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# How To Register A Domain Name (2025 Guide)

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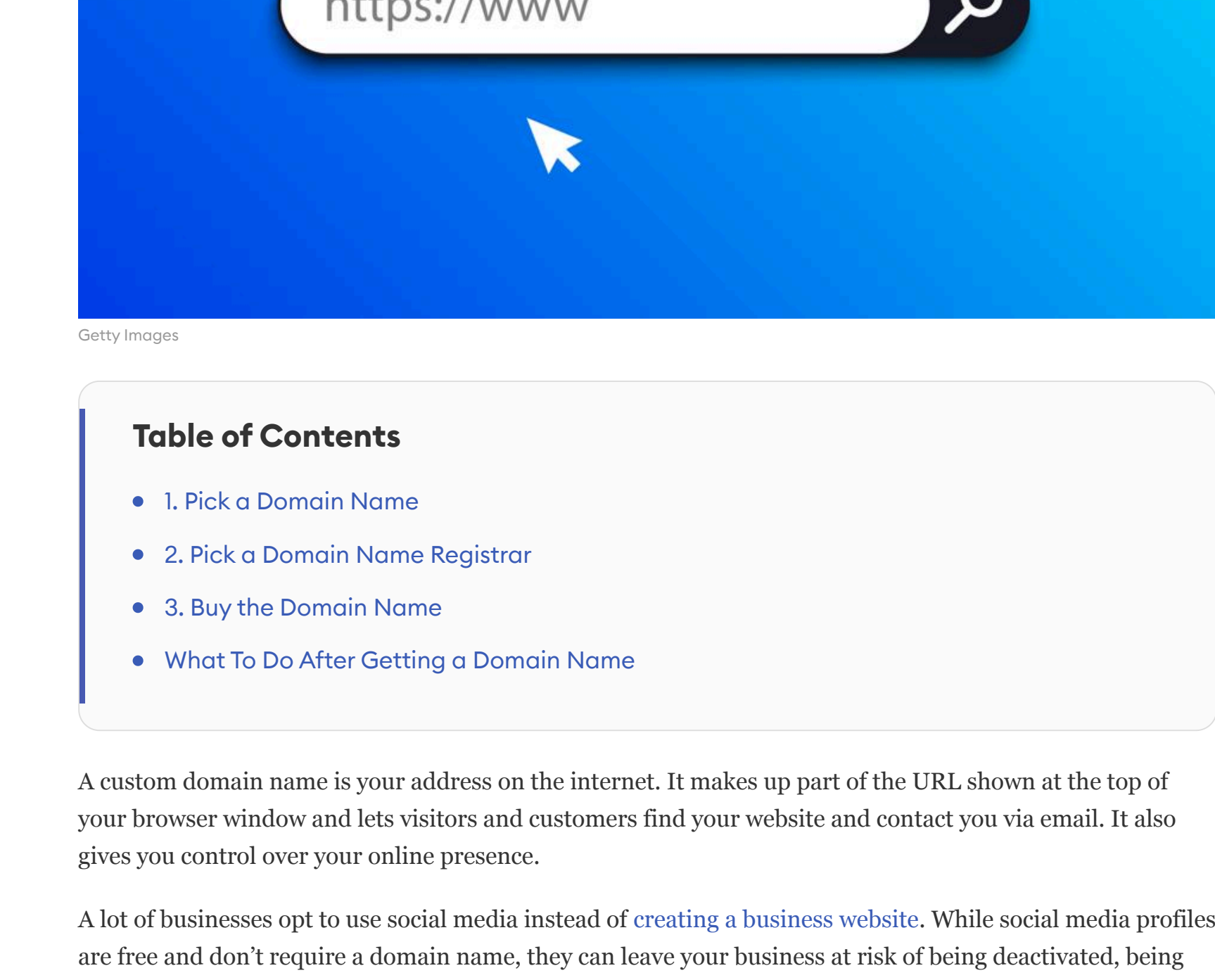


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## 1. Pick a Domain Name

The first step in registering a domain name is choosing the name you want to use. While you could change it by registering a new name later, it is generally considered best practice to avoid changing domain names when possible.

### Domain Name Rules

There aren't many rules on what you can use as a domain name, but there are a few. For example, sections can't be more than 63 characters. However, unless you're writing a paper about the lung disease *Pneumomoultramicroscopicilocavolcanoconiosis* or building a website for *Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobawllantysiliogogogoch* tourism, you probably won't come close to hitting that maximum.

The main domain name rules are:

- English-language letters and numbers only; no special characters are allowed
- Hyphens are allowed but not at the beginning or end of a domain name
- No strings of hyphens
- No spaces
- Domain name length must be between 3 and 63 characters per section and no more than 253 characters in total
- Domain names are not case-sensitive

### Domain Name Best Practices

Beyond registration restrictions, there are several best practices to help make your domain name easy to remember and avoid faux pas.

- Keep names under 20 characters
- Use a name as close to your business name as possible
- Be careful when using multiple words to avoid embarrassing combinations
- Use standard spellings
- Avoid names similar to larger brands

### How To Think of a Domain Name

Personally, I prefer to brainstorm name ideas before checking availability and always recommend creating at least 5 or 6 possible names. That's because it's easy to get frustrated if your preferred name isn't available, and without that list of alternatives ready, that frustration often leads to creating a low-quality domain name just to get something live.

If you need help brainstorming names, most registrars have domain name generators available to help out. However, many of those check availability at the same time and can start that spiral of trying to find anything available instead of really picking names that are a good fit for your business.

To avoid that, I prefer to use a stand-alone system, such as *Perplexity.ai*, to ask for name suggestions. While many are copied from domain name idea articles, they often give me ideas of where to start.

When picking your list of name alternatives, remember that some terms usually cost more if they are part of the name such as SaaS or tech.

### What Is the Best Domain Extension?

A domain extension is the part after the dot. For example, *.com* and *.org* are domain extensions. Domain extensions are also called top-level domains (TLDs). There are hundreds of TLDs available, but most domain registrars only carry a fraction of that number.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) manages what TLDs are available (outside of country code TLDs like *.uk*) and then turns over the management of different domains to other organizations. Registrars then buy the rights to sell use of TLDs to others.

Some TLDs are restricted from public use. For example, you can't register a domain name ending in *.mil*, *.gov* or *.arpa*. Some TLDs are restricted by organizations as well, such as *.realtor* only being available to licensed realtors.

The best domain extension will depend on your business. More widely known TLDs, such as *.com*, *.info* and *.net*, are trusted by the general public, but niche TLDs, such as *.tech* for technical businesses, *.shop* for e-commerce, *.music* for bands and *.art* for creative businesses, are gaining popularity quickly.

Some domains cost more than others as well. For example, *.tech* TLDs generally cost more than *.com* domains.

## 2. Pick a Domain Name Registrar

Where you buy your domain matters. For example, if you already have a web host in mind, your hosting package might offer a first-year free domain name. However, depending on the host, it might register the domain in its name, not yours, so you must check the terms and conditions carefully.

Likewise, you need to look for an [ICANN-accredited registrar](#) to ensure you are really buying the domain name.

When choosing a registrar, I like to price-check several to see what is included in the registration, what the renewal fees are and what the transfer fees are in case I ever move the domain to a new registrar.

Be aware that not all registrars offer all TLDs, and some charge extra for SSLs or domain privacy with Whois.

### Who Is the Best Domain Name Registrar?

The [best domain registrars](#) have a great reputation and often include extras like SSLs and domain privacy with Whois at no extra cost, but each has a different pricing philosophy. [Namecheap](#) has a strong reputation for low-cost domains but charges extra for SSL and "premium" DNS. [Dynadot](#) offers a great introductory rate with free domain privacy but often has inflated renewal rates.

together.



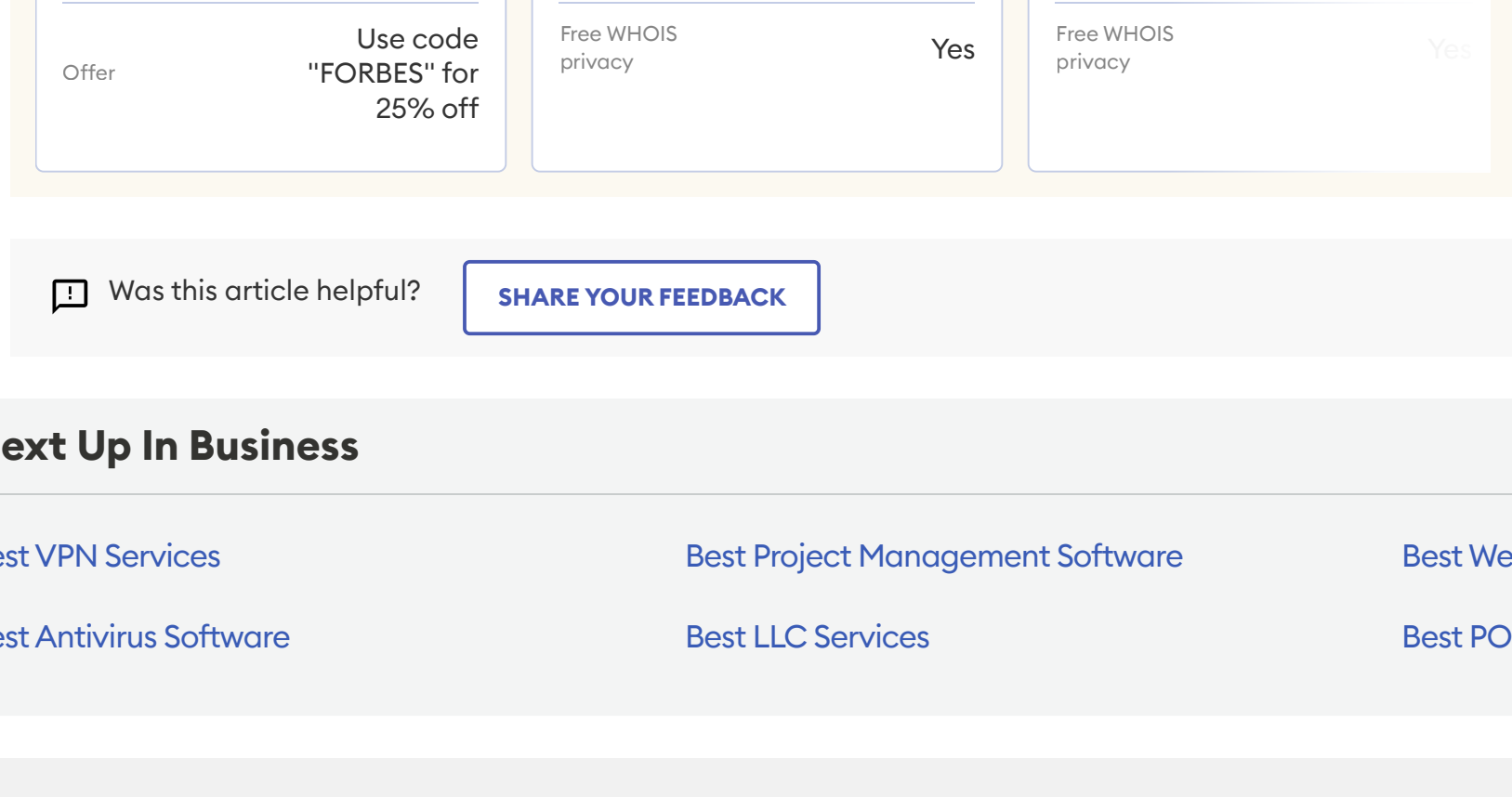
Most domain registrars offer some sort of bundle or discount.

[IONOS](#) offers bundles such as 50% off its [website builder](#) if you register a *.com* domain. My personal favorite, [Cloudflare](#), offers free privacy and SSL with a happy medium of first-year and renewal rate pricing. [Whois](#) also offers domain registration and often offers bundled pricing for buying your chosen name with multiple TLD extensions

## 3. Buy the Domain Name

Everyone says, "buy a domain," but you aren't actually buying it, only licensing the use of the domain name for a set period of time. As discussed above, every domain registrar takes a different approach to licensing and can set prices without much interference after ICANN lifted domain caps on some TLDs.

That decision led to concerns over soaring prices, and in 2024, [Namecheap](#) filed a lawsuit to return price caps to the *.org* domains.



Part of buying a domain name includes choosing how long you want to register the name for.

- Use the search feature for your chosen registrar to see if the name is available.
- Click **add to cart** or **confirm** next to the available domain name you wish to license.
- Choose the length of time you'd like to register the domain for.
- Select any extra items you'd like to add to the order.
- Enter your personal and company contact information (note that this will be publicly available without Whois privacy for the domain).
- Enter your payment information and finalize the purchase.
- Enable automatic domain renewal to prevent accidentally allowing the domain name to lapse.

### Can I Get a Free Domain Name?

Yes, you can [get a free domain](#), although your choices are limited. You can often get a free domain name for one year bundled with a hosting plan, or you can opt for a free subdomain with most website builder plans. However, [Freenom](#), a free domain name registrar, stopped operations after a lawsuit from Meta.

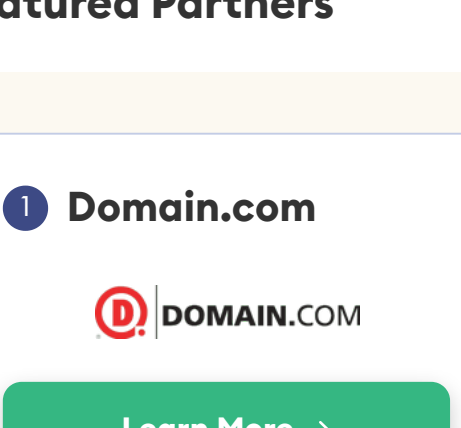
## What To Do After Getting a Domain Name

Now that you have your domain, you have to set it up. That is, unless you bought it through your website host. If you registered a name through your website host, the host generally handles the pointing automatically.

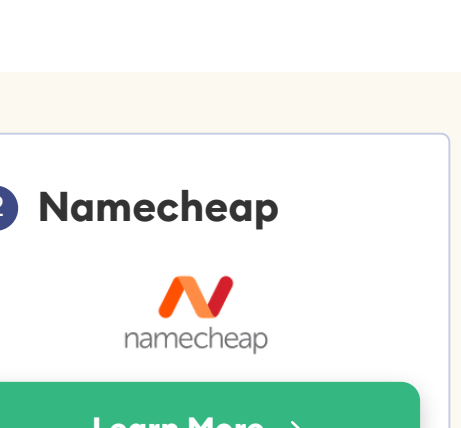
If you need to point a domain yourself, you'll do that by updating the domain name servers (DNS) from your domain registrar's dashboard. The process can vary a bit, but almost every domain registrar has great instructions to walk you through it. Mostly it boils down to copying and pasting a bit of code between your web host and the registrar.

Uses of Custom Domain Names

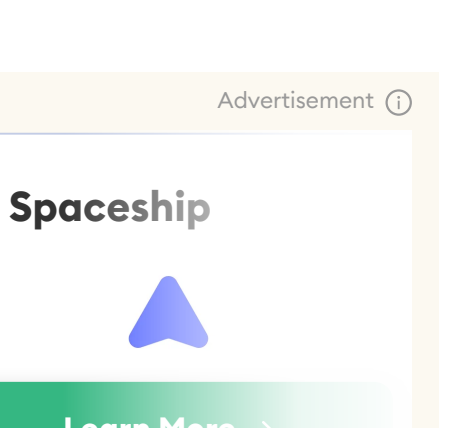
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A custom domain name helps you create a unified contact point across all media.

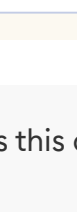
If you want a **business email**, you'll also need to adjust your mail pointing by changing the MX, SPF and DKIM settings. Again, while that sounds really technical, most email hosts will complete the process for you automatically.

Finally, add your new domain URL to all of your business docs such as letterhead, email signatures and social media profiles, including your Google Business profile. Once all that is done, you'll have a unified brand point of contact across media.

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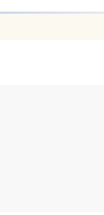
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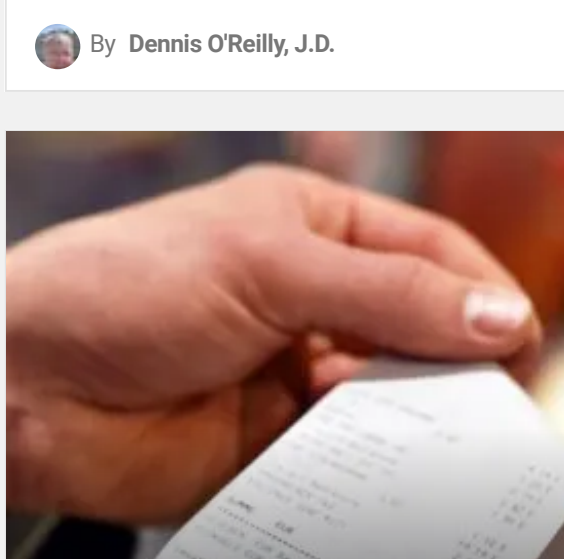
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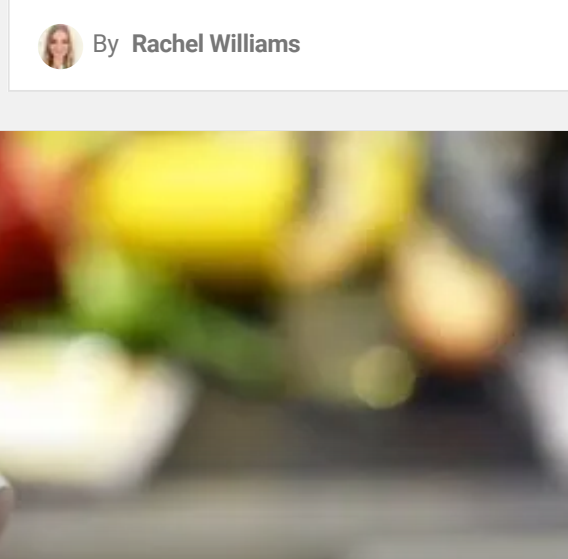
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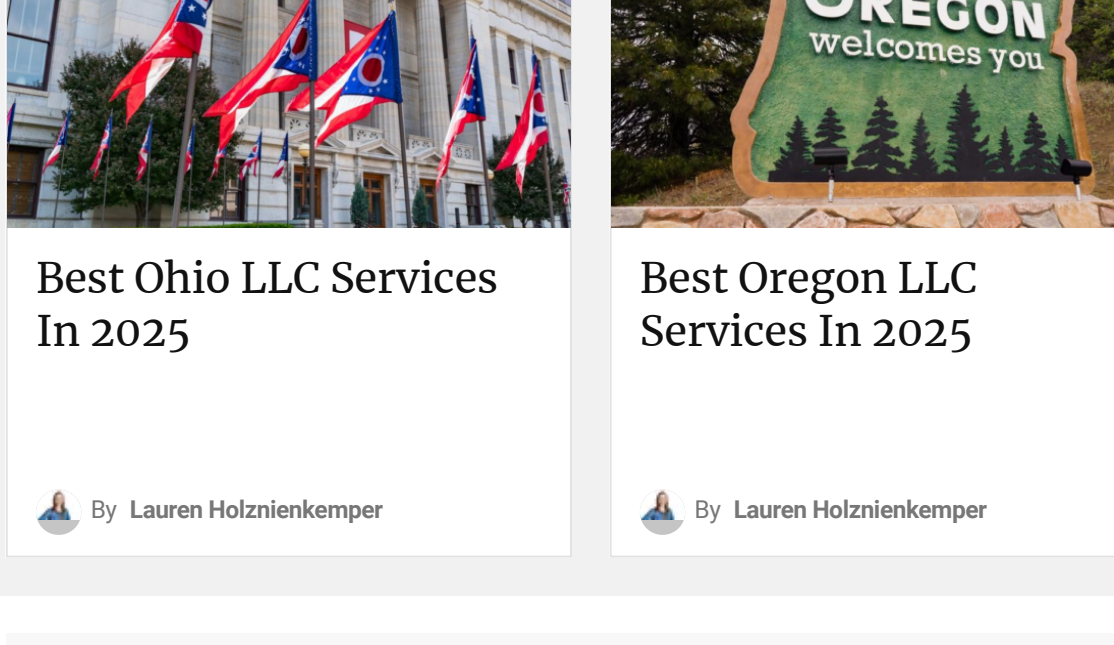
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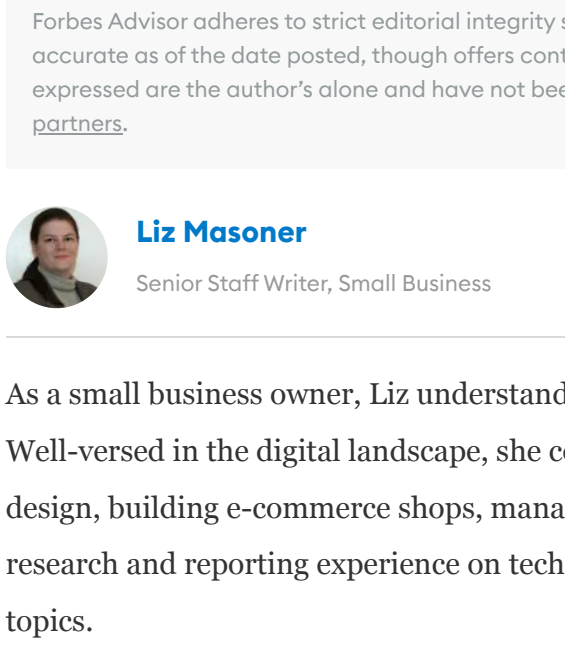
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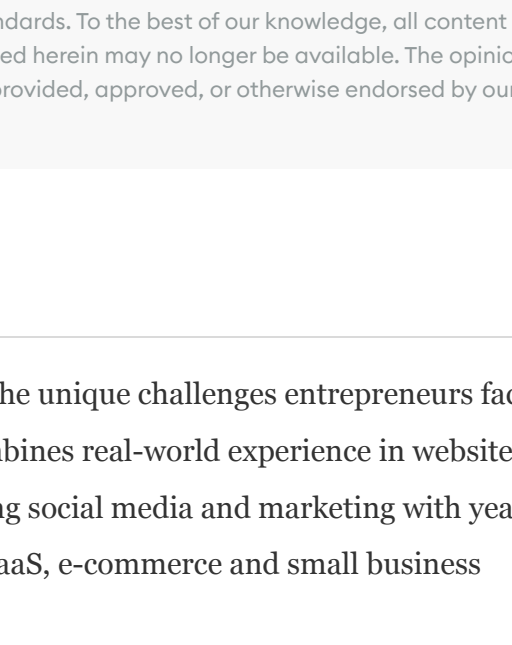
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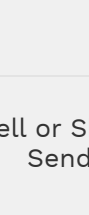


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As a small business owner, Liz understands the unique challenges entrepreneurs face. Well-versed in the digital landscape, she combines real-world experience with website design, building e-commerce shops, managing social media and marketing with years of research and reporting experience on tech, SaaS, e-commerce and small business topics.

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