fix the small things testers and early visitors flagged. Keep a running “fix list” — do not chase perfection page by page.

DO THIS TODAY

Set your go-live date now and put it in your calendar. A website without a launch date is a hobby.

The first 30 days after launch

The first month decides whether your website becomes a salesperson or a brochure. The work is light — but it must actually happen.

Week 1 — Respond fast

Every enquiry from the site gets a reply within minutes wherever possible, not hours. Speed of reply is the cheapest conversion boost there is. Set up WhatsApp Business quick replies for your three most common questions.

Week 2 — Close the loops

- Work through the fix list from launch week.
- Check Search Console: are your pages indexed? Any mobile errors flagged?
- Ask every happy customer for a Google review — reviews lift both your map ranking and your website's persuasiveness.

Week 3 — First improvements

Open Analytics and answer three questions: Which page do people land on? Where do they leave? Did anyone click the WhatsApp button? Then make **one** improvement — usually clarifying the headline or moving the button up. One change at a time, or you will never know what worked.

Week 4 — Build the habit

- Add one new photo or one new customer review to the site.
- Check that your hours, prices and services are still accurate — stale details quietly kill trust.
- Put a monthly 30-minute “website check” in your calendar: analytics, one update, one fix. That habit is worth more than any redesign.

THE ONLY 4 NUMBERS TO TRACK THIS MONTH

Visitors • WhatsApp clicks / enquiries • Indexed pages in Search Console • New Google reviews

BONUS

20 quick tips & tricks

Small wins, most under ten minutes each. Come back whenever the site feels “almost right”.

DOMAIN & HOSTING

- 01** Turn on auto-renew for your domain the day you buy it. Expired domains take sites, email and Google rankings down with them.
- 02** Buy the .in and .com together if both are free — point one at the other. It is cheap insurance against copycats.
- 03** Save your registrar, hosting and builder logins in one place your family or partner can access. Websites outlive phones.
- 04** Check the renewal price before buying any hosting offer — year two is the real price.

CONTENT

- 05** Add a short FAQ to your busiest page — the five questions customers actually ask on WhatsApp, answered in two lines each.
- 06** Put a starting price on every service. “Starts at ₹___” filters out nobody serious and builds trust with everyone else.
- 07** End every page with a button. If a visitor reaches the bottom, they were interested — do not strand them.
- 08** Date nothing you will not update. “Latest offers — January” still on the site in June reads as a closed business.

DESIGN & MOBILE

- 09** Test your site in bright sunlight on your phone. Low-contrast grey text that looks elegant indoors disappears outdoors.
- 10** Keep your WhatsApp button in a fixed corner so it follows the visitor as they scroll.
- 11** Crop photos before uploading — show the work, not the ceiling and floor around it.
- 12** Compress every image before uploading (tinypng.com) — oversized photos are the #1 cause of slow small business sites.

SEO & GOOGLE

- 13** Add your website link to every profile you have: Google Business, Instagram bio, Facebook page, JustDial — each is a signpost.
- 14** Create one page per area you serve if you cover several towns — “Pest control in Manipal” and “Pest control in Udupi” are different searches.
- 15** Google your own business weekly (in an incognito window). What shows up is your real first impression.
- 16** Embed the Google Maps pin of your business on your contact page — it helps customers and reinforces your location to Google.

AFTER LAUNCH

- 17** Reply to website enquiries with a question, not just an answer — questions keep the conversation and the sale alive.
- 18** Screenshot your best customer WhatsApp compliments (ask permission) and turn them into website testimonials.
- 19** When something sells well offline, give it a section on the homepage within the week — the site should mirror the business.
- 20** Once a quarter, ask a recent customer to find one thing on your site (a price, your hours). Wherever they struggle is your next fix.

What to do next

You now know more about launching a website than most people who will ever quote you for one. But knowing the plan and executing it alongside running your actual business are two different things.

That is where I come in.

GET A FREE WEBSITE & MARKETING AUDIT

I will personally review your current website — or your plan for a new one — along with your Google profile and social presence, and send you a short, honest report with the **3 highest-impact fixes for your business**. No generic checklist. No obligation. If you can do the fixes yourself, great — the audit is yours to keep.

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ABOUT THEJAS

I help small businesses and service businesses improve their online presence through websites, landing pages, Meta Ads and practical AI solutions. This guide is the playbook I use in that work — shared free, because a business that understands its own website is a better client and a stronger business.

— Thejas, *Digital with Thejas*

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