

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

A friendly, jargon-free guide to getting your small business online — from your first address to your first customer



Every business starts the same way: with a door people can find.

By Pehenro IT Solutions

Illustrations by Storyset (storyset.com), used with attribution.

Table of Contents

Right-click here and choose "Update Field" to build the table of contents.

A Note Before We Begin

So you've decided to start a business. Good for you — that takes real nerve, at any age, and we're glad you're here.

Here's the good news: getting a business “set up online” sounds like a mountain of technical nonsense, but it really isn't. It's a lot like opening a little shop on Main Street. You need an address so people can find your door. You need a plot of land to build on. You need a storefront people can walk into. You need a mailbox with your name on it, not a P.O. Box out at the truck stop. You need a spot on the town notice board so your neighbours know you exist. And once customers start coming in, you need a good notebook so you never forget a face or a promise.

That's the whole book, really. Every “technical” thing you're about to read is simply one of those six ordinary things, wearing a computer costume. We'll walk through each one in plain English, roughly in the order you'd actually buy it, so that by the last page you'll know exactly what to get, in what order, and why.

To make it concrete, we'll follow one imaginary shop the whole way through: YourBiz.ie, a small Irish business run by a fellow named Sean who makes handmade wooden bowls and gift boards. Every chapter ends with a short box showing exactly what Sean clicked, chose, and paid, so you can see the theory turned into a real, working shop.

Grab a coffee. Let's open your shop.

Chapter 1 — Your Domain Name: The Address People Will Remember



Your domain name is the sign people read before they ever step inside.

Before you can build anything, people need to know where to find you. On Main Street, that's your street number. Online, it's called a domain name — the word people type after “www,” like pehenro.com.

Buying a domain name is refreshingly simple: you pick a name, check that nobody already owns it, and pay a small yearly fee to a company called a registrar — think of it as the office that keeps the whole town's address book. A few well-known, reputable registrars to start with:

- GoDaddy — the biggest name in the business, easy for a first-timer, names typically from about \$12–20 a year^[1].
- Cloudflare — a registrar that charges almost exactly its own cost price, often the cheapest honest option, from around \$9–15 a year^[2].
- Namecheap — a solid, budget-friendly middle ground, frequently used for first-year introductory pricing around \$8–15.
- If you're trading in Ireland and want the local “.ie” ending, you must go through an IEDR-accredited Irish registrar such as Blacknight, which also happens to be the largest registrar of .ie names^[14].

A few grandfatherly tips worth following:

- Stick to “.com” if you possibly can — it's the ending people type out of habit, and the one they trust fastest ^[1]. If you're specifically building trust with Irish customers, “.ie” works just as well, and often better.
- Keep it short, easy to say out loud, and easy to spell. If you'd hesitate reading it to someone over the phone, so will they ^[1].
- Avoid hyphens, numbers, and double letters — they're where typos, and lost customers, tend to live ^[1].
- Remember it's rent, not a purchase. You pay for your domain every single year, usually \$10 to \$20 (or a little more for “.ie”), to keep the sign hanging above your door ^[2].

Why bother at all? Because “yourbusiness.com” looks like a business, and a long free web address looks like a hobby. Your domain name is often a stranger's very first impression of you — it's worth making it a good one.

YOURBIZ.IE IN ACTION — PICKING THE ADDRESS

Sean makes handmade wooden bowls and gift boards in Kilkenny, and wants his shop to feel unmistakably local and trustworthy, so he chooses a “.ie” address instead of “.com.”

- He searches yourbiz.ie at Blacknight, an IEDR-accredited Irish registrar — it's available^[14].
- Because .ie names require proof of a genuine connection to Ireland, he enters his CRO business registration number at checkout — a one-time step, usually reviewed within a few business days^[14].
- His registrar bundles the first year free with a hosting plan; after that it renews at roughly €10–25 a year^[14].



YourBiz.ie: real name, real shop, real address.

Chapter 2 — Web Hosting: The Land Your Shop Sits On



A domain is just a sign. Hosting is the land it stands on.

Here's a mistake a lot of new business owners make: they buy the address (the domain) and assume the shop just appears. It doesn't. A domain name is just a sign — you still need a plot of land for the sign to stand on, and a building behind it for people to walk into.

That plot of land is called web hosting. It's a company that owns big, powerful computers (servers) that stay switched on around the clock, storing your website's files and handing them to anyone who visits ^[3]^[4]. You rent a small piece of one of those computers, much the way you'd rent a storage unit rather than build your own warehouse.

A few reputable places to rent that land, and roughly what they charge to start:

- Hostinger — usually the cheapest honest option, shared hosting from about \$2.49–3 a month, popular worldwide for small first websites ^[12].
- Bluehost — a very beginner-friendly choice, around \$2.95 a month, and often throws in your first year of domain registration free ^[12].
- SiteGround — a little pricier (from about \$4.99 a month, with higher renewal rates), but well regarded for speed and genuinely helpful support ^[12].

- Blacknight — an Irish hosting company. Slightly more than the big international names, but your shop's data stays on Irish or EU servers, and you can ring an Irish phone number when something goes wrong^[14].

Good hosting companies also throw in a few things for free that used to cost extra: an SSL certificate — the little padlock in the browser bar that tells visitors the connection is secure, and which browsers now openly flag when it's missing — and daily backups, in case anything ever goes wrong^[11].

Watch out for one thing every hosting company buries in the small print: the low “intro price” is usually only for your first term, and the renewal price afterwards can be two or three times higher^[12]. It's still cheap in the grand scheme of things — but ask up front so there's no surprise a year from now.

YOURBIZ.IE IN ACTION — CHOOSING THE LAND

Sean weighs up two honest options: Hostinger, the cheapest and quickest to set up, or Blacknight, the Irish company that already registered his domain.

- A couple of his customers ask, half-joking, “where does the website actually live?” — and Sean likes being able to say “Ireland,” and to ring a local number if anything breaks.
- He picks Blacknight's starter shared hosting plan, about €8 a month, which comes with a free SSL certificate and nightly backups included^[14].

Chapter 3 — Your Website: Building the Storefront



Your website is the shop window that never closes.

Now you've got an address and a plot of land — it's time to build the actual shop window people will look through.

You have two honest choices, and neither one is wrong:

- Hire a contractor. A web designer builds it for you, the way you'd hire a builder rather than pour your own foundation.
- Use a build-it-yourself kit. Website builders let you drag pre-made pieces into place without learning a single line of code ^[5].

Since you'll likely hear these three names again and again, here's the plain-English version of each, with roughly what they cost once you're ready to accept real orders:

- Wix is the friendliest option for a true beginner — a big box of building blocks you snap together by hand, with a helper tool that can rough out a whole site just from you describing your business. Business plans typically start around \$17 a month ^[5].
- Squarespace is the showroom with the best-looking furniture already arranged — its templates are polished and photograph-ready. Plans run similarly, roughly \$16–23 a month ^[5].

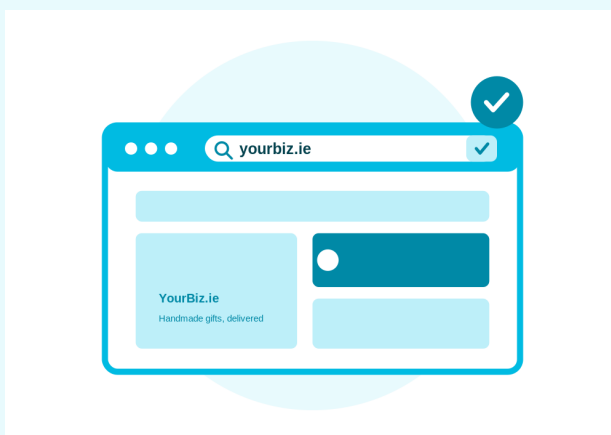
- WordPress is the “build your own house from parts” option — free itself, but you'll still pay for hosting (Chapter 2) and often a template, bringing the realistic total to about \$10–30 a month all in. A bit more assembly required, but nobody puts a ceiling on how big or unusual that house can eventually become^[5].

Whichever you choose, your website is doing one simple job: it's the storefront that never closes. It's open at two in the morning, on holidays, and during the exact five minutes a customer finally decides to look you up — something a paper flyer or a locked shop door simply can't do.

YOURBIZ.IE IN ACTION — BUILDING THE STOREFRONT

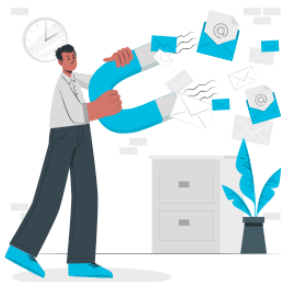
Sean isn't a computer person, so he picks Wix — he wants to drag his own bowl and gift-board photos into place himself, without hiring anyone.

- He starts on Wix's free trial to get the layout right, then upgrades to the Light Business plan (about \$17 a month) once he connects yourbiz.ie and starts taking real orders.
- The whole homepage takes him one Saturday afternoon.



yourbiz.ie's homepage, built in an afternoon.

Chapter 4 — Business Email: A Mailbox With Your Name on the Door



A proper mailbox, right where customers expect to find it.

Picture two mailboxes. One is nailed neatly beside your shop door, with your business name painted on the front. The other is a rented P.O. Box at the truck stop on the highway, shared with a hundred strangers. Both can technically receive a letter — but only one looks like a real business.

That's the difference between an email address like `yourname@yourbusiness.com` and a generic free one. Customers trust the first far more, especially anyone about to pay you for real work^[1].

The two big providers of proper business email are Microsoft 365 and Google Workspace, and both cost roughly the same — about \$6 (around €5.75) per person, per month^{[6][7]}. In plain terms:

- Google Workspace feels like writing on the same notepad as your team, together, in real time. It's famously simple to set up and is a favourite of small, hands-on businesses^{[6][7]}.

- Microsoft 365 feels like your familiar old filing cabinet, just moved to the cloud — full versions of Word, Excel, and Outlook, the same programs many of us grew up using at the office^[7].

Neither is a wrong choice. If your team is small and mostly works from phones and browsers, Google Workspace tends to be the easier first day. If you already know Word and Excel like the back of your hand, Microsoft 365 will feel like coming home^[6]^[7]. Either way, the point is the same: give your business its own proper mailbox.

YOURBIZ.IE IN ACTION — HANGING THE MAILBOX

Sean already uses Gmail and Google Docs on his phone, so he sets up hello@yourbiz.ie through Google Workspace Business Starter — about €5.75 a month.

- Now when a customer emails asking about a custom order, the reply comes from hello@yourbiz.ie, not sean1978@gmail.com.
- Setup takes about twenty minutes, most of it spent waiting for Blacknight's confirmation email to arrive.

Chapter 5 — Getting Found: Social Media and the Town Square



You don't need every corner of town — just the one where your customers already gather.

Once your shop is built, people still need to know it's there. That's what social media does — it's the town square, the community bulletin board, and the chamber-of-commerce mixer, all rolled into one small screen.

You don't need to stand on every corner of town at once. In fact, posting on five platforms at half-effort usually works worse than doing one or two properly ^[10]. Here's how the three most-asked-about platforms actually behave:

- Facebook is the community bulletin board outside the general store. It reaches the widest, most varied crowd — including the customers most small businesses actually want, adults 25 and older — and it's especially good for building a neighbourhood following ^[10].
- Instagram is the shop window display you redecorate every week. If what you sell photographs well — baked goods, flowers, furniture, haircuts, handmade crafts — Instagram lets people window-shop before they ever walk in ^[10].
- LinkedIn is the chamber-of-commerce mixer, not the street fair. It's for reaching other businesses and professionals, not walk-in customers — worth having if you sell to companies, easy to skip if you sell to the public ^[10].

A sensible rule for a new business: pick the one or two platforms where your actual customers already spend their time, post consistently — three to five times a week is plenty — and give it two to three months before judging whether it's working^[10]. A bulletin board with one fresh flyer a week beats five boards nobody ever updates.

YOURBIZ.IE IN ACTION — FINDING THE TOWN SQUARE

Handmade wooden bowls photograph beautifully, so Sean opens an Instagram account and posts a new piece three times a week.

- He also keeps a Facebook page, mainly so older, local customers who don't use Instagram can still find him and message him directly.
- He skips LinkedIn entirely — he sells bowls to people, not services to companies^[10].

Chapter 6 — The CRM: Your Little Black Book, All Grown Up



The notebook that never gets lost behind the counter.

Every shopkeeper has kept some version of the notebook by the register: “Mrs. Jenkins wants the blue one, not the red — call her back Tuesday.” That notebook is, in essence, a CRM — a Customer Relationship Manager. It’s simply a place that remembers your customers so you don’t have to ^[8].

Here’s the honest truth nobody tells new business owners: most small businesses don’t lose customers because of bad products or bad service. They lose them because somebody forgot to follow up ^[9]. The notebook falls behind the counter. The sticky note gets thrown out with yesterday’s receipts. A CRM is that same notebook, except it never gets lost, never runs out of pages, and taps you on the shoulder when it’s time to call Mrs. Jenkins back.

A couple of well-known notebooks worth knowing by name:

- HubSpot CRM — free for up to two users with unlimited contacts, which is plenty for most one- or two-person businesses just starting out ^[13].
- Zoho CRM — free for up to three users and 5,000 contacts; paid plans start around \$14 a person a month once you outgrow the free tier ^[13].

- Salesforce — the well-known heavyweight, better suited to a bigger team once you're past the notebook stage entirely ^[8].

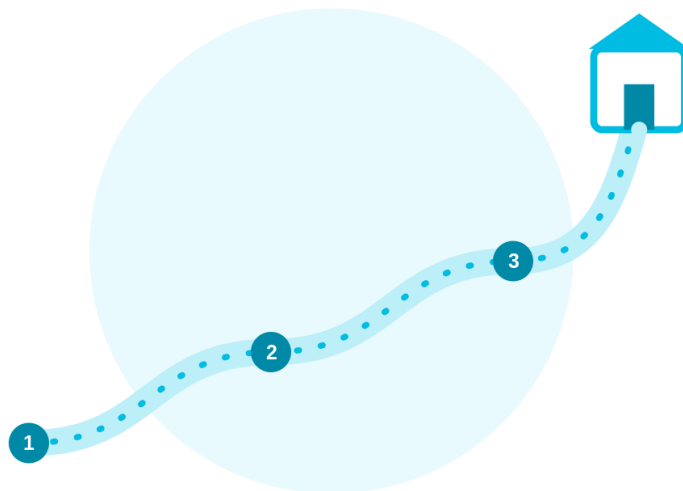
Customers have come to expect this, too — most now expect a business to remember their history and preferences rather than asking them to repeat themselves every single time ^[8]. You don't need one on day one. But the moment you can no longer hold every customer's name, order, and promise in your head, it's time to open that bigger notebook.

YOURBIZ.IE IN ACTION — OPENING THE BIGGER NOTEBOOK

For his first year, Sean gets by with an actual notebook by the till.

- Once orders start arriving through yourbiz.ie too, and he can no longer remember them all, he moves to HubSpot's free CRM plan — free for up to two users, plenty for just him and his daughter, who helps out on weekends ^[13].
- Now when Mrs. O'Brien orders a set of coasters every Christmas, HubSpot remembers, and quietly reminds Sean to reach out again in November.

Chapter 7 — Putting It All Together: A Simple Order of Operations



Same shop, same order, one step at a time.

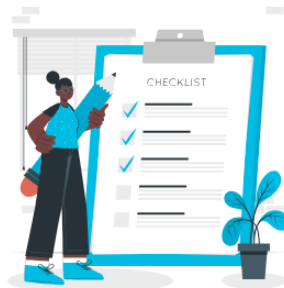
If all of this feels like a lot at once, here's the order most businesses actually do it in, and roughly what each step costs:

- Domain name — pick your address first. Roughly \$10–20 a year (or free-to-cheap the first year if bundled with hosting) ^[1] ^[2] ^[14].
- Web hosting — secure your plot of land. Roughly \$2.50–15 a month depending on provider ^[4] ^[12].
- Website — build the storefront on that land. Free to build with a bit of elbow grease; typically \$17–30 a month once live with a builder plan ^[5].
- Business email — hang your proper mailbox by the door. Roughly \$6 per person, per month ^[6] ^[7].
- Social media profiles — put your name on the town notice board. Free, aside from the time it takes to post ^[10].
- A CRM — open the notebook, once there are enough names to remember. Many start free (HubSpot, Zoho) and grow with you ^[8] ^[9] ^[13].

Altogether, a modest, professional starting setup often lands around \$40 to \$60 a year for the basics — domain and hosting — plus roughly \$6 to \$17 a month once you add proper email and a website builder plan ^[11]. That's less than most people spend on their

phone bill, for a business that's now reachable, trustworthy, and impossible to lose track of, any hour of any day.

Chapter 8 — Your Quick-Glance Checklist



Keep this page handy — it's the whole book in six lines.

- Domain name — your address, so people can find your door.
- Web hosting — your land, so the shop has somewhere to stand.
- Website — your storefront, open even while you sleep.
- Business email — your mailbox, so you look like the real business you are.
- One or two social media profiles — your spot on the town notice board.
- A CRM — your notebook, so no customer's name ever slips away.

You don't have to build all of this in a day, or even a month. You just have to build it in this order, one piece at a time — the same patient way anyone ever built a shop worth walking into. Sean didn't do it all in a week, either — and neither should you.

Where This Information Came From

Every fact and figure in this guide is drawn from the sources below, numbered to match the little bracketed notes throughout the text.

- [1] GoDaddy — “How to buy a domain name in 3 steps: Your essential guide”. www.godaddy.com/resources/skills/how-to-buy-a-domain-name
- [2] Cloudflare — “How to buy a domain name”. www.cloudflare.com/learning/dns/how-to-buy-a-domain-name/
- [3] Hostinger — “What is web hosting? Web hosting for beginners explained”. www.hostinger.com/tutorials/what-is-web-hosting/
- [4] GoDaddy — “What is web hosting? Complete guide for beginners”. www.godaddy.com/resources/skills/what-is-web-hosting
- [5] Website Builder Expert — “I Tested Wix vs Squarespace vs WordPress: Which is Best?”. www.websitebuilderexpert.com/website-builders/comparisons/wix-vs-squarespace-vs-wordpress/
- [6] Fit Small Business — “Google Workspace vs Office 365: Which Is Better?”. fitsmallbusiness.com/g-suite-vs-office-365/
- [7] CIOTech — “Microsoft 365 vs Google Workspace (2026): Security, Cost, and Control”. www.ciotech.us/microsoft-365-vs-google-workspace-better-decision-2026/
- [8] Salesforce — “CRM For Small Business (Your Complete Guide)”. www.salesforce.com/crm/crm-for-small-business/
- [9] Thryv — “When Does a Small Business Need a CRM? A Beginner's Guide”. thryvedigest.com/smallbusiness/does-a-small-business-need-a-crm/
- [10] Sprout Social — “Social Media Marketing for Small Business: Complete Guide for 2026”. sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-marketing-for-small-business/
- [11] Hostvogo — “Online Essentials for Your Business: The Complete Checklist”. hostvogo.com/blog/online-essentials-for-your-business/
- [12] Crazy Egg — “Best Web Hosting for Small Businesses in 2026”. www.crazyegg.com/blog/best-web-hosting-for-small-businesses/

[13] EngageBay — “HubSpot vs Zoho CRM: 2026 Head-to-Head Comparison”.

www.engagebay.com/blog/hubspot-vs-zoho

[14] Blacknight — “Register IE domains with Blacknight — Irish domains registration & transfer”.

www.blacknight.com/register-ie-domains/

Illustrations throughout this guide are courtesy of Storyset (storyset.com), recoloured to match the Pehenro brand palette, and used under the Freepik Free License with attribution: “Online illustrations by Storyset.”