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https://www

Tech Basics for Marketers

# Infrastructure

A brief checklist of the top infrastructure points to help keep your website running smoothly.

Semantic Website Wins #4

Neil Lewin – April 2020

# Welcome

Semantic Website Wins is a new series of mini guides to help marketers optimise their website, learn something new, and make the most of these strange times.

Many of us are working from home or furloughed, so day-to-day work has reduced or stopped. We hope that you can use our guides to find website wins to use now, or in the future and also build your skills so that you're ready to bounce back stronger.

We'll be writing guides with advice, tips and ideas to help you optimise your website in the coming weeks. Of course, we're always happy to help with any questions and provide further support if you get stuck.

Just drop me a line I'll be back in touch:  
[neil@semantic.co.uk](mailto:neil@semantic.co.uk) or 02380 111 545.

In the meantime, stay safe, and stay positive.

Neil

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P.S. Need some extra support?

We're offering free video-call consultancy sessions for leisure & tourism, sports, theatres and professional bodies impacted by Coronavirus.

We can cover SEO, conversion rate optimisation, technical or critical analysis of your site.

Just give us a call for more details on 02380 111 545.

# Infrastructure checks

“I’m not very technical” is a phrase we often hear as we’re helping to explain another piece of tech jargon.

Infrastructure probably isn’t the most fun part of the web for the clients we work with, but unless you have a team taking care of it for you, there are a few areas that you should know about. As with most good agencies, we work hard to get it right and make sure our clients don’t need to worry about it.

Don’t worry though, this guide will explain the areas that you need to know about... it might not be fun, but getting the infrastructure wrong has a big impact!

Hopefully if you’re armed with some key basic information, you’ll know what to ask, and when to get more help, whether this is checking with your current developers or as part of a new project brief/pitch process.

This guide is broken down into several key areas:

- Infrastructure basics in 2 minutes
- Kick-off checks
- Normal operating checklist

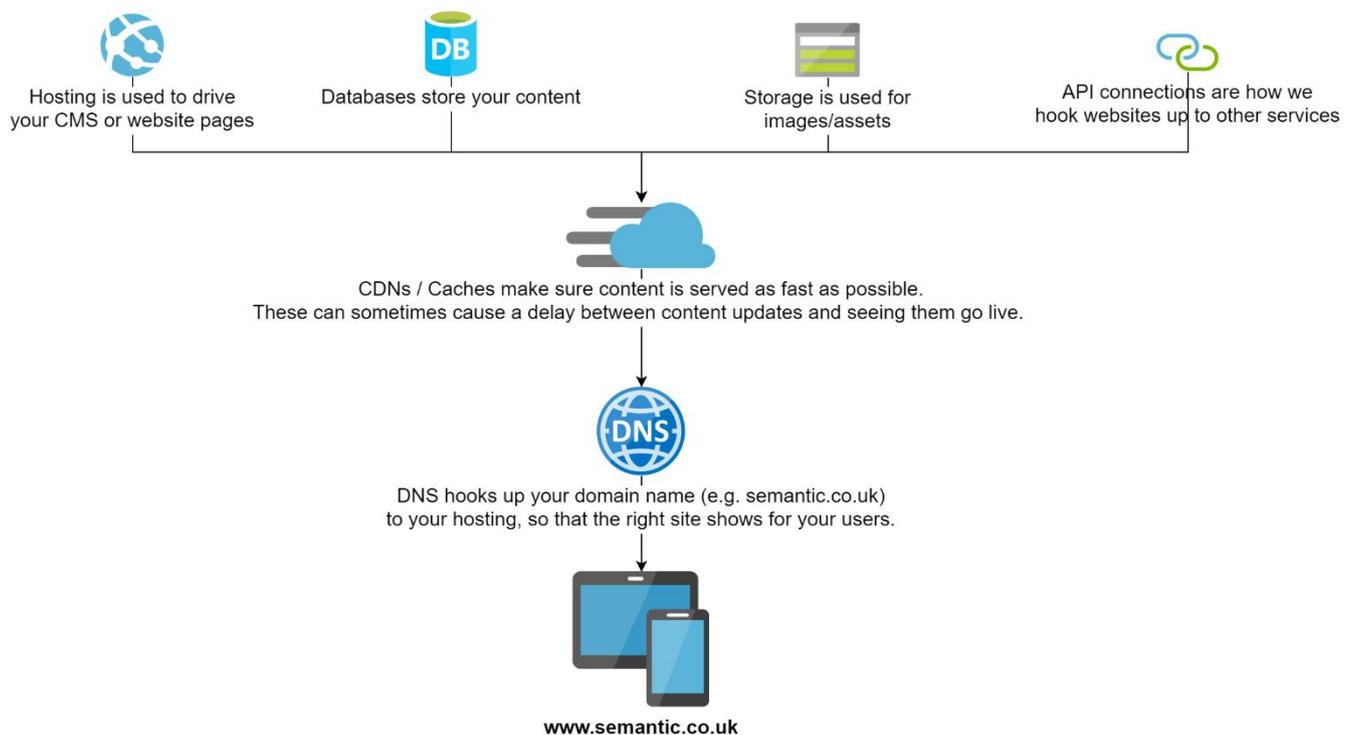
There’s a long list of other optimisations that can also help. Some of these will be covered in other guides, and some need a bit more expertise to do the heavy lifting.

Let us know with the checks and ideas suggested here, we’d love to hear from you.

# Infrastructure basics in 2 minutes

Infrastructure used on websites can vary greatly, from very simple to very complex. Let us explain the top-level areas...

Before Content Management Systems (CMS), websites were essentially a collection of document files (normally HTML) which are uploaded to a server, along with any styling and image information. A server is just like your computer – a place to keep files/resources. It's hooked up to the web, and you then can use DNS (Domain Name System) to point your domain name to the files and have your site show up online.



Nowadays, things are more complicated, but the fundamentals are the same. There's a bunch of stuff behind the scenes, linked to your domain name with DNS. This just scratches the surface - there's now a whole collection of tools up our sleeves to make things fast and secure.

Any techies reading... of course, this is massively simplified... please don't hate us!

## Kick-off checks

If you're a total infrastructure beginner, and you've never given it a second thought, then this quick checklist will help make sure you've got it covered:

- Check who's responsible**

Is someone in the team responsible for your website infrastructure (whether that's in-house, or an agency)?

- Are backups running?**

We recommend having full daily backups that are kept securely.

- Is the site reliable?**

Monitor your uptime. We use [Statuscake](#) to monitor client websites and alert us if they go down.

- Is your site running on https?**

This is the part of the web address that generates the secure padlock. It means that traffic between the user's device and the site is encrypted (secure) using an SSL certificate. Make sure this is in place – you can use [Statuscake](#) to generate renewal reminders.

- Check where your domains are registered**

There are hundreds of providers out there to register domain names (domain registrars, e.g. GoDaddy, Namecheap, 123-reg). Make sure your registration/payment details are up-to-date, and that domain names are set to auto-renew.

# Normal operating checks

Now that you've covered the basic kick-off checks, you need to make sure the normal operating procedures are in place.

Here's a basic list to get you started, we can send a more comprehensive list if you need it..

- **Make/update an infrastructure normal operating policy document**

Keep a secure document showing -

- providers used
- key contacts (internal/external)
- domain names owned + renewal dates
- infrastructure setup, if not obvious

DO NOT share login details for infrastructure. Each user should have a unique login so that they can be tracked and blocked if necessary.

- **Make/update an Emergency Action Plan document**

Again keep this secure, and cover off -

- timings of when to take action (e.g. sometimes sites just reboot, so come back within a few minutes anyway)
- any uptime/status boards to check – e.g. [Azure Status](#).
- key contacts and escalation process
- hacking/recovery procedure

- **Verify uptime alerts (using [Statuscake](#) or similar)**

- **Verify SSL and domain name renewal alerts are working (again [Statuscake](#) works well for this)**

# Need a hand?

If you've followed along, then you'll have covered many of the basics that often get missed, particularly if you've not got a dedicated team looking after the infrastructure.

The next guide continues the techie focus, with some key points on how you can improve your page speed, and make sure your site stays fast.

Keep an eye on our blog and LinkedIn for more tips and updates. If you need a hand in the meantime, then we're always happy to help.

- Email me on [neil@semantic.co.uk](mailto:neil@semantic.co.uk)
- Call 02380 111 545
- Book a time in my diary to chat at <https://calendly.com/neillewin/>



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