



Websites, like [fashion](#), are in a constant state of [flux](#). Design trends, technology improvements and marketing strategies combine to create a [matrix](#) of ever-changing attitudes and expectations by site owners and visitors alike.

As a business owner, what this means for you is that you must constantly be aware of not only what your competitors are doing, but what your website visitors are [experiencing](#). And to make that experience as good as possible, your website - like your business itself - should be **constantly** evolving.

Think about it. Do you remember when you started your business, and how differently you approached marketing and building it? Can you imagine going back to that now? Well, many websites are doing exactly that – they're [stuck in the past](#). Outdated information, functions that are not compatible with more recent software, or [web pages so ugly](#) that they ought to be illegal still deluge the web.

Businesses with this type of site don't generate many leads or much revenue from them (want to guess why?), which suggests the site isn't worth the effort or expense to improve it. This type of thinking is not healthy, and requires a drastic change of perspective.

As a website owner, the first thing you need to do is to stop classifying your site as an expense – it's actually an asset. Second, you may not need to break down your site and completely start over, you may only need to make small improvements to it. Third, though there was a time not long ago when maintaining your site on a regular basis was costly and time-consuming, technology has driven that cost way down.

Keeping your [website relevant](#) is an investment in the most important marketing tool you own, and will definitely generate [ROI](#) if done correctly.

With that in mind, there are various ways to get your site up to speed that won't break your budget. Below are 5.1 of the top suggestions to make it competitive.



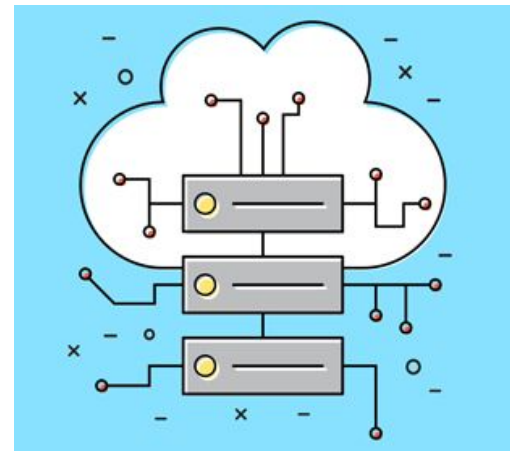
1. Install A [Content Management System](#). CMS applications have been around for a while now, with [Wordpress](#) being a ubiquitous choice in the industry. A CMS enables you to administer your website more effectively, and in real time. Adding a CMS will help you in various ways:

- a) Faster, more efficiently controlled changes.
- b) Improved security since your website files and [data](#) have multiple layers of protection.
- c) Google love – Google favors websites that have a CMS, because it contributes to a better [user experience](#).

One thing to remember is that a CMS needs maintenance to work efficiently. [Plugins](#) and associated apps must be updated as well as the CMS itself.

2. Upgrade your [hosting](#). \$7 a month for hosting is a wise choice when starting your fledgling business. But as an established professional, you need a bit more. \$20 a month will get you the type of hosting support you now require (however, eCommerce hosting costs will be higher).

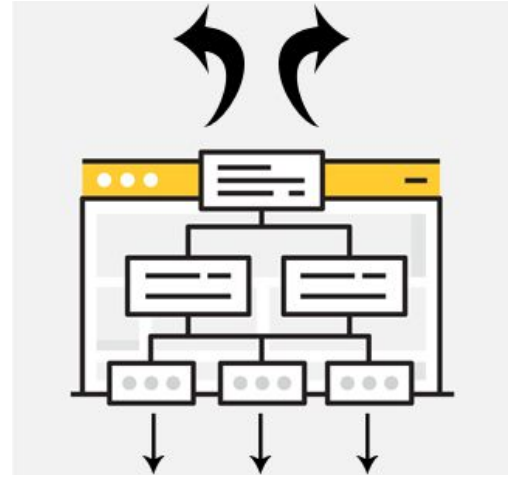
Low-cost hosting means you're on a [shared hosting plan](#), if you want better function and faster loading of your pages, you need to get on a [VPS hosting plan](#). Aside from improved [bandwidth](#) (load time), you have more storage and yes, better security! All of this adds up to a better user experience, which keeps people coming back.



3. [Optimize the site](#). This is the process of making your website more searchable, efficient and fun to use. The importance of optimizing your website cannot be emphasized enough. A site without optimization is like a car that hasn't been tuned up in years – people stay away from it and no one wants to use it.

4. Streamline navigation/condense pages. In some ways, this is part of optimizing, although it's an important step to take on its own. As you know, without a good user experience, your site just won't market your business effectively. To up the odds in your favor, you should:

- a) Make sure your menu links are accurate and in logical order based on their objective.
- b) Associate similar pages on the same menu with [drop-down links](#).
- c) Condense several short pages with associated content into one page.
- d) Long pages should be made into sections with [accordion](#) or [tabbed](#) menus.



5. Start blogging. Posting news, events or informational articles not only helps your [SEO](#) rankings by adding fresh content, it contributes to your reputation as an authority in your industry. Blogging will also help keep you top of mind if users come to read your posts. If you send newsletters, you can use that content for your blog or vice versa. If you're in a bind for new content, you can invite guest bloggers from your industry – and if they want you to guest post on their site, even better!

5.1. Upgrade your graphics. This is the easiest and most affordable thing you can do on your site. People are visually oriented, thus they often will look at images before reading anything. Just upgrading your graphics and/or images to be larger and more colorful can make your site feel new. Make sure you use the [biggest images](#) - but [smallest file size](#) - you can for the available space.



Doing any one, or ideally all of the steps above will have a definite impact on your site's visual appeal, ease of use and functional efficiency.

Your website can be a marketing beast for you, if you're willing to take the steps to make it roar! Or, you can leave it as is, where it will just fade away with a whimper. The choice, of course, is yours.