LEO CLARE

DIGITAL MARKETING PROGRAMME

Week 3 – Canva and Website Marketing

Session Summary

Delivered by The Marketing Crowd on behalf of Local Enterprise Office Clare

Introduction

This document summarises Week 3 of the 6-week Digital Marketing Programme organised by Local Enterprise Office Clare, delivered on 21st April 2026. The session covered two major topics: how to use Canva to create professional-looking graphics for social media and websites, and a practical guide to getting a website and making it work harder to generate enquiries and sales. Whether you are brand new to Canva or looking to sharpen your skills, this summary will walk you through everything covered and give you a clear set of actions to take away.

Part 1: Designing with Canva

Getting Started

Canva is a free, browser-based design tool used by 225 million people worldwide. It sits between basic tools like PowerPoint and professional software like Adobe Photoshop — giving small business owners a way to create eye-catching graphics without any design training. You access it at canva.com and sign up for a free account. No credit card is required.

There is also a paid version at €12 per month. The free version gives you roughly 60–70% of all features, and anything in the paid tier is marked with a small crown icon. You can design freely on both versions, but if you try to download something containing a paid element, Canva will prompt you to upgrade or replace it.

There are three approaches to using Canva: creating from a blank canvas, using pre-built templates, and using AI to generate designs. This session focused on the first two.

Choosing the Right Canvas Size

When you arrive at the Canva homepage, the key first step is choosing the right canvas shape for what you are designing. Canva has pre-sized canvases for almost every platform — Instagram posts (4x5, which is 1080x1350px), Instagram Stories (portrait), LinkedIn cover photos, Facebook posts, Facebook cover photos, and many more. The important point is that you never need to remember the exact pixel dimensions — Canva handles that for you. Choose the platform, choose the format, and the canvas is automatically the right shape.

For most social media posts across Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, the Instagram Post 4x5 format works perfectly on all three. If you are designing for your website, you will need a custom size — more on that later.

Creating Designs from Scratch

Evan walked through a series of exercises, each introducing new skills. Here is what was covered:

Adding images. Your images live on your own computer and need to be uploaded to Canva's library before you can use them. Go to Uploads → Upload Files, select your image, and once it appears in the library, click it to place it on the canvas. To make it fill the entire canvas, right-click the image and select "Set Image as Background." Images you upload are stored in your library permanently — no need to re-upload them next time.

Adding text. There are four ways to add eye-catching text in Canva:

- The basic approach: click Text → Heading or Subheading. Simple, but it looks like PowerPoint.
- Search for font combinations by topic: in the text panel, search for words like "sale," "Christmas," or "love" and Canva will show you professionally paired font combinations on that theme. You can change the words — you're borrowing the design, not the text.
- Scroll through font combinations: scroll down in the text panel to browse pre-designed combinations. Again, don't be put off by the words used — you can edit them to say whatever you need.
- Graphics with built-in text: under Elements → Graphics, you can search for animated or static text-as-a-graphic (e.g. "wow," "sale," "Black Friday"). Use the Filter option to show only free items if needed.

The key principle to remember throughout Canva: if you want to change something, click on it. The editing menu only appears once you click.

Choosing colours. Canva offers five ways to choose colour:

1. Default solid colours — a pre-selected palette to browse.
2. Search by colour name — useful if you want a specific shade.
3. The colour picker (click the + button) — choose a hue on the horizontal bar, then move the circle within the square to control brightness and saturation.
4. Enter a hex colour code — useful if a designer has given you your brand colours.
5. The eyedropper tool — click anywhere on your screen to match a colour exactly.

You can also create gradients (where one colour fades into another). Professional designers often use subtle gradients — such as a dark green fading to a slightly lighter green — rather than jarring combinations. This is what big brands like Vodafone and Sky do to give their designs a polished feel.

Removing backgrounds. One of the most powerful features in Canva is the background remover. Click your image, then look for the BG Remover button in the editing menu. This uses AI to detect and remove the background, leaving just the subject (a person, a product, a logo) on a transparent layer — ready to be placed on any coloured background. If you are on the free version, the same result can be achieved using remove.bg, a free website where you upload your image and download the transparent version, then bring it back into Canva.

This technique is what big brands use. Paddy Power, for example, removes backgrounds from photos and places subjects on a branded gradient background, with logo and text added on top. You can do exactly the same.

Using your brand colours. If you are on the paid version, you can create a Brand Kit (found on the Canva homepage under Brand), upload your logo, and Canva will extract your brand colours automatically. These then appear as shortcuts whenever you go to choose a colour.

On the free version, there is a clever workaround: place your logo onto the canvas, then click the canvas background and open the colour selector. Canva will show "Photo Colors" extracted from whatever images are on the canvas — including your logo. Choose your brand colour, then delete the logo from the canvas. The colour stays, and you can build your design from there.

Layers. When you have multiple elements on a canvas — a background, a person, and some text — these sit on top of each other in layers. Right-click any element and choose "Layer → Send Backward" or "Bring Forward" to control which element appears in front of or behind another. This is how you achieve effects like text appearing behind a subject.

Multiple variations. When you're nearly happy with a design but want to compare options, use the "Duplicate Page" button (the small + icon in the thumbnail panel). This gives you an identical copy you can modify — change the colour, move an element, try a different shape — and then download all versions together as a zip file.

Designing for your website. If you want to replace an image on your website with something created in Canva, you need to match the exact pixel size of the original image. The process: right-click the image on your website → Save Image → find it on your desktop → hover your mouse over it to see its dimensions (e.g. 640x360px). Then in Canva, choose Custom Size, enter those dimensions, and design on a canvas that is the exact right size.

Using Templates

The second major approach to Canva is templates — and this is where it really becomes powerful for non-designers. Canva has over 100,000 professionally designed templates.

To find them, go to Templates in the left menu and search for your topic: "art exhibition," "new arrivals," "restaurant," "boutique logo." Canva will return results across different formats — you can then filter by category (Instagram post, poster, story, etc.) and style (minimalist, illustration, modern).

The critical mindset shift: when you look at a template, don't look at the image, the colours, or the text. Look only at the design and layout — because you can change everything else. Don't discard a template because it features a woman when you sell menswear, or because it's about jewellery when you're a consultant. Browse for what you like the look of, then click "Customize" and swap in your own images, colours, and words.

The same applies to logos. Search for "boutique logo" or "consultant logo" and browse through the results. When you find one you like, click in and replace the placeholder name with your business name, adjust the font if needed, and change the background colour to match your brand. You now have a professional logo built on a designer's foundation.

Part 2: Getting a Website and Making It Work

How to Get a Website

There are two main routes to getting a website.

Option 1: Hire a web designer. This is a relationship, not a one-off transaction. You will need ongoing support from your web designer, so customer service matters as much as price and skill. Recommendations are the best starting point — post on LinkedIn or Facebook asking for personal recommendations from people who've had a genuinely good experience. Also do a Google search for "web designers Clare" (or your county): if a web designer can't get their own website found near the top for the most obvious search, that's a red flag. Look at their portfolio and check whether client meta titles look like they've been optimised.

Typical price ranges: 5-page website €1,000+; 10-page website around €2,000+; e-commerce websites typically €3,000–€5,000, all plus VAT. These are mid-range figures.

When requesting a quote, specify that you want a WordPress site (WordPress.org — the software version, not WordPress.com). WordPress powers around 40% of all websites because it is easy to update and has a marketplace of over one million plugins, meaning you can add almost any functionality to your site in future.

Option 2: Build it yourself using a website platform. Services like Wix, Weebly, Squarespace, and WordPress.com allow anyone to build a professional website using pre-designed templates, no technical knowledge required. These typically cost €20–€25 per month, which covers hosting, maintenance, and the platform itself. For e-commerce specifically, Shopify is the strongest option — it is purpose-built for selling online and costs around €30 per month.

The process is the same as Canva templates: browse by industry, find a design you like, swap in your own images, text, and colours, and go live.

Domain Names

You need a domain name (e.g. yourbusiness.ie) to have a website. Recommended provider: Black Knight (blackknight.com), an Irish company with good customer service. Search your business name, check whether the .ie and .com versions are available, and if both are available, buy both. Typical

ongoing cost is around €30 per year per domain. Always tick the auto-renew option to avoid accidentally losing your domain.

SSL Certificates

Your site must be HTTPS, not HTTP. The S means it has an SSL certificate, which encrypts any data people enter on your site (email addresses, payment details). Without it, Google Chrome will warn visitors that the site is not secure, and most will leave immediately. If you use Wix, Squarespace, Shopify, or similar platforms, the SSL is included automatically. If you go the web designer route, they will handle it. If you have an older site without one, contact your hosting company — it typically costs around €30 per year.

Part 3: Making Your Website Convert

The Marketing Funnel

Your website is the sales environment at the centre of all your digital marketing. SEO, social media, Google Business Profile, email — all of these are about driving people towards your website. Once they arrive, your job changes: you need to engage them and then convert them.

Studies show that 60–70% of website traffic comes from search — meaning visitors have likely also looked at competitor sites. Around 80% of people who land on a website are in research mode, not buying mode. The website that works hardest is the one that keeps people browsing rather than bouncing.

Tactics to Engage Visitors

- **Load speed matters.** Meta found that if a page takes more than four seconds to load, 40% of visitors leave. Use GT Metrics (covered in Week 2 as an SEO tool) to check your pages.
- **Your headline must resonate immediately.** Ask an AI tool to tell you the three things people most look for in your product or service, then ask it to write a headline that incorporates those three things. If someone lands on your page and your headline speaks directly to what they're searching for, they stay.
- **Body text should be scannable.** Studies show people only read around 20% of text on a page. Short sentences, bullet points, clear structure. No long paragraphs.
- **Video increases engagement dramatically.** Google research suggests pages with video see 400–700% more engagement. Ask an AI tool what kind of video would work best for your specific product or service page — the answer will vary significantly depending on what you sell.

Tactics to Build Trust

- **Stats and credentials.** A yoga instructor who has taught 3,000 classes, a driving instructor with 25,000 hours of lessons delivered — these numbers instantly convey credibility. Ask an AI tool to help you identify a compelling stat from your own experience.
- **Media coverage.** If you've appeared in local radio, newspapers, or online publications, create an "as featured in" strip on your homepage.
- **Photos of your physical location.** If you have a shop, studio, or premises, use photos of it on your homepage and contact page — particularly important for e-commerce, where people need reassurance before handing over payment details.

Tactics to Convert Visitors

- **Offers work — but make them short.** A month-long offer creates no urgency. A limited offer expiring this Wednesday at 7pm makes people act now.
- **Testimonials should be prominent.** Don't hide reviews on a separate page or buried in a footer. Pepper them throughout your site — on product pages, service pages, and your homepage. If you have reviews on Google, TripAdvisor, Facebook, or Booking.com, pull them

onto your site using a tool like **TrustIndex.io** (free for the first week, then approximately €60 per year).

Key Takeaways

Getting to grips with Canva and understanding how websites work are two of the most practical skills a small business owner can develop. The session reinforced a clear principle: professional-looking results are within reach for everyone — you just need to know the tools and the approach.

- Everything in Canva is editable — whether you start from scratch or from a template, nothing is fixed until you download it.
- Brand consistency matters: use your brand colours, remove backgrounds from logos and product images, and keep your visual identity consistent.
- Your website is not passive — it needs to actively engage and convert visitors, not just display information.
- Use AI tools (ChatGPT, Perplexity) to help you with website headlines, video ideas, offer types, and comparing platform options.
- Reviews are more valuable than most people realise — on your Google profile, on review platforms, and pulled onto your website.

Action Points

1. **Sign up for Canva** at canva.com if you haven't already. Choose a free account to get started.
2. **Create your first social media post** using an Instagram 4x5 canvas — upload an image of your product or service, add your logo with the background removed, and add text using one of the four methods covered.
3. **Set up a Brand Kit** in Canva (paid users) or use the photo colours workaround (free users) to make your brand colour instantly accessible in every design.
4. **Remove the background from your logo** — either using Canva's BG Remover (paid) or remove.bg (free) — so it sits cleanly on any background colour.
5. **Browse Canva templates** relevant to your business. Search for your industry type and explore what's available. Try customising one.
6. **Check your page load speed** using GT Metrics. If any pages score poorly, speak to your web designer or hosting company.
7. **Review your homepage headline.** Ask an AI tool what three things people look for in your product or service, then ask it to write a headline that incorporates those things.
8. **Identify a credibility stat** for your business — years in business, number of clients, hours of service delivered. Ask an AI tool to help you work it out and phrase it compellingly.
9. **Collect and display testimonials.** If you have reviews on Google, TripAdvisor, or Facebook, set up a free account at TrustIndex.io and look at pulling them onto your website.
10. **Research your domain name** at blackknight.com. If you don't have one yet, check availability and purchase both the .ie and .com versions if possible.
11. **If you are planning a new website**, shortlist 2–3 web designers based on personal recommendations and their own Google ranking for "web designers [your county]." Compare their portfolios and check client meta titles for SEO quality.
12. **If you are considering a DIY website**, browse templates at wix.com or squarespace.com to see whether a self-build approach could work for your business. For e-commerce, go directly to shopify.com.

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