Small business tech stack checklist: Tools to get your business online by Hover

Starting a business can come with a long to-do list, but figuring out which tools you need to run it online doesn't have to be complicated. Hover, a domain name provider based in Canada, has put together a quick checklist to go over the key pieces that really matter, and where applicable, the order that is best to implement them in. Whether you're just getting started or you're auditing what you already have, this checklist can help you review your business technology stack.

What is a small business's technology stack?

A small business's technology stack, sometimes referred to as a tech stack, is the collection of tools your business uses day-to-day, covering everything from your online presence, finances, customer relationships, and marketing. Think of the tech stack as a foundation. The tools you pick early shape the operations, planning, and logistics that comes after. Your digital presence will be shaped and supported by your technology stack, as well.

The ultimate Canadian small business tech stack checklist for your digital presence

Every tool on this list serves a purpose, and some depend on others being in place first. We've flagged those where it counts, so feel free to work through this in whatever way makes the most sense for your business.

1. Your domain name for your business name

Your domain name is the foundation of your business's online presence. It's what powers your email, gives your website a home, and helps show your customers that you're a legitimate, established business online. You can start searching options at any domain registry, such as the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA).

A few tips for picking a great domain name:

- Keep it short and easy to spell.
- Avoid hyphens, if possible. They're easy to forget and awkward to say out loud.
- Explore modern domain extension options. Extensions like .co, .store, and .shop are widely recognized when .com isn't available.
- Consider a country-code extension, like .ca. It's a simple way to signal your national identity, like powerpay.ca!

> **Pro tip!** While you're at it, claim your business name on social media too. Even if you're not ready to post yet, securing your handles now keeps them out of someone else's hands and your brand consistent everywhere.

2. A professional email address

Once your domain is registered, setting up a professional email address is a natural next step. It's a small change that makes a big difference. Your email address says a lot about your business before you've even sent a message, and you@yourbusiness.com signals to customers, partners, and vendors that you're a legitimate, established operation.

It's also what goes on your invoices, your website's contact form, your business cards, and every account you set up as your business grows. As your team expands, you can choose to give your team members domain email addresses, as well.

3. A website or landing page

You need a website or web presence that answers three questions: what do you do, who is it for, and how do people reach you. A simple landing page does that job while you build out your website or ecommerce site.

Ultimately, your business will benefit from a full website, and the path you take to get there will depend on your specific needs. Website builders are a great fit for many small businesses, offering professional results without any technical knowledge required. If your website calls for more customization or specific functionality, working with a freelance developer or a small agency might be the better route. And if you're feeling adventurous, AI-powered tools have made it easier than ever to build something yourself.

Whatever route you choose, look for something that's easy to update on your own as your business grows. That could mean refreshing your copy, adding a new page, or expanding your offering over time. It should also work well on mobile and be able to connect to your marketing and analytics tools. At the end of the day, the most important thing is to launch. It can be easy to get lost in the details, but the best website is one that's actually live.

4. Accounting and bookkeeping software

Try to set this up before your first sale, not after your first tax season. Establishing proper accounting habits early means cleaner records, less scrambling come tax time, and a much clearer picture of how your business is actually performing.

Most modern accounting software options are cloud-based, which can make things like syncing your bank, sharing access with an accountant, and tracking expenses much more manageable. Look for something that covers the basics: invoicing, expense tracking, and payroll integration.

5. Communications and social media tools

Email marketing remains one of the most reliable ways to reach your customers directly. An email marketing platform lets you build and segment a list of customers and prospect emails, create polished campaigns using templates, and make sure your communications land straight in their inbox. SMS is another incredible way to reach customers in a way that is easy for them to engage with and reply. That kind of direct access is hard to replicate elsewhere.

Social media, on the other hand, is excellent for visibility. It widens your reach, opens the door to organic exposure, and gives you a space to build a community around your business. A social media management tool can help you stay consistent across platforms once your strategy starts to take shape. Many businesses use their social media sites as their main website too, if that works for your business.

6. Analytics and website tracking

Setting up analytics from day one is one of the most proactive things you can do for your business. Even with a single landing page, you can learn a lot: which cities or regions your visitors are coming from, whether they found you through social media, search, or a link you shared, and what they actually clicked on or engaged with once they landed on your page.

You don’t need to obsess over the numbers early on. Just having them collect in the background means that when you are ready to dig in, the data is there waiting for you. Set up goal tracking for key actions like sign-ups or form fills, check in monthly, and let it help guide you.

How do you choose the right tools?

With so many tools on the market, knowing where to start can feel overwhelming. It's important to remember that the right tool is usually the one you’ll actually use. A sophisticated platform that collects dust is worse than a simple one you open every day. Here are a few principles to help you narrow it down:

- ☐ Start with free tiers and try a few types of software. They all often have different features and some may be more suitable to your business and needs than others.
- ☐ Check integrations before you buy. Tools that don't talk to each other create manual work, and switching later is more painful than choosing carefully upfront.
- ☐ Talk to other business owners, especially ones running businesses similar to yours
- ☐ Listen to feedback from vendors and customers interacting with your chosen solution(s).

Your small business’s tech stack matters on day one

When you’re first starting out, one of the easiest traps to fall into is getting caught up in tools that feel exciting or productive before the fundamentals are in place. You don't need a perfect stack to launch your business but ensuring you're set up for digital success is important. You need a functional

technology stack that works for your business in the beginning, and is able to grow and change as your business scales.