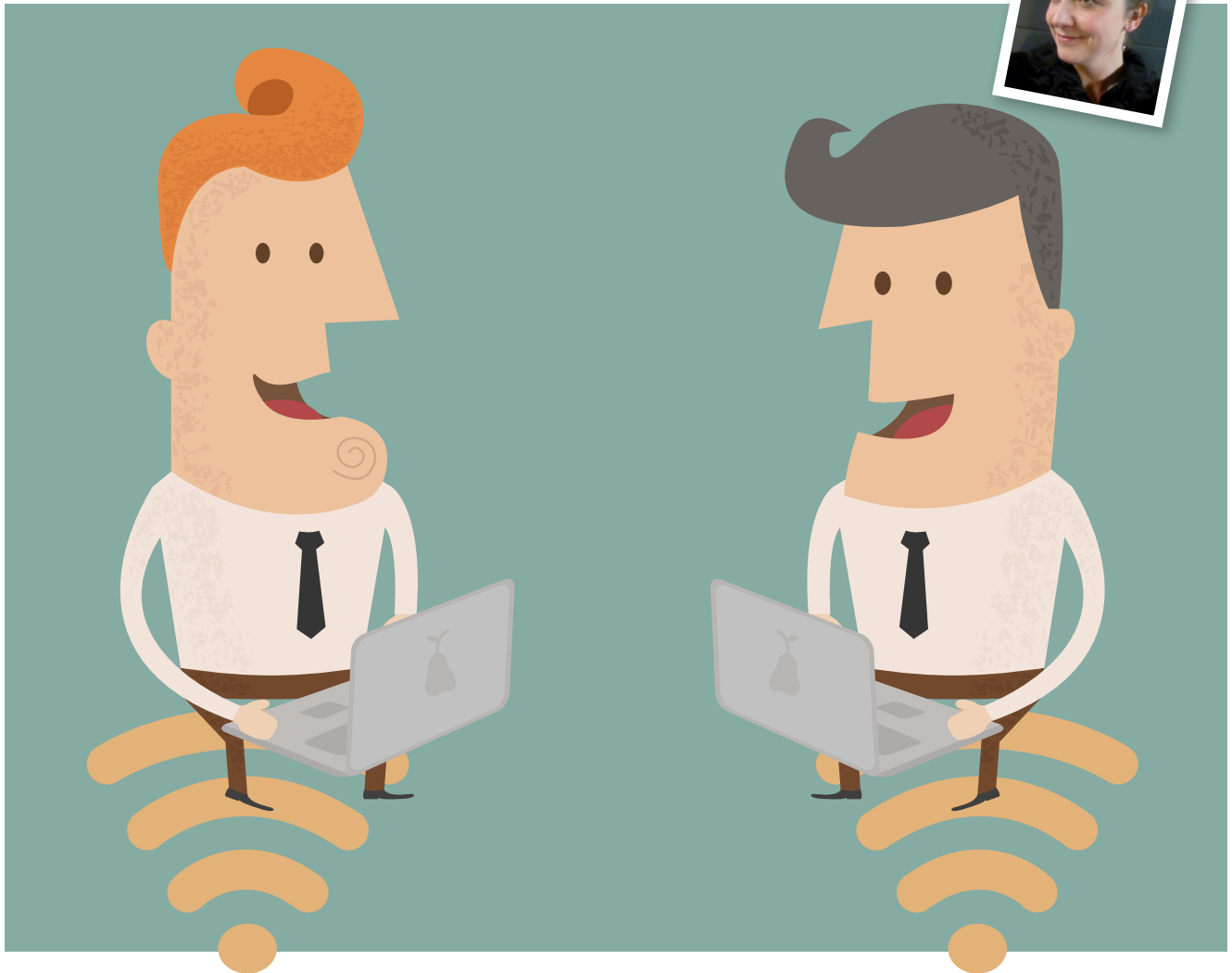# LAUNCHING YOUR FIRST WEBSITE…A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MAKING IT HAPPEN

BY JULIA ELMORE, SCREW WORK ACADEMY GENIE

How to get started

John has said that the number one mistake in creating your website or blog is putting it off. You may be doing this because you can't decide on the perfect name, the right design or perhaps you are just not 100% certain on your message, but John has some sage advice for anyone who is holding back:

1. **Create your website now.** The great thing about websites is that they are editable. If you install WordPress on your own hosting, your website is under your control, so you have the freedom to change your theme (design) and add and remove pages and content as you wish.

2. **Start with just 4 pages** (e.g. Home, Blog, About, Contact) with 1 or 2 paragraphs of text each and get something up. You can begin with just a couple of paragraphs and hide pages until you are ready to go live.

3. **No one will see your early site unless you point them to it.** The site is visible but it doesn't matter too much if it's not perfect yet because it is unlikely that people will stumble upon it. You can share when you are ready.

4. **The site you begin with is often not the one you end up with**, but if you wish to reach an audience and sell a product or offer, a website can be the best place to start, so consider this a starting point rather than the finished product. You will gain clarity from making it happen.

Alternatives to your own website

If you really do not feel ready to create a website just yet, but want to start building your tribe, there are other options.

Create an event on meetup.com

Meetup.com has been used successfully by a number of Academy members to organise events and grow their circle of potential clients. When seeking the sort of people you want to engage with and ultimately sell to, John always advises, "Go where your clients are." Kal Atwal, a member of the first Screw Work Academy, realised that her ideal clients were looking for events on meetup.com so she set up an event there and in addition to expanding her customer base, she was also discovered by someone who was actively seeking people for a TV show on dating.

Use Facebook to your advantage

It can be easy to lose hours on Facebook that could otherwise be spent on your project. However, if you use it wisely, Facebook can help you gain clarity on your ideas and reach the right audience. Here are some pointers:

1. **Create a Facebook page or group**. By creating a Facebook page or group for your project, you can invite your friends and start sharing relevant images and articles as well as initiating conversations on your subject and growing your audience. Choose a name for your page or group that describes your subject so that anyone searching for that subject on Facebook can easily find you.

2. **Engage with your readers**. By posting questions and statements on your Facebook page you can strike up a dialogue with your readers.

If you are still exploring your theme, conversations with readers can provide valuable insights. Posting the right questions can help you find out what gets people fired up, what their needs and challenges are and can even provide content for your blog. You can do this on your personal page too. I recently posted a couple of questions on my personal page, the first: "What is your biggest block when it comes to making art?" The comments and conversations that ensued provided me with fresh ideas and inspiration for my blog as well as giving me a personal insight into the needs I should be addressing with my offers and courses.

3. **Create a Facebook event**. You can create events on Facebook and invite your friends along. Add a link to a site such as eventbrite.com or bookwhen.com in order to take bookings online.

4. **Add a sign up form**. Mailing systems such as Mailchimp and aWeber allow you to add a sign-up form to your Facebook page so you can start building your mailing list without a website.

5. **Experiment**. I am currently testing the water to see which of my pages gets greater engagement when I post, my personal page or my Be Creative Daily page. At the moment, my personal page is winning, though I only have a small percentage more friends than I do likers for my page. However, my creativity page enables me to reach out beyond my friends to a wider audience. Test out different ways of sharing and engaging and see which works best for you.

Making best use of your new website or page

When you have hosted an event, created your Facebook page or begun to engage with your tribe through other means, you will likely have a clearer idea of the needs of your customers. You will now be ready to consider Seth Godin's advice on what works for websites.

Seth Godin s take on how to best use your website

If you wish to sell a product or create an offer, it pays to know who your ideal customer is. As Seth Godin advises, "The only reason to build a website is to change someone. If you can't tell me the change and you can't tell me the someone, then you're wasting your time."

To gain clarity on this, Seth has a list of questions which you should ask yourself:

- Who is this site for?
- How did they find out about it?
- What does the design remind them of?
- What do you want them to do when they get here?
- How will they decide to do that, and what promises do you make to cause that action?

These questions are just as relevant for someone who already has a site. If the answers are not clear from looking at your website, it may be time for a re-think and re-design. However, if you get all of these things right, growing the right audience for your website and product will be much easier. Ultimately, Seth advises, "Answer your visitor when he asks, 'Why am I here?'"

What to do now

1 Get something up there. Put up the website; start the blog; create the event or the Facebook page.

2 Think about your call to action. What do you want visitors to do? Do you want them to call you / sign up to your mailing list / buy something? Make it clear.

3 Focus your site on leading visitors to take that action. Make it easy for visitors to take the action you want – for instance, you could put the main offer right on the home page with a big buy button. Or put a prominent notice about why they should join your email list and form right underneath to fill in.

4 Start promoting your website, page or event. We'll be learning more about this in future months on the Academy but you could start by simply adding a link to your website into your email signature.