Marketing & Communications

The way you market and promote your organization will influence fundraising efforts, community engagement, the way your organization is perceived in the community, and so much more. Marketing plays an important role in the success of an organization, and our Marketing & Communications Team has developed materials in this toolkit to give you more resources for success!

Creating A Website

Learn about the 8 steps in creating a website for your organization.

Story Telling

Learn about how to collect compelling stories from your clients.

Come Back Soon!

Our team is working on more topics for this toolkit. Come back soon for more information!

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

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UNDER CONSTRUCTION

SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK of MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Creating A Website

Step 1: Obtain a Good Domain Name

Your domain name, or website address, is the entry point to your website. Here are some tips to create the optimal domain name:

- Make it as close as possible to your business name.

- Make it easy to spell.

- Keep it as short as possible. The shorter it is, the easier it is to remember and type correctly.

- Use the proper domain extension. Try .org if you are a nonprofit and .com if not. Avoid .net, .co, etc. if possible.

- Research the domain name. Google it to see if a similar website address exists online, and search on USPTO.gov to ensure it does not contain any registered trademarks.

Ready to purchase your domain? We recommend using GoDaddy

Step 2: Set Up an Email Address to Match Your Domain Name

- You can use free email services for your business but using one that matches your domain (and business) name, creates a more professional impression. For example, your domain-name email will display as info@mybusiness.com, instead of mybusiness@gmail.com.

- The service provider who registers your domain name, or your web hosting company, may provide an email service or include it as a paid add-on.

Step 3: Choose a Web Host and Content Management System (CMS)

In the past, website hosts (or website hosting providers) and content management systems (CMS) were separate. Thankfully, most companies now offer both services. This means the company that you use to build your website is also the company that offers the technology necessary for your website to be viewed on the internet. There are countless companies out there that offer these services. Second Harvest's website is hosted and built on WordPress.

Here are some other options:

- **WordPress**: WordPress is the world's most popular CMS. It has a vast, active support community and many useful plugins to extend the functionality of your site. WordPress is also free and relatively simple to install.

- **Squarespace**: Squarespace is a service you subscribe to monthly or annually that makes website and blog creation an easy "drag and drop" experience. It includes website design, development, software maintenance, metrics, domain name with annual purchase, SSL security, 24/7 support, and unlimited bandwidth and storage hosting all in one package. It is especially suitable for creatives and provides you with top-notch design templates. If you are on a tight budget, need a simple and beautiful site, but cannot afford a website designer, this is a great service for you.

- **Wix**: Wix is very similar to Squarespace, but it is a bit more user-friendly. It offers a monthly, but not annual, subscription and includes similar features. Wix is also a drag-and-drop builder—you can freely drag and drop elements anywhere on the page; in comparison, Squarespace is more structured in where you can drag and drop on the page. The learning curve to using Wix is even shorter than Squarespace, so if you need to publish a site quickly, this may be your best option.

| Wix | Squarespace | WordPress |

Step 4: Conduct Competitor/Peer Research

- To build an engaging website from scratch, it's key that you understand your target audience and do some competitor research. You'll want to understand what type of content your potential visitors are interested in and what information they're searching for.

- To do this, search Google for websites like what you envision yours to be. Go through the relevant pages and look at what type of content they're providing, whether it be blogs, community forums, social media feeds, testimonials or Q+A sections.

Step 5: Design Your Website by Prioritizing Your Content

When designing your website, think about:
- the information you want to give your customers
- what you want them to do on your site
- the questions they'll have
- the order they'll be doing things in.

Structure the site to make it easy for them to find and do the things they need. You'll want your most eye-catching and important content to be placed above the fold (in other words, the area that's visible on your website without visitors having to scroll).

Create your sitemap: The easiest way to plan your website content is to create a visual site map. See an example here. Think of this as the blueprint of your site's architecture. Your sitemap should include all the pages you plan to create and how they connect to each other. By planning this in advance, you have a better chance of perfecting your website navigation and offering users a smooth browsing experience. After you've created the sitemap, create a document with all the contents that belong under each section.

The key elements to include on your website are:
- An inviting homepage
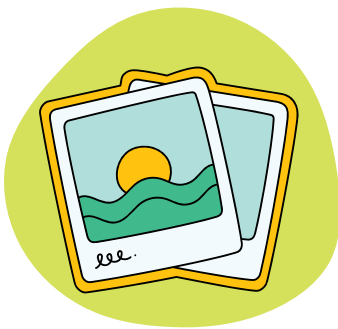- An About page
- A contact section
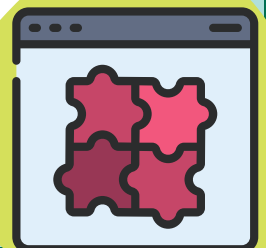
Step 6: Build Your Website

Once you've worked out what content you want on your website, you'll need to create or buy the content.

Website content includes things like:
- images
- videos
- copy (written words)
- interactive tools, like maps
- landing pages to support promotional campaigns

Having relevant and professional content and images will help customers understand your products and services and make them feel comfortable about doing business with you.

Step 7: Optimize Your Site for SEO

Search engine optimization, or SEO, is the practice of optimizing your site so your pages can rank higher on search engine result pages. When launching a new website from scratch, it's vital to set your site up for success so it can be found by Google.

The more exposure you get, the more likely that prospective clients will find your site and book your services, buy your products or read your blog.

# Step 7 (Continued): Optimize Your Site for SEO

SEO mainly includes the following practices:

- Keyword research and implementation
- Fast loading speed
- Being secure and having an SSL certificate installed; SSL is the standard security technology that ensures data passed between web servers and browsers remains private
- Having a mobile-friendly site
- Existence of high-quality backlinks (links on external websites with related content) that lead to your site
- Having lots of positive reviews online (Google, Yelp, Facebook, etc.)
- Using internal links throughout your site to keep people clicking and reading
- Using social media to link to your site (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, etc.)

Step 8: Publish Your Site

Once your site is ready, it will need to be published or made live so it can be found by customers using your domain name.

It can take a day or two for your website to go live across the internet (a process known as propagating). Take this into account if you've scheduled your website release to coincide with other opening activities.
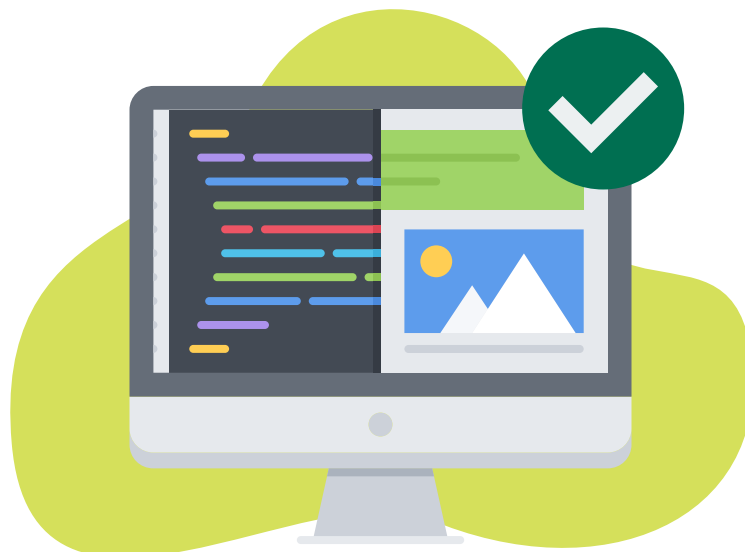
Storytelling

Your clients usually have beautiful stories to share and are happy to tell them. We have found, very infrequently, has someone approached them to ask them to tell their story, and doing so can be empowering and cathartic. There are best practices for developing a compelling story.

Step 1: Have a Name, Face, and Voice

It can be useful to think of things in a traditional mindset, where your client is a "main character". To make your audience feel compelled to do something (donate, volunteer, etc.) after reading your story, it is important to make them care about your main character. To do this make sure your character has a name, face, and a voice.

- **Name:** It is best to only use first name, as the subject matter you're dealing with may result in your clients wanting to preserve privacy. Try to use your clients' names as frequently as possible when discussing them, instead of pronouns. For example, "John went to the store" instead of "He went to the store".

- **Face:** When possible, it is always best to share an image of the character your story is about. This not only helps the audience visualize who the story is about, but, more importantly, sympathize. It is also important to describe the character in your story. Adding background, context, and relevant facts about your character will create a more compelling story.

- **Voice:** Always add quotes from your character to add color to your story. It may be tempting to change or edit a quote to fit your narrative, but it is important to make sure you share quotes are they are given by your character, as to empower and give dignity to their story.

Step 2: Make Sure Your Story Has An Arc

The Original Story: "John, a retired veteran, is here to get affordable medical care for his diabetes" is not a compelling story but has all the necessary elements to become one.

The Original Story *with an Arc*: After retiring from the Military, John struggled to afford medical care for his diabetes. Thanks to us, he can get access to affordable care."

The story now has a defined beginning, middle, and resolution. It is important for the resolution to be centered around your organization to compel your audience to support you.

Step 3: Offer A Solution

This is where the "ask" comes in. Provide an example of how your organization, through the support of your audience, can prevent a similar story from happening or can help people through similar events.

Offering the Solution: "Only with your support can we continue to provide affordable care to people like John. Please consider a donation today."