LOCAL LIFT STUDIO

EPISODE 2 COMPANION

What Should a Website Cost? — The 10-Minute Quote Check

Companion to the video: "How Much Does a Website Cost for a Contractor? (Real Prices, Explained)" **Series:** Contractor Tips — Johnston County · Local Lift Studio

Hey neighbour — in the video we priced every way a contractor can buy a website: the real ranges, the costs nobody quotes up front, and exactly what we charge. This is the check that goes with it. Ten minutes, ten questions, no technical knowledge needed. All you need is a quote in front of you — one you're holding, or the last one you were given — and your last card statement.

Be honest with the answers. Nobody sees this but you — and whatever it tells you, it's better to know before you sign than after.

The check

☐ 1. Which of the three ways is this quote?

Ask: Every website is bought one of three ways — do it yourself on a builder, hire a freelancer, or hire an agency. Which one is this? - **The honest bands, from published 2026 pricing research:** a freelancer building for a small business generally runs **$1,500–$8,000**; contractor and trades sites specifically, about **$1,500–$5,000**; a professional agency build, **$3,000–$15,000**, and custom work higher. - **Pass:** You can name the way, and the price sits somewhere sensible for it. - **Fail:** The quote won't say what kind of build it is — or the price belongs to a different way entirely (agency money for a builder site, say). - **If you failed this one:** Ask one question: "Who actually builds this — you, your team, or a platform I rent?" Write the answer on the quote.

☐ 2. Driver one — the pages

Check: Does the quote name your pages — every service you offer, every town you serve, as real pages somebody builds? - **Pass:** The pages are listed, and they match the work you actually do. - **Fail:** The quote just says "website." A five-page site and a fifteen-page site are different jobs — and the service and town pages are the ones Google ranks. - **If you failed this one:** Ask for the page list in writing. If a service or a town isn't a page, it isn't in the price.

☐ 3. Driver two — the words

Check: Who writes the words on the site — the pages that explain what you do and answer a customer's questions before she calls? - **Pass:** Writing is named in the quote, and it's written to sound like you. - **Fail:** The quote never mentions the words. Then the copy is either you, writing it at midnight — or it's filler that sounds like everybody. - **If you failed this one:** Ask: "Who writes it, and when do I see it?" Writing takes real hours. If nobody's hours are in the price, the words aren't either.

☐ 4. Driver three — your photos

Check: Are real photos of your work — gathered, sorted, and presented properly — part of the job? - **Pass:** Yes. Your jobs, your trucks, your crew, presented like the work deserves. - **Fail:** Stock photos of somebody else's work, or photos aren't mentioned at all. - **If you failed this one:** Real photos sell jobs; stock photos decorate. Ask whether yours are in the price, and who does the gathering.

☐ 5. Driver four — the tools that turn visitors into calls

Check: Does the price include the machinery that makes a website earn — an estimate form, a booking path, click-to-call that works on a phone? - **Pass:** They're named in the quote. - **Fail:** They're missing, vague, or "available later." This is the first thing cut from a bargain build — and it's the part that pays for the rest. - **If you failed this one:** A website without a way to ask for the job is a brochure. Ask what a visitor can actually do on the finished site.

☐ 6. Driver five — what happens after launch

Check: Changes, updates, someone to call when something needs doing — is that priced in, priced extra, or not priced at all? - **Pass:** You can say which of the three it is, in writing. - **Fail:** Nobody can tell you. "After launch" is where vague quotes go quiet. - **If you failed this one:** Ask before you sign, not after. All three arrangements can be fair — not knowing which one you bought can't.

☐ 7. The monthly bill that never stops

Check: Is there a monthly fee attached to this quote — hosting, platform, "care" — and does it ever end? - One real rented website we audited here in North Carolina runs **$69.99 a month**. That's about **$840 a year**, about **$2,520 over three years**, about **$4,200 over five** — and at the end of it, the owner holds nothing. - **Pass:** No open-ended monthly fee — or a small one you chose, for real work, that is never the price of keeping your site online. Hosting itself is a small cost; it's the one part of this business that gets cheaper every year. - **Fail:** A large monthly fee, forever, explained as "hosting." You're rarely paying for hosting. You're paying rent on your own website. - **If you failed this one:** Do the Episode 1 maths on your own number: monthly fee × 12 × 3 years. Say it out loud. That's the figure to compare.

☐ 8. Does it sit inside the honest range?

Check: For a Johnston County contractor — roofer, HVAC, remodeler — a properly built website you own, with your services and towns as real pages, your photos presented well, and a working path from visitor to phone call, should sit inside the contractor range: about **$1,500–$5,000, paid once**. - **Below that range:** check drivers 2–6 again. The cheapness is coming from somewhere, and it's usually a driver quietly left out. - **Above that range:** ask what team you're paying for. Sometimes it's worth it. Often, for a local contractor, it's building you don't need. - **For reference — ours, so you can run the same test on us:** Local Lift Studio, here in Clayton. Essential **$797**, Pro **$1,597**, Complete **$2,597**. Half down to start, half at launch, live in one to two weeks. Hosting **$0 a month, forever**. If you want small updates handled afterwards, optional Care is **$49 a month** — for minor updates only, never the price of staying online. Yes, that's below the band. Run us through the five drivers above and check that every one is in the price. It is. - **Pass:** The quote sits in range for what's actually in it — whoever wrote it. - **Fail:** The number only makes sense if you don't ask what's missing, or what else it buys.

☐ 9. The $0 test

Check: If the price is free — or close enough to it — whose name is on your address, and what sits behind the paid tier? - **Pass:** You're not looking at a free offer (mark this one and move on) — or it genuinely carries your own domain and the tools that make a site earn. - **Fail:** The free version puts their name on your website, your address is a corner of theirs, and your own domain and estimate tools wait behind a paywall. "Free" is usually just the first month of a bill you haven't seen yet — and your evenings wrestling the builder were never free either. - **If you failed this one:** Free is a fine way to learn what you need. It is a poor place to run a business from.

☐ 10. The year-three question

Ask it, word for word: "What does this cost me in total by year three — and what do I own at the end?" - **Pass:** A straight answer: a total you can write down, and at the end of it the website and the domain belong to you. - **Fail:** The answer gets foggy — the total won't hold still, or what you own at the end turns out to be nothing. - **If you failed this one:** A straight answer to this question is worth more than any discount. If it gets foggy, you've learned what you needed to know.

Your score

Count your fails:

- **0 fails — A straight quote.** The price is honest about what's in it, what it costs to keep, and what you'll own. Whoever wrote it — us included — has earned a serious conversation.
- **1–2 fails — Mostly straight, with quiet gaps.** Usually a missing driver or an unanswered after-launch question. Both are askable while things are friendly. Ask them before you sign, in writing.
- **3 or more fails — The number is hiding something.** Either work has been left out to make the price look small, or the meter runs forever and the deed belongs to somebody else. That doesn't make you foolish — quotes are built to be hard to compare. Now you can compare them.

One next step, only if you want it

If any of these answers bother you, we run a **free website audit** for local contractors at **locallliftstudio.com**. No pitch. Just a straight answer on what your current setup really costs, what it's costing you, and what owning would look like. Read it, sit with it, decide for yourself.

Your website is the one salesperson your business has working around the clock. Know what it costs — and own it outright.

— Local Lift Studio, Clayton, North Carolina Websites for contractors in Johnston County — owned outright, $0/month hosting.