LOCAL LIFT STUDIO

EPISODE 1 COMPANION

Do You Actually Own Your Website? — The 10-Minute Ownership Check

Companion to the video: "Do You Actually Own Your Website? What Renting a Website Really Costs a Contractor"
Series: Contractor Tips — Johnston County · Local Lift Studio

Hey neighbour — in the video we ran the numbers on what a rented website really costs. This is the check that goes with it. Ten minutes, eight questions, no technical knowledge needed. All you need is your last card statement and the login details you use for your website, if you have them.

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

The check

☐ 1. The stop-paying test

Ask yourself: If I stopped paying for my website tomorrow, would it still be there next month? - **Pass:** Yes — the site stays up because it's mine. - **Fail:** No — it disappears when the payments stop. That's the definition of renting. - **If you failed this one:** Don't cancel anything. Just write down who you'd have to call to ask about it. That's step one, and it's enough for today.

☐ 2. The never-ending payment

Check: Is there a website payment on your card or bank statement that has no end date — no final payment, no payoff point? - **Pass:** No open-ended website payment. I paid once, or my only costs are ones I chose. - **Fail:** There's a monthly website fee that's been running for years with no finish line. - **If you failed this one:** Find the very first month you paid it. You'll want that date for question 7.

☐ 3. Whose name is on the domain?

Your domain is your web address — the name customers type in. **Check:** look your domain up at lookup.icann.org (free, takes one minute) and see who the registrant is. - **Pass:** The registrant is you or your business. - **Fail:** The registrant is the company that built your site — or a name you don't recognise. - **If you failed this one:** Your address may legally belong to somebody else. Ask your provider, in writing (email is fine): "Is my domain registered in my name?" Keep their answer.

☐ 4. Could you take it with you?

Ask yourself: If I moved to a different web company tomorrow, could I take my pages, my photos, and my content with me? - **Pass:** Yes — I could get my files and move them. - **Fail:** No — everything lives inside their system, in a format that only works there. Leaving means starting over. - **If you failed this one:** Ask your provider: "If I ever leave, what exactly do I get to take?" A straight question deserves a straight answer.

☐ 5. Do you hold your own logins?

Check: Can you sign in yourself — today, without calling anyone — to (a) your domain account, (b) your website, and (c) your Google Business Profile? - **Pass:** I have all three, and they work. - **Fail:** One or more of them lives with my web company, and I'd have to ask permission to get in. - **If you failed this one:** Request your logins in writing. They're your accounts. A good provider hands them over without a fuss.

☐ 6. Where does your Google trust live?

Ask yourself: The reviews I've earned and the history my business has built on Google — are they attached to a web address I control? - **Pass:** Yes — my reviews and history sit on my own domain and my own Google profile. - **Fail:** They're tied to the rented site. If it goes, years of trust go with it. - **If you failed this one:** This is the one that costs the most over time. It's worth a conversation before you renew anything.

☐ 7. Run your own maths

Do it: Take your monthly website fee and multiply. Monthly fee × 12 = one year. × 3 years. × 5 years. - For a worked example: one real rented site 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:** My five-year total bought me something I own. - **Fail:** My five-year total is in the thousands, and I own nothing at the end of it. - **If you failed this one:** Put your number next to the example. Same maths, your business. Let it sit with you a minute.

☐ 8. The change test

Think back: Last time you needed something changed on your site — a phone number, a new service — what happened? - **Pass:** It got changed quickly, by me or without a queue and an extra charge. - **Fail:** I waited in somebody else's queue, on their timeline — or paid extra to change my own phone number. - **If you failed this one:** Note how long it took. That's the everyday price of not holding the keys.

Your score

Count your fails:

- **0 fails — You own it.** Genuinely. Your website is an asset, like your truck and your tools. Keep your logins safe and you're in good shape.
- **1–2 fails — Mostly yours, with a loose thread.** Worth pulling on before it matters — usually the domain or the logins. Both are fixable while things are friendly.
- **3 or more fails — You're renting.** However good the site looks, the deed belongs to somebody else, and the meter is running. That doesn't make you foolish — plenty of smart owners signed the same deal, because nobody explained it at the kitchen table. Now you know.

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 whether you own your site or rent it, what it's costing you, and what your options are. Read it, sit with it, decide for yourself.

Your website is the one salesperson your business has working around the clock. It ought to belong to you.

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