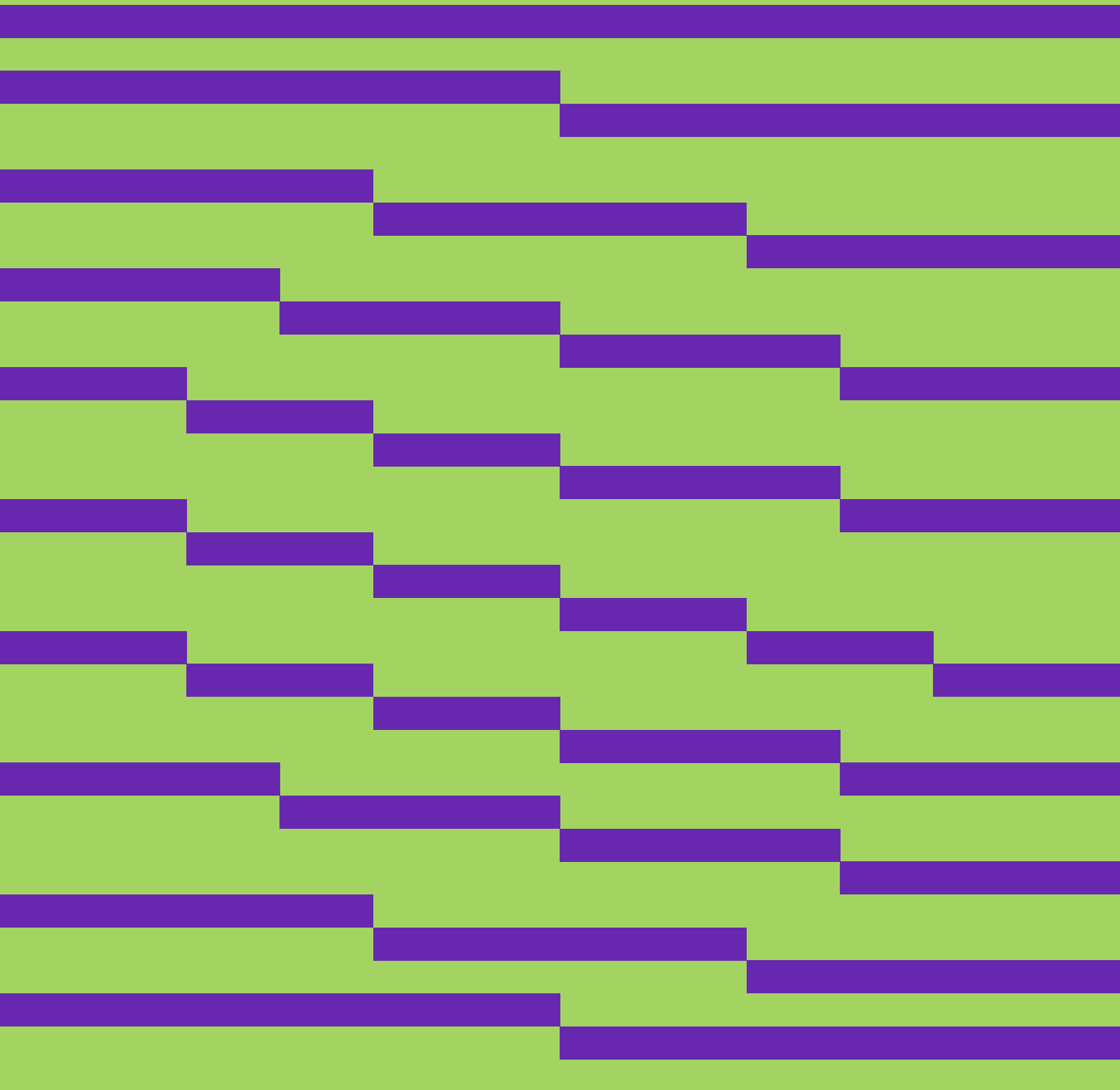




# Preventing Website Downtime: A Business Owner's Checklist



# Introduction

Website downtime can cost businesses thousands in lost revenue, customer trust, and search engine rankings. Whether you run a small business, e-commerce store, or corporate website, ensuring consistent uptime is essential. This eBook provides a practical checklist to help business owners prevent website downtime and maintain a seamless online presence.

We will find out:

**01** What is website downtime?

**02** The causes of downtime

**03** The downtime prevention checklist

**04** How 80five and UpWatch can help



# What is website downtime?

Website downtime is any period when your site is unavailable to visitors. Someone trying to access your website might be met with a blank screen, a warning message or a message from the browser saying it cannot load the website.

There are two types of downtime:

- **Planned downtime** - A scheduled period of maintenance when the website or the hosting server have to be offline to make upgrades.
- **Unplanned downtime** - An unexpected period where the website is suddenly unavailable to any external visitor.

A planned period of downtime can be mildly frustrating, as you never like your website to be offline and for visitors to be turned away. Much worse, though, is an unplanned period. If you are not monitoring for downtime you do not know how long the website has been offline. Was it minutes, days, weeks or longer?

## Why does downtime matter?

Website downtime has four key impacts:

1. **Financial loss** - While your website is offline you are unable to generate some of the business' income. If you run an ecommerce store it is really damaging. Even for cafes and plumbers you are potentially losing new business.
2. **Reputation loss** - People only want to use companies they can trust. With your website offline people won't feel they can trust or rely upon your business.
3. **SEO & Google ranking** - Search engines like Google keep an eye on how quickly your website loads and how often it is unavailable. If it's often slow or down, it will negatively affect your ranking in Google search results.
4. **Increased worry** - Quite often a website goes down for a very legitimate reason and often related to human error. Having a website that is prone to going offline can add an extra burden for you as a business owner.

# The causes of downtime

We've explored website downtime and its potential negative impact. Now, let's explore why your website might go offline.

- 1. Human error** - Around 40% of all significant website outages over the previous three years have been related to human errors. As much as we want to automate processes and use AI, there are so many parts of website management and maintenance that still require a human and this can be your downfall!
- 2. Cyberattacks** - Every business of any size can and will be the victim of some sort of cyberattack. Websites are a very common target as they will have financial and personal data, plus the ability for cybercriminals to further spread their harm. In 2024, 40% of small businesses reported some form of a cyber attack.
- 3. Traffic spikes and server issues** - Whilst every business wants to be successful, as your business develops it puts more strain on your hosting server to cope with surges in traffic. Christmas sales or TV appearances can lead to very sudden, significant spikes in traffic and this can cause your hosting server to crash. Alongside traffic spikes, issues such as power-related problems or shared resources can lead to your hosting server becoming slow or non-functional.
- 4. Software issues** - Outdated or incompatible software can cause slow or sudden deteriorations or loss of a website. Content management systems (CMS) like WordPress, Joomla and Drupal rely upon plugins that add an extra layer of complexity. One conflict or coding error in an update can slow or crash your website.
- 5. Expired domains or SSL certificates** - Somewhat related to human error, but both your domain and your SSL certificate will require regular renewal. If they are allowed to expire without renewal then your website will become unavailable very suddenly. Setting up auto-renewals can help, but sometimes the auto-renewals can fail if payment details are incorrect or due to issues with the provider.

# The business owner's downtime prevention checklist

Many of the downtime issues we have explored can be prevented with basic actions and reliable tools. By following this checklist, you can reduce website downtime, improve your customer experience, and avoid lost sales or reputational damage.

- ☐ **Choose a reliable hosting provider**  
Look for independently recommended hosting providers, have a chat to their customer support and speak to other satisfied website owners.
- ☐ **Use a website monitoring service**  
Make sure you know as soon as there is a problem so can you reduce any downtime.
- ☐ **Keep software up-to-date**  
If you use a CMS like WordPress, make sure you keep plugins, themes and the WordPress core up-to-date. But make sure you have backups in case it goes wrong!
- ☐ **Secure your website from cyberattacks**  
Make sure you have a valid SSL certificate, use a firewall from providers like Cloudflare, and ensure that all your accounts have strong passwords with 2FA.
- ☐ **Have a website backup**  
If something does go wrong, especially due to software issues, you will want to have a backup available so you can quickly roll back the website.
- ☐ **Have auto-renewals set up**  
Your domain and SSL certificate should be set to auto-renew.
- ☐ **Test and check regularly**  
Many aspects of website downtime are preventable and result from gradual degradation. Make sure you regularly check your website, run site health audits and look at as much data as possible to look for any changes.

# How can 80five & UpWatch help?

Over the previous three chapters we have looked at a lot of concepts and situations that can be stressful for a business owner. No one wants to find their website offline and their hard work undermined, especially due to factors beyond their control.

Introducing UpWatch! Our sister company is focussed on providing the most complete selection of website monitors so you can know as soon as anything changes.

UpWatch takes the stress off your shoulders by monitoring your website. Their comprehensive collection of seven website monitoring tools, which are available to all 80five clients, help you rest assured that your website is working and your business can thrive.

Here are seven ways we help keep your website running smoothly:

- 1. Uptime monitoring** - Our website uptime monitoring will check your website to see if it is loading. Not just that, it will also check to see how quickly it loads across multiple continents and regions to ensure a consistent experience for everyone.
- 2. SSL monitoring** - With our SSL monitoring, you can be notified well in advance of your SSL certificate expiring. That way, you will have plenty of time to renew or purchase a new certificate. It will also let you know if an auto-renew has failed.
- 3. Domain expiration** - Our domain expiration monitoring will also notify you well in advance of your domain expiration date, giving you plenty of time to renew.
- 4. DNS changes** - Your DNS records are the brains of your whole digital operation. Our DNS change monitoring can let you know as soon as anything changes with your DNS records so you can take action if it creates issues.
- 5. Visual changes** - Our visual change monitor will look for sudden, dramatic changes to your content, either due to a hack or due to human error.
- 6. Page speed monitoring** - Our page speed monitoring will spot both slow and sudden changes in your website's loading time and let you know before anyone is affected.
- 7. Site health monitoring** - A site health report will provide you with deep analysis across your entire website and clear actionable steps to improve it. You can then empower your design agency or internal staff to start taking actions and to help make steady progress on your website.



# Want to get in touch?

If you want to find out more about 80five and how we can help you create an unforgettable website for your business, you can find out more on our website, call us, or drop us an email.



01392 949168



hello@80five.co.uk

