



From Idea to Launch: A Beginner's Step-by-Step Guide to Launching a Website or System

Launching a website or system is easier when you know the steps. Follow this guide in order and tick each box. It works for a business website, a school or clinic system, an online shop or a software product.

Step 1. Define the purpose

- ☐ Write one sentence: "This website or system exists so that [who] can [do what]."
- ☐ List your main audiences: customers, students, patients, staff, partners.
- ☐ Choose 2 or 3 goals you can measure, for example 50 enquiries a month or fees recorded for every student.
- ☐ Decide the single most important action a visitor or user should take.

Step 2. Decide what to build

- ☐ Website: shows information and gets enquiries (company, NGO, school, tours).
- ☐ Web system: users log in to work with data (fees, records, stock, library).
- ☐ Mobile app: needed when users work in the field, offline, or need phone features.
- ☐ SaaS product: your own subscription software for many customers.
- ☐ Start small. List the "must have" features for version 1 and keep the "nice to have" list for later.

Step 3. Plan your budget, time and people

- ☐ Write down who decides, who provides content, and who approves each stage.
- ☐ List the costs to plan for: design and development, domain, hosting, email, photos or logo, training, and yearly maintenance.
- ☐ Agree a realistic timeline and add extra time for feedback and corrections.
- ☐ Choose your builder using the questions in our article "How to Choose a Web Developer in Tanzania".

Step 4. Get your domain, hosting and email

- ☐ Domain name: choose a short, easy name in your own organisation's name. Local endings such as .co.tz and .or.tz are registered through accredited registrars; .com is also common. Check the rules for .or.tz and .ac.tz.
- ☐ Register the domain in your own name or your organisation's name and keep the login safe.
- ☐ Hosting: shared hosting is fine for most websites; systems with many users may need a stronger server.
- ☐ Set up a professional email address such as info@yourdomain.
- ☐ Make sure the site will use https (a security certificate). Most good hosts include it.

Step 5. Prepare your content and brand

- ☐ Plan the pages: Home, About, Services or Products, Contact, and any others you need.
- ☐ Write clear, short text. Say what you do, for whom, and how to contact you.
- ☐ Collect a logo, brand colours and real photos. Make sure you have the right to use every image.
- ☐ Prepare Privacy Policy and Terms pages, and follow Tanzania's data protection law if you collect personal data.
- ☐ For a system: list user roles (admin, teacher, accountant...) and what each person may see or change.

Step 6. Design and approve

- ☐ Ask for a design preview (mock-up) of the main pages before any coding starts.
- ☐ Check it on a phone first. Most visitors use phones.
- ☐ Give all feedback in one organised list and approve each stage in writing.
- ☐ For a system: walk through the screens with the real users and confirm the steps match how you work.

Step 7. Build

- ☐ The builder develops the pages or the system in a test area that the public cannot see.
- ☐ Check progress regularly and answer questions quickly to avoid delays.
- ☐ For a system: plan how existing records will be cleaned and imported, and who is responsible.
- ☐ For payments: decide which mobile money or card providers you need early, as set-up takes time.

Step 8. Test everything

- ☐ Test on different phones, a laptop and at least two browsers.
- ☐ Test every form, button and link. Confirm that emails arrive and confirmations are sent.
- ☐ Check page speed on a slow connection and compress large images.
- ☐ Test logins and permissions: each role should see only what it should.
- ☐ Ask 3 to 5 real people to try common tasks without help and note where they struggle.
- ☐ Fix problems and test again.

Step 9. Prepare for launch

- ☐ Take a full backup and confirm you know how to restore it.
- ☐ Turn on https and check that the domain and www both open the site.
- ☐ Add your site to Google Search Console and submit the sitemap. Create a Google Business Profile for your location.
- ☐ Add visit statistics if you want to measure results.
- ☐ Prepare social media links, a WhatsApp number and your email signature.
- ☐ Train the staff who will use or update it, and keep a short user guide.
- ☐ For a system: run a pilot with a small group first, then roll out to everyone.

Step 10. Launch day checklist

- ☐ Choose a calm day and time, and tell the team.
- ☐ Switch the website or system from the test area to the live address.
- ☐ Open the live site and click through the main pages and forms.
- ☐ Send yourself a test enquiry and check the confirmation email.
- ☐ Announce it: WhatsApp, social media, email and printed material.

Step 11. Life after launch

- ☐ Check that the site is online every week and set up a free uptime alert.
- ☐ Keep automatic backups and apply security updates.
- ☐ Answer enquiries quickly and keep content fresh with news, photos and updates.
- ☐ Review your goals every month and improve what is not working.
- ☐ Agree a maintenance and support plan with your builder, including who to call when something breaks.

Common beginner mistakes

- ☐ Starting to build before the goals and audience are clear.
- ☐ Trying to include every feature in version 1.
- ☐ Letting the developer register the domain and hosting in their own name.
- ☐ Not testing on phones, and not testing forms and emails.
- ☐ Skipping backups, training and a support plan.

Quick glossary

- ☐ Domain: your website address, for example afrotechna.com.
- ☐ Hosting: the computer space where your website or system lives online.
- ☐ https / SSL: the lock that keeps visitors' data private.
- ☐ Backend: the part users do not see, where data and logic live.
- ☐ MVP (minimum viable product): the smallest useful first version.
- ☐ Sitemap: a list of your pages that helps search engines find them.

General guidance. Adapt it to your project and local rules. AfroTechna can help with any step: afrotechna.com or info@afrotechna.com.