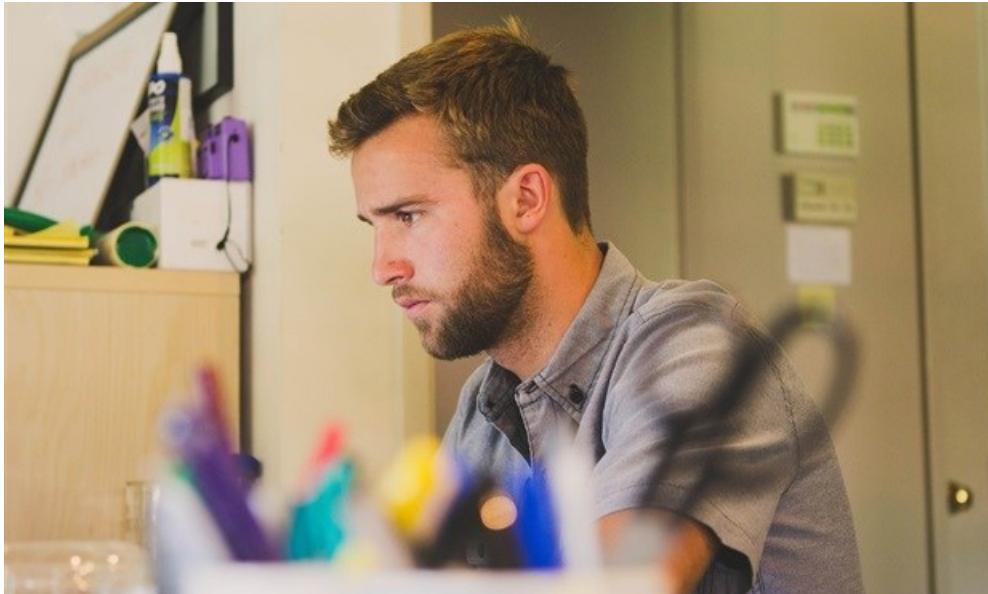


The big three: Professional website platforms for small businesses

 By Hicks Crawford

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A brand has less than two seconds to make an impact with a potential customer. On the web, the endless barrage of advertising and content means that your company has to stand out from the crowd, or risk becoming part of the noise.



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With Lagos [reportedly](#) becoming the Silicon Valley of Africa, it won't be long before other African nations catch-up and become major tech trend-setters. For small business in Africa, tech means access; a website can start a movement or help fund a project by directly reaching people around the globe.

If you're ready to jump off the sidelines and invest in the digital economy, you'll want to start with an impactful website. Thanks to the following business website platforms, an expensive web designer can be crossed off your list.

Wordpress

Tried and true, Wordpress has been a staple of e-commerce since its inception in 2003. Blogs, corporate sites, sports teams and e-commerce power players rely on the customisable platform with built-in marketing smarts. If you're on a tight budget (looking at you, startups), it's incredibly cost-effective. Just purchase a hosting plan and install the free distributable to get a website up and running in a matter of minutes.

The more technical expertise you have, the more you'll be able to do. Thankfully, there are hundreds of online resources and self-help tutorials to get you from zero to hero in no time.

You'll find the Wordpress core files, as well as themes, plugins and services easily accessible on WordPress.org.

Joomla

Another great, free content management system (CMS) is called Joomla. Where Wordpress is more focused on blogging, Joomla was created with e-commerce in mind. Based on personal experience, Joomla is a bit less user-friendly.

Where Wordpress has a strong network of plugins and a support community, Joomla is still growing. Although both Joomla and Wordpress might seem antiquated when compared with some of the newer [business website builders](#) that have hit the market.

Drag and drop website platforms

For the non-technical among us (I'm raising my hand), drag-and-drop is a concept that is easy to understand and virtually eliminates the technical learning curve. [Weebly](#), [Wix](#), and [Jimdo](#) offer free versions of their service. [GoDaddy Site Builder](#) and [Web's Website Builder](#) were each created by hosting companies and do not offer a free version, at least not without combining the builder with the purchase of another product from their catalogue.

If you're debating between the various drag and drop website builders on the market, here are the key considerations you need to weigh:

1. What is the cost to use the builder, both long and short-term?
2. Do you need to purchase a domain?
3. Will the builder add their logo to your website? Can you pay to remove it?
4. How visually appealing are the templates?
5. Are the finished websites search-engine friendly (can they be seen and understood by Google)?

The good news is that no matter which way you go, you'll be able to combine the marketing power of your website with the business management power of today's business-centered mobile apps.

Through the magical connectivity of the internet, today's entrepreneurs can operate completely from their digital devices. This kind of accessibility is breaking down barriers to entry; empowering Africans to compete on a much more level playing field with the rest of the world.

ABOUT HICKS CRAWFORD

Hicks Crawford is a leading Online Marketing Business and author. Over the past 4 years, he's worked closely with clients from all over the world to help them get more results from inbound marketing and blogging. Through experience, he has mastered some of the most powerful Tech, Content Marketing and Social Media Platforms

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