

Web Marketing

101

How To Create
Business Success
Using Little Known
Internet Secrets



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Developing a “Brand” for Your Business

With websites, the first impression is critical. A visitor can come and go very quickly, especially when conducting a search and checking out several websites. To make a good first impression, keep your visitor on your website, and motivate them to contact you, follow these tips:

1. Keep the content simple: remember, in most cases a website is not designed to sell your service. It is designed to give your prospects enough information about you and your business to entice them to contact you. Too much text per page will deter your prospect from reading it at all.
2. Simple navigation bar: make sure that your website has an easy-to-find and simple-to-use navigation bar. The navigation bar is the set of links or tabs used to get from one web page to another.
3. Contact Information: include all your contact information on each page of your site and have an easy-to-find link to your contact page.
4. Pictures: include at least one picture per page with the text to enhance its visual appeal.
5. Sound: be careful not to frustrate your website visitor with sound or music. If you do use sound, keep it subtle and brief.

Credibility

Having a website gives your business instant credibility. In today's market, consumers expect businesses, even small businesses and entrepreneurs, to have websites. To build credibility, include client testimonials on your website, as well as links to other credible websites. However, a website can be a double-edged sword. A poorly designed website can do more harm than good since your prospective clients will usually see your website before they meet you. Avoid investing in a 'Build-Your-Own' website program. Although they are inexpensive, you get what you pay for. These programs are frequently difficult to use, and, if you are not a web designer, your website may reflect poorly on your business.

Look and Feel of Your Message

Keep the message on your website simple. Include only enough information to encourage your prospect to contact you. One exception to this would be website pages dedicated to educating your prospects or clients such as 'FAQ' page, 'Resource' page, Articles, Forum or Blog. (These are also important pages for attracting the search engines). Limit the text on the website pages to topics consistent with the name on the link or tab. Use the text to highlight your Unique Selling Proposition (USP). This is the marketing-based content on your website that separates you from your competition. Because of the importance of your USP, we recommend getting marketing advice when writing your text, and having it reviewed or edited by a copywriter.

Leveraging the Power of your Website

Websites as an Educational & Customer Service Resource

Your website can be a great tool to keep your clients updated on the trends in your business and industry. A website can replace hand-out materials and even more sophisticated educational elements if you incorporate video and audio. You can link to articles on the Internet, post articles directly onto your website, add your monthly newsletter, and incorporate educational pages on your site. Some ideas for customer service & educational elements on your site are:

- Newsletters and a newsletter archive.
- Articles and white papers available for download.
- A Message Board or Forum on topics related to your services and industry.
- A BLOG focused on your industry and other service-related topics.
- Links to other qualified resources.
- An interactive survey or related tool.
- Video and audio clips on instructional matters.
- A scheduling or sign-up tool.
- Offering client-related educational E-books.
- A web store for related product sales.
- A password-restricted member's section with additional resources and tools.

As you naturally add articles and content to your website over time, you will also improve your search engine ranking.

While the search engines will drive traffic to your website, the most important factor to attracting attention to your site will be your own website promotions. Ideas to drive traffic to your website are listed below:

- Add your domain name to all printed materials that you pass out such as business cards, letterhead, post cards, and brochures.
- Add your domain name to the signature in your email.
- Add your domain name to your phone message.
- Attend networking events and pass out information directing people to your website.
- Send out e-newsletters with several direct links to pages within your website.

Websites as a Marketing Tool

Once a prospect arrives at your site, it must be designed well enough to do its job. If your site is not set up properly, you may lose prospects before you can address any misconceptions or poor impressions they may have formed. Remember, your site is not designed to sell your service. Many service providers make the mistake of using their website to convince prospects they can serve their needs. From a sales perspective, convincing a prospect of anything is the last step in the process. If the earlier steps of 'getting their attention' and 'developing interest' are not effective, then prospects will rarely commit to your service.

A website is designed to get attention and, in some cases, begin the process of developing interest. (The exception would be an e-commerce site). You have approximately 15-30 seconds to get someone's attention once they hit your website. If you don't prompt them to do something or take action, you will lose them. It's especially important that your home page does not overwhelm your prospects with information. It should include an obvious call-to-action such as a prominent link to 'Contact Us for more information'. The main job of a website for a growing business is to get prospects to contact you for more information, and then it is your job to sell your products or services.

WebFlexor has designed its website services to cost-effectively empower the small business owner. Many of the tools and tactics necessary to develop a powerful web presence are built into the standard WebFlexor program and many others can be added for a nominal fee. Ask us how we can help you with your website needs today.

Improving your Visibility on the Internet

Understanding the Search Engines

Let's say you go on to the web looking for a local auto mechanic. After getting onto your favorite search engine, perhaps Google, you would probably type into your search box 'auto repair Los Angeles'. Then Google will return a list of sites relevant to your search term. Google is able to present these choices to you because each of these sites has been submitted to its database and the content of each site has been indexed per their system.

Websites are built using HTML or similar programming language that search engine programs can analyze to determine proper indexing for the website in their database. There are numerous design elements factored into the process to determine which website is indexed or ranked more optimally in the search engines. This process is referred to as 'Search Engine Optimization'. One of the main objectives of a business website is to be found on the search engines to generate business leads. It is important for a new website owner to know that having a website and being ranked optimally in the search engines are virtually unrelated. Imagine opening a retail store and expecting to get instant business.

Most businesses want to get their websites optimized in the search engines. As a result, search engine ranking can be very competitive and, in many cases, difficult to achieve. Many companies invest significant amounts of time, money and resources trying to optimize their position in the search engines.

Submitting Your Site to the Search Engines

Before you can get your domain name or URL to appear in the search engines, you must first submit it to the search engines. There are many services that will submit your site for you for a fee. However, many will submit your site to a multitude of Tier 2 and Tier 3 search engines that will have little or no impact on increasing your visibility on the internet. The Tier 1 search engines are Yahoo, Google and MSN. Approximately 90% of all searches on the web are conducted through one of these search engines (Yahoo and Google are the most widely used). It is important to submit your website to these search engines. Below are links to each Search Engine's page for website submission.

GOOGLE:

<http://www.google.com/addurl?continue=/addurl>

YAHOO:

<http://search.yahoo.com/info/submit.html>

This is a list of all their “Submit” options. The only option that is relevant to our discussion is the first link “*Submit Your Site for Free*”. You will need a Yahoo account to do this so if you do not already have one you will have to sign-up. Once inside, you will have two options for submitting your site; you will use the top one. Just copy and paste the URL’s from each webpage on your website into this box and hit Submit for each.

MSN:

<http://search.msn.com/docs/submit.aspx>

Once your website has been submitted you will have to wait for the search engines to list your site. Sometimes this can take weeks or months depending upon the search engine. To determine if your site has been indexed by the search engine, do a search for your exact domain name. For example, if I wanted to see if www.webflexor.com has been indexed, I would search for ‘webflexor.com’ in the search box.

After a period of time, if your site is not listed, you may want to consider re-submitting.

Keywords

When a search is conducted via a search engine, a specific key word or keyword phrase (more than one word) is submitted. In the prior example the keyword phrase was ‘auto repair Los Angeles’. Your business will probably have more than one set of keyword phrases that describe your services or products. The more refined or specific your key words, the easier it is to get listed in an optimal position. For example, the keyword phrase ‘PC Computers’ is fairly general and many companies will be competing for this keyword phrase. Therefore, it will be difficult to get listed near the top of a search that is so competitive. But if your keyword phrase was more specific, such as ‘personal training De Moines Iowa’, there will be fewer competing websites and it will be easier to get listed.

The search engines use complex algorithms to review websites that have been submitted. The data they “index” is used to determine your ranking in the search engine based on certain keyword phrases. None of them will give away their secret algorithm but it is easy to tell that it factors in a number of website features such as:

- Content – the viewable text on your website pages.
- Page Title –the text you see in the blue bar at the top of the window when you are on a web page.
- MetaTags – a list of all the relevant keywords/phrases for the web page with the most relevant listed first. These are listed behind the scenes and imbedded in the HTML code of your website.

- MetaDescription – the description of the page that people will see when they find your site through a search engine. This is listed behind the scenes and imbedded in the HTML code of your website.
- Page Names –the actual file name of the web page. Just like Microsoft Word documents, web pages are actual individual files. In the URL <http://webflexor-websites.com/custom-website-options.php> the file name is “custom-website-options.php”
- Image Names – each image or picture that is built into your website has a file name.
- Link Population – see section below.

As in the earlier example, if someone is searching for ‘auto repair Los Angeles’, the search engines search their “index” for websites that scored highly for that exact phrase and similar phrases. This will determine which website will be ranked higher in that particular search engine for that search phrase. It would be very important for an auto repair shop in Los Angeles with a website to have those keywords appear throughout the text on their web pages and behind the scenes in the meta tags and other HTML features of the site.

Take some time to list the key words that apply to your business. Limit your list to the primary key words (20 or less). Once you have determined your key words, they will be built into the HTML features of your website by your designer, and even more importantly, sprinkled throughout the text of your web pages. You can observe the HTML language in most websites by going to any page, right clicking on a blank spot, and selecting "View/Source." A little box will come up with a lot of text that represents the programming language, typically HTML. Although it is important to have the key words in your HTML features of your web pages, it is even more important to have the keywords/phrases listed in the actual text of your website.

WebFlexor provides its clients with the functionality to add their own HTML features into their website, as well as add text in the actual web pages. This information will change as a business grows and evolves. When a client has the ability to edit their own HTML features and content, rather than go through a web designer, they will save valuable time and money.

Link Population

Another and probably most important factor in determining the search engines’ ranking of websites is the number of sites linked back to your website. This is known as ‘Link Population’. You could think of it as a popularity contest. The more websites that link back to you, or have your actual URL in their website as an active link, the more popular your website and the more attention you will receive from the search engines. Remember, the search engines look for quantity of links and, more importantly, quality of links. Therefore, the search

engines prefer when you link to websites with similar content and information. For example, an auto repair shop in Los Angeles should have auto related websites link back to them. In addition, the more popular a website that links back to you, the more impact it will have on the results you receive in the search engines. It is also helpful to link to websites that are already popular with the search engines.

Link Exchange

To encourage websites to link back to your website, offer to add a link on your website back to theirs. This is known as a Link Exchange. You can initiate a Link Exchange Program by contacting owners of other relevant websites and asking them to exchange links. Start by doing an internet search for websites with similar content to yours. For example, an auto repair shop might do a search for 'auto repair' or 'auto parts'. That search would produce a large number of matches. Next, review the website matches and look for those that are already linked to other websites. A 'links' page/tab on their website is a good indicator. Contact them either via email or over the phone and request a links exchange. Here is a sample of an email that you can send to make this request:

Dear _____,

I would like to propose a link exchange between our websites. As you may realize, by exchanging links we can both improve our positions in the search engines. Here is a link to my website: www.mywebsite.com. If you agree, I will add a link to your website.

One of the major strengths of the WebFlexor system is that many of these features are accessible and controlled by you, our client, so you can continue to refine your web pages to improve your search engine ranking over time. In addition, with the WebFlexor System you can add links to your website without having to contact a web designer.

Basic Tips to Improve your Search Engine Performance

Your website design is a factor that will improve your website ranking in the search engines. An effective website should balance two objectives: simplify your marketing and sales efforts; and add relevant content to your site to enhance your search engine optimization efforts.

You can simplify this balancing act without complicating your website by:

- Adding a newsletter section with an archive for old newsletters. Write them on a regular basis with business-related topics. Over time, this will enrich your site by having more content.
- Adding a message-board or forum to your website for business-related discussions. This will also generate information that will enhance your search engine efforts.
- Adding articles or white papers to your site that will interest your clients.
- Adding a BLOG, if you have the interest and ability to manage it properly. It is a natural way to develop your search engine ranking over the long term.

The WebFlexor Program integrates a newsletter service into its website package. It also has a self-managed article archive feature that allows you to post articles and newsletters to your website. In addition, WebFlexor can provide you with a BLOG and/or Forum that integrates directly with your website.

Some General Tips When Writing Content for Your Web Pages:

- 300-500 words of text per page are optimal.
- Target 2-3 keyword phrases per page (each page should target different phrases).
- Sprinkle your keyword phrases throughout the text, 3-4 times for the #1 term for the page and 2-3 times for the other top phrases (only if it reads well).
- When inputting your meta-tags, use your top keywords first and then include other relevant terms.
- Include the keyword phrase for the page in your Meta Description that describes your services/business. This becomes the short blurb of text when your page shows up in a search engine.
- If you are a small business that targets clients in a specific geographic area, make sure the names of towns, cities, counties, etc. are included in your keywords. The more specific you are, the less competition you will have.

The search engines are more concerned with key words or phrases in your web pages' text than in the meta tags. It is important to include and update the key words in the content of the web pages as your business evolves. Getting ranked in the search engines is a slow process. Your success will depend upon your efforts. To turn your website into a marketing machine, focus on the tactics outlined in this section and participate in Paid Inclusion Advertising or Pay Per Click advertising through Yahoo, Google, and MSN.

Paid Inclusion Advertising

Most small businesses do not have the budget to hire search engine optimization (SEO) consultants to get quick results for their website. The approach to SEO that is most affordable allows for the natural progression of search engine ranking. This can take 6–12 months or longer. This can be a drawback since businesses want immediate marketing results. Getting your website listed in the search engines takes time and there are no guarantees.

However, there is a way to get listed in the search engines without having to wait. This is referred to as Paid Inclusion Advertising or Pay-Per-Click Advertising. There are two areas in Google, Yahoo and MSN that list searches. They are primarily divided into two columns; the left column is referred to as the Organic or Natural Search column. There is also a thinner right column of listing which is typically known “Sponsored Links”. With this approach, you can get your website advertisement on the first page of search results with little effort. (It is important to get to the first page of search results since most people do not go beyond the first page).

Pay-Per-Click Advertising is a process of bidding against other websites with the same keywords for positions in the “Sponsored Link” area of the search engine. For example, if your business is a yoga studio in Tulsa, Oklahoma you might be bidding for a position under the keyword phras ‘Tulsa Yoga’. The search engines would rank the yoga business that bids the highest in the Sponsored Link area of the search engine (there are also some other less decisive factors that might contribute to the positioning). In this example, since the keywords are less competitive than ‘PC Computers’, the yoga business might be able to secure a position on the first page for a minimal cost (possibly as low as 5-10 cents per click). This would be a cost effective way for this business to get a potential client to visit their website.

Web advertising usually causes some concerns for small business owners:

Most business owners expect Pay-Per-Click to be overly expensive

FACT: Google and MS adCenter reward businesses that take the time to set up an effective and targeted advertising campaign. They will factor the quality of your efforts into the bidding and ranking process. This may allow you to compete successfully with a low bid, and achieve the same ad position as other companies that are bidding much higher for their clicks.

Most business owners are concerned about controlling their costs. They fear that their site will generate thousands of clicks and cost thousands of dollars.

FACT: This just doesn't happen. You actually control your costs. If you are comfortable spending only \$15/month then Google Adwords, Yahoo! Search Marketing or MS adCenter will display your ad in an optimized fashion over the coming month to meet your budget. You can also limit the amount you spend per day. When you have exceeded the appropriate number of clicks, your ad will disappear for the duration of that day.

The strengths of Pay-Per-Click programs are:

- Instant gratification! As you build your advertising campaigns, they will start showing up on the Internet as people search for products and services like yours.
- Changes can be implemented immediately.
- You can target very specific keyword phrases and search phrases.
- You can target geographic areas. People searching outside your target area, will not see your ads.
- You have very specific cost controls. You can get started with a budget as low as \$10 per month.
- Through a process of trial and error, you will discover the most popular key words for your business.
- With a low investment, you can get potential clients to visit your site.

More Information on Paid Inclusion Advertising:

By using Yahoo's Search Marketing, Google's Adword or Microsoft's adCenter Paid Inclusion programs you can buy an ad for your business or service across the web. Each time someone clicks on one of your sponsored links you'll be charged; hence the name pay-per-click advertising.

What will the ads look like?

Try searching for "gemstone beads" on Google. See the sponsored links at the top of the page and the right-hand column. These are the ads (or links) you can pay for with Google's Adword program. Now do the same for Yahoo. You'll notice that Yahoo also includes sponsored links at the bottom of their page as well as at the top and right-hand side.

To sign up for accounts with the major Paid Inclusion services, go to the following links:

Google AdWords
<http://adwords.google.com>

Microsoft adCenter
<https://adcenter.microsoft.com/>

Yahoo Search Marketing

<http://searchmarketing.yahoo.com/srch/index.php>

Google and Microsoft both rank advertisements on a combination of pricing and relevancy while Yahoo is based strictly on the bid price. In Google's own words: "Ad's are ranked on a combination of its maximum cost-per-click (CPC) and clickthrough rate (CTR). The higher your CPC or CTR, the higher your ad's position will be. Because this ranking system rewards well-targeted, relevant ads, you can't be locked out of the top position as you would be in a ranking system based solely on price uses something called a click through rate (CTR) which determines the ranking of an ad."

Should I be doing it?

It's definitely something you should try for a period of time – especially if you are targeting a specific geographic area such as a city, town, or area around your office. With Google AdWords, you can focus your ads on searches in your geographic area. This will dramatically reduce the competition and the cost of your advertising. It only costs \$5.00 to start a Google Adwords account and you can pay as little as five-cents per click. You probably won't get a high ranking at five-cents, but if you're a niche business and target ads with specific keywords, you might be surprised. AdWord advertising can be a cost effective and targeted form of advertising for you. You can also track your advertising dollars to see if they're converting to sales and leads. These programs have a return-on-investment (ROI) tracker, a great way to see if your advertising campaign is effective. Both ROI tracking and ads targeted to geographic locations are explained in greater detail in the various tutorials provided by Google, Yahoo and Microsoft. We recommend you take a look at them.

There is a learning curve to setting up a cost-effective Pay-Per-Click advertising program. WebFlexor can refer you to a Pay-Per-Click advertising consultant who can help you set up and manage your account for maximum success, if you are willing to make the investment.