



STARTING UP.. AN ONLINE BUSINESS

As with any new business, the steps to starting to trade online involves conducting market research to identify your target market, assess demand, analyse the competition and reaction to pricing from potential customers. You will also need to produce a **Business Plan** (see our factsheet).

GETTING YOUR SITE UP AND RUNNING

You need to decide whether you have the skills to create your own business website or whether to engage a professional. There are two types of website designers, those that design and those that build!

Do your research and find someone who can help you with both and who also has experience of e-commerce websites as you will need a “shopping cart” function. Do set a budget and ask to see their terms and conditions, a clear brief can really help minimise costs.

MARKETING

This will largely determine your website's success and search engine optimisation (SEO) is crucial to this.

Again, you can learn to do this yourself, or engage a professional SEO marketer.

WEBSITE INFORMATION YOU MUST INCLUDE:

- Address and contact details
- Privacy policy
- Cookie policy
- Terms and conditions
- Exchange and refund policy, quality commitment and information about delivery and payment

Stock availability and pricing should be kept up to date and you must state how much VAT, (if applicable) and postage and packaging is payable per item.

Getting up and running

Marketing and SEO

Website information you must include

Photography

Getting paid

Test and protect

PHOTOGRAPHY

If you have products to sell, consider having professional photographs taken, this may make all the difference to the look and feel of your website.

GETTING PAID

You will need to include a “shopping cart” function as well as a secure means by which customers can enter their card details when paying. You will also need a merchant account to collect payments. Providers such as PayPal are popular, but do enquire at your bank and the Federation of Small Businesses. You will pay a service charge on each transaction, a set-up and monthly service fee. Don't forget to budget for these.

TEST AND PROTECT YOUR WEBSITE

Test your website thoroughly before your launch. Ask potential customers what they think, also take into account the opinions of friends and family.

Bear in mind, running an online business is not without risk. Serious technical or security issues can have disastrous consequences, so make sure you protect your website from online threats and back up important data.

We look forward so you can move forward...