

Search Engine Optimization, Web Site Design and Development, and Online/Offline Promotion – the successful integration of these components will maximize your traffic and sales conversions.

A web site owner's guide to building a successful web site business.

The keys to better search engine results and promotions uncovered...how you and Search Engine Optimization experts must work together to make a successful, winning website.

Courtesy of Marvin Pirila

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Successful, Winning Web Sites take Two; You and Your Expert in Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

It takes the success of Search Engine Optimization, Web Site Design and Development, and Online/Offline Promotion to maximize your web traffic and sales conversions. One without the other will result in your web site being less effective. Search Engine Optimization will improve your traffic and increase your visitors to your target group. However, without attention grabbing headlines, well-written content, and promotion, your web site will struggle to convert visitors into customers. When you utilize the techniques, methods, and strategies in this report, your website will have a much greater chance of realizing its maximum potential.

The most successful strategies used to design and promote websites effectively are surprisingly inexpensive and simple. By employing them correctly, you can have a website that outperforms your wildest expectations.

Integration (Content/Promotion/Search Engine Optimization) = Website Success

Search Engine Optimization

Ways to improve your search engine results and web site effectiveness.

Eliminate 93% of your online competition before they eliminate you!

Only 7% of all websites are visible on the search engines. The reason behind this phenomenon is that most web sites are not properly optimized to achieve high search engine rankings.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): the greatest degree of popularity, ranking, and relevance attainable with search engines under implied or specific conditions.

The implied or specific conditions of successful SEO include META Tag descriptions, content, architecture, and title tags.

Each search engine has its own algorithm for determining what results to return for “searches.” These algorithms change frequently to make searches more relevant. Sites that attempt to cheat on their way to higher rankings face penalties and occasionally banned from search engines altogether. On the other hand, those sites that contain “relevant content,” receive higher rankings.

An algorithm is defined as a rule or procedure for solving a problem that frequently involves repetition of an operation.

Search marketing has conversion rates 2-4% higher than banner ads or email. Banner ads are those annoying advertisements that roll across the page as you're reading it. *"Search engines effectively qualify and convert customers because they reach users later in the buying cycle – when they are researching a considered purchase and are subject to marketing's influence."* -- 2002 Forrester Research brief.

Placement is Location in the Internet World

You wouldn't dream of opening a store without advertising and carefully choosing its location. The purpose of placing websites is to promote and locate them on the Internet. Without it, your website will not be found, and your business will fail. That would be like locating a gas station on an abandoned, prohibited road where there is no traffic.

Website marketers cited Search engine positioning as the top method to drive traffic to their sites (66%). Second is email marketing (54%). Source: Direct Marketing Association (DMA). The most cost-effective way to market your web site online is to obtain several top 10-search engine rankings in the major search engines for your keywords. Keywords are those words/phrases you want your business listed for when searches are done online. As traditional businesses regularly advertise to draw customers, they must also use placement to draw customers to their website.

Placement is like taking the gas station from the abandoned road and moving it next to the freeway. It's located where there's heavy traffic and no other gas station for one hundred miles. Location is everything.

A Search Marketing Survey of approximately three thousand marketers by MarketingSherpa, marketers said organic clicks increased an average of 73 percent in the six months after optimization. So be patient and you can expect to see effective optimization boost your site traffic – and your online success.

Note: Organic clicks are those "natural" results found when a search engine queries specific keywords and keyword phrases. These results are based on editorial importance of terms, keywords, and page make-up.

What you don't see on your website affects the effectiveness of your website. The structure and coding of websites cause them to fail because:

- THEY'RE NEVER FOUND
- They don't emphasize their unique selling position.
- Pages load too slowly resulting in visitors clicking away.

- Navigation from page to page is unclear.
- Text within frames not indexed, especially when using relevant keywords.
- They try to place keywords that are common and highly competitive. This results in low rankings and pages missing from search engine results pages (SERPs).
- Pages not titled for placement.
- Comment tags are missing or containing irrelevant information.
- ALT tags are missing from pictures.
- Irrelevant links and links to low-ranking sites
- Search engines have difficulties indexing pages that contain frames, pictures, flash elements, Java script or dynamic URLs.

The Content/Sales process cause Websites to fail

You must first plan your web site knowing your sales process thoroughly before you create it.

Secondly, you must write your content in a logical, step-by-step process. Each step should move the prospect closer to the sale. This means that there is a right and wrong time to ask for a sale, make your claim, discuss your proof, and state your benefits. Placing the wrong step in the wrong place is enough to lose a sale.

Next, convey the benefits as tangible and cover the five senses. How does this product/service make me wealthier, sexier, healthier, or save me time.

Finally, information distribution is not information collection. The key is to get to know your customers, interact with them, and forge a lasting, trusting relationship with them.

Benefits of Optimization

- More traffic (hits) to your site
- “True Relevance.” More credible search results to connect you with “real” prospects. Higher numbers of visitors are only good if they fit your “targeted group.” How many cars do you think you would sell if people came to your lot looking for televisions?
- Increased ease of use. Customers will be able to find what they want quickly.
- It is necessary because most search engine users will not look behind three pages for results.

Components of a Website that Search Engine Professionals Fine Tune

- Meta Description <META NAME="DESCRIPTION">: this is the summary displayed below your listing when returned on the search engine results page. Search engines also look here for keywords. Meta Description Tags should be kept under 20 words or 150 characters.
- Keywords in the <META NAME="KEYWORD"> tag
- Title tags <TITLE> – place your chosen keywords at the beginning. Keep under 60 characters.
- Headings <H1>/Subheadings
- Comment tags <!-- >
- Links –not broken, missing, or returning an error message.
- Content – is it relevant and written for keyword or keyword phrase weight.
- ALT tags for graphics
- Site architecture – are all parts in the proper order.
- Coding – if search engines cannot access your site, they will ignore it. If the server returns an error code, search engine spiders won't index it.
- The right two- or three-word keywords will make you more competitive. These words or phrases should be those commonly used by your buyers.
- Relevant sub domains
- URL address – shorter is better. Relevant keywords are essential.
- Anchor texts (words used to link to a web page). For example: for more information on [search engine optimization](#) ... The words "search engine optimization" are the anchor text to a link. If your company were trying to place for this phrase, this would help your rankings.

Organic Optimization vs. Pay per Click

“Organic” or “natural” search results are those sites found based on a search engine’s algorithm. This algorithm uses variables such as keywords, content, coding, and architecture to determine rankings. Simply put, natural search results are those sites returned when you type words into a search engine’s search box.

Most customers will get better conversions from organic optimization than they will for pay-per-click. This happens in part due to click fraud or people merely clicking on certain ads to boost their adsense revenues. Determining click fraud sources is difficult, although investigations do sometimes catch the culprits. These investigations analyze factors such as IP address, duplicate clicks, and other clicking patterns. In the end though, they are subjective and sometimes impossible to determine. At the minimum, running invalid clicks reports takes valuable time.

Organic (natural) searches account for over than 60% of the nearly 6 billion search clicks in March 2006 alone. That’s 36% better over the same period from the previous year (Source: Nielsen/NetRatings)
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Research by MarketingResearch.com indicates that as much as 30% of paid search traffic may be fraudulent (Thursday, 30 June 2005). They discovered that individuals or organizations participating in click fraud are using advanced cloaking technologies that may prevent preventive systems such as those used by Google. In the majority of click fraud cases, click-fraud criminals were using rolling-IP distributed attacks from several countries. The research also showed that it appeared that there might be organized human click-fraud campaigns using low-cost third-world labor.

"Impression fraud" is click fraud that occurs when criminals manipulate the number of page impressions for a given search term. When click-through rates (CTR) decrease, a search term can be suspended due to low performance. Other advertisers, by committing impression fraud, are able to obtain higher search rankings at lower costs due to the crippled competition.

Pay-per-click (PPC) involves the buying of keywords. You can specify ad copy and determine where your traffic goes. Even if you use pay-per-click for traffic, you should also be seeking Search Engine Optimization to increase traffic and sales.

How the Spider (“Bot”) Searches the Pages

Once you submit your page, the search engine will add your URL to a list of sites to be Spidered. The search engine will read all the words on the page and filter out parts it does not want when your URL is Spidered. The search engine can take anywhere from one day to a number of months to spider your site. The benefits of placement usually take two to six months, but the time spent waiting is well worth it. You’ll get more hits from higher quality prospects (target group) and more opportunities to convert these hits to sales.

The “Spidering” process involves reading all the text and links on a website and saving that information to the hard drive of the respective search engine. The Spider follows the links and weighs for relevancy. This relevancy (number and their rankings) helps determine your websites’ popularity and corresponding ranking.

Certain search engines cannot read text within frames and require that a <NOFRAMES> tag be used for this text.

A Professional Looking Website is Critical!

A study conducted by Dr. Gitte Lindgaard of Carleton University in Ottawa demonstrates the importance of a good first impression. This study, published in the *Behaviour and Information Technology* journal, showed the ratings made in just fifty milliseconds were significantly like the judgments made after a longer examination.

This halo effect, as psychologists call it, suggests that people continue to use a web site that gave a good first impression to “prove” to themselves that they made a good initial decision.

A professional site lacks spelling errors, while designed to spur and retain interest.

Logo

Logo's must follow basic, yet essential rules. These include:

1. Uniqueness
2. Timeless – don't obsess on passing fads or trends.
3. Free of special effects because they may not add to the professional look.
4. Adaptability – you want your logo to be transferable to different mediums such as checks and invoices.
5. Scalability – design your logo for a variety of sizes, both large and small. Most importantly, your text must be readable.
6. Color is Secondary – refrain from using too many colors that blend when the logo is smaller or lacks the proper contrast.
7. Appropriate Aspect Ratio & Footprint – square is best.

Home Page

Every home page should have a “contact us,” “about us,” a bio, and brief descriptions of your products.

www.killerminisites.com uses the following structure for websites:

The header graphic block
The headline/promise block
The testimonial/credentials block
The informational block
The product introduction block
The benefits block
The call-to-action block
The guarantee block
The action summary block

The **Header Graphic Block** must grab their attention and pull them in. You have limited time to get their attention before they click away. This area generally contains your company logo, a high-quality relevant photo, and links. The whole object is to pull them down one layer at a time by grabbing and maintaining their interest. In this case, this first layer should lead you to the headline/promise block.

The **Headline** is the most critical portion of your site. Copywriters often spend more time determining the right headline than they do writing the rest of the piece. They know that the rest doesn't matter if they don't capture the attention of the reader and pull them in farther. The right headline attracts more prospects, increases sales, and boosts profits.

Headlines should solve a problem quickly, and for a small or reasonable amount of money. It should make the reader curious to discover more.

Humor, intrigue, or a provocative statement arouse the curiosity of the reader.

A successful headline will create excitement, enthusiasm, and anticipation for more. Headlines should be concisely and powerfully written statements that induce interest and desire. Throughout your content pages you'll utilize headings (subheadings, bullet points, postscript, etc.).

Four out of five readers will read the headline and skip the rest of the ad – David Ogilvy

Robert W. Bly, in his “Copywriter’s Handbook,” states that every headline you write must get the attention of the selected target audience, deliver a complete message, and draw the reader into the body copy.

All humans seek four big benefits. Will this product make me healthier, wealthier, sexier, or save me time?

The headline/promise block must promise the prospect powerful benefits, while making a surprising claim. This promise must be powerful enough to keep your prospect reading into the next layer of your web site (The testimonials/credentials block).

The **Testimonial/Credentials Block** must state testimonials immediately to validate the accuracy of your previous claim/promise. Credentials relevant to your service/product can be persuasive in your attempt to prove your ability to deliver. To have kept your prospects interested this far, the previous components must be working. The success to this point will pull them into yet another layer of your site, “the informational block.”

The **Information Block** is simply your chance to explain your area of business and its existing problems. This is your opportunity to empathize with their frustrations. Let them know how it once affected you too. Drop hints that those problems are now behind you as you have a solution. Once they feel you’re an expert on the topic, their desire for a solution to their frustrations will drive them down deeper into your site.

This block is intended to establish yourself as an expert on the topic.

The **Product Introduction Block** is where you explain how your product is the solution to the prospect’s problems. This is where you’ll also present a graphical representation of your product or service. A photo goes a long way in showing customers what they will get by purchasing your product. Ebay sellers using photographs generally outsell those that don’t. A book is not just a book to users. They want to see the cover, because an image provides a sense of a “real” product and not just mere words.

High quality graphics help tremendously in showing what something really looks like, rather than leaving it to perception. Each person sees something a little different, and sometimes a lot differently than the next. An image helps to bridge the “perceived” or “actual” variation in perception. This bridge is what helps make sales. Why else would Amazon show a picture of their books, retailers show their products in advertisements and commercials, and catalogs show items instead of just explaining them? They do it because it works.

The **Benefits Block** appears next and ushers in the ways your product or service can solve each of the problems your prospect has. Remember that “features” are not “benefits.” Benefits explain how the product or service will make your life better, easier, or more enjoyable. Features tell you different qualities of your product or service.

The key mission of the benefits block is to create desire for your service or product. Answer how life is going to be so much better because of your product or service.

Once you have sparked their desire, it's time to make the call to action. In the **Call-to-Action Block** you will make an offer that propels your prospect to make the purchase. This call to action encompasses three important variables. First, you must stress the greatest benefit they'll receive as a result, again. Second, sweeten the offer by offering additional items of perceived value. These are often free items derived from the main benefit your offer is based. Third, a deadline acts as a catalyst for action. If you've kept their attention this long, you've got them interested but you still must complete the deal. A deadline sets their mind in motion, "if I wait, I might miss out on this incredible deal." Without a deadline and perceived scarcity, they may just walk away and never return.

Interesting fact: You must ask for the order roughly nine times before someone buys. The average salesperson is still asking just 1.5 times.

The **Guarantee Block** follows the "call to action" and removes any risk for your prospect. This removes any remaining resistance. There is a direct correlation between the length of the guarantee and the number of sales made. An ironclad, longer-term guarantee will bring far more sales than a 30-day one.

The final and most critical block on your site should be the "**Action Summary Block**." This is where you restate the most appealing benefit and how it solves problems for the prospect. You conclude by asking for the order. You must ask for it or they won't buy it.

People buy on emotion and justify with logic.

The purchase process must be as easy and logical as possible. Many sales are lost because of complex sales transactions. If you are experiencing an alarming rate of shopping carts abandoned, your checkout process may be too confusing.

Shopping carts help orders – no carts – no orders.

Search Engines

At the time this was written, Google Search accounted for 50.8% of all searches on the Internet. Yahoo! Search, MSN/Windows Live Search, and AOL Search account for 23.6%, 8.4%, and 6.1%, respectively. Source: Nielsen//NetRatings MegaView Search, January 2007. These four providers accounted for 88.9% of all searches made. If you want heavy traffic, these are the search engines you and your webmaster must focus on.

Searches are available through both Search Engines and Directories. Search engines index your site via "spidering" and typically require submission, rather than random discovery. Directories require submission and generally link to only your home page.

Search engines include AltaVista, HotBot, Lycos, Google, WebCrawler, and Infoseek/Go.com.

Search directories include Yahoo!, Open Directory, and Snap.

Google Sandbox

New pages end up in Google's "sandbox" until they consider them mature enough to be ranked in the search results. Google values the age of a web page in its rankings. Google's "sandbox" is basically a hold and wait status.

Links are not all the same

Search engines do not place the same value on all inbound links when determining search engine rankings. A page that is ranked #1 for certain keywords carries more weight than one that is ranked #20 for the same words. Inbound links that use keywords that are relevant to the content of your site are important to placement rankings.

Preferably, all inbound links will be relevant and complimentary to your business. These same links should also come from reputable, long-standing web sites.

Success depends on intelligently designed websites built for placement.

- An Iprospect Survey in 2002 reported that 78% of web users abandon their search if the first three pages don't provide an answer to their question, and 28% don't scroll past the second page of results. Source: Media Post article reporting results of Spring 2002 IProspect survey. You need placement to avoid limiting your potential market to 22% of web users. The Internet population is booming, but if your website isn't on the first three pages returned, you're unlikely to make a sale.
- Ninety percent of consumers use an Internet search to find more information on something that interests them in a TV program or ad.
- Projected online spending is estimated to grow to \$229 billion in 2008, a 139% increase. Source: Forrester Research.
- Forty percent of those conducting online research go to search engines first. Fifty-four percent use them to find a website to purchase from and 53% investigate where to purchase a product. Source: "How America Searches: Online Shopping," iCrossing, based on Harris Interactive® poll, August 26-30, 2005.

You can help the process of Search Engine Optimization and sell more.

- Focus first on what your customers want, then optimize for search engines. More visitors mean more sales only when they are getting what they're looking for.
- Define the niche market you're going after. It's fruitless to go after mainstream keywords like "computers" that are dominated by powerhouses like IBM and Dell. Large companies like these have several full-time employees devoted to search engine placement.
- Write your content with your niche market as your focus.
- Determine what your Unique Selling Position (USP) is and stress this uniqueness. Answer the question everyone is asking, "Why should I buy from you?" "What makes you different from the rest?"
- Stress the "urgency" of your product. Why must everyone have it? What will happen if they don't buy it?
- Stress the benefits of your product, not the features. The horsepower of a tractor is a feature; the ability to do everything you need to around the farm is a benefit. What does your product provide that makes life easier, more enjoyable, or more exciting?
- Pursue good inbound links from related web sites. They should be both relevant and higher-ranking web sites.

Keyword Phrases - Use Longer Keywords

You should generally choose the longer form of a keyword to take advantage of a concept called "word stemming." When a search engine uses word stemming, it searches for word roots will also include the variations of that word. For instance, searches for "consult" would also return documents that have the words "consulting" and "consultants" unless the user chooses to do an exact search.

The ranking criteria is different among search engines, but most grade the placement of keywords on your Web site, the site's title and description based on these factors:

1. Prominence of the keyword
2. Frequency of the keyword
3. Site popularity
4. Weight of the keywords
5. Proximity of keywords
6. Keyword placement

Keyword Prominence: The first place the keyword appears in the Web site's title or description. Did the title of the site start with a particular keyword or was that keyword the fourth or fifth word of the site's title?

The number of times a keyword appears in a website's title or description. If you repeat a word too frequently, you may be penalized for keyword stuffing. Generally, you should repeat your keyword in the document as many times as possible without allowing it to distract from your copy. It should also be stated from three to seven times in your META tags.

Site Popularity: The number of other Web sites linked to yours. This ranking measurement provides credit to those sites that were linked to because they were considered important. More weight is given to sites relevant to your own and those with higher rankings.

Keyword Weight: The number of keywords appearing on a Web page compared to the total number of words appearing on that page. Some search engines consider this when determining the rank of your Web site for a particular keyword search.

Keyword Proximity: The placement of keywords in relation to each other or other words with a similar meaning as the queried keyword. For search engines that grade a keyword match by keyword proximity, the connected phrase “home loans” will outrank a citation that mentions “home mortgage loans” if you are searching only for the phrase “home loans.”

Keyword Placement: Where on your page your keywords are located. For example, in most engines, placing the keywords in the title tag of the page or in the heading tag will give it more relevancy. On some engines, placing keywords in the link text, the part that is underlined on the screen in a browser, can add more relevancy to those words.

Service reigns, Online and Offline

Even when they're found, web sites, like regular businesses, can fail if their service is poor. Barry Gibbons, former CEO of Burger King, wrote in *This Indecision is Final* "70 to 90 percent of decisions not to repeat a purchase of anything are not about the product or price. They are about some dimension of service."

Based on a study of customers who defected from 14 major service and manufacturing businesses the Forum Corporation found:

- Fifteen percent of customers left for technical quality reasons.
- Fifteen percent left because of the price.
- 20% left because of "too little contact and individual attention."
- Forty-nine percent left because contact from the supplier's personnel was "poor in quality."

Reason for switching to a competitor:
Contact from old supplier's personnel was poor in quality – 49 percent. – Forum Corporation

"Anything that tightens your relationships with an existing customer increases the revenue you get from that customer." – Michael Taylor, Arthur D. Little

Today's customers want piles of information, immediate/personal access to you, and ultimate control of decision-making. As a business, you must accommodate these wants by giving them choices, perceived control, and ownership of you. You must allow them to customize products/services to meet their specific needs.

Key Fact: Customers that you're already selling to are your best sales target and hold the maximum potential for profit.

Three Fundamental Rules of Selling

1. People don't like the idea of being sold.
2. People buy things for emotional, not rational reasons.
3. Once sold, people need to satisfy their emotional decisions with logic. Sell to their heart, not to their head.

Principles of Persuasion

1. Give gifts!
2. Get them to make little commitments as you work towards getting the ultimate commitment.
3. Show the popularity of your products/service and that other people have bought it.
4. Credibility (degrees and credentials)
5. Create scarcity by imposing deadlines.
6. Honesty – people like to hear that you have flaws.
7. Create as much rapport as you can.
8. Create urgency by limiting the time your offer is good for
9. Make offer so incredible that they can't say no.
10. Create an impression that by failing to act now the prospect will risk loss or pain.
11. Twenty percent of people are motivated by fear, lack of something, and loss; they move away from pain instead of moving toward pleasure. The other 80% is generally moving toward something.
12. Create a sense of belonging through clubs, forums, groups, etc.
13. Arouse their curiosity.

Traffic Driving Tools

- Bundling (offering better prices for package deals)
- Recycling – re-approaching visitors who left your site without buying.
- Baiting – offering opt-in opportunities such as free chapters, free trial, free report, etc.
- Engaging – people that interact more with your site are more likely to visit more often.
- Gifting – there is an unwritten “rule of reciprocity” – we try to repay in kind what other people have provided us.

Keys to Niche Marketing

1. The niche market you decide to advertise in should be a place where your prospective client hangs out. This place must offer what they want to read, have clubs or events that bring them together, and offer the information they are looking for.
2. The market must be large enough to allow a profit but small enough so there aren't too many competitors.
3. The market must show they will spend money.
4. The group must be passionate about their hobby.

Promoting your Website

- Affiliate Program – give commissions to those selling your products. They usually get 10-50% commission on each sale referred. Typically, lower cost, high volume items pay higher commission percentages than high-cost, low volume ones.
- Articles
- Blogs
- Bulletin Boards
- Direct Mailings – physical mailings to a targeted group
- Ebooks – they are easy (and cheap) to produce and transmit electronically. Infoproducts (informational products) are the biggest sellers today online.
- E-zine: this is a monthly online newsletter that is generally provided for free in exchange for an email address. Services and templates such as List Builder, and Microsoft's e-mail marketing solution can help.
- Press Releases like PRWeb are often successful in getting links to your site. Average releases on PRWeb attain over 70,000 reads in little time. Of course, the size of your target market determines how many reads is considered good.
- Show Booths (fairs, trade shows, etc.)
- Word of mouth
- Contests
- Special Offers
- Print your URL (web site address) on all correspondence, shipping supplies, and vehicles.
- Offer free samples.

Cross-Promotion

Successful sales associates know that sales are maximized through the use of various channels like direct mail, phone orders, and face-to-face. Any means that makes the sales process simpler and more convenient for your customer will enhance sales.

Shipping Options

Each business must determine their own policy on whether shipping costs should be free or included in the price of the product.

For items that sell at the lowest price possible, you should charge a reasonable amount for shipping. Even higher end item sales can be hurt when the shipping charges appear to make it seem like less than a “bargain.” Restivo from GourmetFoodMall.com, whose company regularly surveys online consumers on such issues, recommends second-day-air shipping. “You can build \$3 to \$5 into the price. Costs are much cheaper than overnight, and customers are satisfied.”

Direct Mailings

The secrets to successful direct mailings (traditional mailings through your mailbox) are similar to those you’ll use online. You’ll also find it helpful to cross-promote your business or service by using regular mail.

Direct mail can get your business off the ground and boost your bottom line.

- In 2001, business mailers spent an average of \$167 in direct mail per person in the U.S. and received \$2,095 worth of sales as a result, a return on investment of 13-to-1.
- According to the Direct Marketing Association (DMA), sales from direct marketing totaled nearly \$2 trillion in the U.S. in 2002.
- A recent study showed that more than 78% of households read or look at advertising mail. Six (6%) percent said they want more than they currently get.
- According to a DMA commissioned study, Americans spent \$125 billion in catalog sales alone in 2002. Average sales increased 11.6% in Quarter 3, 2003 among direct marketing companies that are DMA members.

Copywriters use well-kept secrets in everyday mail pieces to propel businesses into profits. They know what drives sales and what techniques are most effective. These secrets include:

Writing content that boosts sales includes certain distinguishable elements such as:

- Attention grabbers: grab their attention with a great headline followed by a promise; stress your unique selling position.
- Interest: avoid clichés; write in short, simple sentences; hold their interest with surprising facts; stress important, relevant details of the item you are selling.
- Desire: focus on benefits, not features. Benefits tell you how a feature improves your life.
- Action: ask for their order, clearly and directly; instill a sense of urgency.

Steps to win new business:

1. Put together a mailing list of prospective customers that fit a certain profile.
2. Devise an offer. What makes your offer better than the competitions? Why must you have it? What will it do for you?
3. Create and mail the offer.
4. Look at your results.
5. Repeat.

Test small mailings before deciding to go big. When you have a successful mailing, then expand the size of your next mailing. Your risk will be dependent on the size of your mailing, so make sure you're confident in the one you have. A few different mailings should be evaluated before making the big plunge.

Copywriters consider their first mailing their control. This means measuring future mailings against the success of the first one. The most successful one becomes the new control, and the process repeated. Once you have a successful control piece, you can simply mail it repeatedly to an expanding range of prospective customers.

Way to drive traffic to your store:

- Hold a private sale.
- Hold a drawing.
- Start a birthday or anniversary club.
- Mail often. AOL used to frequently send CDs to customers offering them a certain number of free hours. The staff at AOL mailed to everyone a minimum of eight times to gain their business. If they got you in one of these eight attempts they felt they were successful.
- Send a coupon calendar.
- Get behind a local charity.
- Start a store newsletter.
- Guest speakers, demonstrations, and seminars
- Get an endorsement.
- Remind customers to come in.
- Hold a block party.
- Start a referral program.

Successful postcards are simple, timely and printed on both sides. They are also attractive, measurable, and “cheaper” than regular mail pieces.

Graphic design that sells include:

- One dominant feature: when you emphasize everything, you emphasize nothing.

- Limited typeface variety: generally, use large, bold type for headlines and smaller, easy-to-read typeface for text.
- White space: keep at least 1” margins to create an inviting and friendly feeling.
- Easy-to-read text: keep paragraphs short; intersperse short paragraphs with long, indenting paragraphs, using bullet points or bold subheads.
- Relevant illustrations: they should draw attention to your message or dramatize it.
- A clear, visible logo and call-to-action: let your readers know where and how to buy it.

Tactics to trim printing and mailing costs

- ✓ Choose a cost-effective format: generally, 8 ½ x 11 inch paper should be used.
- ✓ Use color sensibly: highlighting your piece with 1 or 2 extra colors, though slightly more expensive, can help your mailing stand out.
- ✓ Use plain paper unless you have color photographs.
- ✓ Give printers time: give your printer the time to do the job right and save you money on rush charges.
- ✓ Proofread before printing.
- ✓ Clean your mailing list: eliminate duplicate names from your list; consider using an ancillary service like “return service requested” or “address service requested.”
- ✓ Take advantage of Postal Service discounts: using standard sizes and keeping the weight of your mail piece under one ounce eliminates additional postage. You might also be able to obtain presorted First-Class Mail® or Standard Mail® discounts by following guidelines in *A Guide to Mailing for Businesses and Organizations (DMM 200-A)*. The guide is available online at the Postal Service™ web site. Go to <http://pe.usps.gov>.

Secrets for getting more response from your mail:

1. Highlight an offer: a discount, gift or rebate; make sure the offer has an expiration date. Expiration dates urge customers to action.
2. Emphasize benefits, not features: The “7-horsepower engine” in a snow blower is a feature. “The power to clear 10 inches of snow from 40 feet of sidewalk in 20 minutes” is a benefit.
3. Put a P.S. on the letter: the P.S. is often read even before the body. This makes the P.S. a good place to reiterate the offer or main benefit.
4. Make it personal – use a one-to-one conversation perspective.
5. Mail frequently: the added exposure to the eyes and minds of your customers has a better chance of breaking down resistance and increasing traffic and sales.
6. Put in a business reply card: it improves response rates.
7. Start a club.
8. Add a fragrance: psychologists say the right fragrance can put people in a positive frame of mind.
9. Add a gift to the envelope.

You have to ask for an order an average of nine times before someone will buy. The average salesperson is still asking just 1.5 times.

10. Test different sized pieces for response rates
11. Tell people what you want them to do.
12. Tie in with a timely product.

Test every mailing and grade it:

1. The mailing list: tailor your list to the profile of the person you're marketing for; test your in-house mailing list – test the lists you rent from mailing list brokers (you can find brokers at www.usps.com among the authorized “Direct Mail Merchants.”
2. The offer: this is the inducement to respond immediately to your mailing.
3. The creative: you can test a humorous approach versus a serious approach or flashy designs versus simple pictures. Test formats – Evaluate results. Test handwritten vs. typewritten letters.

Repositionable Notes add impact to business mail because:

1. They allow you to grab your customer's attention quickly – improving open-and-read rates.
2. They let your direct mail piece be more actionable – driving potential customers to respond to your offer.
3. They make customers and prospects know that your message is important.
4. They can help current and prospective customers keep your company and your products and services in mind.

Results: First Charter Bank of North Carolina wanted to convince automobile owners to refinance their auto loans at a promotional low-interest refinancing rate. They developed an advertising campaign targeted at both current customers and prospects with existing loans of \$7,500 or more.

As part of their campaign, they sent a “last chance” reminder mail piece, half with Repositionable Notes on them and half without. In both target groups, the mail pieces with Repositionable Notes got higher response rates, resulting in 45% more new auto loans than the other mail pieces, and a net return-on-investment of \$43,000.

Check it out vendors at www.usps.com/repositionablenotes/vendors.htm or learn more at www.usps.com/repositionablenotes.

Be the Leader in your Field

Customers want current information. You can help by keeping a frequent schedule of articles and press releases out. Your web pages should also show current copyright dates and the last date the page(s) were modified. Stagnation is sure death for a web site.

Avoid too much duplicate content. Customers lose interest in redundancy. Treat their time like yours – it's short and valuable.

Good Content

Useful content emphasizes your keywords while still maintaining a “one-to-one” conversation tone. Your writing should express the benefits to them and be written with the “you” perspective throughout. Different emotions your writing might appeal to are fear, greed, pride, lust, and envy.

Useful content includes:

- Focus on the prospect and how your product or service solves his or her problem. Write to the reader's own concerns, desires, needs, and problems. Address the strongest desires and problems of customers.
- Headlines must grab your attention and lead you into the text.
- Lead paragraphs must immediately follow-up on the idea expressed in the headline.
- Highlighting benefits instead of features, beginning with the most important.
- Answers why your customer should buy from you.
- Specific, factual content – enough evidence to support your claim.
- Offers a guarantee.
- Urges the user to action. Studies have shown that just by asking for the sale increased sales dramatically.
- Sets a deadline. Limited time motivates many to act now before it's too late.
- Customers want sufficient product information. Jupiter Media Metrix reports that 59% of retail shoppers wanted more product information before visiting a site more often (September 2001 study).
- High-quality photos of products are critical.

Ninety-percent (90%) of all purchases people make are motivated by impulse. These purchases are based on the benefits and solutions of a specific product/service they desire. Today's world seeks instant fulfillment of these desires.

High-ticket items take longer copy (more persuasive and longer pitches) to sell.

Your homepage should comprise 200-300 words, focusing on 2-3 of your most important keyword phrases.

Secondary (underlying) pages allow you to target keyword phrases other than those on your homepage.

A consistently growing site encourages more frequent crawling by search engines. More pages also allow:

- More potential for ranking other phrases.
- More entry points to your web site.
- More linking opportunities for others.
- Improved link popularity by properly coding internal navigation.
- A growing site is also important in getting visitors to return frequently. Studies show that it takes between five and seven exposures on average for a prospect to consider buying.

Your Site must be easy to read

"Easy to read" means that your text, background images, and the text within graphic images should have the highest contrast possible.

Things to keep in mind:

- The highest color contrast comes from using basic black and white. Another good combination is a light-yellow background with dark blue or black text. Dark blue text on white makes good subheads.
- Do not use graphic images as backgrounds. They can make it more difficult to read and take longer to load.
- The most legible fonts are standard serif fonts (like Times or Courier) and sans-serif fonts (like Arial or Helvetica).
- Use the equivalent of 12-point or greater font.
- Search engine spiders cannot read text in images or graphics. You must use the alt tag for this text.
- Eliminate scrolling from left to right to view the page.
- Break writing into short paragraphs; use short sentences and simple words.
- Avoid technical jargon.
- Be concise, specific, and right to the point.

Blogs

A July 2006 study showed that twelve million American adults keep a blog (PEW Internet Study). Ninety-five percent or 11.4 million of these bloggers actively seek out online news.

Blogs are ideal platforms for ongoing dialogue because they link with other blogs and websites.

Business blogs usually share news, ideas, and information with readers. Experts recommend developing a Blogset (10 blogs), with unique content updated three times a week with a minimum of 250 words each. Each blog entry should focus on a targeted keyword.

Blogs must be monitored to avoid spamming by unscrupulous visitors. These are the ones that write irrelevant information and leave a link back to their site. This is an attempt to improve their rankings. Like the rest of your web site, you want the focus retained on your core product, service, or idea.

A Few Words about Press Releases

Successful press releases are designed to drive action. They focus on your customers' problems and deliver the appropriate content to help. A successful campaign will result in many new quality inbound links and a significant increase in website exposure.

Every press release should also be posted on your web site.

Google News uses a 28-day news cycle. After that time, it will no longer appear in search engine result pages. Other wire services will make your news available for longer periods.

The greatest advantage of press releases is that they generally feed into RSS content feeds. Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds make press releases available to individuals, blogs, and other sites. The feeds are often based on keywords and phrases, so it's critical that you focus on the wording of your release.

Every press release should have a link or links that point to a specific offer or a page with more information on the subject.

Each time this press release, with links to your site, is posted on another site, you gain an inbound link. Inbound links are just one variable used by search engine algorithms to determine rankings.

Consistent, high quality press releases signify a business as a trusted, expert resource to turn to when you need them.

Press Release/Article Writing Tips

SearchWarp.com tells how to author popular articles in just two steps:

1. Rule #1: Your article must clearly answer a question.
2. Rule #2: Many people must be asking the question your article answers. Find out by using Google's search suggestion tool or Yahoo's Keyword Selector Tool. Either of these tools allow you to simply type in the title of your article and see how many people regularly search for the answer to the question your article answers.

Keys to Success

1. Focus on main theme.
2. Research the keywords to target.
3. Create a compelling headline.
4. Format your press release correctly.

Establishing Credibility

People are naturally wary of online transactions. Media reports of hacking, identity theft, and spyware have the savviest online users on guard.

If you want to be successful online, you need to establish trust. You establish trust through a "guarantee" and/or "warranty." For example, "If you're not satisfied for any reason, return it free of charge within 60 days, no questions asked."

A strong guarantee helps alleviate any apprehension the customer has about ordering from you. The guarantee shows you have confidence in the product you are selling. It's proven that the longer your guarantee the fewer the returns and the greater the trust.

Testimonials from actual customers aid tremendously in building trust. If possible, give them the phone number of the customer to call directly.

Strong testimonials can increase sales by an astounding 250% (Source: SiteProNew: Simple Changes That Explode Your Response Rate). Gaining credibility and trust are crucial on the internet where there are no sales done in person. Elements of a Good Testimonial include:

It is descriptive. Avoid using one- or two-word testimonials. Longer testimonials are more influential when they contain solid numbers and facts about the benefits they experienced.

- List the customer's full name, business name, and URL.
- Do not edit your testimonials. You may correct the spelling, but no more.

- Work best when placed just below the headline.

You should be easy to contact. Respond as quickly as possible, but not later than 24 hours later.

Avoid errors of any kind. Errors show a lack of professionalism.

Cite your credentials, such as training, profession, and experience. Also include a history of the company.

Make it easy to verify any claims on your site. Cite studies and research that support your claims and hyperlink to them.

Every web site should contain a privacy statement, telling them that you will not sell, provide, or trade any information with a third party.

Avoid ads, splash pages, and pop-ups. They irritate and steer people away.

Frequent contact helps you earn the trust of your prospects.
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Online Shopping Habits

Internet readers tend to have shorter attention spans than traditional readers (newspapers, books, magazines). Therefore, present web pages in shorter segments. Enormous amounts of text should be broken up with graphics or other elements that break the monotony of text alone.

Keywords should be interwoven with text to please visitors, feed directory editors, and algorithmic search engines. Spiders generally incorporate all keywords on a page into their ranking algorithms when they crawl it for content and <meta> tags.

Average Time from First Visit to Purchase

The average time delay between a consumer's first visit to a Web site and their initial purchase was just over 19 hours. The delay varied from site to site depending on customer demographics, brand recognition, the number of competitors online, and the average price of product. Source: DMA (5/27/05); shopping behavior of more than eight million consumers in survey data who visited 140 Web sites between June 2004 and March 2005). Their data showed:

- 50% took more than 1 hour
- 40% took more than 3 hours
- 35% took more than 12 hours
- 28% took more than 1 day

- 21% took more than 3 days
- 14% took more than 1 week
- 4% took more than 2 weeks

The DMA concluded that the return-to-buy decision seemed based on two broad categories:

1. Price and Availability (Available model/color/design, shipping cost, and cost comparison)
2. Safety and Trust (Shipping speed, honored returns and warranty claims, secure merchant (credit card) transactions)

A ComScore Networks study examining the impact of search engine usage on the purchase of consumer electronics and computer products showed that among consumers who chose to purchase online following the search, 85 percent of the sales occurred in a later (non-search) session.

For comparison-shoppers, trust factors can function as strong motivators when present or strong barriers when absent.

Cautious shoppers are more responsive to the appearance of security certification marks or seals on sites. “Hacker Safe” certification marks increased sales among all groups and particularly effective as the time-to-buy rose.

Armed with this new understanding, site designers need to make the shopping experience more informative, and the sense of safety more “memorable,” to dissuade consumers from abandoning shopping carts at purchase time. Shopping cart abandonment is simply the act of moving on to the next comparison. Carts must therefore become convenient shopping tools – encouraging shoppers to return and buy. Saved search functionality where returning purchasers can easily pick up where they left off is critical to saving more of these types of purchases. Source: APPLES TO ORANGES: Understanding the Comparison-Shopping Habits of Online Consumers (Ken Leonard, CEO of ScanAlert)

The #1 Factor in determining Sales

The length of time someone spends at your site is the number one factor in whether you make a sale. You have just seconds to garner their attention, or they’ll click away. Factors that contribute to extending your customers length of visit, which include:

- ✓ Easy navigation – from every page
- ✓ Visual design – Convenient, easy to use shopping carts.

“We find that Web sites have three seconds to make an impression.” – Jeff Rosenblum, co-founder and research and strategy director of Questus

- ✓ Interaction – is there a useful calculator, survey, or information request they would like to participate in. Sometimes a contest or game. Opt-in newsletters.
- ✓ Relevant, current information all related to a certain topic.
- ✓ Blogging
- ✓ Content – become the top resource in your field. Update often.
- ✓ Use everyday language.

Keys to making the Sale

- If something isn't working, change it and try again. With the controls you receive with DNN sites, you can do it at your convenience from wherever you like, when you want.
- Know your customer (lingo, frustrations, problems, desires, etc.)
- According to interactive marketing solutions firm Questus, critical components are site navigation (37%), the checkout process (32%), and product descriptions (38%). This report also reported that perspective buyers left e-commerce sites for a few major reasons: 29% didn't want to register with the site; 22% found it difficult to locate products; and 17% felt the site wasn't trustworthy or secure.
- You must make "a call to action." This is a statement that asks the visitor to do something, such as learn more, buy now, compare, call now, or read. In fact, the button itself should have the action word as its label. Don't use generic wording such as "click here" or "next page."

Website Maintenance

The Internet, like most technology, is rapidly changing all the time. What is new and exciting today is often primitive and outdated tomorrow. Whatever you buy today will eventually need upgrading or modifications soon. It's just a fact in the fast moving, and changing, world we're living in. It is often stated that a successful website comprises 5% development and 95% maintenance. This volatile, always changing environment requires constant attention.

Typically, website maintenance constitutes:

- Adding or removing sections
- Writing, creating, and sending electronic newsletters.
- Adding updated content
- Database administration
- Writing press releases and blogs to increase website content (and make more search engine friendly).

Focus on Conversion Rates

The ratio of sales to visitors is your conversion rate.

Sales/Visitors = Conversion Rate

For example, if you have one hundred sales from 10,000 visitors in a month you have a conversion rate of .01 or 1%.

A supersuccessful site converts 3% of visitors into customers.

You can increase your sales by either increasing your number of visitors or the conversion rate.

You can improve your conversion rate faster than your traffic rates because you can quickly change the contents of web pages and test different options.

Customers that you're already selling to are your best sales target and hold the maximum potential for profit.

Directory Submission

All directories are different, with varying categories and rules for submission. Submission is time-consuming, requiring specific details for a specific directory. Directories permit anywhere from 15 to 200-word descriptions. You must write these carefully because directories usually rank web sites by category, title, and site description.

Why you should hire a Certified Placement Specialist

While there are many ways you can improve your rankings in Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs), certain software and expertise are necessary to achieve the highest ranking possible.

First, there is expensive software to buy that provides page rankings for each of your pages and that of others in each search engine. Like any software, updates must be regular, costing additional monies.

Second, after interpreting the page ranking results, only an experienced placement specialist will know how to get you the highest rankings possible.

Third, search engines are constantly changing the processes (algorithms) for their rankings. It requires someone to be on top of these changes all the time. As a busy entrepreneur, do you have time for this and everything else?

Fourth, when you hire professionals like those at Fishing Webmaster, you can get the entire spectrum of services you need. Whether it's Search Engine Optimization (SEO -placement), web site design, search engine submissions, or hosting, Fishing Webmaster can help. They also help with database setups, RSS feeds, blogs, and PayPal accounts. If there is anything you need for your website, they can help.