



The Portal People
integrated ebusiness



How to Choose the Right Website Building Solution



Knowledge
Series

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How to Choose the Right Website Building Solution

Building a website is an exciting step, whether you plan to launch a personal blog, a small business, or an online store. But before diving into the various website-building solutions, it's important to understand what you need from your website. There's no one-size-fits-all option, what works for a portfolio might not suit a growing business.

Understanding Your Needs and Business Objectives

Your website is more than just an online presence, it's a tool to achieve your goals. Are you showcasing your work, selling products, or providing information? Understanding your business objectives will help you narrow down the kind of website builder that best fits. For example, an eCommerce site has different requirements from a simple blog. Also, think about your budget and the time you have to maintain the site. If you're not keen on dealing with updates, security patches, or troubleshooting, you might want to consider solutions that take care of those things.

Audience Size and Scalability

Next, consider the size of your audience and how much you expect it to grow. A small portfolio site with limited traffic will have very different scalability needs to an online shop expecting thousands of visitors a month. Some platforms are better equipped to handle spikes in traffic or growth, while others might struggle to keep up as your audience grows.

Future-Proofing and Flexibility

Finally, think about the future. Will your website need to evolve over time? You might start with a simple website, but if you anticipate needing advanced features as your needs develop, like integrating with third-party apps or building out a member-only section you'll need a solution that can grow with you. The more flexibility you have, the less likely you'll need to start again with a new platform later.

Now that you have a clearer idea of what you need, let's explore the different types of website-building tools available and how they might fit your vision.

Drag-and-Drop Website Builders

What they are: Drag-and-drop builders make it easy to build a website without knowing how to code. You simply pick a template, drag elements (like text, images, or buttons) onto the page, and customise them. These platforms usually come with built-in hosting, so you don't need to worry about that part.

Ideal for: Beginners, small business owners, or anyone who wants to get a website live quickly and easily.

Features

- **Ease of Use:** No coding or design skills are needed.
- **Quick Setup:** You can have a website up in hours.
- **Design Freedom:** Many platforms offer pre-made templates that you can adjust to fit your style.

Considerations

- **Limited Flexibility:** While great for simple sites, these builders might not offer the customisation or complex features some users need.
- **Ownership:** You typically don't own the infrastructure of your site. You're using their platform, so moving your site elsewhere is often difficult.
- **SEO Control:** Many drag-and-drop builders offer basic SEO tools, but they might not give you the deep customisation options needed for advanced SEO strategies.

Examples: Popular names in this space include [Wix](#), [Squarespace](#), and [Weebly](#), but there are many others that offer similar solutions.

Open Source Content Management Systems (CMS)

What they are: A CMS is a more advanced tool that allows you to manage your website's content without needing to code (though some coding knowledge can help). The CMS software gives you the framework to build anything from simple blogs to complex eCommerce stores.

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Ideal for: Users who want more control over their website, including design, hosting, and functionality.

Features

- **Flexibility:** You can build just about anything with a CMS. It's perfect if you plan to scale your site or need advanced features.
- **Customisable:** With themes and plugins, you can add whatever functionality your site needs, whether it's an online store, a membership area, or a portfolio.
- **Ownership:** The site files and content are independent of the hosting services so if you want to switch hosting providers, you can move your site.

Considerations

- **Learning Curve:** While not overly technical, CMS platforms can take more time to learn.
- **Maintenance:** You are responsible for keeping the site updated and secure, although managed hosting/patch management services can handle this if required.

Examples: [WordPress](#) is the most well-known CMS, but others like [Joomla](#), [Drupal](#), and [Ghost](#) offer different flavours, depending on your needs.

AI-Powered Site Builders

What they are: The newest trend in website building, AI-powered builders, use artificial intelligence to design your site for you. You provide basic information, and the AI generates a website, often with little need for customisation on your part.

Ideal for: Users who want the fastest, easiest setup and don't need much control over the final design.

Features

- **Speed:** These tools can build a functional website in minutes.
- **Simplicity:** You don't have to choose a template, set up pages, or worry about design—it's all done for you.

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Considerations

- **Limited Control:** The AI does most of the heavy lifting, which means you may have little say in the finer details of the design.
- **Lack of Flexibility:** If you want to make significant changes or add custom features later, it could be tricky or not possible.
- **Ownership:** Like other platform-based builders, moving the site elsewhere is usually complicated or not a viable option.

Examples: Some drag-and-drop builders (like Wix or GoDaddy) now offer AI-powered site-building tools, and new standalone AI-based services are popping up.

Developer-Friendly Platforms and Frameworks

What they are: These are the go-to solutions for tech-savvy users or businesses with unique needs. They offer complete control over your site, from the design to the code. These platforms might involve building a website from scratch or using a web framework (a collection of pre-written code to speed up development).

Ideal for: Advanced users, developers, or companies needing custom solutions or heavy-duty websites.

Features

- **Ultimate Flexibility:** You control everything from the design to the back-end functionality. It's ideal if your site needs to do something unique, like integrate with specific software or handle a large volume of traffic.
- **SEO:** Developers can fine-tune SEO settings for maximum optimisation.
- **Scalability:** These platforms grow with your business, handling complex features and increased traffic with ease.

Considerations

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- **Technical Expertise Needed:** Unless you hire a developer, building and maintaining a site on these platforms can be daunting for non-technical users.
- **Time-Consuming:** Building a site from scratch can take more time compared to other solutions.
- **Maintenance:** You are responsible for ongoing updates and management of code changes.

Examples: Frameworks like [Ruby on Rails](#), [Laravel](#), [Yii](#) or [Django](#) are popular among developers. Many CMS platforms like WordPress can also be extended and customised with developer help.

eCommerce Platforms for B2C (Business To Consumer)

What they are: If you're looking to build an online store, you might consider a dedicated eCommerce platform. These platforms are tailored for selling products, managing inventory, and handling payments.

Ideal for: Small to large businesses that need to sell products or services online.

Features

- **All-in-One Solution:** eCommerce platforms handle everything from product listings to payments.
- **Customisable:** Most allow you to create a unique shopping experience, by adding custom features like discount codes or customer reviews.
- **SEO:** Many platforms come with built-in SEO tools to help your products rank on Google.

Considerations

- **Costs:** eCommerce platforms can be pricier than traditional website builders due to transaction fees and premium features.
- **Limited Beyond Selling:** They're great for shops but might be overkill if you're building a site that doesn't primarily focus on selling products.
- **Examples:** [Shopify](#), [BigCommerce](#), and [Magento](#) are some well-known names, but many CMS platforms like WordPress also have eCommerce options through plugins.

eCommerce Platforms for B2B (Business-to-Business)

What they are: For businesses that operate in the B2B (Business-to-Business) space, eCommerce platforms designed specifically for this purpose are key.

B2B eCommerce sites typically require more complex features than B2C (Business-to-Consumer) sites, such as bulk ordering, negotiated pricing, and multi-user accounts.

Ideal for: B2B businesses that need an online storefront to manage orders, invoicing, and account-based pricing.

Features:

- **Tailored for Business Transactions:** B2B platforms allow for bulk orders, tiered pricing, and custom user experiences that cater to businesses rather than individual consumers.
- **Integration with ERP & CRM Systems:** These platforms are built to integrate with business software such as enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems or customer relationship management (CRM) tools, which is essential for handling large inventories, customer data, and detailed order management.
- **Advanced Product Catalogues:** B2B eCommerce often involves detailed product catalogues, with complex variations of products, which the platforms are designed to handle.

Considerations

- **Cost:** B2B platforms can be more expensive than standard eCommerce platforms due to their advanced functionality.
- **Complex Setup:** Getting all the integrations and features set up correctly can take time and often requires development help.

Examples: Some platforms, like our own [B2B eCommerce Platform](#), Magento and BigCommerce, offer robust B2B solutions, while others may require custom development or plugin extensions on a general eCommerce platform.

So, Which One Is Right for You?

The solution that is right for you depends on a number of factors such as your ultimate goal and the amount of time and technical know-how you have to commit to developing your website. There are many options available covering many disciplines and the options in this article are by no means exhaustive.

The online world is constantly changing both technically and in terms of user expectations so whatever your initial goal keep in mind that owning and running a website is likely to be an ongoing evolution as you understand what aspects of your initial idea are working well and which ones could be dropped or improved.

Further Reading

[What is Hosting and which one should you get ?](#)

[Beginners Guide To Domain Names](#)

[Glossary Of Web Development Terms](#)

[What is Integration and Why Should You Care?](#)

[Web Development: Structured Data vs. Visual Page Builders: Unveiling the Underlying Differences](#)



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