

12 BIG WAYS TO BOOST YOUR SMALL BUSINESS WEBSITE



TAMMY FINCH

Ready to Give Your Small Business Website a **Big Boost**?



Do you ever feel as if your website is sitting on the web like a business card on a notice board? Does it seem as if customers barely notice it, or that the time and money you've put into various Internet marketing campaigns hasn't paid off in the way you might like?

We are continually meeting with business owners and managers who feel the same way. They have professional websites, but aren't getting any kinds of measurable results from them. And so, they end up feeling stuck – on the one hand they don't want to ignore the most powerful marketing medium ever invented; but on the other, they feel nervous about wasting even more time and money on the wrong ideas or activities.

What they need are set of low-cost, highly-effective tips to get them pointed in the right direction. They require some proven, common sense strategies that they can use to bring in more visitors and convert them into buyers. Most of all, they need to see results that are measurable – in terms of new leads, sales, or walk-in customers

In this short ebook, we're going to show you a dozen reliable ways any small business can start getting more from their website and online activities. None of the ideas we will outline are expensive and impossible, but they can all help you improve your bottom line very quickly.

If that sounds like something you might be interested in, let's look at the dozen best ways you can give your small business website a huge marketing boost...

12 Big Ways to Boost Your Small Business Website

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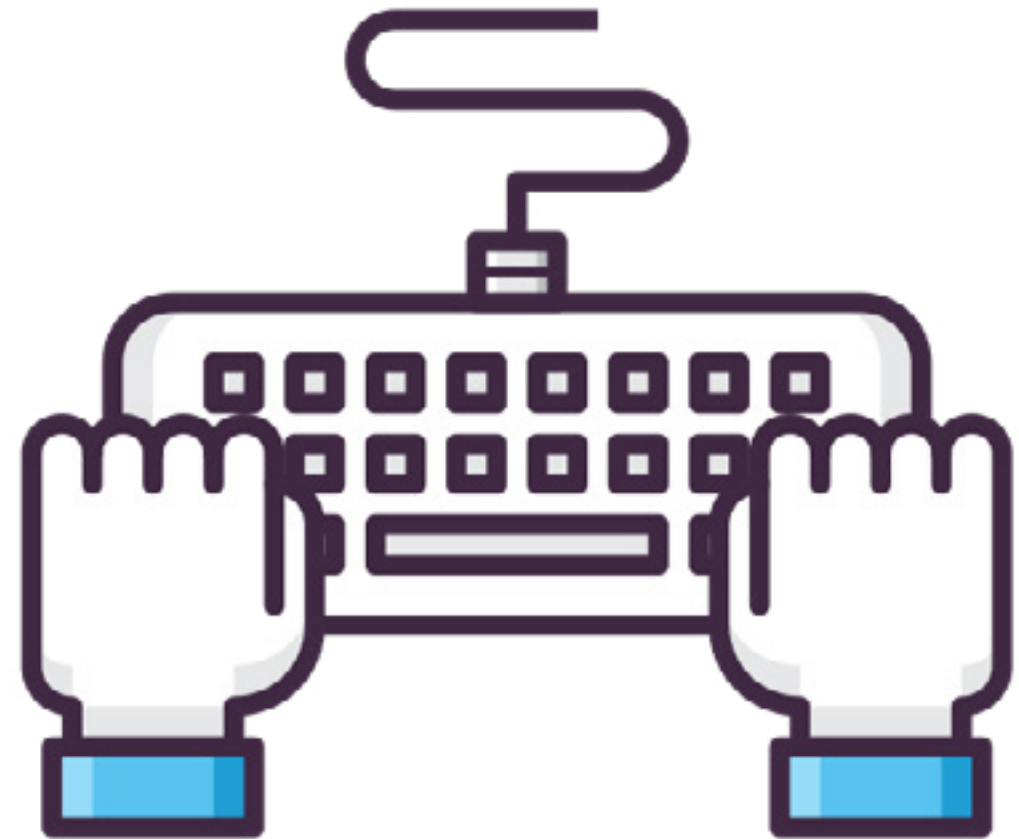
#1

Audit Your Website to Know Your Business

Every big investment you make comes with two costs. The first is the money you pay up front, and the second is the periodic contribution you make to keep it running smoothly.

You probably pay an accountant who takes an occasional look at your books. You have a mechanic who goes under the hood of your automobile, and a dentist who cleans your teeth and takes care of cavities. Why not extend the same kind of care to your website – which in many ways is the centerpiece of your business.

It's a good idea to hire a professional to take a closer look at your web presence at least once a year, and certainly on occasions when you are concerned your site might not be performing as perfectly as it could be. During a routine website audit, the creative professional can search for broken links, problematic pieces of HTML, issues arising from old plug-ins, and even duplicated content.



These might not seem like that big of a deal on your website, but they can stop your pages from loading quickly (or at all), give customers warning messages in their web browsers, and even cause you to disappear from Google and the other search engines. On a more mundane level, outdated pages and content can promote specials, products, or employees who are no longer with your company.

A detailed website audit is a fast and easy way to look at what's going on with your pages. It's a chance to peek at the underlying code behind your layout, and to see your web analytics in an up-close and personal way. Doing so allows you to know your company, and your web presence, in a way that you just can't get from a onceover of your most popular pages. It's also an opportunity to see what is and isn't working for you online.

With a thorough website audit you can identify challenges before they become full-fledged problems. You can locate bottlenecks and performance -related issues that might stop you from getting the kind of traffic and conversions you are expecting. And most importantly, you'll get a sense of what's needed to put your website back on track.

If you want to know what's happening with your company online, you have to look past the obvious. That's why an audit of your pages can be so invaluable.

#2

Make the Most of Your Branding and Content

There are a lot of really generic looking websites out there. So many of them seem as if they were created from the same small handful of templates (which in many cases happens to be the truth). Generating layouts in this way might be economical, but it doesn't help businesses to stand out in the market. After all, why should someone work with you if the first thing they see is a website that looks just like all the others that come up in a search engine?

“Smart business owners know that their competitors are only a click away, online. And so, they do everything they can to bring a sense of branding and personality to their own sites.”

Making your web presence unique doesn't mean you have to reinvent the wheel. You can still use conventional navigation and menu bars, for example. In fact, doing so is a good idea because it makes your website more usable.

At the same time, every one of your pages should reflect the intersection of three important details:

- Who your customers are and what they want
- What it is that makes your products or services a unique value
- What your personality as a marketer is like



If that trio of points fails to come through, then you're always going to have a hard time generating conversions online. People are going to have a hard time figuring out why you are any different or better than anyone else.

Note that making your website unique doesn't have to require a big investment, or redesign of your current layout. Instead, it simply means you should be careful about images, fonts, and especially the messaging found on your pages. Someone who reads the first few lines of your homepage, for example, or your "about us" description should be able to tell in a matter of seconds whether you are a good fit for their needs or not.

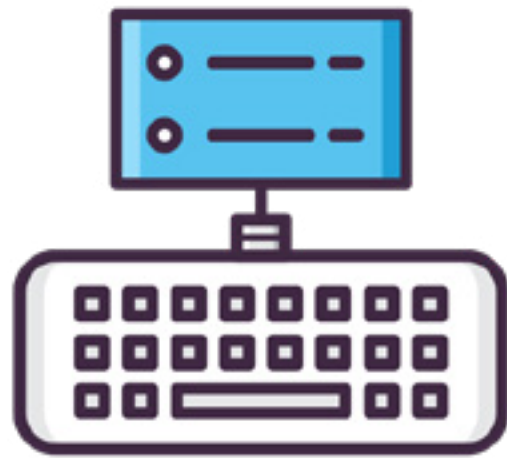
It's worth pointing out that having lots of unique and targeted content gives you an advantage on search engines and social media sites, as well. But, these should really be afterthoughts. That's because the potential buyer who visits your site for the first time is only likely to stay for a few seconds unless you grab their attention immediately and give them a reason to keep looking and reading. That's a lot easier to accomplish when your branding content is up to par.

#3

Upgrade Your Web Hosting to Improve Performance

Web hosting tends to rank near the bottom of the list when it comes to priorities and concerns that business owners have about their websites. But, when you consider the huge gains and advantages you can get from the right hosting plan – and how little it costs to get something great – choosing a better package becomes a no-brainer.

Putting a great website on a cheap shared web hosting plan is like taking a fine Italian leather couch and dropping it in the middle of a filthy apartment in a bad neighborhood. It just doesn't make any sense.



The web hosting package you choose will largely determine whether your site is online all the time or routinely goes down for maintenance. With good web hosting your pages will load quickly, while bargain-basement packages will slow your content down. Premium web hosting includes security and backup features, while the worst web hosting plans don't offer any extras.

With the right web hosting, you can add SSL connectivity your website, which allows for encrypted exchanges of information and improves your search engine visibility. Bad web hosting could leave you on a blacklisted IP that makes it impossible for your site to rank well in Google and the other search engines, no matter how hard you try.

These aren't details business owners tend to think about when they go looking for hosting plans. That's probably why they choose whichever option is the cheapest and most convenient. But again, the neighborhood you drop your website in matters a great deal.

It isn't unusual to see hundreds of different websites stored on a single shared hosting server. Some of those will belong to small businesses like yours, but others will be adult websites, link farms, and other scam businesses. That means the normal sites could be at risk for malicious pieces of software that are being uploaded to them, and could find themselves unintentionally associated with the worst of the web.

The difference between the cheapest web hosting packages and the best literally comes down to a few dollars per day. Knowing that, and knowing how important it is to have good web hosting for your sites performance and search visibility, why would you accept anything less than the best? It's easy to move your website to a better spot, and the benefits are hard to overstate.

#4

Use a Responsive Web Design for Mobile Compatibility

It seems like everyone is walking around with a high-speed Internet connection in their pocket these days. Some of us have two or three web-ready devices on us at any given time. And yet, it's not really that unusual to come across business owners who are reluctant to add mobile functionality to their websites.

That's a mistake that looks a little worse every day. You've probably heard by now that more than half of all Internet traffic flows through phones and tablets. What you may not know is that experts predict a full three-quarters of all web users will use mobile devices as their primary means of going online within the next few years.

In other words, desktop and laptop computer users will likely make up a small minority of your customer base in the near future. If you haven't already made the switch to a mobile-ready web design, there's no time to waste. Most traditionally-designed sites just don't look great on small screens or work properly on mobile browsers. Why turn away half of your customers over something you can easily fix?

If that argument doesn't sway you, consider that Google now incorporates mobile compatibility into its search algorithm. So, if your site doesn't feature that functionality, a lot of buyers aren't going to find it.

Of course, there are a lot of different ways to make your website mobile-ready. You could develop a special version of your site that only displays on smaller screens. Or, you could create your own native app that takes buyers straight to your company when they open it. Both of those solutions tend to be expensive and time-consuming, however. That's because mobile sites in native apps have to be developed, tested, and maintained.

A better, more cost-effective option is to simply work with the creative team that can turn your existing layout into a responsive web design. That means the layout adapts to the screen size and browser it's being displayed on

With a responsive website you can maintain all of your content in one convenient place. You can get the future-proof mobile functionality you need, but without breaking the bank or taking on a whole new web presence that you'll have to fix and upgrade later. Responsive upgrades are relatively inexpensive and do a great deal for the marketing potential of your business.

More than half of your customers, and potential buyers who are using search engines, want a mobile version of your website. Shouldn't you give them one?

#5

Build a Sales Funnel That Generates Activity

Most business owners know they need to get visitors to their website, and have a hope that those visitors will lead to sales opportunities. However, only a few have plans in place to actually make that happen. The rest are simply leaving things up to chance.

If your website isn't designed to do anything except share information, though, you can't be surprised when that's all it does. If you want to generate leads or sales on a consistent basis, you need a working sales funnel that helps to drive conversions.



Building a sales funnel might sound complicated, but in reality it just means following a three-step process:

- Attract qualified prospects to your website
- Convert those visitors into leads by capturing their contact information
- Using automated follow-ups to stay in touch with them

A sales funnel can be as simple as a handful of blog posts, an email newsletter registration, and a series of monthly messages. Or, it can involve a complex B2B process that's driven by advertising, CRM systems, and advanced analytics. Either way, the principles are the same: you have to generate traffic, make an offer that visitors will respond to, and have a way to maintain that contact over time.

When these pieces are in place, something interesting happens. Your website goes from being an online brochure to a reliable source of new business. Prospects come across your ads or content, respond to the offers you put in front of them, and then qualify themselves with each new communication or information piece you send their way. Eventually they decide to make a purchase or contact you when they are satisfied you have the solution to their problem.

Before any of this can happen, though, you have to have a good content marketing or online advertising campaign in place. Additionally, you need a reasonable set of steps that takes the visitor from their initial point of entry into your website to the place where they are willing to either buy something or contact you.

Both of those elements require a little bit of intentional forethought. They aren't going to happen by accident. So, while a lot of business owners will focus on search engine optimization, for example, as the key to increasing sales, it's just as important that they have a logical plan for generating conversions. Build a sales funnel and you'll transform your website into a source of new revenue.

#6

Find Buyers in Your Neighborhood With Local SEO

Google never announced itself as the digital age substitute for the Yellow Pages and other print directories, but it replaced them nonetheless. Somewhere along the way, most of us figured out that it was faster and easier to look up local businesses online – and find addresses, hours, online reviews, and more – than it was to dig through outdated ads in a printed guide.



That shift didn't just affect the way customers looked for businesses. It also change the way search engines themselves would function. When the designers and engineers at Google discovered that more than a third of all searches were for a local company or resource, they started modifying their algorithm to reflect this new reality. If search spiders could figure out where your business was located, Google would make an effort to show your website to people looking for a company like yours.

That was a win-win solution for everyone. Searchers found it easier to get in touch with the local businesses they were looking for, and even the smallest businesses could suddenly compete with nationwide chains. The thing that made it all work, though, was that location had to be easy to establish.

This is how we arrived at the current state of local search engine optimization. By adding geographic keywords to your website (like city, state, and province names), you can make it easy for search spiders to identify the areas you work in. You can make things even easier by ensuring ZIP Codes, street addresses, and phone numbers are easy to find on your site.

If you want to encourage buyers to visit an office or retail location, you can go a little farther. It's easy and inexpensive to incorporate maps, driving directions, landmarks, and photos of your business into your website. Each can help generate walk-in traffic or local inquiries.

The best part about all of this is that local search engine optimization is a lot easier than traditional search marketing. It takes a lot less effort to stay visible with your local customers than it does to market to everyone in an industry. And, adding the right geographic information to your website is likely to pay quick dividends. Local search results update every week or two, so it's easy to get ahead.

Local buyers are easier and cheaper to attract, and they tend to be more loyal. Doesn't it make sense to make a few simple changes your website so they can find you?



Setup PPC Campaigns With Laser Precision

There are certainly some marketers who would say that pay-per-click advertising doesn't have a place in an ebook on cost-effective Internet marketing strategies. In their minds, every click is too expensive, and the ultimate conversion rates are too low.

Then again, there are tens of thousands of other business owners who would attest that PPC on Google, Facebook, and other search and social sites is fast and affordable. They think it's a great way to find customers and test new ideas.

The difference between these two groups isn't in their budget, but the degree of focus they build into their campaign. For PPC advertising to really pay off, it has to be set up with laser precision.

In this context, precision means narrowing in on the very specific group of buyers who make up the ideal market for product or service. It doesn't mean anyone who types in a broad search string, or fits a wide demographic on Facebook.

When you're trying to turn paid traffic into sales opportunities, figuring out who you don't want is just as important as who you do. That's because a click from someone who isn't going to buy from you will cost you just as much as a hit from your best potential customers. So, you have to weed out unprofitable traffic in an aggressive way.

Being precise with PPC advertising also means emphasizing efficiency over vanity metrics. Paying for top search ad positions and broad social campaigns is sure to yield lots of views and clicks.



However, scaling things back – by bidding for a lower search position, for example, or stopping big chunks of the market from seeing your Facebook offers – can lower costs without costing you many sales. It's all a balancing act between what you're willing to spend and the results you need to generate.

Once you adopt this kind of mindset, it's possible to make an impact on your bottom line by spending less on PPC than you would for a daily cup of coffee or a few pizzas for your staff. You might not reach millions of buyers by setting up your campaigns in that kind of focused way, but you aren't going to throw away your advertising budget unnecessarily, either.

#8

Embrace Cost-Effective Social Strategies

Social networking can give you a way to stay in touch with buyers and fans, and costs nothing but time. Or, it can be an endless distraction that pulls valuable minutes from your schedule each and every day while giving you little in return.

Just as with pay-per-click advertising, the difference between productivity and waste on social media is a matter of focus. Stick to what works and you can get all the benefits from having a robust social profile without wasting valuable hours every week.



The first step is ensuring you are represented on all the major social media platforms in a professional way. Your business should have some kind of dedicated presence on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google + at a minimum. These profiles and pages should be separate from your personal accounts. They should be customized with logos, photos, contact information for your business.

Within each profile, you should work to build a network of contacts. That can begin with customers, vendors, and colleagues you already know. By spending a few minutes a day reaching out to others who run in the same circles online, you could double or triple the size of your contact list within a few weeks. And once again, you can do it all without spending anything.

In order to accelerate this process, you should be engaged in your social profiles. That doesn't mean spending all day tweeting, just that you should occasionally add fresh content to your pages. It can be something as simple as a link to your blog or an image with a quote or statistic attached. All of these invite feedback and discussion while promoting your expertise and point of view.

Just like the pages on your website, each of your social profiles should feed back into your sales funnel in some way. In other words, there should be some incentive for social fans, friends, or followers to request more information. That could be an informational guide, a coupon code, or simply an invitation to join your newsletter to get more information.

With this kind of simple strategy in place, you can generate leads from your social media accounts without spending anything. It might take you a couple of hours to set everything up, and a few minutes a day to post to your accounts, but in return you'll get a brand-new platform for meeting new customers and keeping in touch with the ones you already have.

#9

Shake Up Your Content Marketing With Images and Video

Content marketing is almost always thought of in terms of generating written blog posts and downloadable reports. These can be invaluable to your search engine optimization campaigns and inbound sales funnels. But, if you're looking to make the most of your time and budget, you can give your website a big boost by experimenting with other types of media.

In particular, images and video can be used to spread your message and engage your audience in a whole new way.



If you spend any amount of time on Facebook or other social media sites, you already know that images are easier to post, attract more attention, and are more likely to be shared than written material is. That's because it's easier for people to process visuals quickly, and because they have a stronger emotional impact. They also happen to be easier to produce if you are even somewhat familiar with an image editing software package.

Video takes more time and effort to produce, but it can also add a new dimension to everything you post online. That's because video tends to be more personal. Whether it's you speaking to a camera, a close-up shot of your products explaining their features, or a first-person testimonial offered by one of your customers, video gives more subtext than writing and feels more authentic.



Both images and video are easy to spread on social media, but they can also add a lot of value to your own blog or website. Often, visitors who don't have the time to read a long description or idea will be happy to check out something they can scan or watch. What they see might feel more impactful and memorable at the same time.

The key to making content marketing work with images and video is to get good at the process of creating. Just like a traditional blog post, you have to be consistent in the way you craft and release your messages. Learn how to improve and customize the photos you want to use in your marketing. Learn a few video editing basics so you can add captions and calls to action.

What's important here isn't the specific image or video clip you use, though. Instead, it's that you embrace them and mix them in with the other pages and posts you are already producing. Visual content is fun and inexpensive to make, and adds a whole new dimension to your online marketing.

#10

Reach Customers Instantly and Inexpensively With Email

Email marketing works almost instantly, costs next to nothing, and can be used to generate new sales or leads in a matter of minutes. So why aren't more business owners excited about sending out their newsletters every week, or every other week?

There are probably two factors at play. The first is that email isn't as exciting as a lot of newer online marketing methods like responsive web design or social media advertising. It's been around for a while, so business owners either take it for granted or forget about it all together.

The second is that it's getting harder to attract attention from customers by emailing them. Because so many companies have newsletters that are little more than bland infomercials, their messages don't get many responses (and those responses tend to be "unsubscribe" all too often).



There is a bit of good news in here, though. Because your competitors are probably underestimating email and using it improperly, that leaves room for you to reach your customers (and theirs) quickly and inexpensively. In order to do so while getting the kinds of responses you're looking for, you have to combine an element of curiosity with your sales messaging.

Nobody is going to open your email – much less read it or react to it – because they are hoping you will give them the hard sell on your latest product or special. But, they might give you their undivided attention if you make it clear there is something in it for them. That could be a coupon code, a free preview of what you have to sell, or an informational article they wouldn't be able to read anywhere else.

In other words, if you give your subscribers something of value, they'll give you a bit of their consideration in return. Then, you can close your email with a compelling call to action that brings them (surprise, surprise) deeper into your sales funnel.

If you can compose email newsletters that are relevant to your target market, are short and crisp enough to be read in a few minutes, and ask the subscriber to take a clear next step, you may be surprised at what kind of results you can generate. Email is still fast and affordable, but you have to take a customer-focused approach to making it work. Otherwise, you're wasting the reader's time and your own.

#11

Establish an Online Reputation That Sells

It used to be that if customers wanted to know whether they were going to be happy with your prices and service, they would speak to a friend or colleague who had done business with you in the past. These days, that word-of-mouth dynamic has gone digital. Instead of getting one opinion, most buyers will look up the company on Google, Facebook, or LinkedIn see what dozens of other people have to say.

That's incredibly convenient when you're shopping or evaluating vendors, but it poses a new challenge to marketers. It's no longer enough to simply have good materials or a strong sales call – if you want buyers to work with you they have to be able to see third-party reviews and impressions.

Put together, we call all of those reviews and testimonials your online reputation. They include the star ratings you get on Yelp and industry websites, not to mention the testimonials and endorsements you gather on LinkedIn. They encompass tweets sent about you and your company, feedback left on Facebook, and even blog posts other people write that involve your business.

Obviously, you can't control everything that is written or posted about you online. But, you can take steps to guide your online reputation in the right direction so that it encourages new sales and inquiries.

The first thing you can do to help your online reputation is to establish one to begin with. If your business is new, or isn't well known online, then you might have to take some time creating profiles on a number of different social platforms and review sites. These should all be complete and customized, making it easy to separate you from your competitors.

When those accounts are in place, you can ask your best customers to leave positive reviews for your company. The more specific a testimonial is, the more marketing power it will have. You'd be amazed at what just a few good reviews can do for your company.

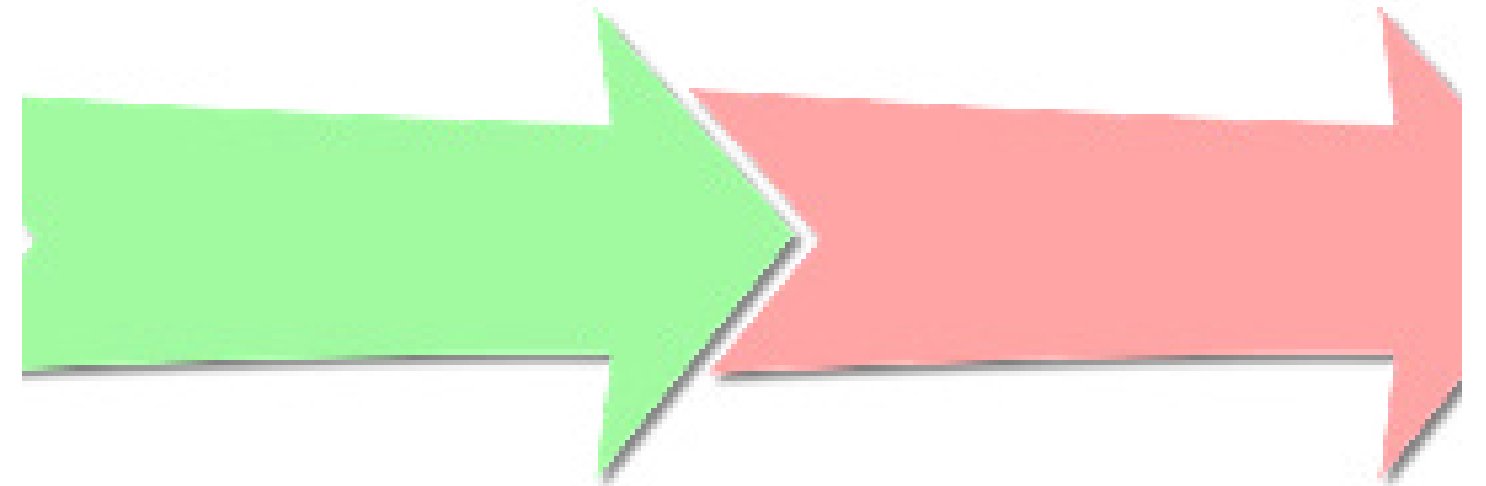
Don't settle for a handful of reviews, though. Let new customers know how important their feedback is to the growth of your company. Ask them to share their thoughts with you, and with others online. The resulting input can help you grow your business in a number of ways while also convincing new buyers that they'll be happy they made a decision to work with you.

Your online reputation is a powerful sales tool when you have the right kinds of reviews in place. Make sure yours is helping your business instead of hurting it.

#12

Dig Into Your Web Analytics to Get to the Facts

We began this short ebook by advising you to have your website audited so you could find out whether there are any issues with your layout, your content, or the underlying HTML code. It's only fitting, then, that we wrap things up by reminding you to dig into your web analytics on a regular basis.



It's amazing how often we work with new clients who feel like they have a grip on all of these issues, and yet when we start to look at actual user activity we learn that many of their assumptions aren't accurate. It's almost impossible to know whether you're getting as much as you should be from your website without evaluating where your traffic is coming from, which pages visitors are spending their time on, and where users tend to leave your website. These are just a few of the biggest and most obvious examples, but they point at the need for accurate data.

With the right analytics-based insights on your side, you can make smart decisions about where you should spend your time and money when improving your website or taking on new online marketing campaigns. Without them, you're always moving around in the dark, hoping that some strategic change or shift is going to work without having any real idea of whether it will or not.



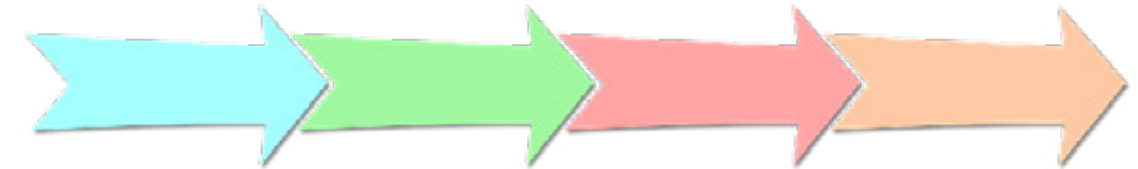
Naturally, your web design partner can help you to automate analytics reports and ensure you understand the data that's coming your way. That's why this should be part of your annual website audit. However, just a quick look at the numbers (and the direction they are moving in) at regular intervals will stop you from being surprised later on.

Few business owners enjoy digging into their analytics reports, and most will avoid anything that even looks like math. But, the facts and figures coming from your website are the key to moving your business in the right direction. Master them and you'll always know how your online marketing campaigns are going... and what you need to do to improve going forward.

Let's Put These Ideas in Action

In this short guide, we've laid out a dozen different ways you can take your existing website and make it more profitable. You've learned strategies that work quickly and help you assess your web performance, reach new customers to search engines and social media, and reinforce those relationships through the creation of sales funnels.

These can either be interesting concepts that you read and forget about, or a new plan of action that helps you turn the corner and make this your most profitable year ever. Which outcome would you prefer?



Most business owners never get their Internet marketing campaigns off the ground because they have trouble organizing their thoughts and turning them into executable steps. Our creative team has the skills and experience to help you break through those barriers.

We can work with you to figure out exactly what your company needs to connect with buyers online and then help you reach measurable goals that affect your bottom line, not just the number of online friends you have or clicks you receive.

If you're ready to start taking action – and see a bottom-line improvement in your business as a result – we encourage you to reach out to schedule a complementary consultation and website review today. In one short meeting, we can give you the tailored advice you've been waiting for.

This is your chance to move forward, make your business more valuable, and put some space between yourself and the competition. Contact us now so we can get started together!