

# HOW to CHOOSE a WEBSITE BUILDER: WordPress, Weebly, Wix or Shopify

---

Choosing the website builder tool or platform for building your small business website isn't easy. There's no one perfect solution, but your answers to these questions will help you understand the tradeoffs between purpose, functionality, design and ease of use. If you need help, we offer white boarding sessions to help clients make these types of decisions.

## 1. What type of website suits my business?

Your first decision is whether or not you need an online store. If not, the functionality and ease of use of tools like Weebly, Wix or Squarespace may fit the bill. All have good looking, mobile responsive templates (critical for Google and good for customers). Weebly and Wix are created by dragging and dropping content. Squarespace is a little more complex, but has better designed templates. Even if someone sets the site up for you, you should be able to take over most of the modifications and maintenance yourself.

### Ecommerce Sites

Although they offer catalog, shopping cart and checkout features for ecommerce, we wouldn't recommend these tools for setting up an online store. They may be more expensive than warranted. If you're only selling a few products, that could be fine, because you'll only pay for features you need. With more sophisticated ecommerce, the price starts to go up.

### Shopify is a better ecommerce option

Designed from the ground up for ecommerce, it has a full range of features like inventory management, merchandising and sales promotions. For a large catalog, you could try Big Commerce, but there are many ecommerce platforms. You'll need to decide which ones are most suitable for the way you run your store and fit your pocketbook.

### Blogging Sites

If blogging is central to your business model, go for Wordpress. Although it's not as easy to use as the others we've mentioned, it's worth the learning curve, especially if you want to publish a sophisticated, feature-rich blog or magazine.

### Specialty Builders

Specialty builders, like Photoshelter for photographers, ZenPlanner for fitness studios, or Restaurant Engine, have features specific to the needs of those businesses. The key is to decide if a more generic builder tool will match your business model, or if one more specific will work better. Whatever your business, there's probably a platform built for it. Only consider completely custom when absolutely necessary.

## 2. What special features and functionality will I need?

Start with a wishlist of what you want your website to do, planning a couple of years out (by that time your business will have changed and so will the tools). If you're not sure where to begin, try visiting competitors' sites for



inspiration. If you're not sure who they are, pretend you're a potential customer and do a search on Google for services like yours. Check out the top 5 sites and see what they use. You can use [builtwith.com](http://builtwith.com) to view a site's technology.

Once you've created your list, look for the tool that's the best match, feature for feature. There probably won't be one that gets it 100%, but most allow you to add third party cloud applications. For example, we had a client who used Speakpipe for voice messaging and Jotforms for collecting data on her Weebly site. Another common addition is to embed widgets from services like MailChimp or MadMimi to collect email addresses. Most platforms allow embeds now.

### **3. How critical is design?**

As they say, form follows function. After that, it's about finding the template that's the best fit for your brand. If that's all you need, Weebly will satisfy. You can custom visualize your brand with logo, fonts, colors and more.

For graphic or interior designers, artists or ad agencies, for example, where design is central to what you offer, you'll want to highlight this capability. In that case, use Squarespace which only works with its own set of beautifully designed templates. With Wordpress, you can access hundreds if not thousands of gorgeous templates available for purchase. However, choosing a template is a job unto itself.

### **4. How much customization?**

All the services allow you to add a logo, choose a design template, add content, and

change font styles and colors of selected components. If you want to do more than that, you'll need to get into the CSS. All but Wix offers this option.

### **5. How do you want to display your information?**

Websites can display your content in any number of ways, from slideshow headers to one page scrolling and more. Each website builder tool has an array of templates, each with their own display options. If you're looking for something specific, be sure to check the builder's templates and feature list.

### **6. How much time am I willing to devote to learning the platform?**

When all is said and done, you need to find a platform and template that will work for you, your business and your website visitor. If you don't know how to edit HTML or don't understand what the CSS is, and you don't want the expense of hiring someone to do it for you every time you need to make a change, go for Weebly. Squarespace is a little more challenging, but if you like their designs, it could be worth the effort. Wordpress is even more complicated, but the tradeoff is you'll get a great platform for publishing.

Once you've gone through this list, your next step is to check out the ones you like. Do a feature list comparison, check out their templates and then sign up for free trials. That's a sure way to figure out which one will work for you.

For more tips, tools and resources, visit: [blockbeta.com](http://blockbeta.com)