

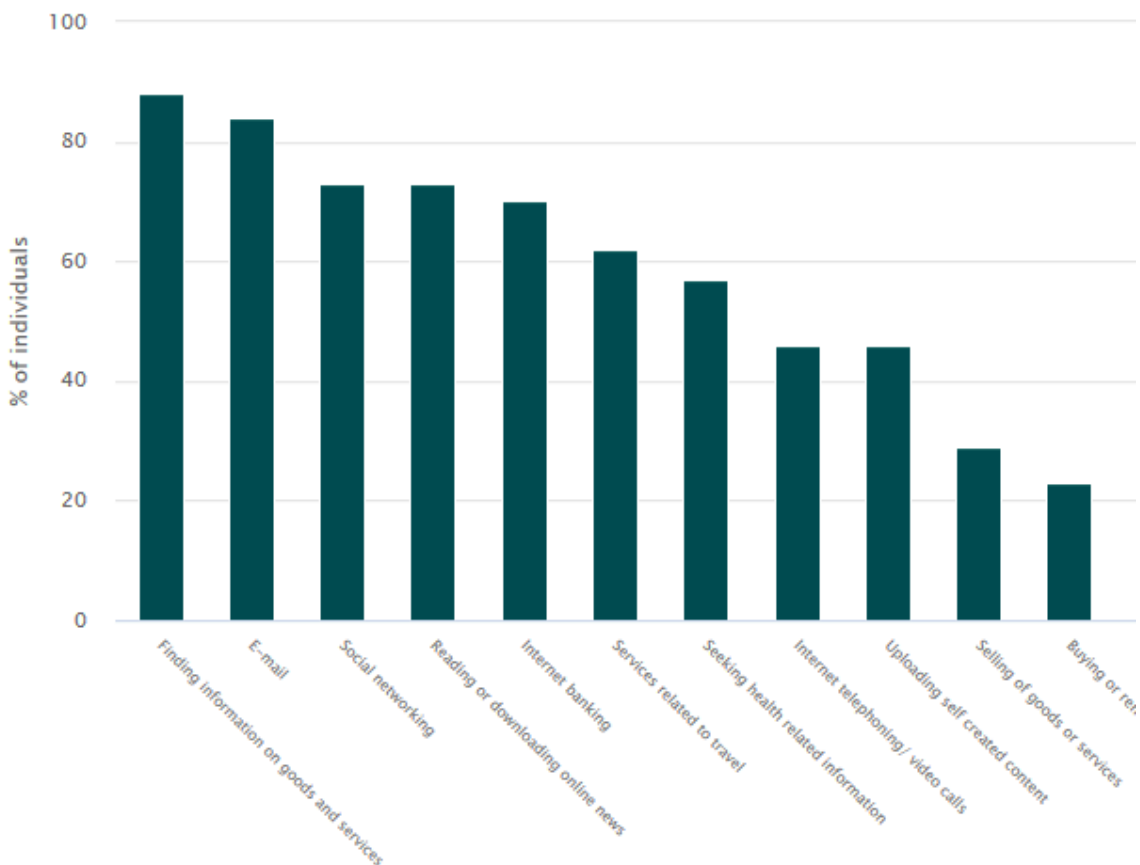
# Building An Online Presence

We all see the significant impact the internet has had on consumer behaviour. But believe it or not, it is not uncommon for small businesses to continue to operate without an online presence that can help hugely in boosting revenue and profits.

## Why Businesses need an online presence

You could be losing out to your competitors if you do not have any online presence.

The table below from the CSO (Central Statistics Office) gives a good overview of what people are using the internet for. The most popular activity shows 88% of individuals use the internet to find information on goods or services before they buy.



When potential customers want to find out about your product and services, they will check your website first.

If your business is unable to 'close the sale' there and then, then you could be at a big disadvantage and missing out on valuable customers that are interested in what you have on offer!

## Cost

Building a website can be expensive and the cost usually depends on the functionality of the website. If you need a basic e-commerce website (enabling your business to sell online) you can shop around and find a freelance web designer or an agency to build your website at a relatively low cost versus the return.

Things you should bear in mind when choosing between a freelance web designer and a design agency:

	Freelancer	Agency
<b>Design</b>	Cheap and cheerful	Custom and professional
<b>Development</b>	Limited functionality	Bespoke and skilled functionality
<b>SEO</b>	Basic implementation	Advanced techniques
<b>Social Media</b>	Includes integration	Integrated with marketing plan/advice
<b>Training</b>	Little to no training	In-person, followed by videos and online documentation
<b>Marketing</b>	Not included	Dedicated team of marketing experts
<b>Warranty</b>	30 days or may not be offered	Anywhere from 30 days to one year
<b>Support</b>	Not included	Phone and email support
<b>Communication</b>	One freelancer split between many clients	Dedicated project manager devoted to your company
<b>Teamwork</b>	May only be interested in their next paycheck	Wants to work with you long term and see your business succeed

(Source: When potential customers want to find out about your product and services, they will check your website first.)

If your business is unable to 'close the sale' there and then, then you could be at a big disadvantage and missing out on valuable customers that are interested in what you have on offer! If you are investing in a website that will enable you to trade online, you may also be eligible for financial assistance for up to 50% of the costs through your Local Enterprise Office (See next section)

## Grow Digital Grant

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) is a first-stop shop for small businesses locally, and they are offering a Grow Digital Voucher.

The Grow Digital Voucher offers small and medium businesses with up to 50 employees financial support to embrace digital technology. A digital for business project report must be completed within the previous 2 years.

- **Funding:** Up to €5,000 to invest in software and training/IT configuration.
- **Boost Efficiency:** Streamline operations and enhance productivity with new digital tools.
- **Reach New Customers:** Expand your reach and connect with a wider audience online.
- **Stay Competitive:** Bridge the digital gap and compete effectively in today's marketplace.

For more details about the Get Digital Voucher, [click here](#).