

5 REASONS

Every Small Business

Needs a Website



VERISIGN®



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INTRODUCTION

Today, people often turn to the Internet first to research businesses and products. In fact, a September 2015 survey conducted by Verisign found that 91 percent of U.S. consumers use the Internet to look for local goods and services, and 93 percent use it for research before making a purchase.¹

These findings reinforce the importance of having a website - not only does it help small businesses promote and sell their products and services, it allows them to put their best foot forward to consumers who rely heavily on the Internet to gather information about a company, including product reviews.

97% of U.S. small businesses would recommend having a website to other small businesses.

In the same survey, 97 percent of small businesses with a website said they would recommend having a website to other small businesses. Why? Reasons cited were to be found, build credibility, get more customers, grow business faster and gain a competitive advantage.

This e-book looks into each of these reasons and highlights how some small businesses are successfully using websites today.

¹ sample size: 787 U.S. Internet consumers aged 18 to 59 and 456 U.S. small businesses



1. BE FOUND

It comes as no surprise that many consumers begin their purchasing decisions by searching for products and services online. According to Verisign's survey, 91 percent of U.S. consumers use the Internet to look for local goods or services. Small businesses without an online presence may find themselves excluded from consideration.

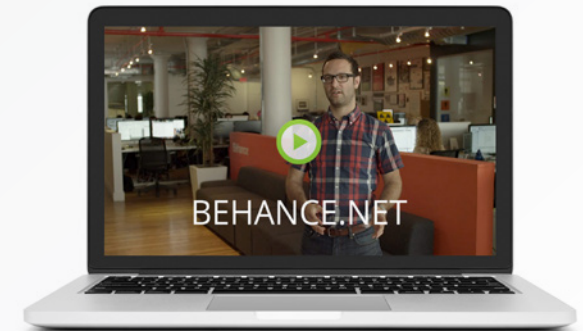
The survey also found that 88 percent of U.S. small businesses with websites agree that a website makes it easier for customers to find their business. Today, customers are constantly using and searching with computers, tablets and smartphones. A website lets customers find and learn about your business 24/7.

A website offers other benefits too. It allows small businesses to reach a bigger audience outside of their local area without a huge increase in marketing expenses. And it's not just about attracting new customers. Business owners use websites to better serve existing customers by providing pertinent business information and services on their site which they can access anytime and anywhere.

Some businesses use [social media or online directories](#) in lieu of a website to promote their business - even using a domain name as a custom Web address to [connect](#) to these sites. This is an easy way to quickly create an online presence. However, experts recommend this as a temporary solution since websites offer many more advantages, such as increased flexibility, control, branding and credibility. In fact, 76 percent surveyed said that when looking for information about a business, they would trust a business's website over a social media page or an online directory. This reinforces the critical role a website plays in connecting with potential customers.

88% of U.S. small businesses agree that a website has made it easier for customers to find their business.

Using a [.com](#) or [.net](#) domain name is one of the most reliable ways to guarantee a business's website will be found.



Founders Matias Corea and Scott Belsky of [Behance](#), a platform for creative professionals to showcase their work, chose a [.net](#) domain because it emphasized their website as a creative network and ensured it could be found easily online.

2. BUILD CREDIBILITY

A website lends credibility to the legitimacy of a small business. Verisign's recent survey revealed that 84 percent of U.S. consumers believe a business with a website is more credible than one with only a social media page. Although small businesses can build a brand presence on social media, they are limited by its platform in terms of design, process and technology. Having their own website gives small businesses the ability to control every aspect of their brand with no restrictions on how to market their products or services. This contributes to a brand's overall reputation and market standing. If a small business wants to be credible and attract new customers, a website can make a difference.

One important decision in creating a website is [choosing the right domain name](#) (or Web address), so businesses should take careful consideration when making their choice. First, businesses need to decide which domain extension, such as .com and .net, best serves their company. And second, select a name that is memorable, descriptive, keyword-rich (e.g., words Internet users might enter into a search engine to look for a business such as yours) and isn't trademarked by another company.

Small businesses can also use a domain name for email. Verisign's survey found that 65 percent of consumers believe a [company-branded email](#) is more credible than a business using a free email account. Referred to as branded email, this lends further credibility when communicating with prospective customers. Branded email also offers the benefit of using multiple email addresses for different areas of a business (e.g., info@bobscakefactory.com, pr@bobscakefactory.com), which further supports an established, professional image.

84% of U.S. consumers believe a business with a website is more credible than one with only a social media page.



Northern Virginia realtor, Doug Francis, needed to set himself apart from the other 13,000 realtors in the area and turned to his website, [DougFrancis.com](#), to help him do just that. By creating a dynamic, interactive website and using a branded email, he has been able to establish credibility as a top realtor and connect with more buyers.



3. GET MORE CUSTOMERS

The top priority for most small businesses is finding new customers, and in today's competitive marketplace, having an online presence is key. This means that if someone is looking for a product or service your business offers, your website needs to show up in search results or you will miss out on potential sales leads.

In the Verisign survey, 77 percent of U.S. small businesses said a website is a great way to find new customers. This is true for Society Fair, a one-stop food shop that started out as a brick-and-mortar store. The response to the launch of their website and online store, [SocietyFair.net](https://www.societyfair.net), was so overwhelming that it helped strengthen relationships with their loyal retail customers, and attracted online customers who had never stepped foot into their physical store.

77% of U.S. small businesses agree a website is a great way to find new customers.

Ongoing business success rests in large part on a company's ability to bring in new clients. Using traditional marketing methods like direct mail or print advertising to reach a large audience can be expensive and unreliable, but getting online enables small businesses to reach more people while paying less for the exposure—and with measurable results.



Registering multiple domain names can help enhance marketing efforts and attract new customers. In fact, it's a tactic that bigger brands use successfully and can easily be implemented by small businesses. Reasons for registering more than one domain name are to be search engine friendly, protect a brand, and to highlight specific attributes of their businesses or major online marketing initiatives.



4. GROW YOUR BUSINESS

A website is a cost-effective tool to expand any business locally, nationally and globally. According to the same Verisign survey, 81 percent of U.S. small businesses said a website has helped grow their business.

A website can help businesses broaden their customer base outside of their city limits. While face-to-face interactions are important and business may come via word-of-mouth, a website provides a company a chance to “pass their card out” to thousands of new potential customers outside their normal perimeters, which then leads to a larger service area and possible expansion of regional offices. An e-commerce store allows businesses to sell products to customers around the world.

81% of U.S. small businesses say a website has helped grow their business.



Building a business website on a .com or .net domain name provides the opportunity for global recognition. This was a strategic decision made by Fiona Woods, founder and owner of **Naturally Cool Kids, a U.K.-based provider of natural skincare products for children. Establishing her e-commerce website on a .com domain name provided her company with global recognition, and enabled her to expand her business to eight different countries, including the U.S.**



5. GAIN COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

A current trend among consumers is to conduct research online before they buy. And Verisign's recent survey supports this; 93 percent of consumers use the Internet for research before making a purchase. Consumers want to be informed prior to making purchasing decisions, from what they buy to whom they buy from. So a company without a website risks losing customers to businesses who are already taking advantage of the online marketplace.

More than [half of U.S.-based small businesses don't have a website](#), so there's no time like the present to [establish or improve your business website](#) and get ahead of the competition. That's what Neil Callanan did when he launched his digital and social media marketing agency, LooseGrip Communications. Callanan knew that in order to compete with larger digital agencies, LooseGrip had to stand out. With an already well-established social network – both online and offline – a professional website was the obvious next step to increase credibility and clientele, so he established LooseGrip.net.

[According to Callanan](#), "If you want to be taken seriously in any competitive client-based industry, you can't create opportunities for prospects to question your commitments or professionalism. A strong first impression is critical for opening up your business and a website is often the first place clients look."

If your small business is in direct competition with another business that has a website, it's critically important to make sure your business has one, especially if your competitor is effectively marketing its website. Having your own website helps level the playing field.



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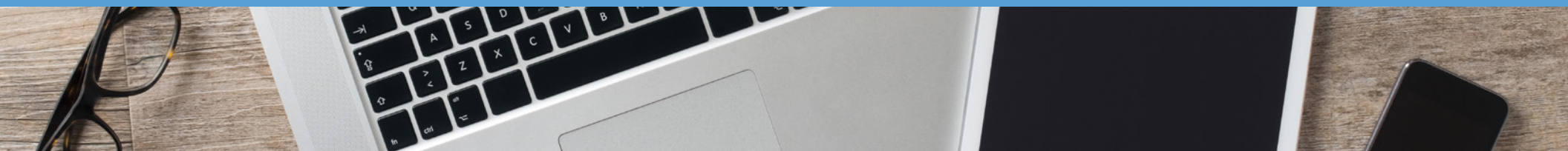
CONCLUSION

Relying solely on a physical store or traditional marketing efforts may limit the success of your business. In this digital age, consumers increasingly rely on the Internet, and expect businesses to have an online presence. In fact, 84 percent of U.S. small businesses surveyed by Verisign said their website is important or critical to their business.

Whether you're concerned about establishing credibility, growing your business, gaining a competitive advantage or wanting to be found online, the bottom line is a website can help. There's no doubt that [registering a domain name](#) and [establishing a website](#) offer a number of different business advantages, and are easier now to do.

The first step is simple. In as little as 10 minutes and for less than the cost of lunch, you can [register your domain name](#)—your business's identity on the Internet. So get started now.

For more information on how to get your business online, visit TipsToGetOnline.com.





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