

Module 16 Lesson 1

Transcript

Hi there. I'm Karen Rogers, chief operating officer of Nutritious Life and today I'm here to talk about the basic things you need to consider in regards to building or maintaining your website and also technology and software options that can make your business more successful and your life a little bit easier. I'm going to speak from experience here. I've been with Nutritious Life for over a decade and I've led several website iterations and software upgrades and email marketing service changes and so much more. So behind the scenes we've, at one time or another, had to explore many of the same decisions you're probably exploring and I'm excited to save you from starting your research from scratch and to share as much tech advice as I can with you.

So first things first. Do you even really need a website? Most people who say that you don't need a website are usually software companies hoping to sell you their services and pioneer a new way forward. One day that might totally be the way that the world is, that nobody needs a website anymore. But in my opinion, unless you are a stellar marketer with very specific strategies and you can build an audience and a sales pipeline in a very unique way using just landing pages, you need a website. So that's my bottom line, you need a website, and my reasons are threefold.

Number one, your website is the place to tell the world who you are 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If someone finds you in the middle of the night, they're scrolling through their Instagram, they want to know and learn more about you, your doors are always open on your website. Websites don't have closing hours. So you have a place where you can sell to your customers at all times. You can also answer simple questions for them right on the site, such as how do I contact you or where are you located, or what is your program all about, who are you, what's in it for me? It can all be right there immediately so you can capture a new member of your audience right away.

Number two, you own your website. You don't own your social media profile. Think about it. You've been building your social media following for years. You've carefully chosen the photos that you share, the caption that speak for you and the conversations that you have with your audience, and with the flip of a switch, someone behind a desk somewhere in the world can take it all away from you. Yikes. So you don't own your social media, you own your website.

Number three, your credibility depends on it. Let's face it, having a website, it elevates your ability to be seen as a brand instead of just another person on Instagram. It also makes you easier to find in a digital world and it allows you to engage differently than on social platforms or in person.

Customer purchases are frequently influenced by digital content, and to win the game, you need to be in the game. So now that we've established the reasons that you need a website, let's move onto the best way to build one.

In Nutritious Life, we get these questions all of the time. Should I build a website in WordPress or Squarespace or Wix or Shopify? What's the best one? Should I do it all myself, even though I don't know a thing about code or should I spend the money to hire someone? How much should a website cost to build and how should I maintain it? Also, what exactly do designers and developers do? So we break a lot of this information down in the handouts included with this lesson. So take some time to read through the pros and the cons that we share.

Since technology changes faster than you can say technology, I will keep my answers here more conceptual to help you make the best decisions. Because what I say today might be different a year from now. So we can change things easily and we'll always keep those handouts updated. So first, let's start with choosing the right website platform for your needs. The days of needing to hire someone else to do your website, they're long gone. Previously, you pretty much had to rely on a designer or a developer to build you a website probably on WordPress back then. After that, trying to maintain it was nearly impossible for anyone who didn't work in technology, so it was kind of an ongoing headache that sort of came with the territory of a digital business.

But hey, we thought at least we didn't have the overhead of a brick and mortar business anymore, so we've kind of traded one set of headaches for another in a sense. By the way, the difference between a designer and developer is that a designer makes things look pretty. Think of them as they work more on the front end of the site and the things that you see. A developer makes sure everything functions the way it's supposed to. Think of them more working on the backend of the site and the things that you don't see.

Now there are front end developers and backend developers and full stack developers and UX designers and graphic designers and all kinds of designers, which we break down in a handout for you. But for our basic purposes here, these definitions will suffice. Truth be told, if you're looking for someone to build you a website that looks pretty, there absolutely are all in one website designers who can do very... Build you a very simple website that looks really pretty and so you don't necessarily need a designer and or a developer. There are some people that can kind of do it all. I digress.

The companies like Squarespace, Wix, Shopify, they completely revolutionized the industry. They realized that building and maintaining a website shouldn't be so hard for people who were experts in anything other than technology. So they've built their own website engine and they hired

their own staff to maintain it. They hired designers to create beautiful customizable templates so that everybody had the opportunity to have a modern looking site and they made it really easy to add content or change the colors of your buttons or create new pages as needed, all at a very affordable price. I mean they turned the industry upside down.

Suddenly, building your own website was possible for anyone, but it did come with a few catches. First, you couldn't really do everything you wanted to do with your website. You more or less had to stay within the parameters that they set for you. Selling products online wasn't as easy as it should have been back then, and there were also concerns about SEO and if the engine that they built was completely optimized, or if Google would choose a WordPress site with better SEO than a Squarespace site to rank higher and on and on. There's lots of back and forth.

But over time, many of these kinks have been worked out. For instance, you can do a ton of stuff on Squarespace that you couldn't do before. There's a ton of other competitors who have joined the market too, so you have more choices than just a Squarespace or whichever. Bottom line, the all in one website platforms, they can be great for the majority of probably most of you watching this video. They're inexpensive, they're easy to use, they're well-designed, they're pretty customizable, and they're well-maintained, meaning, if something breaks, they have people lined up that fix it and they have lots of options now that they didn't have before. You can have a membership site, you can sell your products, you can build your email list, and so much more.

So big, big pros for using those types of website platforms, but it doesn't mean that it's right for everyone. There are a lot of people who absolutely should build their site on WordPress, and by WordPress, we're referring to wordpress.org not wordpress.com, it's a big difference. We talk about it more in the handout, but please do not make the mistake of building your website on wordpress.com. In fact, Nutritious Life is built on WordPress, not wordpress.com. But Nutritious Life is a WordPress site and it's perfect for our needs. In comparison to other services, WordPress is like a more robust engine. It can be fully customized to do pretty much everything under the sun. Sky is the limit and this fact alone is why many people prefer it. But it's also not without its faults.

For one, in the long run, WordPress is a little bit more expensive. You can absolutely choose a free template, but as they say, nothing in this world is actually free. The problem with doing a complete DIY website using free everything, free templates, free plugins, free this, free that is the fact that it will probably break sooner than later, sooner, sooner than later, and you'll have nobody to fix it unless you hire someone, which then negates the whole free thing.

So second, WordPress has a learning curve for anybody using it. So if you want to create a blog or upload a recipe or change things around a bit, you are going to have to learn how it all works

and it might feel a little clunky at first, especially compared to the all in one platforms, but you will get used to it if this is what you think is the best choice for your business. Some would also argue that WordPress has stronger SEO capabilities, so your chances of ranking higher on Google are a little bit better simply because you can do more with SEO as you are building your sites, whereas Squarespace is already kind of built in for you. However, other services are going to argue that they're just as powerful when it comes to SEO. So it's one of those things, again, you ask 10 people, you're going to get 10 different answers there.

An SEO just a quick, in case you're not familiar with it, SEO is search engine optimization, which means your site is built in a way that will make Google choose your page over a competitor's page. If your site is SEO optimized, it will show up higher in search results when someone Google's the best weight loss coach or easy healthy dinner recipe. It's so much more complicated than that and there's things that you can control and there's things that you can't control and there's things that you will do today that will be changed tomorrow. So it's not as simple as just like, oh, optimize it and it'll be perfect. It's not. But at least you know you need to take SEO into consideration and do a little research as you're building your site.

We could debate which way to go all day long. But in a nutshell, an all in one platform is great for anybody who wants to DIY their website, who doesn't have coding skills and who wants to keep things simple. WordPress is great for anybody who wants total freedom to create the site of their dreams and isn't afraid of technology and might have a little bit more budget. Only you can decide how much time and energy you want to put into your site and how many bells and whistles you need and how much you want to spend to keep it going.

So that's everything I want to share with you as far as should you choose WordPress, should you choose Squarespace or some of the others? Check out the handouts, do a little digging. At least you have the basics of like, all right, I know that I have this much time, this much money, this much patience, and hopefully right there you can make your decision one way or the other.

Let's move on. So another technology topic you are going to consider when building your online business is what CRM or email management software you need. So CRM stands for customer relationship management and it's basically the software that allows you to organize all of your customer data. It helps you keep track of who is on your email list and where they live and what purchased and what emails they're going to open and which ones they're clicking on and which one they're ignoring and what's your engagement has been with them. So it can kind of allow you to run reports and see a total picture of your business so that you can make great business decisions as you grow or figure out why you weren't growing the way that you want to grow.

Email management software is a more basic option than a CRM. It specializes only pretty much in sending emails and it doesn't really have eCommerce capabilities normally. The biggest thing to consider when choosing your email management software is simply budget. Some email platforms start out free and then increase in cost as you add subscribers. So you have to kind of know how fast you're planning on growing, what that might look like financially. When you're just starting out, a simple email platform like MailChimp or ConvertKit, they can be great. But as you grow, you may need to build more robust email funnels and marketing campaigns, and at that point you might want to invest in a platform that can grow with you like an active campaign or an Ontraport or there's a dozen other CRMs. Again, we cover some of them in the handouts.

Once again, if you asked 10 people which CRM or email platform is their favorite, you're going to get 10 different answers. So it's really important to do your homework before choosing one for yourself. Some are much more user-friendly than others. Some are much more difficult to integrate into your website than others. Costs are all over the place. Some platforms can be very expensive. Some emails can look really pretty and some are much more kind of one size fits all. So do your homework and figure out how robust of a system that you need and make the best choice for you.

I also encourage you to ask your peers, ask the TNS community which options they like best and start your research there. Chances are the one you land on will not be the same one that you're using in a few years. So be ready to make changes as your business grows because your needs will change. We've changed email platforms several times as we've grown and as our needs have grown.

Okay, third part of this video. I want to share some tools and plugins you should consider when building your site, whether it's on WordPress or whether you're choosing an all in one platform. We're also going to share a bunch of specific examples in the handout section. But here's a few just to get you going. First, you want to make sure that you have a static email capture on your homepage. Make it easy for people to give you their email address. Don't make them hunt for the place to sign up for your newsletters. Serve it to them literally on a silver platter. Make it easy to find, easy to do, one click, that sort of thing. Preferably, put it at the very top of your homepage or somewhere else that's very prominent and can't be missed and it shows up on every page. You can put it in your footer. Just make sure it'll be static capture on your homepage.

Number two. You also want to make sure you have a pop-up to capture emails. It's a really easy and common way to politely ask your website visitors for their email address so you don't have to just hope they offer it up themselves like in your static email capture. It gives you... It kind of puts

it in their face. We're going to help you strategize this, but I wanted to make sure it was on your list of must-haves now as you're thinking through your technology needs.

Number three, make sure you're building your site, that you're taking SEO into account when you're building your site and that you use whatever SEO resources your website platform offers. We could do an entire course on SEO and still not cover everything. But we'd end up probably with analysis paralysis as well. SEO, it is confusing and it's dynamic and the rules are constantly changing. So keep it simple. We share some basic SEO strategies in the handouts for you, but it really starts in the backend of your site, not just in the titles that you choose for your blog posts. So I want to mention it now. Make sure you have a solid SEO strategy as you're building your website.

Number four, you're going to want your customers to fill out a form at some point for something. Maybe it's a free download or they want to purchase something, or maybe you want to request their feedback or send out a survey. Make sure you have some sort of way to capture that information and that you have forms set up on your website. There are a million ways to do this depending on what platform or CRM that you choose to use. But you need to make sure you have some way of using forms on your site and capturing data or information that you want from your customers.

The last thing is eCommerce options. They're different on every platform, but if you're going to sell anything online, eBooks, downloads, courses, whatever, you need to be able to run credit cards and deliver products. So make sure that you're set up with the technology, the credit card processor, the banking institution, and the site security you need to be able to do all of this. It's really not that complicated. It's just a little bit of figuring out which systems that you want to go with, so.

So there you have it, the very basics of wrapping your head around technology. You can do this. Don't be overwhelmed. Stay focused on the things that you can do well and do those things. If technology is not something you do well, then consider hiring some things out. For instance, if you're passionate about baking, you might open a bakery, but then you have to master business and tech and you might find yourself baking less and less. Unless you focus on doing what you do best, which is baking, and you hire people out to do the tasks that you don't want to do or that you don't do as well. So work towards your strengths and your expertise and hire out your weaknesses whenever you can.

Just remember, not hiring out an essential task could mean lost time and money. In fact, you could lose more money than you might spend on hiring the help. For example, if you spend six weeks trying to figure something out on your own on this website and you just can't quite figure it

out when you could have just hired it out with a designer or developer, whoever, and they had it ready for you in a week, that could equal five weeks of lost sales. You could have been selling in those five weeks that you were busy just trying to figure something out. So don't look at just the immediate cost of hiring out help. Look at the bigger picture. Often, you'll find that an immediate expense could actually pay for itself or end up being cheaper in the long run if you invest wisely.

But still, no matter how much you plan on hiring out, I urge you and I encourage you and I want for you to get as familiar as possible with technology as you can. That way, if you don't have the budget at some point to hire out what you need or something goes wrong and you're in a pinch, you don't feel entirely helpless.

So to wrap up, we have covered the reasons to have a website and the best options to build one for your particular situation. We talked about what to consider when choosing a CRM or an email marketing system or platform and the top five plugins that you should plan on adding to your website. Finally, we discussed the pros and cons of a DIY website versus hiring help. I hope you feel a little bit more prepared to make the best website decision for your business and you now have more insight into some of the basic technologies that can make your whole life a lot easier and your business a whole lot more successful right off the bat. So thanks for watching.