

# Jantcu

## BUILDING YOUR FIRST WEBSITE

Do you want to **build a website for your organization**, but aren't sure where to get started? The web team at **Jantcu** put together this quick guide to give you some context and to point you in the right direction!

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# -----Planning-----

## **create an internal committee**

One of the biggest factors we've found that correlates to project success is internal buy-in by your organization. There should be at least one "champion" at your organization who is invested in the project outcome and has been given adequate time and resources to devote to its success. We also find that forming an internal committee that is representative of your key stakeholders is helpful as long as the committee isn't too large. Creating a clear division of labor and approval structure before project commencement increases efficiency throughout the process as well.

## **Identify Your Audience**

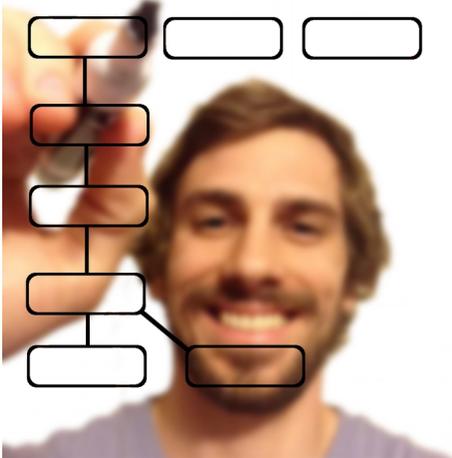
Write down details about who you are you trying to reach and what messages you want to convey. Talk with your audience to find out about their habits and preference and cater to them. Trying to get people to change their behavior can be an uphill battle. Remember that you are not building a website for yourself, but for your audience (sometimes this can be your own staff). Try to be objective about the what you like/dislike and focus on the goals of the project.

## **Determine Project Goals and Metrics for Success**

Pick 3 - 4 goals that are the major items you are looking to accomplish by creating an online presence. Work with your team to setup concrete criteria that can be used to determine whether or not you are accomplishing those goals. For example, if your goal is to provide resources to the audience of a specific program, you might want to track how many people sign up for the newsletter on a monthly basis, the bounce rate of the program's landing page, or registrations for your community based events.

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# ====Design=====



## **Create an Information Architecture**

This is an important step whether you're undertaking a major project involving a design agency, or if you're trying to bootstrap development using an already created template. Information Architecture (IA) is essentially the navigation structure of your site. Think of it as a blueprint for how users will find content, similar to a sitemap.

Develop your site structure by forming hypotheses about how you think your audience will want to use your site and then test your hypotheses. You can, and should, do this before you even start development. Testing can be as simple as stacking cards on a table that represent your menu hierarchy and asking someone to pick up cards one at a time to find a specific page. Keep note of how long it takes them and if they choose wrong cards when attempting to find the page.

## **Do a Content Audit**

Determine whether or not you already have content created for the site and then ask yourself:

1. Does this content need to be revised?
2. Who is the audience for this content?

You will need to determine who should make the call to keep or discard content and who on your team is responsible for revising content and writing new content. If your organization is large, creating a content strategy by department or program can be helpful. The design of your site should be dictated by the content, not the other way around. Thinking about how to group information early and often will help you create a website that is cohesive and easy to navigate.

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# -----Build-----

There are many different technical approaches you can take for the actual development of the website. We've listed three different approaches, each with two distinct options, that cover a large percentage of use cases. There are literally thousands of other excellent frameworks out there, we've only listed some of the more popular ones here.

These factors should influence your technical approach:

1. Project Budget
2. Amount of Dynamic vs Static Content
3. Technical Requirements of Project
4. Technical Staff at Organization
5. Developer Guidance
6. Anticipated Features/Growth
7. Community Adoption of Framework



**weebly/squarespace**



Weebly and Squarespace are great for a Do-It-Yourself approach and work well for organizations on a tight budget. They each have a variety of templates to choose from that look really great out of the box, and sites can be built and maintained by nontechnical users. If you need a really simple website, with only a couple of pages and no custom functionality or design, this is the way to go.



## **Wordpress/Drupal**

Wordpress and Drupal are a level up from Weebly and Squarespace in the sense that they take a little more effort to manage, but offer more features and opportunities for customization. Wordpress is often thought of as easier to get started with, but Drupal is often argued to be more powerful. We're a Drupal shop at Jantcu, so we could go on about why we think it's the best framework, but we're also biased so we wanted to make sure to highlight these great alternatives. Both Wordpress and Drupal can handle custom workflows including commerce, event registration, contact relationship management, mailing lists, blogs, and many other enterprise level features.



## **Django/Rails**

Django and Rails are frameworks that take a base level approach to building websites. They make less assumptions than the frameworks listed above which give them greater flexibility to create custom applications and functionality. Since they use a “ground up” approach, there are less prepackaged components available, resulting in a larger portion of the site needing to be built by the developer. They also offer less mature user interfaces out of the box, which requires the developer to build these tools if nontechnical users want to be able to make changes. These frameworks are great for building applications that serve a specific purpose, generally one that isn't needed by the majority of the population.

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# -----====Domain Names====-----

## **What is a Domain Name?**

A domain name is the human readable address that specifies where your website is located on the Internet.

**Example:** mynonprofit.org

## **choosing a Domain Name**

It's best to choose a domain name that incorporates your organization name or the services your organization provides. Doing this allows search engines, like Google, to direct traffic to your site. There is a whole discipline called Search Engine Optimization (SEO) that focuses on increasing your search ranking. Suffice it to say, a good domain name will help.

Short, easy to remember (and spell) names are best since some of your users may be navigating directly to your website. If you have a name in mind that you like, secure it today even if you're not quite ready to build the site yet. It's an open market and popular domain names fly off the shelf every day.

## **Options Available to Nonprofit Organizations**

Most nonprofit organizations opt for domains that end with a ".org" top level domain (TLD). Non-governmental organizations may want to take it one step further and also purchase a ".ngo" TLD. The advantage of ".ngo" is it's a verified listing, so only non-governmental organizations can actually register for one.

## **Where do I Get a Domain Name?**

You purchase domain names through an agency known as a domain name registrar. Sometimes these companies offer additional services, such as hosting, as well. Here are a few of the better known registrars:

NameCheap, Name.com, Gandi.net, 1&1, and GoDaddy. Remember that it is important to have *your* organization listed as the registrant to ensure that you actually own the domain. It's ok to add your developer or hosting provider as a technical contact, but don't list them as the registrant.

## **How Much does a Domain Name cost?**

Domain names with a “.org” TLD typically cost around \$12.00 per year depending on the registrar you use.



# -----====Hosting=====

## **Shared Hosting**

Shared hosting is the cheapest option available, although it can present certain drawbacks. It is largely viewed as less reliable and has lower performance than other options. This can be the perfect option for smaller sites without lots of features.

**Average Cost:** \$3 - \$10 per month

**Providers:** Godaddy, FatCow, BlueHost, HostGator

## **Private Hosting**

Private hosting offers scalable solutions and a variety of tools capable for handling enterprise level websites. This option generally offers better performance, but requires more oversight. We recommend you either have a technical team in-house capable of server administration or a support contract with your web developer to manage these services.

**Average Cost:** \$25 - \$150 per month

**Providers:** Amazon Web Services, Rackspace, Digital Ocean

## **Platform Specific Hosting**

Platform specific hosting is setup to accommodate a particular type of application. For example, if your website is built using the Drupal framework, there are a few hosts that provide tools specifically geared toward Drupal. These are a great option for large organizations who need enterprise support.

**Average Cost:** \$100+ per month

**Providers:** Acquia, Pantheon

## **What is an SSL certificate**

SSL Certificates enable secure communication between users and your website. It's what changes the "http://" to "https://" in the address bar of your browser. Price can vary drastically depending on the certificate authority (CA) you use. There is no discernible difference in quality of certificates, the price differential is only based on the trust the community has in the CA. The more trusted a CA, the more likely the "https://" will actually turn green when people visit your site, instead of a scary red color and a pop-up warning that says your site can't be trusted.

**Average Cost:** \$50 - \$1,000 per year  
**Providers:** RapidSSL, DigiCert, VeriSign

## **Do I need an SSL certificate?**

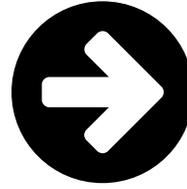
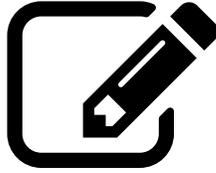
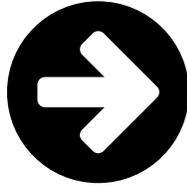
The short answer is no, it's not required in many cases. But it is recommended and could potentially be a legal obligation if you host sensitive data on your website such as HIPAA (health) or PCI (credit card) data. Those types of data requirements have other considerations that can affect the cost of your monthly hosting as well. Some shared and platform specific hosts include SSL Certificates as part of their monthly hosting package.

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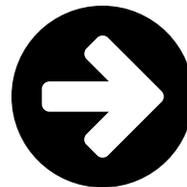
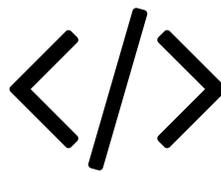
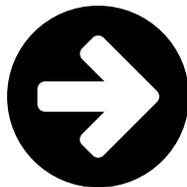
# Support

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## Content

Figuring out who will be responsible for which areas of the site is critical. Some small sites with mostly static content probably could survive without this, but in order to have an engaging experience that drives viewers to your site, you should have a few dynamic components if feasible for your organization. Site updates require an appropriate allocation of time to these tasks, but with the right strategy in place, it doesn't have to be burdensome.



## Code

Most websites these days are like living organisms. They grow with your organization and need to be able to bend to changing requirements. Figuring out if there is someone on your team, or a consultant, who can create new features and fix technical issues will be an essential component of your website's lifespan. Having someone available that can apply security patches and keep your code up-to-date is also an important step in keeping your content safe. Some platforms offer updates as part of their service package.

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# ====Questions====

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Hopefully you enjoyed this guide and got something out of it! If you have any question, please feel free to reach out to us:

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**Email:** [info@jantcu.com](mailto:info@jantcu.com)

We love talking about web technology and meeting people from the community so we hope to hear from you! Thank you for reading!

