

# VACCODA.

## Our bumper guide to setting up a new business!

Our bumper guide is packed full of actionable hints, tips, advice and much more to help you get things right when setting up a new business!



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## Introduction

### Why did we create this guide?

First of all, big thanks for downloading our guide to setting up a new business - (a bumper guide no less!) and for having a read. We hope that you find it helpful and that you can use some of the information contained within this guide in your business.

We have written this guide based on many years of working with entrepreneurs of start-ups and those that have more established businesses, so we really have covered a cross-section of business types, sectors and industries that are operating at different stages from the start-up phase, to businesses that have been running for years but perhaps lost their way a little with things.

### Its all in the question

We tend to find that most of the time we get asked questions when business owners have either overlooked the fundamentals, lack in areas of knowledge, don't have the staff that specialise in specific areas or they simply struggle to understand some aspects to business, digital media and/or digital marketing.

We like to think that we have been able to steer all those who have struggled in one area or another down the right path to help them understand things.

We normally find that it's the same (or very similar) questions that we get asked, so, to help you, we've created this helpful guide based on all the many questions we've been asked over time.

### But we don't know it all

We don't profess to know it all with business and there will no doubt be information that we haven't included in this guide, but our aim was to produce a guide that covers as many aspects of digital media and marketing as well as more general business start-up advice including loads of actionable hints, tips, ideas and considerations to help you make the right decisions and to avoid some of the many pitfalls that can appear out of nowhere, especially during the early days of a new business – and even in more established companies too.

We want this guide to be helpful to everyone who reads it, and even if there is just one piece of advice within this guide that helps you, then we have done our job – smiles all round! We have also written this guide to be to-the-point, focusing on the most important actionable information without needing to read through loads of fluff!

### Want to know the answer to something?

If there are any questions you have that aren't covered in this guide, then please feel free to [get in touch](#) with us and ask away – by asking us you are also helping others too, as we will add your question(s) to this guide as well!

## The first steps

### Congratulations!

If you have decided to leave your current day job and go it alone, or maybe you have a life-long dream to be your own boss but not quite sure how to go about setting a business up then this guide is for you.

Equally, if you already run a business but have been looking for some guidance in certain areas, then hopefully our guide will help you too!

### Time to go it alone

But first – congratulations to those of you who have decided to start a new business!

It takes courage, discipline, dedication and determination to make a new business work, and the first step towards your new self-employed working life is to take the plunge – often the hardest step, especially for those that are still in full-time employment and have become used to the routine of working for someone else and, of course, the regular income, and on that note, when considering the idea of starting up a new business, it is always best to have some savings behind you as a financial buffer - very important!

### Naming your new business

This is probably the single most important aspect of any new business, but given how many businesses there are in existence, it can often be difficult to come up with a great business name that is not only unique but also available to use.

What do you mean by 'available to use' I hear you say? Well, herein lies the problem; people come up with a great name for their business but often fail to do even the most basic of checks to see if the name can be registered as a company, if the

Domain Names can be registered (in both .co.uk and .com versions ideally to protect your business/brand) and whether there are any trademarks that are pending or active using the same business name that you have thought up.

### Do your research!

It's also just as important to do proper research on Google to see if anyone trades under the same business name, and if they do, who are they, where are they located and what do they do?

You can never – NEVER – do too much research when it comes to brainstorming names for your new business, after all, most new businesses must watch the pennies, so the last thing you want is to plough ahead with registering Domain Names, and getting everything else done like a website, logo and stationery only to receive a sternly worded letter or email demanding you change the name of your business or face Court action.

### Play on words!

Another way to come up with an inventive business name is to write a list of words that relate to your business, perhaps think about different terminology or references that might relate to what you do, and then put words together, switch words around; in fact, do whatever you feel works best for you and your business- If a name/word appeals to you then there is no reason why you can't use it.

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## Bonjour!

you could even use words from other languages to create a name for your new business, however it's worth pointing out that if you decide to go for a more exotic sounding business name, (words in another language), you should make sure the translation of the word(s) literally translates into what you expect it to be rather than something inappropriate or offensive!

## Some online resources to help you

To make it easier when choosing a business name, we have included links to some really handy resources online below:

### Companies House web check

<http://wck2.companieshouse.gov.uk>

Here you can find out if there are any active, previously active or dissolved Limited companies – visit Companies House Web Check.

### LCN – to check for Domain Name availability

<https://www.lcn.com/>

Check to see if your business name is available as both a .co.uk and .com Domain Name.

### Search for a trade mark

<https://www.gov.uk/search-for-trademark>

Go here to see if a similar trade mark already exists and to find out who owns a trade mark.

### Search for a patent

<https://www.gov.uk/search-for-patent>

You can also search for patents in case you are thinking about inventing something.

## Google

[google.co.uk](http://google.co.uk)

Sounds obvious, but make sure you undertake thorough research on Google to see if anyone else trading with your proposed business name.

## Social Media

<https://namechk.com>

You should also check to make sure the relevant Social Media platforms that you wish to use have your new business name available. Namechk allows you to check all platforms at once.

The key thing to do is research and then research some more. Take time to carefully and thoroughly check to make sure your new business name is free to use in all areas.

It's better to spend more time at this early stage checking properly, rather than having to spend more money at a later stage changing your branding, artwork, print and anything else all because you failed to check your proposed business name properly at the start.

## Don't forget Domain Names!

So, you have carefully researched, double and triple checked to make sure your new business name is available – great! The next step is to secure your Domain Names by registering them.

Your web design company can either register them for you on your behalf (we do this for many of our clients), or you can do this yourself (but remember to select “auto renew” on your Domain Names where possible and make sure you always have a valid debit/credit card on the account, so you don't lose your Domain Names!). If you do choose to register the Domain Names yourself, there are plenty of companies that you can use to register them; a couple of great options are listed as follows:

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**LCN.com**  
[www.lcn.com](http://www.lcn.com)

**123-Reg**  
[www.123-reg.co.uk](http://www.123-reg.co.uk)

**Names.co.uk**  
[www.names.co.uk](http://www.names.co.uk)

We always recommend registering both **.co.uk** and **.com** versions of your chosen Domain Name where possible too, so be creative and ingenious with your business name so you can find Domain Name's where both options are available.

### Secure your Social Media platforms

The next stage is to think about what Social Media platforms you are going to be using, and it's also advisable to check to see whether your business name is available on all the social media platforms you intend to use before you register your Domain Name(s) and quite possibly before you settle upon your business name too.

Doing it this way saves you headaches further down the line when trying to think of different ways to spell your business name on social media platforms because all other options are already taken, so this is a 3-pronged approach for checking things at the same time, that being:

- 
- ▶ Business name availability
- 
- ▶ Domain Name availability
- 
- ▶ Social Media platform availability
- 

For most businesses, the best and most popular Social Media platforms to use are Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and

Instagram. Just Google these social media platforms to find their websites and sign-up.

To make life easier, when checking for name availability on social media platforms, using the tool mentioned previously (<https://namechk.com>) will enable you to check every platform at the same time and will show you at a glance whether your chosen business name is (or isn't) available across all platforms.

It is recommended that you secure all your social media platforms at this stage whether you intend to use them straight away or not to prevent anyone else registering them. You will need an email address to register your Social Media accounts with – ideally you should use an email address associated to your business, but if you only have a personal email account at this stage then that will be fine to use.

With Facebook, you will need to have an existing personal Facebook profile to setup a business page. To create a business page, simply log into your personal Facebook account, and at the very top right next to privacy shortcuts and notifications, there is a downward pointing arrow icon. Click on this icon to expand the drop-down menu, and click "Create Page". The rest is self-explanatory.

### Hosting for your website and email addresses

Website and email hosting is important. You need it to put your website on the internet, and you also need email accounts so you can send and receive emails under your business name. It is recommended that you invest in the best solution you can afford. In years gone by when the internet first came into existence, cheap hosting accounts (some as cheap as £1, \$1 or even 1p a month!) offered a limited service and in many cases the hosting account was slow and unreliable.

## The first steps

In more recent years the same principles apply, and it really isn't best practice to use cheap, slow unreliable hosting as it will not only annoy your customers when trying to browse your website but Google won't thank you for it either and will result in less visibility on Google when people search for your business if you decide to do a **Search Engine Optimisation strategy**. It is a much better bet to spend more money on hosting for a better service. We offer hosting solutions for small, medium and large sized websites, find out more here:

<https://vaccodadesign.com/support>

An important point to make here – don't use a free email account (such as a Yahoo, Gmail or Hotmail email account) to send and receive business emails as its simply not professional, it doesn't look good and could give your business an 'amateurish' image.

Once you have chosen and ordered your hosting, your business email addresses can be setup and your website holding page created to let the world know about the upcoming launch of your new website! For email, you can have any email addresses you like. Some of the most commonly chosen email addresses are as follows:

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▶ info@

---

▶ hello@

---

▶ your-name@

---

▶ yourname@

---

▶ enquiries@

---

▶ sales@

---

▶ webmaster@

---

▶ accounts@

---

You don't have to be limited to just these options though – you can choose any email address you want!

We offer great hosting and can give you loads of advice if you need it! Find out more about our hosting service here:

<https://vaccodadesign.com/support/>

# Give your business an identity

## Logo design and brand identity

The next and most important stage is to give your business a visual identity – a logo and some colour! Many of the best logos and brand identities are often the simplest and cleanest.

Take Google for example, before they had a logo with shadows and used a traditional looking font, but now they have an ultra-modern design that incorporates their brand colours and uses a contemporary font and a flat design (flat design means they have no bevels or gradients or drop-shadows) and we think it looks great!

Other well-known businesses such as eBay also dropped their original logo in favour of a modern, clean flat design too.

### What about colours? Where should I start?

Another important aspect to the design of your logo is the colour (or, colours if you are having more than one) you choose. When deciding upon colours, it's not always about what your favourite colour is but more about what colour(s) suit your business type, industry and/or sector.

That said, we aren't suggesting that you cannot use your favourite colour or to not be a bit 'out there' with your colour-scheme, but it's always best to research your competitors to get a feel for the logo variations and colours used first before deciding upon your colour(s).

A great website to get colour-inspired and to pick your favourite colour scheme is a website called Adobe Color. This website allows you to pick all sorts of different colour combinations, from 'Analogue' colour palettes, right through to 'Complimentary' and 'Triad' colour schemes. Check it out by clicking on the link as follows:

### Adobe Color

<https://color.adobe.com/>

### What do I need to ask my graphic designer?

Some of the questions you need to think about before appointing a graphic designer to create your logo and brand identity are as follows below.

## Questions about your business in general

The first few questions are designed to make you think about your logo from more of a business perspective – to look at your competitors (and their logos / brand identities) and think about what they do right and perhaps get wrong, but also to consider your customers and target audiences.

These questions also help you to define your own business objectives, your unique selling points and how you see yourself being different to your competition.

### What does your business do?

*(Describe your business in simple terms)*

### Who are your main competitors?

*(Operating in the same or similar market – identify main competitors by name or web address)*

### What makes you different from your competitors? Define your USPs.

*(Spell out your USP's – Unique Selling Points – why a client should choose you, what you do better than others)*



## Give your business an identity

### **What keywords best describe your business? What do you want your logo to say about your business?**

*(For example; innovative, reliable, friendly, authoritative, warm, trustworthy)*

### **What is the exact wording that should be used on your logo?**

*(This may be your full business name or a shortened version of it that you want for the logo)*

## Questions about your target market

The next set of questions helps you to determine your target market(s) and the sort of people you want to attract. These questions help a designer to understand your sector / industry specifically and the sort of logo styling / visual that would work well for you.

### **Who are your ideal clients or customers?**

*(The type of company/individual/buyer or specific clients you want to target)*

### **Who are your target audiences?**

*(The type of people, industry, roles, demographics, locations)*

### **How are your customers most likely to encounter your business?**

*(For example; website, phone/email, events, business cards, documents, staff on the job, signage, uniforms, brochures)*

## Questions about your business name and logo

The following questions detail what you do / don't like, where the logo will be used and helps the designer to understand the sort of logo designs you do and don't like. This is important

and will narrow down the sort of design and style your logo and brand identity will be created around.

### **Is your business name registered? Do you want the logo to be trademarked?**

*(Trade marking helps protect you against others using a similar name for a similar business type, in your country of operation)*

### **Do you currently have a logo in use?**

*(If you already have something you use, it would be beneficial for the designer to see this)*

### **If you do have an existing logo, why are you changing it now?**

*(Helps the designer to understand what you did/didn't like about your existing logo)*

### **Is there a strap/tagline to accompany the logo?**

*(For example; Tesco has "Every little helps" or Asda has "Saving you money every day")*

### **Where do you intend to use your logo?**

*(For example; on a website, corporate literature, signage, on a vehicle, etc)*

### **What logos do you find unappealing and why?**

*(Really important question – helps the designer to understand what you DON'T like or want! Find examples of logos you don't like – it doesn't matter if the logos are completely unrelated to what you do – this is purely for creative reasons and to get a feel for what logos you dislike)*

### **What logos do you find appealing and why?**

*(Really important question – helps the designer to understand what you DO like or want! Same as the above question, but find examples of logos you really like)*

## Give your business an identity

### **What images/icons/symbols best represent your business?**

*(The designer may include an icon / emblem / graphic on your logo)*

### **Do you have any preferences regarding colours or typography/font style?**

*(Give examples ONLY if there are any visual styles you particularly love or hate. Remember these can be subjective – a logo is for your target audience as well as for you and staff/colleagues, so be clear on font styles you do and don't like)*

Giving your designer as much information as possible right from the get-go will not only help them to come up with the perfect logo for your business but will also speed up the whole design process and you will have one very grateful graphic designer!

## All about your website

### Design of your website

Just like the logo / brand identity design process, website design is equally as important; and you must spend some time thinking about what you do and don't like in a website, what you want your website to do and how you envisage your website looking when its finished and live online.

Nowadays, clean, simple and easy to use websites are the most successful when it comes to conversion rates (conversion rate means turning a website visitor into a customer) so try to resist the urge to overload your website. There is a golden rule that a customer should be able to find anything on your website within 3-4 clicks – this alone tells you that your website should be simple in both concept and design.

#### What do I need to ask my web designer?

Some of the questions you need to think about before appointing a web designer to create your new website are as follows:

### Intro questions

The following questions will help you to think about your website from all angles, such as your objectives, unique selling points and from a creative perspective, and will greatly assist your website designer when you arrange your first meeting.

#### What's your business vision?

*(Describe what you do or where you want to be in a brief summary)*

#### What are the main objectives for your website?

*(For example; to attract new customers, raise business profile, increase volume/value of sales, change brand perceptions, launch a new product/service, etc)*

#### What specific outcomes do you want to achieve from people who visit the website?

*(For example; to get people to contact you via phone/email, to buy from you online, to tell friends/colleagues about your website or to contribute information, etc)*

#### Who are the target audiences?

*(Think about location(s), job/role, industry/market, understanding of your business/industry, typical age/gender, income/social level if relevant, online experience/habits, and so on)*

#### Do you already have a website? If so, what do you want to change about it? If not, do you have a domain name yet, or know which domain/s you want to use? Do they match your business name?

*(Sounds simple, but it is important to define what you do and don't like about an existing website if you have one. Likewise, for new businesses so many people overlook the importance of registering Domain Names as soon as you have decided upon a business name – so get this done first!)*

#### Who are your competitors (or similar organisations)? Which websites do you see as benchmarks?

*(Research and find out who your main competitors are. Identify key competitors and their websites and make a note of them. Think about what you like about their websites and perhaps what you would do differently/better)*

### Questions about who you do and don't like

The following questions focus on what websites you do and don't like and will consider your project from a creative perspective. They can be any websites you like and it doesn't matter what they do – look at the websites creatively and note down why you do/don't like them.

# All about your website

## Do you have any preferences for website design style – colours, fonts, type of images?

*(Please provide examples of any sites you like the look of, if any. It doesn't matter if the website(s) you like are completely unrelated to what you do – this is for creative purposes. Try to explain what you do and don't like about the example websites you send over too)*

## How do you want the website to feel?

*(For example; friendly, calm, professional, simple, etc. This should relate to your brand personality – how you want to be perceived, what the experience is like for website visitors)*

## What are the strengths or USPs (unique selling points) and messages you want to communicate?

*(An important aspect to your design and should be well-considered during the build, for example, you might have key services, products or information that you want to show on your homepage, so your web designer would need to provision enough space to include this)*

## Do you have any visual material, such as photos or illustrations? Do you own copyright for these?

*(as discussed above, images are incredibly important and will help to really sell your website to your target audiences. Good quality images make all the difference. Make sure you either take great photos yourself or source high quality free or paid-for images – links to websites above)*

## Questions about website pages, content and functionality

The next set of questions will ensure you have thought about all the pages you would like on your website and content you want to include along with any functionality you would like built into your website, such as e-commerce, merchant accounts and more.

## Do you know what the page titles are for your website?

*(page titles will form the structure of your website. It is important you think carefully about page titles and the sort of information you want to include on your website within each of the pages – see below)*

## Do you know what content you want to include in the website?

*(think about the pages you want on your website as discussed above and the content you want to include on each page. Put yourself in the shoes of your customers – what would you want to know?)*

## What functions might the site need?

*(E.g. shop, user registration, blog, forms, website search, a gallery or any other functionality that you should write down in your own words and explain to your web designer, so they can grasp what you want to achieve)*

## For ecommerce websites, how many products will you be adding to your website?

*(As a guide, you need to create a product stock list either in a Word document or Excel spreadsheet that contains the product name, price, colour variants, size variants, description of the product, product weight, delivery options and any other product variant or detail, along with all your product images as high quality image files. Having everything together before you start will make your life a lot easier when it comes to adding the products into your new e-commerce store)*

## All about your website

### **For ecommerce websites, do you have your delivery information and terms and conditions of sale written?**

*(This is a very important part of any e-commerce store, and you should have your delivery information and terms and conditions of sale already written up that includes distance selling regulations where necessary, delivery costs and lead time – next day, 48 hour for example, your returns policy for unwanted/faulty/damaged goods and any other detailed delivery and sale related information)*

### **For ecommerce websites, do you have a payment service provider (also known as merchant account) sorted?**

*(For e-commerce, you need to have a way for people to pay for products/services on your website. Payment service providers include PayPal, WorldPay, Barclays ePDQ, SagePay and others)*

### **How often will content be updated? Which content is likely to change most often? Do you want to be able to update it yourself (via a Content Management System – CMS)?**

*(This helps your web designer to understand how often the website will change and what sort of Content Management System – or CMS for short – should be used for ease of updating)*

## Technical and general questions

The last set of questions considers all the technical aspects to your project, such as email addresses, updating and timescales to completion, as well as any final general questions.

### **Do you need website hosting and email accounts? If not, please advise on email arrangements**

*(Either way, let your web designer know whether you intend to host with them or if you have your own hosting already setup. If you have your own hosting already sorted, your web designer*

*will need full access, so they can put your website live once it is finished – and setup email accounts if needed)*

### **Do you have any specific technical requirements?**

*(For example; preferred Content Management System, use of specific plug-ins, level of accessibility, etc. If you don't have preferences, your web designer will follow best practice)*

### **Do you have a Domain Name?**

*(Although the registration of Domain Names has already been discussed in an earlier in part 1 of this guide, your web designer will ask this question, so be sure to have the login details to your Domain Name handy)*

### **Supply all business contact details**

*(Obvious but often missed out until the end. Remember to send all your company contact details over to your web designer, such as full business name, contact numbers – telephone and mobile number if including, full address and postcode, all social media account links and any other contact info you would like to show on your website. It would also be a good idea to let your designer know if you have any specific requirements for any customer contact forms on your website as well)*

### **Do you have a budget for your web design project?**

*(An important question as the budget you have allocated to your project will help the web designer determine the best options for you based on the budget you specify)*

### **What are your preferred timescales and deadlines for the site launch?**

*(Very important to know this so your web designer can schedule in the project – make sure you let them know when you would like your website completed by so this allows enough time to design and build it).*

# All about your website

## Your website content - what you need to think about

One of the most important elements of any website is the text content and the images used. We would recommend that before engaging a website designer to start the build of your new website, you write up all the text you would like to include on it and get as many – if not all – of your photos and images together.

Any web designer or design agency will request the website content soon after you have given them the go-ahead to start the project, so to have this already done and ready to go before your website gets built will considerably speed up the whole process. The best way to create the text content in a Word document, with clearly labelled sub-titles and sections so your web designer knows which content belongs where on your website.

As a guide, the main pages you may want to create content for would be as follows:

### Homepage

*(think about your key products or services – the most important information goes onto the homepage)*

### About Us page

*(On this page you can talk about you, your business, why your customers should choose you, your unique selling points, accreditations and awards, provenance or anything else you would like your customers to know)*

### Our Services page

*(Use this page to showcase your services – try to be as detailed as possible, and if needed assign one page per service you offer so you can give your website visitors as much information as possible)*

### Blog section

*(Blogs are great, but don't have one if you don't intend to keep it updated. A website that contains a blog that is months and months out of date can have a detrimental effect, so only request one if you intend to add at least one new blog per month)*

### Gallery/Portfolio page

*(this page is great for showing off your work or gallery of products / projects completed / things you have made or anything else for that matter, but only use the best quality images you can – poor quality, blurry or grainy images won't sell themselves – or you)*

### Product pages and images

*(If you are having an e-commerce store built, remember to use the best quality product pictures you can find. There is nothing worse than a well-designed e-commerce store that is let down by poor quality product images. Remember your customers are on your website to buy your products, so the least you can do is use high quality product images – not postage stamp sized blurry pictures that screams of laziness – this won't do the product, website or your business any justice)*

### Contact Us page

*(Include all your main contact details such as address, email and telephone number, a contact form so customers can easily enquire about your products or services, a map of your location, opening times and social media links. This will help convert a website visitor into a customer)*

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## Images and pictures - sourcing images and sizing

Images are just as important as good quality text content, so spend time sourcing the best images you can, or take your own high-quality photos.

If you do need to get stock images for your website, there are many websites that offer great quality royalty-free (no charge) or paid-for stock images, these are:

### Free image resources

**Pixabay**  
[pixabay.com](http://pixabay.com)

**HiResStock**  
[hiresstock.com](http://hiresstock.com)

**Picjumbo**  
[picjumbo.com](http://picjumbo.com)

**Pexels**  
[pexels.com](http://pexels.com)

**StockSnap**  
[stocksnap.io](http://stocksnap.io)

**Gratisography**  
[gratisography.com](http://gratisography.com)

**Unsplash**  
[unsplash.com](http://unsplash.com)

**Morguefile**  
[morguefile.com](http://morguefile.com)

**Freelimages**  
[freeimages.com](http://freeimages.com)

**GetRefe**  
[getrefe.com](http://getrefe.com)

### Paid-for image resources

**iStockPhoto**  
[istockphoto.com](http://istockphoto.com)

**Shutterstock**  
[shutterstock.com](http://shutterstock.com)

**Dreamstime**  
[dreamstime.com](http://dreamstime.com)

**Adobe Stock**  
<https://stock.adobe.com/uk>

**Gettyimages**  
[www.gettyimages.co.uk](http://www.gettyimages.co.uk)

There may be other websites that also offer free images as well as paid-for ones, but the above list covers the main websites we use on a regular basis.

### Important!

Remember to take the biggest photos you can (not small cropped photos) and to only supply your web designer with large size images – again not small cropped images. If you need assistance with this your web designer will be able to help you.

When you send a list of images over to your web designer, make sure you let them know what page each image is meant to go on. The best way to let them know is to reference to the filename of the image, so for example “image-01.jpg goes

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on homepage” or “picture-of-doggy.jpg goes on dog walking page” and so on.

### **Be prepared**

Going into a design agency with a clear idea right from the start will help to speed things up considerably and will make your web designer very happy!



# Stationery and printed materials

## Your stationery

A business is not a business without good stationery, or a business card at the very least to give out to potential clients – and don't skimp on this, spend a bit extra to get the very best business cards you can – handing out a thin, tatty, poorly designed business card will send out all the wrong signals about your business – remember first impressions count! More on the print side of things below.

So most, if not all businesses need a selection of branded stationery so make sure you provision for this. Typically, most companies have / use the following main stationery items:

- ▶ Business cards (essential!)
- ▶ Letterheads
- ▶ Compliment slips
- ▶ Some sort of general information leaflet (in some cases)

A word of advice; make sure that whoever designs your stationery does it professionally. There is nothing worse than blurry images or poor design, and just like cheap print can give a negative first impression, bad design can also have the same adverse impact on your business.

## Don't forget your email signature

It is also wise to have an email signature designed as it rounds-off your emails nicely and looks professional. In case you aren't sure what an e-mail signature is, it usually consists of your business logo, your name, position in the company and your contact details along with any social media links and is found at the bottom of all emails you send / reply to.

Vaccoda can design your stationery and email signature – more info can be found here: <https://vaccodadesign.com/design/>

## Printing - what you need to think about

Just as important as your stationery design is the print. So many businesses skimp on printing when they really don't need to.

There is nothing worse than receiving a flimsy, bendy business card that feels as though it's been printed on toilet paper – and as mentioned above, that's not the sort of first and lasting impression you want to leave with your potential customers.

With professional printing so affordable nowadays, it won't break the bank to go for more luxury print finishes, such as 450gsm business cards (450gsm stands for the weight of the paper / stock material used to print on – the higher the gsm, the better quality the paper / stock material is) or 120gsm letterheads and compliment slips. For flyers go for something nice and thick, like 400gsm, and for leaflets something a bit thinner, so 170gsm will work just fine.

Did you know that Vaccoda offers luxury printing services at low prices! Find out more here: <https://vaccodadesign.com/design/>

## Keeping your data safe

When you setup a new business or even if you have an existing, established company, have you ever given any thought to what would happen in worst case scenarios such as a burglary, if you had a fire or if your hard drive failed for example?

### Computer hard drives don't break ... do they?

If this thought hasn't crossed your mind then you are not alone. Many business owners seem to completely overlook or not even think about the consequences of complete loss of data. Imagine you have worked hard to build your business and have produced hundreds, if not thousands of documents and data that are vital to the day-to-day running of your business, only to lose them in a fire, hardware failure, theft or through accidental damage (such as dropping your laptop or external hard drive). You are then faced with the monumental task of having to re-create all the documents again – or most of them – from scratch.

### I use USB sticks – is that okay?

It might even be a case that you save all your business files and data to a USB stick for example, however this method is not really recommended for a primary backup solution due to USB failure that will inevitably happen as the device reaches the end of its working life and begins to fail – in this situation it can be difficult to recover files from failing USB devices and in most instances, impossible to recover any data at all.

Other options include backing up data to multiple external devices (such as various USB sticks and external Hard Drives), but just like backing up to one device (such as a USB stick) as mentioned previously, it is also not wise to back-up to multiple backup devices because these will eventually fail as well, and it can be a headache trying to keep track of what device is storing what data.

All in all, finding yourself in the situation where you have failing backup devices (whether its one or multiple external backup devices you use) for many businesses can be fatal, however you needn't have to worry about losing any vital documents or data if you take the necessary steps to back up the data first in the correct way.

### I bet it costs a lot?

Data backup doesn't have to be expensive and the cost should be considered as a monthly business overhead due to the importance and necessity of backing up your valuable data to ensure it is kept safe and secure at all times.

The cost of backing up your data is a small price to pay when taking into consideration the amount of disruption and time that would need to be spent recreating all the lost documents and data again from scratch – the financial implications of this can be huge in some cases.

### Cloud backup

The safest and most efficient way to back up your data is to use a cloud backup solution, like [Vaccoda OwnCloud](#), which backs up your files securely to our private cloud environment in real-time. More information on our Vaccoda OwnCloud data backup service can be found here: <https://vaccodadesign.com/vaccoda-owncloud-data-backup/>

In short, it is wise to prioritise data backup right from the start, so you never have to worry about data loss.

# Let's market your business!

## Marketing overview

Online marketing is critical to any business looking to get found on Google, Twitter, Facebook, or anywhere else on the internet for that matter. Depending on how you approach your online marketing strategy it will determine how much website traffic your website will receive, how many sales you generate or how many customers enquire about your products and/or services.

### To market ... or not to market?

Having a website without implementing an online marketing plan will, in most cases, end up in a website that never gets seen and a business that makes no money. Online marketing using social media or marketing on Google will act as a virtual 'signpost' directing customers to your website.

### Get me found online!

There are literally millions and millions of websites out there, and its highly likely that all of your competitors will have websites that are being actively marketed on Google, on social media or both, so given this fact, if you choose to not market your business online then you will stand very little chance of being found by your target audience(s).

Whilst online marketing is an investment of your money, it is a necessary expense to ensure the long-term success of your business; even if you have premises that your customers can visit, such as a shop, office or industrial unit like a warehouse or similar, it's highly likely that a majority of your customers will find you online first and visit you as a result.

## Social Media

Too many business owners think they need to have an array of social media accounts for the sake of having them because...

***"All my competitors use social media, so I must sign-up to it as well"***

...but this train of thought is not right.

We've seen many businesses that have dormant Instagram accounts or Facebook profiles that haven't been updated in 2 years, or a Twitter account that has a few "hello everyone" style tweets that were posted soon after the profile was originally created and then left to collect dust for months – even years!

### I don't know what social media platforms to use!

In short, you need to understand what each Social Media platform has to offer, and whether it is relevant or even appropriate for your business before deciding upon which social media platforms you should be using.

For example, in our opinion it would be pointless for a funeral services company to have an Instagram account, but Instagram would be perfect for a company that makes decorative cakes / fashion / pretty things.

That said, the main Social Media platforms that most businesses use nowadays are:

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▶ Facebook

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▶ Twitter

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▶ LinkedIn

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## Let's market your business!

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▶ Instagram

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▶ YouTube

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▶ Pinterest

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▶ Google+ (Google My Business)

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▶ Vimeo

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However, as already mentioned, you don't need to use all the accounts listed above – only the ones that are relevant to your business.

It is equally important to plan a proper Social Media marketing strategy. Not doing this will result in social media accounts that post uninteresting, unrelated content sporadically and this can be more detrimental to your business than you might think.

The first time a potential customer might encounter your business could be via Social Media, and if you have a Twitter or Facebook account that hasn't been updated in months/years and a new customer sees that, they may think you are not trading anymore and go elsewhere, or simply realise that you can't be bothered to use Social Media correctly and this in itself can send out all the wrong signals to your potential customers! You need to make sure your business doesn't fall foul.

**I can't do it ... I don't have the time ... I don't understand it!**

We offer monthly [Social Media management](#) services – why not have a chat with us about the options? We also have many blogs that provide guidance on how to use Social Media effectively along with top tips – have a [browse through our blogs](#) for ideas!

### Search Engine Optimisation (SEO for short)

The other two giants of the online marketing world are Search Engine Optimisation and Google AdWords (Pay-Per-Click).

Both as important as each other, however offer very different marketing solutions, but let's look at Search Engine Optimisation first.

#### So, what's this SEO you speak of?

Search Engine Optimisation (or SEO) is all about online visibility and awareness through the optimisation of your website to rank high up, organically in Google search results pages (also known as 'SERPs' for short). SEO is progressive service that gives steady month-on-month improvements with your online visibility and should be considered a long-term winner that can reap incredible, consistent results for business owners with excellent exposure online and a steady stream of website traffic, enquiries and sales.

#### Do I really need SEO though?

As you are aware through your own use of Google to search for information, products or services online, Google is a huge part of your, (and everyone's) lives – in excess of 100 billion searches are carried out each month and with Google being the first port-of-call for anyone looking for something on the internet, it's safe to say that any business owners that ignore or overlook the importance of Google and what SEO can do for their businesses is really making a very, very poor decision.

#### Okay so how does it work?

Without getting too complicated or technical, Google determines the search results that are shown to you after you

# Let's market your business!

have entered search terms, keywords or phrases based on many different factors to ensure that you only see relevant and accurate results (websites) on Search Engine Results Pages (or "SERPs" for short).

For example, if you were searching for a gardener local to you; in this example, we will use "Kent" as the area; you would probably type in keywords in along the lines of "Gardener in Kent" into the Google search box.

Based on this search - [of 'Gardener in Kent'] - if Google then presented you with search results for gardening businesses based in Scotland these results would obviously be useless to you, therefore the considerations that Google gives to the results that are shown are predominately based on showing only the very best websites that contain fit-for-purpose, accurate and relevant information based on the search terms you entered and in most instances also based on geolocation also, dependent on the business type.

## Google AdWords (pay-per-click)

Google Pay-Per-Click / AdWords works completely differently by way of charging you each time a customer clicks on one of your sponsored ads on Google search results pages. You will notice the sponsored ads at the top, and in most cases, the bottom of Google search engine results pages. They are distinguished by a small green "Ad" icon – these are pay-per-click adverts.

### Is Google AdWords quick?

AdWords is designed to give near instant results (if the campaign is setup correctly), so for example, you might create an AdWords account on Monday morning, and quite possibly as soon as Monday evening your sponsored Ads could start displaying in Google search results pages and generating

customer clicks and leads through to your website.

So, if you are looking to achieve a steady flow of highly targeted customers from Google right at the moment when they are looking for your products or services, then Google AdWords will provide exactly that, but it does come at a cost (more on this below).

### Shall I do AdWords with an SEO campaign?

During the early days of an SEO campaign, AdWords can also prove to be very beneficial as you can start to generate leads in as little as 24 hours after your AdWords campaign has been started, but SEO would really be the main long-term marketing strategy because when you are ranking on page one organically, you will no longer need to supplement your SEO strategy with AdWords, or at least you can reduce your monthly AdWords spend. In other cases, business owners don't bother with AdWords, instead preferring to stick with SEO.

### What's the cost of AdWords?

As mentioned above, the only down-side to AdWords is the budget – as soon as your daily budget is used up, your ads will stop displaying, and whilst in most cases your Ads will only be clicked on by your target customers with an intent to buy your products or use your services, there is no control over accidental / unintentional clicks, so if someone came to your website by accidentally clicking on your sponsored ad, you will still be charged for that click even though it was an accidental/unintentional click. With SEO there is never this issue as the budget you pay each month for an SEO strategy is based on further growing, enhancing and maintaining your online visibility without the worry of depleted budgets each month.

# Let's market your business!

## Google My Business

One of Google's best and commonly overlooked tools is Google My Business - a free and easy-to-use tool for businesses to manage their online presence across Google including Google Search and Google Maps.

Google My Business allows you to add your business by way of "claiming" a listing (which displays to the right of search engine results pages) which then needs to be verified by a pin code - either by post or over the telephone via an automated message.

Google My Business is a free to use service, and is very beneficial (in our opinion) to your online presence, especially when it comes down to an SEO strategy or to get more visibility within map search results (and in some cases on search results pages), especially if your business displays within the top 3 listings within the map section, commonly referred to as the "map pack".

You can read more on Google My Business by [clicking here](#), and can also setup your account by clicking on the following link: <https://www.google.com/business/>

We have written another blog that provides loads of ways you can promote your business online for free – read it here: <https://vaccodadesign.com/promote-your-business-online-for-free/>

And if you would like your online marketing managed by us, whether that's SEO, Social Media or AdWords, have a read over our online marketing services here: <https://vaccodadesign.com/marketing/>

## Live chat

Another clever way to attract customers is to offer live chat on your website. Sometimes people don't want to ring up, or they are busy, or perhaps they would rather discuss something with you via a live chat environment.

If so, live chat makes it very quick and easy for a potential customer to make an enquiry about your products or services – and if you are not online at that time, they can simply send a message to you instead via the live chat service!

## Offline marketing

Whilst online marketing is important and must be included as part of your overall marketing strategy, let's take a look at offline marketing methods to promote your new business.

There are many ways to promote your business offline that are just as effective as other marketing methods.

## Magazines and print

First, let's consider print – whether that be a local newspaper, magazine or even leaflets. Local newspaper advertising to target the local and surrounding community can be a great way to reach out on a local level to promote an opening, a special offer, a discount or something else that you want to keep locally focused.

# Let's market your business!

In the same sense, local magazines are also effective to run an ongoing ad promoting your business – perhaps mixing it up every so often with a new advert that focuses on a service you provide or product you sell. Keeping the designs seasonal and interesting can also be fun – think about pumpkins at Halloween and Santa at Christmas – inject a bit of fun and humour – it will keep your ads interesting and visual.

## The big leaflet drop!

Another effective way to market your services is to do a local leaflet drop. To design and print flyers isn't expensive (have a look here for more info: <https://vaccodadesign.com/design/>) and you can either deliver the leaflets yourself or employ the services of a leaflet delivery company to do it for you.

With any leaflet drop, the success depends on the information contained within the leaflet, so spend some time really thinking about what you want to offer and be very clear in your message.

## How about sponsorship?

Sponsoring community level activities, local events such as school fetes or even things like the local flowerbeds can also bring attention to your business. Charitable events are also great for not only showing a charitable side to your business, but also puts you in front of lots of local eyes.

People like to know they are dealing with a business that looks after the community, and whatever choice you make when deciding who to sponsor or what charity to support, you can be sure of a positive following and a flurry of customers.

## Final words!

### We hope this helped!

When anyone starts a new business it can be a daunting; you are taking a leap into the unknown and with the uncertainty of a regular monthly income, it can make it all the more scary.

A lot of time can be wasted trying to make sense of things, trying to learn new skills as a business owner and sometimes you might find yourself wasting time and energy in areas you don't need to.

This is the reason we created this guide! It's comprehensive but not conclusive by any means, and there is much, much more to learn out there, but the points we have covered are meant to help you efficiently cover all the aspects to digital media and marketing that you will need to know in the early days.

Of course there is much more to learn, but our guide is designed to help support you in the early days of a new business.



## About Vaccoda

### Who are we?

We are a close-knit, creative and technical bunch headed up by business partners Matt and Rob. We love to create websites, e-commerce stores and design graphics that deliver impact and we get a kick out of managing Search Engine Optimisation, Google AdWords and Social Media marketing campaigns that will give your business great online visibility and generate a steady stream of website visitors, enquiries and sales. We also create amazing iOS and Android apps and can build custom software to make your life easier.

Our awesome team includes IT support techies that can back up your files securely, remotely sort out your IT related problems and setup your email accounts for you too! We are based in West Wickham, (next to Bromley, Kent) and ideally located to provide our range of services to local and London based companies and individuals. We also work with businesses across the UK and beyond.

If you have a project in mind, why not give us a call and pop in for a tea or coffee so we can have a chat about what you need doing.

### Find out more about us

If you would like to find out more about our services or to get in touch, then please check out our website: [www.vaccoda.com](http://www.vaccoda.com)

### See our Social Media

We are on social media too. You can find us on the following channels. Come and give us a follow or a like! Let us know of your social media channels too and we will follow/like you back!

#### Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/vaccoda>

#### Twitter

<https://twitter.com/vaccodadesign>

#### Google+

<https://plus.google.com/+vaccodadesign>

#### LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/vaccoda-design>

#### YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/user/vaccoda>

#### Vimeo

<https://vimeo.com/vaccoda>

#### Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/vaccodadesign/>

#### Pinterest

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/vaccodadesign/pins/>

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