



# What every small business website **should have** (and what's a waste of money).

A no-nonsense, two-page checklist from a studio that has built websites for landscapers, photographers, HOAs, security firms, and luxury photo booths. Print it. Hand it to your designer. Use it to audit your own site in 15 minutes.

FREE GUIDE · 2025 EDITION · MERGING INNOVATION

## **A** 10 things every small business website must have

### **1** A clear answer to "what do you do?" — above the fold

Within three seconds of landing, a visitor should know what you sell, who it's for, and where you operate. No clever taglines that hide it.

### **2** Your phone number, clickable, on every page

For most local businesses, the phone is still the highest-converting channel. Put it in the top-right of the nav and the mobile sticky bar.

### **3** Your service area or physical address

"Northern Virginia" or "Greater Houston" tells Google and humans you're local. Vague language tanks local SEO.

### **4** At least three real testimonials with full names

"Sarah K." beats "anonymous." A real first name plus business name plus a one-line specific compliment is the floor.

### **5** Photos of real work, real people, or your real location

Stock photos are a credibility tax. Even a single iPhone shot of your shop or team beats a polished stock library.

6

### **A page that loads in under 3 seconds on a phone**

Test it. Half your visitors are on mobile, half of those are on a slow connection. Sluggish sites lose money silently.

7

### **An obvious next step on every page**

Call. Book. Message. Buy. One page = one main action. Don't make a visitor decide between five buttons.

8

### **A simple, scannable list of services**

Bullet points beat paragraphs. Starting prices (or "from \$X") build trust. Vague offerings lose to specific ones.

9

### **Mobile design that works one-handed**

Tap targets at least 44 pixels. No tiny dropdowns. The submit button reachable with a thumb.

10

### **Your contact info in the footer of every page**

Phone, email, hours, address — visible without scrolling back up. Sounds obvious; about half the sites we audit fail it.

## **B** 5 things that look impressive but waste your money

### **1** Custom-coded animations no one will see

Most visitors scroll past in seconds. Spend the budget on faster loads and clearer copy instead.

### **2** A blog you'll abandon in three months

An empty blog with three posts from last year is worse than no blog at all. Don't build one unless you'll commit to it.

### **3** Live chat with no one to answer it

A "we'll reply soon" message from yesterday tells a visitor you're inattentive. Use a contact form instead, with a real reply-time promise.

### **4** Stock photos that look like stock photos

Generic handshakes, generic skylines, generic "diverse team smiling at laptop." Visitors smell it instantly. It quietly undermines trust.

### **5** A "members area" or login you don't actually need

Unless you're running a real account-based service, accounts add friction without value. Cut the page; keep the simple contact flow.

## **Want a second opinion on your current site?**

Send us your URL and we'll send back a short, specific audit within one business day. No deck, no pitch, no obligation — just honest feedback from a studio that's seen a few hundred small business sites.

**Email:** [dave@merginginnovation.com](mailto:dave@merginginnovation.com)    **Call or text:** [571-601-4008](tel:571-601-4008)

**Website:** [webdesign.merginginnovation.com](http://webdesign.merginginnovation.com)