

To DIY or
NOT to DIY

There's more to it than you think.

TO DIY or NOT TO DIY?

There is no doubt about it: DIY is a great option for a lot of small or new businesses on small budgets.

For some businesses and some business owners, it's the perfect solution. And for others, it can be a perfect storm, one that ends very, very messily. This guide should help you decide which category you'll fall into.

In the following pages, you'll learn:

- » 8 Skills You Need to Successfully DIY a Website
- » 3 Things You'll Be Working Without When DIYing
- » 4 Things to Be Prepared For when DIYing

It's a lot of content - because there's a lot more than goes into building a website than you might think. Stick with it, and at the end you should have a pretty good idea of whether or not you can successfully DIY your website.

First up, though, is a message to those who *think they should* DIY their website. If this is you, and you have decided you should DIY but keep putting it off, take a breath and turn the page. And give yourself permission to be open and honest.

Ready? Let's go!

TO DIY or NOT TO DIY?

You might feel like you have to DIY your website, because:

You're the DIY queen! You DIY everything! What will people think if you DON'T DIY?! Or just because of a nagging feeling.

To you, I say this, loud and clear: *you don't have to DIY your website.* Even though you've heard Squarespace is SO EASY. And Wordpress is SO EASY. And everyone else says why not just, you know, *do it yourself?!*

I'll let you in on a little secret: *it's not that easy. (Read on for the evidence!)*

Could you do it? Sure. **Will you like the end result?** Maybe.

What will it cost you? A few gray hairs and hours (*um... days? nights? weekends?*) of your life? On the money side, that might still look like the better way to go- *if you come out on the other side with a website.*

But honestly? Most people don't come out on the other side with a website. (*Statistics say less than TWO percent!*) Or, if they do, they cringe every time they think about said website. And they don't show it to anyone. Ever.

Does that sound like the website that's going to represent your business best?

I didn't think so.

So, let's me say it again: It's okay. *You don't have to DIY.* Especially if you don't want your website to scream, "I'm built on Wordpress!" (*If you're worried about that even with custom, check out these 99 websites build on Wordpress that you wouldn't guess were built on Wordpress.*)

You could DIY. Or you could hire a professional and then you could spend your time doing the thing you know how to do: running your business.

UP NEXT » 8 Skills You Need to Successfully DIY a Website

8 Skills You Need to Successfully DIY a Website

Glad you're still with me! Like I said earlier, there are many unexpected skills that come into place when DIYing a website.

If you pick a template that you love every component of, have content that looks really similar to the content in the template, and are confident in your tech skills, you might get away without these skills. But that's rarely the case!

So let's take a look at those skills that will lead you to a successful DIY. I'm going to break them up into three parts: Content, Design, and Tech.

» CONTENT

You'll be more likely to be successful at DIYing your website, if:

- 1. You have a business plan.** Meaning, you know exactly what your business does, how it does it, and more importantly, why. You know who buys from you and what your target market is. Every business (*even Target*) has a target market, and no one (*not even Target*) tries to target the whole world. Follow me there? **FIND YOUR TARGET MARKET.**
- 2. You like to write.** This might mean that you took writing in college or that you have a pen pal. It might mean that you enjoy sending a Christmas letter once a year and everyone tells you how great it is. It might even mean that you like to journal - although it's more of an indicator of success if you're writing for someone else to read and correctly comprehend rather than your own reflection.
- 3. You're organized.** You like to make charts and figure out the best flow - whether it's seating guests in the right places at a dinner party or making sure your kids get off to school efficiently.

» DESIGN

You'll be more likely to be succesful at DIYing your website, if:

4. You enjoy decorating your home. This might mean that you start on Pinterest, but it means you actually get to the decorating part, too. You enjoy trying different throw pillows to see how they affect the mood of the room and you understand that lamps are works of art in-and-of themselves. You enjoy swatches of all sorts, but are not overwhelmed by options. You can pick a palette, choose your items, and complete a room.

5. You enjoy putting an outfit together. Just like decorating a house, decorating yourself takes time and intent, too. You have a style and you are drawn to things in stores that you know will wear well on your body. You know what you like and you know what you don't.

» TECH

You'll be more likely to be succesful at DIYing your website, if:

6. You're somewhat skilled with one of the Adobe Suite programs, Publisher, or PowerPoint. Once you've decided to DIY your website, it helps to mock up what you want it to look like. By mocking up, I mean creating a really rough sketch of what you want the final to look like. You can also try this on paper.

7. You're a user of social media and like figuring out what your cover photo and profile photo will be. You change them and find it fun and easy. At the very base level, creating a templated website will be somewhat like changing your profile photos, over and over again.

8. You're not overwhelmed by online services and you've used at least one before. You don't mind when Facebook changes its layout and you find it easy to navigate through large, complicated software that you've never seen before. The online web builders all say that they are EASY and that kids can do it. They are right - kids CAN do it, because kids have grown up with technology since day 1. It's different for the rest of us.

UP NEXT » 3 Things You'll Be Working Without When DIYing

3 Things You'll Be Working Without When DIYing

Rarely will you see the following on any proposal you get from a web designer - that's because these three things are inherently included in every design project that is completed by a professional. When you DIY, you'll probably be flying a little blind without them.

Three things you will probably be without:

1. Outside perspective
2. Ownership of your website
3. Easy access to knowledge

While none of these are completely critical for success, they are to be considered before embarking on a DIY journey. Let's take a look:

» OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE

When you run your own business, you get inside of it. Sometimes that insularity is just what you need to succeed. But sometimes it makes you blind to what your people need or want. You might be lucky enough to have a business partner, a significant other, or even a client who can serve as a sounding board for you. If not, working with a web designer can bring in that outside perspective that you're lacking, and help prevent the oversight of simple things your customers need.

» OWNERSHIP OF YOUR WEBSITE

There are three main DIY website platforms on the market right now: WIX, Squarespace, and Weebly. On each, you own your content, but you do not "own" your website. You pay monthly to use their template and code. It's kind of like renting an office versus buying it - in the short term, it costs less up front; long term, buying is a better investment. A self hosted Wordpress site is the "buying your office" version.

DIY?

» EASY ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE

Web designers and developers have all of their prior experiences as their knowledge base. You will be missing a lot of knowledge that professionals have in their heads already, about usability, organization, and hierarchy. A good designer/developer also spends time each week learning the latest techniques and reading up on the latest research. You'll have to sift through a lot of not-so-good advice to find helpful info.

That doesn't mean that this knowledge isn't available widely on the internet; it is. What it does mean that you'll need to devote that much more time to research and learning, and then implementing, the things that professionals already know and do for you. You might have to try things out that they already know don't work.

Here are a few examples of things you might not know:

People read lists - sometimes before they read anything else on the page. That's how drawn we are to them! Use them, wisely, and draw your readers in.

Call to Action buttons are much more effective when they are in a little used color on the website. Studies have shown that buttons that clash with the rest of the site still perform well - people click!

Flat design isn't everything. Research has shown that some of the new Apple interfaces are too simple. There's no indication of where user should click, which makes them difficult to use.

Options for DIY

The three main options right now, as I mentioned above, are **WIX, Weebly, and Squarespace**. If you google "Weebly or Squarespace or WIX 2015", you'll get a whole slew of results for people testing them. Some love Squarespace, others find it confusing. The same can be said for WIX and Weebly.

It's almost a consensus that Squarespace has the best templates, but they tend to be set up really well for personal websites and less well for businesses.

UP NEXT » 4 Things to Be Prepared for When DIYing

4 Things to Be Prepared for When DIYing a Website

Let's just jump right in, shall we?

1. Be prepared for it to take more time than you think. Estimate the longest time you think it will take and then double it. And then double it again. I realize that sounds crazy - but time will disappear and you will wonder why you are up at 2am, stuffing your face with empty carbs because you just want to finish *one. more. page.*

2. Be prepared with your favorite stress buster in case things go downhill quickly. When working with new-to-you technology, things will go wrong. Be kind to yourself, and be patient. Take frequent breaks.

3. Be prepared to pay more than free. The free plans often include advertising and don't include a custom domain name, which means you only take a half-step towards professional instead of a full. The cheapest paid plan is often the best bet. Sometimes, however, the features you want are only available on the premium plan.

4. Be prepared to quit while you're ahead and find a professional. (*This 2014 study shows that only 3% of people who start building a site on a website builder actually launch their sites. Yikes! This surprised even me.*)

DIY?

So, will you be DIYing?

Or hiring a professional?

It's time to weigh your options! I'll leave you with this thought - when someone asks me face to face if they should DIY their website, I always tell them:

"If you are Type A, self-motivated, organized, like to research, are not intimidated by technology and can put together an outfit or a room (and have fun doing it!), then give it a whirl! Give yourself room to fail, because statistically, you very well might. But you'll never know unless you try!"

If you have questions or comments, I'd love to hear them! Email me at linda@rubyreddesignstudio.com

yours very truly,

Linda

