The Easy Guide to SEO
How to promote your online business

This E-Book shows the steps involved in conducting a full SEO review of your website to make it search engine friendly. It can also help you to choose an SEO Company to do the work for you.

Issue 4

The Easy Guide to SEO eBook Contents

What is Search Engine Optimisation?

"The process of improving a websites ranking in search engine results"

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is the process of improving the visibility of a website in the main search engines by using natural and un-paid search results.

Other forms of search engine marketing target paid listings, such as Google's Pay Per Click.

In general, the higher the page(s) and the more frequently a website appears in the search results list, the more visitors it will receive from this source.

As an Internet marketing strategy, SEO considers how search engines work and what people search for.

Optimizing a website may involve editing its content and XHTML and associated coding to both increase its relevance to specific keywords and to remove barriers to the indexing activities of the search engines.

Promoting a site to increase the number of back links, or inbound links, is another well used SEO tactic.

Fact: About 90% of all new visitors to a website arrive via the major search engines such as Google, Yahoo or Bing. A far smaller proportion comes from search directories such as Yahoo! and DMOZ.

SEO professionals will aim to acquire top-level search engine results for all their clients.

Unfortunately, keeping top rankings is a daily, on-going struggle even if you are a professional SEO specialist.

There are also many other aspects of SEO that will be discussed in full later in this e-book.

How Long Does It Take to Get Results?

No matter what the scale and cost of your company's Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) campaign, you will normally have to wait some time to see any real and meaningful results.

It doesn't matter if you, or your SEO expert, are undertaking a massive link building exercise, using social media to improve visibility or even adding regularly to your sites blog and page content, you will still have wait quite a while to see the final results of your SEO campaign.

Just how long you need to wait to get any measurable results depends on a number of factors that might apply to your website.

Is your website optimised at all?

If your established website has no optimisation in place at all and perhaps uses flash for site navigation, which often blocks the search engine spiders, a fair amount of page changes, or even a redesign of the entire site may be necessary to make your website 'search engine friendly'.

However once this optimisation is complete you will soon begin to get natural search engine results that boost the number of visitors to your website.

How many links does your website have?

If you have an old website with no inbound links, this will certainly increase the time you will have to wait before seeing any results.

If you have a number of inbound links already, Google will probably visit your site within a week or so of the initial SEO updating.

To check how many inbound links you have visit Google or Bing and type - **link:www.yoursitename.co.uk** – into the search box. This will show how many inbound links point to your website. The listings from Google and Bing will not be the same.

At Yahoo! the link format is slightly different. You have to give the full URL of the site, as either:

link:http://www.yoursitename.co.uk

or try,

link:http://yoursitename.co.uk

Interestingly, the Yahoo! listings are different for each of these two options.

How new is your website?

A brand new site with no inbound links will probably have to wait a long time to get any improvement in the number site visitors. Google might well find you, but this is not guaranteed. If you do nothing to improve your site it may never be properly indexed.

At the very least, you must get a few inbound links and prepare an XML sitemap if you want to stand any chance with a new site.

Search engines such as Google and Yahoo use an XML sitemap to work out which pages to visit and add to its search results.

XML Sitemaps have a structured format and are written in a text file that complies with the XML standard. This means that the list of pages can be arranged with additional information such as the relative importance of each web page. So if you think that your top selling product or service should have a higher priority in search results than your terms and conditions you can let search engines know and they will take it into account when showing their results.

By helping search engines to identify which pages you have on your website it can help to speed up the indexing process. They can find out everything they need to know about your website by reading just one file, rather than searching through all of your website's pages. If a page has been updated it can go directly to that page and get the latest edition. If a page has been removed from your website it can take it out of the search results immediately, meaning visitors are far less likely to see a broken link (404 - page not found).

By ensuring that your XML sitemap has the most up to date and comprehensive record of your pages you can improve the performance of your website.

Tip: If you are using Google Site Search to provide a search facility on your website this will also improve the quality of the results that are shown in the search listings.

How flexible is your site?

If your entire website utilises a back end content management system, how flexible is this system for customisation?

If the CMS (e.g. a blog) will not allow for structural SEO changes, this will drastically slow down your progress to achieve a site that is 'search engine friendly' and is boosting your online visitors.

How competitive is your target phrase?

The more competitive a target phrase is, the longer you will have to wait to get any results. In this case you will need to get more inbound links and add more fresh content to your site if you want to improve your website's position in the search engines.

Picking a target phrase that has searches, but only modest competition, is your best bet to get started.

'Targeted key phrases' are phrases that people type into the search engines when searching for your type of product or service.

Take a look at the top 10 sites for your target phrase. If on average these website's have 5,000 inbound links and 1,000 plus pages, and your site has 25 inbound links and 35 pages, you will probably have to wait a long time before you see any real improvements in search engine placement. In fact, without on-going SEO your sites performance may never improve.

You don't need to match the numbers of the top 10, but you do need to be as close as possible to their SEO techniques.

If the top 10 is littered with all the major players in your market sector you might have to re-evaluate your long term goals.

Get Google to visit your website

Once Google spiders your site you will still have to wait for the updated cache to appear in Google's index, and in most cases, you will have to wait a bit longer to see any real impact in the search engine rankings.

Getting Google to visit your site is relatively easy, but it can sometimes take a month or longer.

A fairly new website with some inbound links and an XML sitemap, may have to wait quite a long time before Google arrives.

Typically an established and regularly updated website will seldom have to wait more than a few weeks to get Google to pay them a visit.

However, if your site has been sitting stagnant for several years, it may take a lot longer to get your site optimised enough to get Google interested in your content.

How long will it take to get good rankings?

Generally speaking, for a brand new site, starting with no SEO or just a bad site design, you could be looking at around a year before you start to see significant ranking changes.

You may get the odd site link here and there and start to see some traffic, but for any phrases that are remotely competitive, it can take quite a long time to get the ball rolling. Unless you have a very tight marketing niche, expect to wait at least six months before you see any real movement at all!

This is not to say that you can't get quick results. By using Pay-Per-Click marketing your site should see a rapid increase in site visitors. But as soon as you stop using PPC your site visitors could rapidly fall away. *Your long term goal should always be to get good complimentary inbound links and encourage natural search engine listings by providing regularly updated content.*

For more established sites, search engine rankings tend to come much more quickly. One significant factor in determining how long this will take is inbound links. If your established site has lots of good complimentary links, but the site itself is simply lacking the fundamentals of good SEO or proper navigation, then you can sometimes see results pretty quickly.

If you have no inbound links and need to build them, this can significantly increase the waiting time. Even for an established site, achieving good inbound links in a highly competitive industry is not always easy. It can take a long time to build the ideal mix.

Why Are Top Site Rankings Taking Forever?

There are a number of reasons why your site may not achieve results over the long term. If you find that your SEO campaign has been going on for a long time and you have seen no movement at all, it is possible that one of the following problems is hindering your efforts:

Spamming and Penalties

If your site has been previously penalised for spamming, you absolutely must clean up all traces of the SEO techniques that have caused this classification.

Google lists many underhand SEO methods that must be avoided. Here are a few of the main ones:

- Avoid hidden text or hidden links.
- Don't use cloaking or sneaky redirects.
- Don't send automated queries to Google.
- Don't load pages with irrelevant keywords.

- Don't create multiple pages, sub domains, or domains with substantially duplicate content.
- Don't create pages with malicious behaviour, such as phishing or installing viruses, Trojans, or other spyware.
- Avoid "doorway" pages created just for search engines or other "cookie cutter" approaches such as affiliate programs with little or no original content.

Note: The full Google guidelines can be seen [here](#).

Once the site is entirely cleaned up, then you can apply for re-inclusion. There is certainly no assurance that Google will ever pay your site any attention again but it's certainly worth a try.

Duplicate Content

If your site has used a massive amount of duplicate content, chances are you will never see high rankings until you replace the content with something original and meaningful. There is no "duplicate content" penalty as such, but you are essentially penalising yourself if you copy existing online content. Google tends to look at the first instance it finds online for a piece of content as the official source (this is not always the case). If you copy content that is already out there and already indexed by Google, the value of your content will be discounted as it is already indexed somewhere else, and your site or page will simply get anywhere in the battle for top search engine placements.

Inbound Links

If your site has no inbound links, you will probably not get any rankings, even after you are fully indexed. However, if your site has thousands of good quality inbound links you will see your site rapidly climbing the search engines results and that will lead to more site visitors.

Warning: Do not use free for all sites, link farms etc. as they won't help you at all. Google often classes these types of links as spam!

Competition

You may be up against strong competition and find it hard to propel your site up the rankings. If you only have a small operation you may not be able to beat the major players. And if your selected keyword (target phrase) has millions of searches each and every month you may have to change your strategy and focus on a different keyword and perhaps even a different SEO technique.

Not Listening to your SEO Expert

If your SEO expert gives you recommendations that should be carried out, follow them. Recommendations are given for a reason, to help you achieve rankings. If you are not willing to implement what is suggested, then your campaign may go nowhere.

Search Engine Optimisation guidelines

Get your site(s) appearing on Google, Yahoo and Bing!

A good and proven Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) company can certainly help you achieve this, but what's involved in optimising a website?

But to achieve real results, which can get a website on the first page of all the major search engines, can take quite a long time, so never expect instant results when you employ an SEO company.

Typically a good SEO company will provide some or all of the following services:

- Keyword and Key Phrase analysis.
- Competitor analysis.
- Usability testing analysis.
- Website optimisation (or a complete re-design).
- Inbound Link Building.
- Link Baiting.
- Inbound Link Popularity Testing.
- Building Content for a website.
- Site submission.
- Directory submissions.
- Blog submissions.
- Article submissions.
- Social networking (Digg, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google + etc.).
- Regular positioning reports.
- Tracking and ROI Analysis.
- Pay Per Click advertising.

A few more details of what good SEO involves

Keyword Analysis - this involves the optimisation of your web pages for the phrases that deliver quality traffic online for your particular website.

'Targeted key phrases' are phrases that people type into the search engines when searching for your type of product or service. This means it is generally better for you to select a list of specific key phrases rather than generic ones. The more specific the key phrase is, the less competition your website will be up against.

Web Page Design & Layout - a possible redesign of your website pages and even a new domain name may sometimes be required. Generally speaking, you cannot start to design a search engine friendly website unless you have a search engine optimisation strategy in place beforehand.

Additional Page Creation - new pages may be needed such as a site map, blog, forum or a links page.

Amending Existing Pages - existing pages may also need to be optimised so that they can include target words and key phrases to help you to get good listings in all the major UK and/or World search engines.

Site Updates - regular updates to your website content helps with search engine promotion and positioning. This could involve you in preparing a regular flow of new and interesting articles and even weekly posts for a blog.

Internal & External Linking - using key words and key phrases in internal and external links is another thing to implement if you want your sites search engine optimisation to be successful.

Pay Per Click Campaigns

Pay Per Click (PPC) is an advertising model where you only pay if a user actually clicks on an advert to visit your website. This will usually be a text based advert.

This form of advertising can bring fairly quick results and there are many companies offering this service (just try searching Google for 'Pay Per Click Campaigns). Many SEO companies include this 'Pay Per Click advertising as part of their overall package and charge you accordingly.

How PPC works

Advertisers bid on keywords or phrases they predict their target market will use as 'search terms' when they are looking for a product or service on the Internet. When a user types a keyword query that matches the advertiser's keyword list, or views a page with relevant content, the advertiser's ad may be shown. These Pay Per Click ads are called a 'Sponsored link' or 'Sponsored ads' and generally appear next to or above the natural or 'organic' results on search engine results pages.

Minimum prices for very popular search terms can cost a lot more if you use the most popular search engines to conduct your campaign.

To find out more about this type of advertising please see - Pay per Click Advertising for Quick Results on page 31.

SEO pricing guide

So what price should you expect to pay for professional Search Engine Optimisation from a company that specialises in this type of work.

Only a handful of SEO companies quote prices on their websites and many say they cannot quote a price because of the amount of SEO work that might be needed for one site may not be needed for the next site e.g. one site may have to be completely redesigned to make it search engine friendly whereas the next could be well designed to start with (XXHTML and CSS) and just needs a few extra pages optimised and a few added.

Bear in mind that SEO work is long term so many companies charge for a full twelve months. Some will ask you to pay up front for the whole twelve months whereas others will let you pay monthly or quarterly.

Good SEO companies never promise immediate results or guarantee number 1 positions in the major search engines.

In fact, initial results may well take up to four months or more before your website starts appearing in the search engines!

As your competitors are also trying to get high rankings in Google, Yahoo and Bing your websites page position may change as the weeks and months go by, no matter which SEO company you buy into.

Website Usability Issues

Website Usability refers to how easy it is for your website's visitors to find the way around your website to buy your products or access your important information.

So as a first step, your website must be easy to navigate and be designed in a way that makes it easy for your visitors to find whatever they are looking for.

Usability is an important concept that you must take on board as your visitors will leave your site if it takes them more than one or two clicks to get the information they want or need.

So what are some of the key usability principles you should employ in designing a user friendly website?

Provide a site search tool

A site search feature helps visitors quickly locate the information they want. Make the search box prominent and be sure that it searches all of your site - and only your site. We've seen far too many website's that include a "Search the Web" search box on their home page. The result of this folly? Visitors hardly get to your site before your web search function sends them to another site, perhaps a competitors!

Provide intuitive & consistent site navigation

The navigation system should be in the same place on every single page of your website. Visitors will get confused and frustrated if navigation links appear and disappear unpredictably.

Provide a Home Page Link

Always include a home page link inside your main navigation system.

Another accepted practice is to add a home page link to your site logo, which should also appear on every page. Most sites include their logo somewhere at the top of every page - generally in the top, left-hand corner. Visitors expect this logo to be a link to your site's home page. In fact, they'll often go there before looking for the home link in the main navigation system.

Site Wide Hyperlinks

Don't make your visitors guess where a link is going to take them. Visitors should be able to anticipate a link's destination by reading the text in the link (or on the navigation bar).

If there's any question about a link's destination, clarify the issue with a TITLE attribute that explains exactly where the link goes.

Use CSS to emphasize text links. Some designers dislike underlined text links inside page content - even though visitors usually expect to be able to click on underlined text. If you decide to remove this important visual navigation clue, style your links with CSS to replace underlining with another, consistent visual technique like a background colour, different font, or a unique text colour that indicates a hyperlink.

Provide consistent page layout

Keep page layout consistent. Use a website template to enforce a uniform page structure. Visitors should be able to predict the location of important page elements after visiting just one page in your site.

Keep the content clear and simple

You may attract visitors with an eye-catching design, but content is what keeps them at the site and encourages them to return. Content is also the best way to boost your site in the search engine rankings.

Always keep search engines in mind when you write content, but remember that your ultimate audience are all human visitors.

Place your most important content high on the page. Think of a newspaper: the top story is always prominently displayed above the fold. Check your page display at a number of different screen resolutions to make sure that your most important content is visible when the home page loads.

Make your page content easy to view. You'll spend hours - maybe days - writing your page content and it's really annoying to think that visitors may read less than half of it. Format your content so that it's easy to view. Emphasize important points (or product characteristics) with a combination of header tags, bold type, colour, lists and attractive images.

Create a good tag line and use it on every page. A good tag line clearly and concisely explains your "value proposition" or what makes your site stand out from competing sites. It should be memorable and reinforce your brand in one quick phrase.

Site Images and Colours

Be careful with background images and colours because they can obscure the text content on the page. Make sure you have a good reason to deviate from the successful dark text on a light background model. Visitors can't buy your products if they can't clearly read the content.

Each image shown on your site should have a descriptive ALT attribute and TITLE attribute associated with it - particularly images that are also links to other pages. That way, your site visitors can quickly jump to the page they're interested in without having to wait for the entire page to load.

Keep colours and typefaces consistent. Visitors should never click on an internal link in your site and wonder if they've left your website. Choose your colours and fonts carefully and use them consistently throughout the site.

Provide a Site Map

Add a text-based site map. Large or complex sites should always have a text-based site map in addition to text links. Every page should contain a text link to the site map. Lost visitors will use it to find their way, while the search engine spiders will have reliable access to all your sites pages.

Provide for visitor feedback

Forms are critical to the success of ecommerce sites. Without forms, you can't have a shopping cart. But any site usually needs at least one form to allow for user feedback. A form helps you hide from email spiders and also helps you control how user feedback is formatted and sent.

Keep feedback forms short and clearly note which information is required to successfully submit the form. Take care to design accessible forms that all visitors can use.

Provide a contact page

Present complete contact information including your business phone number and postal address.

Visitors will probably prefer to contact you using email or a form, but they will generally feel more comfortable with a site that allows other contact methods as well, such as the telephone, a fax or a mobile phone.

Make it easy to print a page

Always get your designer to add a print style sheet so that all your pages are correctly formatted for printing. This would involve sticking with a good text style for printing and removing unnecessary images or styles.

Use a Custom Error Page

Create a useful custom error page that helps visitors if they should click on a broken internal link or type a URL incorrectly. The custom error page should reflect the site's overall colour, type and layout structure as much as possible and provide useful links to help visitors find

what they're looking for. To see how to create this special page read our online article - [Create a custom 404 File Not Found Page](#).

Test the site on real users

Usability testing helps you replicate the experience of the average website user and correct problems before online visitors find them. It also gives you valuable answers to other questions:

- Do visitors enjoy using the site?
- Do visitors find it easy to buy?
- Do they understand the purpose of the site?
- Is there any incentive to return after the first visit?
- Can they recover from errors?

Usability testing is the best way to test how well your site search, site map, forms, shopping carts and custom error pages function. They should all work together to guide a visitor through the site and help him get where he's going. Frustrated visitors aren't likely to return.

A site that conforms to user expectations makes visitors more comfortable and more inclined to visit again. They will also recommend the site to their friends.

Good usability is critical to your website's overall success.

Why You Must Build Inbound Links to your Site

If you want to get high search engine rankings on Google, Yahoo and the other major search engines, then your website must have a large number of inbound links and a lot of good content.

Inbound Links

The link building process comes in three formats: direct links to your website (inbound links), cross linking content on the Internet (reciprocal and 3 way links), and deep linking to specific pages within your website.

The more links you have pointing back to your website the more popular your website is considered to be by all the major search engines, and the higher your search engine ranking will turn out to be.

The idea behind this concept is that search engines think that your website must be important if many other websites provide a link to your site.

Unfortunately the number of inbound links alone is not enough to improve your search engine rankings. It's also important that the other website's are related to your website in some clearly defined way. If the links to your site include your important keywords in the link text, then it's easier to get high rankings for these keywords.

It's not necessary that the other website is all about your particular topic. As long as the other website has a single category page (or pages) that deal with the topic of your website then the link to your site should be listed on that page.

The more pages of the other site that are about your topic, the better. Make sure that the link to your site is in a 'good neighbourhood' and that the other links are related to yours as closely as possible. Do not end up in a list that includes shoe repairs, pc repairs etc. if your site is all about a beauty product! It's important that you don't end up in a list of totally unrelated links.

As you search the Internet to find suitable inbound links the Page Rank of a particular website should not influence your linking decision. If you see a good website with good relevant content that has a low Page Rank, you should still try to get a link from that website.

If you want to find out which websites Google considers related to your website, go to Google and enter **related:www.your-domain.com** in the search box.

Replace your-domain.com with your own domain name and make sure that there is no space after the colon.

The process of getting inbound links will not only generate traffic from the search engines, but also generate traffic from websites where your link is posted. Oddly enough you will often get traffic from these websites before receiving traffic from the search engines themselves.

You should consider link building as a long term process that will increase the mass of information about your website that's available online. The links to your website will accumulate over time and will have a shelf life of many years.

Setting up a Links Page

Setting up a page of links on your own website can encourage other website's to seek cross linking opportunities with you and therefore also increase the number of inbound links pointing to your site.

A well styled links page shows that you have high regard for the advantages of cross linking and can spell out what links you are prepared to accept. Just as with inbound links, it is important that the website's on your links page are related to your website in some clearly defined way.

Sticking to your core theme is important as the major search engines like to see relevant content on your website and will therefore give your site more credibility. This in turn will push your site up the search engine rankings and attract more visitors to your online business.

So good quality inbound links that are from related sites and are on-topic can vastly improve the number of people accessing your site.

Checking your Link Popularity

To find out how well your website is doing in terms of inbound links it's a good idea to frequently test your [link popularity](). Doing this on a regular basis will help you to detect trends.

The Need to Expand Site Content

The content you can place on your website and on the Internet comes in five primary forms: Articles, News Releases, Videos, Photos and Social Media Marketing such as Facebook and Twitter.

Effective website content can generate targeted traffic, improve conversions, increase average sales value, and even increase customer retention levels.

While search engine optimisation is essential when you want a ton of traffic, your site will ultimately thrive or fail depending on the quality of your content.

Articles

If you offer a product then you may be able to write about the way your product works or can be applied. The same goes for a company offering a service. For example QBS PC Help publish articles based on the computer repairs that have been undertaken. We also design the occasional website and provide SEO services to a few companies, so we also write articles about these subjects.

When you prepare an article offer something of genuine value that answers a question or offers credible and useful information. Not only will your visitors appreciate it and be more likely to trust what you say, they will also be inclined to tell others about what they have seen. The end result could be the type of viral marketing you only dream of!

Effective articles should give your visitors a reason to buy your products or pay for your services and to do so willingly.

Your return on investment will be greatly improved if you can provide content that persuades your visitors that they need to buy a handful of products rather than just one.

News Releases

If you have news about a new product or service then a press release can be a good way of putting this news around the Internet.

There are a number of online press release sites that can publish your news release for you. Just search for 'free press releases' to get plenty of results from Google.

Video

If you have a product that needs a lot of explanation about how it works or operates, producing a video is undoubtedly the best solution. These days video production is fairly straight forward; just look at the success of YouTube!

Any modern camcorder can produce first class video footage that can be uploaded to your website.

Photos

If you sell any sort of product your website will contain photos of your products and perhaps show different views of the product or how it works. These photographs should be of high quality so that they attract attention. Any good digital camera can produce stunning images but for certain products you may decide to use a photographic studio to produce your online display shots.

Social Media Networking

Social media covers a lot of ground from blog's and forums to social book marking sites (Digg, Delicious, Twitter etc.) and networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn etc.).

Social networking is very popular and can produce almost instant results by bringing a lot of traffic to your website. However those results can often disappear very quickly as well.

Social networks make viral marketing and word-of-mouth marketing much easier than ever before. The best use out of social networks is not to make money 'directly' off them, but to harness their marketing potential and to use them to market your own business.

Blog's

Setting up a blog is relatively painless as long as your website's server meets the minimum requirements. At QBS PC Help we prefer to use WordPress for setting up blog's for our clients who need them.

The key to successful blogging is setting a schedule that achieves regular posts appearing on your blog. You need to add posts frequently about your products or services. You can also add news items that mention your products or services in a good light. To get a few more ideas about what you can blog about, see our blogging guide.

Google and all the other major search engines love blog's as they always show the latest news about your online business.

Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging platform, limited to 140 characters, which allows you to post updates (called Tweets) as often as you want. When you follow other people on Twitter, you see their tweets. When they follow you, they see your tweets.

It's basically a constant stream of communication. The good news is you can turn it on or off as often as you like. Twitter also keeps a public record of all updates, which can be mined with Twitter Search.

Go to Twitter Search, and enter your keywords or words related to your product or industry into the search bar. Twitter Search will then show you all the "tweets" that include those terms, and the people who wrote them. You can then click through to their Twitter profiles, and see if they are someone you'd like to follow!

When using Twitter, focus on sharing information - not on making a sales pitch. As with any social media platform, you want to build credibility for you and your business and form good relationships - instead of pushing for a sale.

To help with your twittering try some of the many tools that simplify matters such as [TweetDeck](#).

The Results of Successful Content Marketing

The process of content marketing is quite involved and is also labour intensive when done correctly. However there can be many worthwhile rewards.

Based on the content that's available online, your website may well be considered as an authority on your specialist topic and therefore be visited by more and more people as the your news gets around the Internet.

You will also find that other website's and SEO companies will begin to contact you asking you to exchange links.

You may even find companies offering to write articles for you to place on your own website. These will normally fit in with whatever subject your website features and will probably include a few links back to the originators website.

Be careful with these offers and make sure the links and articles fit in with your sites primary theme.

Once you have started adding new content to your website you'll need to monitor progress with web analytics software. [Google Analytics](#) is free, has a great interface and is packed with useful information about your site visitors. Why not give it a try.

Directory Submissions

Submitting your website to Internet directories is a great way to build inbound links and increase your search engine rankings.

Directory submissions should be done when your website is fully functional and ready for viewing. All the pages should have content and all the links should be live. Even if it is only a one or two page site, everything should work. Once your site actually has some content it will almost always get listed in the Internet directories.

When choosing directories to submit to going for the paid ones can often be better because many of the free directories seem to automatically delete links after a year or so. However, there are still a few free directories out there that should always be used - directories that have stood the test of time, like DMOZ (The Open Directory Project).

Submitting to a combination of both niche and general directories is usually a very good idea.

For most businesses there are a variety of niche directories out there - the best way to find them is to use a search engine. Do a search on Google, Bing or Yahoo for directories in your niche area - those that come up in the first few pages of results are usually the best ones to use.

With general directories it's better to go for those that are more established. The older directories are often the best.

Before submitting, have a good look around the directory and get a feel for which category your site should be listed under.

It's important to make sure that the content on the directories site is "relevant" to the section in which you are trying to list your business. Check and double check, and if you can't find a category that explicitly describes your products or services, go for the nearest descriptive terms.

Some directories will let you use a search phrase as the link back to your site. Other directories may have stricter policies and insist that you use your business/website name.

It is best to keep your descriptions brief, cold and detached - with no superlatives - as you are not trying to aggressively sell anything on the directory. The aim is to get a back link so the search engines can find and visit your website.

It is a good idea to have several different descriptions and titles (anchor text) for the various directories to which you submit your site. You could write perhaps five or six different descriptions and anchor texts. This variation in descriptions could help with the amount of key words on which you are trying to compete.

Many directories allow you to add extra links directly to the internal pages of your website. But quite a few don't, so you need to be discerning before attempting this. A good idea is to check out the linking policies of all the directories you visit.

If the directory allows you add extra links to your internal pages you should take turns in linking to different pages of your website using different variations of the phrases you're targeting on each page. Using the same anchor text to link to the same page over and over again will appear unnatural to the search engines and this could work against you.

There is not a fixed number of directories you must get listed in. It's best to work out a twelve month directory submission budget for each site and then do so many each week or month for the full duration.

Be warned that most directories have human editors and often frown severely on multiple submissions. However if you have a big site with multiple categories, you can place your subcategories as sub domains and submit in different sections of a directory.

All the directories want to offer a first class service. If they are good at listing what people and search engines are looking for, they will get plenty of traffic. To achieve this, they need interesting, relevant listings. This is why some people find it hard to get listed. Unwittingly, a lot of sites try to get listed on paid or unpaid directories without submitting content under the right categories and even try to send multiple submissions using the same words and phrases. This will definitely make directory submissions hard to get. You might even be blacklisted.

However, the more directories that link to you, the better it is for your website.

Most SEO consultants submit to hundreds of directories, and there are free and paid resources that can help you (in a semi-automated fashion) to do the same. Be warned, any software that guarantees full automation is probably lying, since most directories now use graphical images to verify whether the entries are being made by humans or automated software.

Here are just a few paid and unpaid directories to get you started:

Three of the best free directories include:

- DMOZ (Open Directory Project)
- World Site Index
- Web World

Four of the best paid directories include:

- Yahoo! Directory
- Best of the Web
- Business.com
- Aviva Directory

You should always keep it in mind that you are submitting to directories in order to increase your back link count. And the good news is that search engines consider links from directories to be very good, since the links have been vetted by the human editors on the directory.

Article Submissions

Submitting to Article Sites is very popular amongst SEO experts, as it not only gives you one way links from relevant sites but also increases the traffic to your website.

One way back links means links that point directly to your website, but that don't require you to link back.

Article marketing is probably one of the easiest methods to get well established article website's to link to you. These are authority sites that have been around for many years, and you can get many hundreds of one way back links from these article sites.

Writing Articles

Effective articles should give your visitors a reason to buy your products or pay for your services and to do so willingly.

If you offer a product then you may be able to write about the way your product works or can be applied. The same goes for a company offering a service. For example QBS PC Help publish articles based on the computer repairs we have undertaken. Every article you write allows you to include two to three simple text links at the bottom of the article. And its these text links that will increase the number of inbound links pointing to your website.

From the point of view of the search engines, every link from an external site to your website is counted as a vote. In other words, the more back links you have pointing to your site, the better your site will rank. Of course, these back links cannot be any links. They have to be links from authority sites and relevant web pages.

Article Directories

There are literally hundreds of article directories on the Internet that are recognized as authority sites by the search engines. All you have to do is to create relevant content, put your text links at the end of the articles and submit them to the article directories. If they are approved, your articles get published online, and you get a lot of high quality links pointing to your site. Make sure that you create your text links to mention one of your targeted keyword phrases rather than just a 'click here' hyperlink .

'Targeted key phrases' are phrases that people type into the search engines when searching for your type of product or service. This means it is generally better for you to select a list of specific key phrases rather than generic ones. The more specific the key phrase is, the less competition your website will be up against.

By means of these key phrases search engines determine the theme and relevancy of the content on your website. The assumption here is that if there are hundreds of links from external sites "saying" that your site is about "pc repairs", then perhaps your site is really

about "pc repairs". So always write on topic and include your target keywords as anchor text.

To which article sites should you submit your articles?

Ezine Articles

Many say that Ezine Articles is one of the best article directories and has good standards and a page rank of 6. The site is very easy to use, just click onto submit articles and follow the simple instructions to get started.

Buzzle

Another good site is Buzzle. The articles you submit are usually published within 24 hours and indexed by Google in no time. You have to apply to get accepted as an author at Buzzle and it can take a few weeks, but it's worth the wait. The site has a Page Rank score of 5.

Go Articles

Go Articles is another great article site. It is run by the Jayde Online Network and has a Google Page rank of 6. Submitting is easy, just click on 'submit articles' and then fill in the register as a new member to get started. Articles are published fast, usually in less than a week.

Article Dashboard

Article Dashboard is a yet another good article directory The site has a Google Page rank score of 5. To submit articles click on the sign up link in the top right hand corner, follow the instructions and start submitting your content.

ArticleCity

ArticleCity has a page rank of 5 and the site is easy to use. There is a 'submit an article' link at the bottom of the web page which takes you to a simple form. You then just need to complete a few details before submitting your article.

Here are some newer article submission sites, with slightly lower page ranks:

- http://www.article99.com (PR 3)
- http://www.activeauthors.com (PR4)
- http://www.articlepros.com (PR3)
- http://www.free-articles-zone.com (PR4)

If done correctly and in moderation article submission can be a good small part of your link building and SEO strategy.

It's best to start off article submissions slowly. It's a good idea to submit your article(s) to perhaps five of your favourite article sites and a couple of niche sites, and resist the temptation to blast your article to every article site on the planet.

And the really good news is the traffic you get from your articles doesn't stop - it keeps working for you day in and day out, sending a steady stream of on-going, targeted traffic to whatever it is you're promoting.

Only place links at the bottom of each article

You should not use articles to advertise your products or services within the main page content. Just add two or three text links at the end of the article in the 'Authors BIO' section.

Try to write something unique

People all over the world are writing about the same thing. If you truly want to different try writing about topics that aren't covered by everybody else.

Never submit press releases as your article

There is a distinct difference between a press release and an informative article. Press releases are strictly for announcing news about your company. Informative articles teach people about a specific subject and solve problems (not about your company's product or sales news).

Don't copy other people's content

Grabbing articles online and simply changing the title of the article to call it your own is not article writing. If you use someone else's content, only use it for study, not for your own promotion and recognition. If you "quote" someone else, make sure to give credit where appropriate.

Find five new article submission sites each week

If you submit articles once a week, try and make it a habit to find five new article submission sites to submit to. This should be fairly easy to do as new article sites appear all the time. To find new sites to submit to, just go to Google and do a search for "article submission sites", "submit articles" and "where to submit articles to".

Keep your author bio fairly short

Try keeping your author biography short but do include at least one targeted keyword phrase. Use one sentence and a couple of links. Most submission sites will accept up to 3 links within your resource box. The author bio is also the place to add any reprint rights and copyright information.

Do not buy articles from other companies

It's best not to even consider buying articles from people that claim that they will write a unique article for you to promote.

Chances are, the article that you buy has been sold and re-sold many times. You will be doing your business no favours at all by buying articles like this. Article submission website's frown on this re branding method and will ban you from ever submitting articles again if you are caught.

Never use affiliate links

Most article submission website's have a rule against listing affiliate links within your article (body content) and your author bio. If you absolutely need to use an affiliate link, try creating a "short link" that simplifies the link into a smaller, more compact link.

Use manual submissions

Most link submission software isn't the answer. It's far better to personalise your submission by submitting it manually. Granted, this can take up to 4 hours per week if you write one article and submit it to a handful of the best article submission sites.

Many article submission website's have different and unique fields that they require you to enter. If you use software to try and achieve this you will never have that personal touch that each individual website and editor is looking for and your articles will never get published.

Use Link Baiting to Keep Your Visitors Returning

The traditional link building process comes in three primary flavours: direct links to your website (inbound links), cross linking content on the Internet (reciprocal and 3 way links), and deep linking to specific pages within your website.

This linking to specific pages of your website can be greatly enhanced by link baiting. So what does link baiting include from the SEO viewpoint?

Link Baiting means to create something that naturally attracts inbound links for your website. Just one successful link baiting campaign can be worth far more than any amount of PPC advertising you undertake. It can also be far more effective than the thousands of emails you could send out trying to get inbound links for your website.

Just getting your link bait featured on Digg will yield tens of thousands of visitors in a very short period of time and potentially many more inbound links within just a few weeks.

The clear goal of link baiting is to naturally increase the number of links pointing to your website. And the more links you have pointing back to your site the more popular your website is considered to be by all the major search engines, and so the higher your search engine ranking will turn out to be.

Some Common Link Baiting Techniques

- Become an expert in your particular niche and write valuable and newsworthy information.
- Write an interesting and informative article about your products or services.
- Write useful comments on something that is currently happening in your field of activity.
- Interview (by e-mail or phone) prominent people and publish the results to your site and/or blog.
- Write something outrageous or controversial to spark an interest.
- Run an event, such as a contest or free giveaway.
- Make a blog theme, plug in or a piece of software to give away as an incentive. If you can't design it you will normally be able to get this done for you at very little cost.
- Make or design something that others can put on their websites but that links back to your own site.
- Write something funny or controversial.
- Be the first to expose a scam or the scammer.
- Be the first to research and document something completely new and interesting.
- Provide people with a way to feel important about themselves, someone they care about, or something they feel should be important, and watch people flock to your site.

⇨ Take recent news and events and push them out to others who form part of your online community.

By getting people to talk about your link bait, blog about it, discuss it on forums and post it on their social networks and link to it from their website's, you can attract tons of visitors to your own site.

Use Video as Link Bait

Don't miss the opportunity to generate views for any videos you may have.

Providing informational videos is an easy way to generate traffic and interest, especially if they are short, to the point and helpful.

One of the major advantages of videos, compared to traditional written marketing, is that it saves your visitors a lot of time understanding what is being offered and there isn't much effort required on their part. Start the video and everything is explained to them right there and then. Hearing and seeing you tell them all about your products or services has more credibility and allows you to connect with your visitors on an emotional level.

Another great advantage of video marketing is that if you use the right keywords in your video's tags, you have a much better chance of reaching high rankings in many search engines.

You can include the videos on your own website or load them up to YouTube.

YouTube does have some advantages, as the number of times a YouTube video is seen plays a role in their popularity rankings and in getting videos to show up in Google's universal search results.

Many people are still afraid to use video as a promotional tool and think it's difficult to do. So now is the perfect time for you to get ahead of your competition.

PPC Advertising for Quick Results

Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising is one of the best and fastest ways of targeting prospective customers to your website, whether you sell a product or offer a service of some sort.

One of the most widely used PPC advertising models is Google AdWords, although Yahoo Search Marketing and MSN Adcenter are similar PPC products.

When you sign up to your preferred PPC provider you select targeted keywords or preferably phrases that your potential customers will use when searching for your product or service.

These Pay-Per-Click advertisements are usually called 'Sponsored links' or 'Sponsored ads' and generally appear next to or above the natural or 'organic' search results.

PPC advertising is not always easy to do, especially if you have not had any previous experience, so here are some of the key steps in setting up a Pay-Per-Click advertising campaign.

Knowing your Market

To be successful with PPC advertising you must find out what search terms your potential customers are most likely to use when looking for a site like yours. You should try to come up with a few words and phrases describing your products or services. With that list of 'keywords' you can use the Internet to help you find even more words or phrases that you might not have considered. There are a few free tools that can help with this task, just type "free keyword tools" into any search engine.

Selecting your Keywords

PPC advertising is very competitive and some of the keywords you have chosen can work out to be very expensive and be way beyond your planned marketing budget. The key to cheaper bids is to find keywords that are less popular and therefore cheaper to bid for. To help you with this job grab a free keyword analyzer. Just search for "free keyword analyzer tool" using one of the major search engines and you will find many options to choose from.

Some keyword tools are very good at helping with this PPC research as they will not only provide you with a list of alternative keywords, but also display the number of searches for that keyword and the number of campaigns already running for the keyword or phrase you enter. This gives you a good view of what words you can bid on without going over budget, and also allows you to find keywords to bid on that get a large number of searches but do not have a competing ad campaign currently running. To do this yourself, type one of your keywords into a search engine and count all the sponsored links or sponsored ads that appear. Try several search engines, including Google, Yahoo and Bing.

Writing Your PPC Advertisement

Nothing in your PPC ad is more important than an attention grabbing headline. Unfortunately, the tricky thing with PPC ads is the lack of space you have for writing an eye catching ad. For example, Google allows ad titles to be only 25 characters long and the two description lines and display URL under the heading are limited to 35 characters each, so every single word definitely counts.

Using your main keyword in the title and body of the ad will increase the likelihood that the readers of your PPC advertisement will click through to your web page.

Listing a benefit of your product or service in the form of a question is also a good way to attract the view of potential customers, who may then click to view your site content.

Split Testing your PPC Advertisement

Once you've written your first advertisement, write another that's slightly different and test which ad gets the most clicks. Once you've found out which is the best performing ad write another ad to see if you can improve the click through rate (CTR) even further. This process will eventually provide you with the best performing PPC ads for your product or service.

To help with this analysis Google (and others) will alternate your ads for you and you will be able to see which ad performs the best by looking at your click through rate (CTR).

TIP: PPC advertisers who do this 'split testing' are usually more successful with their PPC advertising campaigns.

Using targeted Landing Pages

You must make sure that the page your prospective customers end up on provides exactly what they are searching for. This will not always be your home page, but some other landing page within your site. If a visitor finds exactly what he needs when he clicks your advertisement he is much more likely to buy your product or use your service.

Securing a high page position with your bids

All the major search engines use a slightly different method for working out the position for your PPC ad. Google and Yahoo use a combination of ad relevancy and bid price.

A big mistake a lot of people seem to make is not targeting keywords tightly enough and specific enough to a particular product or service and not bidding high enough on targeted keywords to secure top placements.

It is estimated that 85% of all PPC clicks occur on ads that appear in one of the top three positions on the page. This means, if you are not targeting your ad closely enough to your

potential customers' needs and are not bidding enough to get a top spot, you are missing out on a lot of potential clicks that could lead people to your website.

Google AdWords

Many companies use Google AdWords for their PPC advertising campaigns and take advantage of the Budget control within AdWords to limit their daily and monthly spending to their desired marketing budget. What not everyone realizes is that this can often result in higher cost per click (CPC) and fewer clicks! This is because of the way Google AdWords makes sure you don't exceed your budget, by limiting the number of times your ad is displayed, which therefore limits the number of clicks your ad receives.

Here's a very simplified example to illustrate the point. Say you have only one keyword and it has the following monthly cost and volume data (hypothetical data):

PPC Marketing Campaign for The Widget Co

Keyword: widget

Position	Bid	Clicks	CTR	CPC	Cost
1	£6.91	1,600	4.0%	£8.30	£13,280
2	£4.31	1,100	2.5%	£5.20	£5,720
3	£2.74	800	2.0%	£3.43	£2,744
4	£2.37	700	1.8%	£2.95	£2,065
5	£1.98	600	1.5%	£2.44	£1,464
6	£1.60	500	1.3%	£1.94	£970
7	£1.23	400	1.0%	£1.47	£588
8	£0.85	300	0.8%	£1.02	£306

First, imagine you have a bid of £4.31 (since this is an important keyword, you want to rank highly) and your monthly budget is £2,750. In this case, your ad will show up at position 2, but because of Google's budget limiting, the ad will only appear 48% (£2,750/£5,720) of the time. This means you get just 528 clicks (48% x 1,100). Your cost per click is £5.20, which brings your monthly spending (£2,745.60) within your planned budget of £2,750.

Now, imagine that your bid was £2.74, with the same budget of £2,750. Here, your ad shows up in position 3 but shows 100% of the time so you get 800 clicks at a cost per click of £3.43 for a total cost of £2,744, again within your planned budget.

Comparing these two cases, in the first one you were budget limited by Google and got 528 clicks, and in the second case, you used your bid to achieve your spending target and got 800 clicks for the same cost. That's why managing PPC spending using budget control results in higher CPC and fewer clicks.

PPC Management Software Makes It Easier

Of course, it can be hard to estimate which bid will result in what cost, especially when you are dealing with 100's or 1000's of keywords instead of just one. To find software to help just type 'free pay per click management software', or something similar, into one of the major search engines.

Google AdWords, Yahoo! Search Marketing, and Microsoft adCenter are currently the three largest network operators. Depending on the search engine, minimum prices per click start at £0.01 (up to £0.15), these prices are often referred to as Costs Per Click (CPC).

Tip: Be warned - popular search terms can cost a lot more if you use the most popular search engines.

Create a Killer PPC Advertisement

When it comes to Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising there are only two ways to decrease your spending. You can lower your cost per click (which will lower your position and your click through rate (CTR)) or you can improve your PPC advertisements (which will increase your CTR and your position).

Great ads will attract more clicks for a given amount of impressions, which will be rewarded with lower bid prices or higher rankings.

The real secret to writing the most popular PPC advertisement on the page is to ruthlessly test and track multiple ads - which is called split testing. By doing this, you will improve your advertising skill over time, and will eventually have a great performing ad with a very high click through rate (see Pay-Per-Click Advertising for Quick Results on page 30).

To get a high click through rate your ad must be designed in such a way that it attracts the eye of potential customers so here a few tips on how to design the perfect PPC advertisement.

Write ads for small groups of keywords

You should try to get your keywords to appear multiple times in your ads so that you can take full advantage of keyword grouping. You could even include the keyword in all four lines of the PPC ad for maximum effect. But make sure this does not detract from the advertising message you are trying to put across.

And also by grouping your selected keywords very tightly, and writing your ads specifically for those keywords, you will give yourself a large advantage over your main competitors. Many people do not seem take the time required to do this job properly, yet it is something that will always increase your click through rate (CTR) every single time!

Create an attention-grabbing headline

Nothing in your advertisement is more important than your headline. The problem with PPC ads is that you don't get much space for it.

For example, Google allows ad titles to be only 25 characters long.

Layout your headline wisely, but don't stress over it too much, as you will probably be split testing many different variations before you find the one that performs really well.

Write ads with your audience in mind

When you write an ad, ask yourself "what is my audience looking for when they search for this particular keyword?" If you can write an ad that 'solves a problem', people with that problem will be instantly drawn to your ad.

You do have much space when it comes to writing your ads description as Google limits the two description lines and display URL to 35 characters each, so every single word you use is important.

Give the ads some visual appeal

This takes some additional creativity and planning, but can really help your PPC ad to stand out. For example you could make each line progressively longer (or shorter) for a cascading effect or you could alternate lengths to create a visual "arrow" or "reverse arrow" shape within your ad. You could even make your ad extra short. All of these ideas could help make your ad stand out from the rest and will hopefully increase your ads click through rate.

Ask the audience a question

This is definitely a good strategy for certain markets. If you can work a question into your headline or description, test it out and see how it performs. If someone is searching for something, and then you confirm what they are searching for, they are far more likely to click on your ad. Additionally, the tone of the question, along with the question mark, helps differentiate your ad from all the others.

Use specific numbers

Numbers create interest and specific numbers create curiosity. They won't always perform better, but try to test the impact of including numbers in your advertisement. Always include whole numbers such as 31% rather than numbers including decimal points, like 31.13%. In other words, round up or down rather than using decimal points.

Borrow ideas from others

A copy writing principle that has been in practice for decades is borrowing ideas from other ads. If you only take "ideas" (such as rewriting an ad about "fish" to work with your "pc repair" keywords), you should not get into any trouble copying the ideas of direct competitors. Take some of the top ads that are being shown for your keywords and mix them up to create something completely new. It they are at the top of the listings, they probably have a pretty good advertisement, or are paying out a lot of money to have it appear in the top position.

Emphasize the benefits of your offer

Your audience doesn't care how many features you are offering or how great they may be - all they want to know is "What's in it for me?" If you can tell them, you will likely have a hugely successful ad.

Use words that evoke emotion

If you can get people to feel emotions when reading your ad, they will probably feel compelled to click it. The list of emotion words is very long, so here is a nice [wikipaedia guide to emotion words](#).

Test multiple versions of your display URL

You can certainly experiment with capitalization (i.e. "DomainName.com" vs. "domainname.com"). You should also experiment with "www", sub domains and pages.

Including your keywords in your domain name can often increase your CTR. You can essentially do this one of two ways: "Key-Words.DomainName.com" or "DomainName.com/Key-Words."

Be cautious with prices

Although prices do have their place as negative qualifiers, they will usually be detrimental to your CTR.

Unless your price is definitely the lowest on the block, it's probably best to leave it out of your PPC ad. You can, instead, perhaps state the savings your product provides as a benefit to your potential customers.

Include a call-to-action

Sometimes, the most effective way to get someone to do something is to simply ask them to do it. That's the principle behind the call to action. Because you have such limited space in a PPC ad, the call-to-action might not be beneficial, but it is at least worth a test.

Just including something like "Click here to receive this benefit" or "Get your free copy now" is more than sufficient to test this idea.

Don't waste space with useless words

The space available to you in a PPC ad is extremely limited. Although your ads should be grammatically correct, they do not need to be sophisticated sentences. Keep them simple and concise so that it is easier for the reader to quickly understand what you are offering.

Use negative keywords

Negative keywords permit advertisers to specify when ads should not be shown, such as when a keyword has multiple meanings or is part of other popular queries. You will be able to do this from within your PPC interface.

Although negative keywords are not directly related to how you write your ads, they are important. If you don't use negative keywords, your ad is going to be triggered by keywords that you did not plan for. When this happens, your ad will not match what the consumer was searching for and will result in lower CTR and a lower placement.

To find out more about negative keywords see this Google page - [How can I find the right negative keywords to benefit my campaign?](#)

Make the ad relevant to your landing page

Although your landing page does not affect the CTR of your ad it can affect what you receive from it, in terms of a product sale or in sign-ups for your service. It is therefore very important that you make your ad relevant to your landing page.

If a visitor reads a particular offer or benefit in your ad, they are expecting to find it when they click through to your landing page. Give them what you promise in your advertisement and you will experience a higher conversion rate. Give them something that doesn't match the ad and you will have a lot of confused visitors who will quickly reach for the back button.

Always double check spelling and grammar

This might seem obvious, but is can be very easy to make a stupid mistake. Having a grammatical or spelling error in your ad (or any document) hurts the credibility of your advertisement and will most likely get it disabled by an editor, costing you valuable testing time.

So there you have it. A few tips on writing killer PPC ads.

Visitor and Sales Tracking and ROI Analysis

Visitor and sales tracking can be considered a key component of any online marketing campaign.

No matter how well planned a marketing strategy may be, you will never know how successful it truly is until you launch the campaign and start to track the results.

If the marketing campaign does not deliver on your initial expectations, it does not mean you have to scrap it. You simply need to look at the areas where the campaign is weak and where it is successful. With this information you can improve the weak points in order to have a more successful campaign.

The way to do this is through examining the analytical data that is reflected in ad tracking tools. This is a key point because it is these ad tracking tools that allow you to look at vital information such as conversion rates and visitor information.

For those not familiar with the term 'conversion rate', it refers to the number of people who visit your site and actually buy your products or use your services. So, if 10 out of every 100 visitors were to make a purchase, the conversion rate would be 10%. Those wishing to raise their revenues would have two options: either to increase the number of visitors to the site or increase the conversion percentage of those who do visit. Of course it would be far better to achieve both of these options to get the biggest boost in visitors and revenue.

Increasing Your Visitor Knowledge

Increasing the number of visitors who arrive at your website is all well and good, but to fine tune your marketing and promotional campaigns you must track where your visitors come from and how they have arrived at your website.

Most SEO companies recommend [Google](#) for this type of tracking. For a free tool, it is simply amazing. This article cannot possibly cover all the features of Google Analytics but a Google search for 'google analytics guides' or 'analytics help' and you will see quite a few.

Here's the official online Google Guide to Analytics - http://www.google.com/intl/en_uk/analytics/discover_analytics.XHTML.

Once you have set up your Google Analytics account you must add the analytics tracking code to your websites pages - all the pages that you want to be tracked by Google. This tracking code is how Google Analytics and your website communicate with one another, so that your sites visitors can be successfully tracked.

At this point, you have set up your account and installed the tracking code on every page of your website so that Analytics can start gathering data on your site. After just 24 hours, you will be able to login to your Analytics account and see the results of all your efforts.

In terms of visitor information Google Analytics can provide a wealth of information.

With statistics such as Total Visits, Unique Visitors, Page Views, Average Page Views, Time on Site, Bounce rate and New Visits, it's easy to get a good overview of your site visitors. You can also drill down into these reports to get an even greater insight into your visitor profiles.

To really leverage the next level of information from Google Analytics you will need to set up Goals and Funnels.

When you combine these analytical tools it opens a world of knowledge about the efficiency of your website and how it can lead your visitors down a path that leads to a sale.

Google Analytics Goals

You can also set up goals and funnel reports to check the progress of visitors through your site and if they make a purchase, sign up for a newsletter or download something. These tools can really let you see which website pages perform the best.

So how can you set up these goals and funnel reports and make good use of them?

Google defines a Goal as: a page which a visitor reaches once they have completed an action.

You define goals based on the purpose of your website and the actions you want your visitors to take. Goals are often called conversions, since on e-commerce sites, visitors are converted to customers.

Goals can range from simply filling out a contact form, to downloading a free brochure, or to an actual sale that generates revenue. The choice is yours, but choose wisely. At the moment Google place a limit on the number of tracking goals you can set up. You should therefore choose those that have the biggest impact on the success of your online business.

Google Analytics Funnels

Funnels, when attached to Goals, can point out trouble spots in your "conversion chain". These trouble spots often cause visitors to abandon a process and can lead to a loss in sales for your business.

Using Funnels, you can find these weak points and barriers and make the necessary changes to your website.

The path to your desired goal is called a Funnel Path. Technically speaking, a Funnel Path is a series of pages through which a visitor is expected to pass before reaching the final goal.

So, a visitor might come to your homepage through an AdWords ad and click on a featured product link, then go to your shopping cart and go through the buying process, and finally get your receipt page (your goal) to complete the Funnel Path.

This is what a funnel report looks like.

In the Goal Funnel Report, the middle column of green funnels represent the steps in one of your Funnel Paths. It shows the pages within your site that lead to your receipt or goal page.

Overlaid on each green funnel step is the percentage and number of visitors still in the funnel at each step.

On the right, the red arrows point to the visitors who left the funnel and where they went, whether they left your site and went somewhere else on the web or somewhere else on your site.

Shown on the left, the green arrows show the entrance points, points from which visitors arrive to the funnel. Again these might be places on your site or other sites on the web.

Goals and Funnels enable you to easily see how many visitors reach a certain page and understand where visitors may be losing interest and falling off the path along the way. You can use this important information to improve your site's content and design.

By concentrating your efforts on the best performing funnel paths you will tend to get the most conversions. That could mean more sales, sign-ups, donations or downloads for your online business.

The e-commerce ad-on

Although you can track the monetary value of a single sales item, such as an eBook, by using Goals, this set up is far too limited for a full e-commerce website. You therefore need to set up e-commerce tracking.

This area of Google analytics can help you track all your sales so that you can calculate the ROI for your business.

[This link takes you to Google](#).

How do I track e-commerce transactions?

This method works well for a few sales items but can be unwieldy if you hold and sell a large number of items using shopping cart technology. To properly integrate this with Google's e-commerce reporting may involve some programming.

Tracking Marketing Campaigns

Funnels and Goals can help you make smarter decisions about your marketing efforts by telling you:

- Which marketing campaigns or referrals brought the most converting visitors.
- The geographic location of converted visitors.
- The keywords that lead to goal conversion.

Google Analytics is a superb tool for tracking virtually everything about your site, its visitors, the cost of getting leads, conversion rates and the marketing return on investment for each marketing activity you undertake.

To find out more about Google Analytics see Google's extensive online guide which takes you through this amazing analytical program - and it's free to use!

The Need for On-going Customer Loyalty

The most successful businesses have a well optimised e-commerce website and pay close attention to building customer loyalty in all they say and do. This need for good customer loyalty is true, whether you are selling a physical product or a professional service of some sort.

The customer loyalty game is not always easy to play as according to one survey seven out of ten consumer's visit multiple website's before making an online purchase, so they can find the best possible deal.

Another survey found that 42% of Internet shoppers use comparison search engines to compare prices before they buy.

So it's clear from these surveys that special offers and discounted prices are an essential part of a good customer retention program. But with all that shopping around what else must you do to attract and turn your customers into long term buyers of your products or services?

This is where SEO, social networking and a good web design can help. Your site, and any shopping cart, must be very easy to use, with clear navigation and no broken links, otherwise your site visitors will quickly leave your site and go somewhere else.

When potential customers visit your website you want them to take an action of some sort. You want them to make a purchase, sign up for your services or a perhaps request a newsletter. And once they do it for the first time, you want them to continue doing business with you. You want to create a "loyal" band of customers who frequently return to buy an ever expanding range of your products or services.

To achieve these aims you need to use as many incentives as possible to keep getting a regular flow of new customers and to encourage your existing customers to order again.

It should be obvious to everyone that a 'happy' returning customer costs you a lot less in online marketing than trying to generate new visitors using something like a Pay-Per-Click program. A happy returning customer, also improves your websites return on investment (ROI) and, as a result, increases your sales income. What's more a returning customer who is impressed with your service levels will already be sold on the product or service you provide and be happy to purchase it.

Return on investment - or ROI - is the rate of revenues received for every pound invested in an item or activity. In a marketing sense, knowing the ROI of your advertising and marketing campaigns helps you to identify which techniques are most effective in generating income for your business.

So why are customer loyalty and SEO linked? This is because all the search engine optimisation in the world will not do any good, unless the online business is also playing its part by developing overall customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Customer loyalty may be a single program or incentive, or an on-going series of programs, all designed to attract and keep your customers. So what are some of the ways to do this?

Buy-one-get-one-free programs are very popular, as are purchases that come with rebates or free gifts. Another good incentive for achieving customer loyalty is offering a risk free trial period for a product or service (this tactic is very popular with software providers).

Customer loyalty is also achieved through high value trade-ins, extended warranties and rebates.

Also known as brand name loyalty, these types of customer loyalty incentives are meant to ensure that customers will return, not only to buy the same product again and again, but also to try other products or services offered by your company.

To help manage your customer loyalty programs make sure you track all the visitors to your website whether they purchase something or not. At QBS PC Help we highly recommend [Google Analytics](#) as a great analytical tool. To use it all you need to do is sign up and place a small piece of code on each page of your website. Google give an easy to follow guide on how to do this.

Using Google Analytics you can track visitors, set up goals and e-commerce reports and a whole lot more.

Successful customer loyalty is the result of a well-managed customer retention program. All good customer retention programs rely on communicating with your customers on a regular basis. Opposite you will find a list of some of the best ways to build customer loyalty.

Build Customer Loyalty

Here are some great ways to build customer loyalty:

Regular communication

Whether it is an email newsletter, an online downloadable catalogue or a reminder for a product or service renewal, reach out to your existing customers. Keep them fully informed about your business products or services and you will see positive results. In particular, email newsletters are very affective if you have a good sized customer mailing list that you can target.

As you keep in regular touch with your customers some will do your company a great deal of good by telling their family and all their friends about your company and the products or services you offer.

First class customer service

Go the extra distance and meet customer needs. Train your staff (if any) to do the same. If you treat your customers well they will remember this, and will be more inclined to buy your products or services again and again.

Customer incentives

Give your existing customers a reason to return to your web based business by offering good encouragement and incentives in all your communications with them.

Product awareness

Know what your regular customers purchase and always keep these items in stock. Over time, add other products or services that complement the items that your customers already buy. And make sure that your staff completely understand everything they can about your products, so they can answer any 'technical' questions that might be put to them.

Always keep your website up to date

Update your website frequently with new product information, pricing, on-going sales and other incentives. If products are no longer available, out-of-stock, or on backorder, post a note on the product page and underneath any image that might be present. If possible give a time frame of when the product will be available. The last thing customers want is to reach the checkout page to find out that the item they wanted is no longer available or is out of stock.

Know your customers name and personal details

Use a customer relationship management (CRM) tool to keep track and organise your contacts with current and prospective customers. Typical CRM goals are to improve the services you provide to customers, and to use customer contact information for targeting marketing campaigns.

[See the wikipedia.org definition of CRM](#).

Up sell your products or services

Always try to move your customers up the next level, to bigger and better products or services, as this will greatly improve your overall profitability.

Make your business or service reliable

If your website states that a purchase will arrive on Wednesday, make sure it is delivered on Wednesday. Be a reliable business who sticks to its promises. If something goes wrong, let

your customer know immediately via email or a phone call and compensate them for any inconvenience.

Be Flexible when solving problems

Try to solve your customer problems or complaints to the best of your ability and never offer feeble excuses for poor service or zero stock levels. Always try to minimise problems.

Employee Training (if applicable)

Train your employees in the manner that you want them to interact with your customers. If you use a CRM tool make sure everyone is trained on how to use it. Empower your employees to make decisions that always try to benefit your customers.

Why E-Commerce Shopping Carts are Abandoned

It has often been estimated that around 75% of shopping carts are abandoned before the sale can be closed. It is no wonder then that 'abandoned shopping carts' are considered one of the biggest problems for ecommerce websites.

A recent survey by Pay Pal supplies some of the reasons why this cart abandonment seems to happen.

Pay Pal Survey - A breakdown on why shoppers abandon shopping carts	
Higher than expected shipping charges	46 per cent
Just wanted to comparison shop	37 per cent
Lack of money to spend	36 per cent
Wanted to look for a money off coupon	27 per cent
Wanted to shop offline	26 per cent
Couldn't find a preferred pay option	24 per cent
Item was unavailable at the checkout	23 per cent
Couldn't find customer support	22 per cent
Concern for security of credit card data	21 per cent

There are quite a few of these reasons for quitting that you can do nothing about. However, there are a few where you can take corrective action to limit the fall off in the ecommerce sales process.

1. High shipping charges

46% of prospects who leave the shopping process before clicking the Buy Now button, do so because of higher than expected shipping costs.

If you only sell a few products its far better to include all your costs in a single competitive price so you don't even have to mention shipping charges. For larger ecommerce sites who ship to many different locations it is often better to mention shipping charges earlier in the sales process and not introduce them as virtually the last process before the Buy Now button is clicked. This means your shopping cart software must be flexible enough to accommodate this preferred route to the final sale.

2. Wanted to look for a money off coupon

Give customers an incentive to buy again. Always include money off or special deals coupons with all the packages you despatch. Customers who have just brought something from your website are your best prospects to return and buy even more products.

Also mention any special offers in prominent locations throughout your website to encourage visitors to buy your products.

3. Couldn't find a preferred pay option

24% of those interviewed were put off because they could not find the payment method they preferred. This certainly means that all online businesses should offer a range of payment options including all the different types of credit and debit cards. Pay Pal is another very popular payment method that must be accepted by your ecommerce site.

4. Item was unavailable at checkout

Don't wait until a customer reaches the checkout before explaining that a required product is not available. This could cause a potential customer to abandon the shopping cart and leave your site.

There are a number of shopping cart software products that give you the capability to add, edit and delete products from your inventory database, some of which are even free.

Make sure that you keep your stock availability clearly displayed against every product you sell.

5. Couldn't find customer support

If you run an ecommerce website you must make it easy for potential customers to find your customer support area. This may be a dedicated FAQ type page, the prominent display of your customer telephone help line or live help of some sort.

There are many other reasons for shopping cart abandonment. And a few of these are now discussed below.

Competition comparisons

One of the major attractions of online shopping is begin able to easily compare several competing websites. There are several comparison website's that widely advertise on TV and can help people get the best value for money.

A lot of your potential customers will abandon their shopping carts midway, when they find that your competition has a far better offer.

Second thoughts

While initially taken in by the product and its cost, at the time of final payment online shoppers can abandon the shopping cart due to second thoughts. Wanting to think over the purchase a little more, these prospects are likely to abandon the shopping cart and maybe come back later for the final purchase.

Decide otherwise

While second thoughts do leave some room for a comeback, there are many potential customers who choose items but give up the idea of buying them completely while going through the sales process. They may decide that the item is not required or is not as attractive as they first thought.

Collective cost of products

While shopping online people tend to pick up several products and dump them in their shopping carts. When they finally view the total cost of these products, some find them too high and therefore completely abandon the shopping cart contents rather than going through the whole process again. So give these potential customers the ability to easily remove individual items from their shopping cart.

Length of check out process

One survey suggests that 41% buyers abandon shopping carts because they find that the time required for the final check out is too lengthy. Irritated by the time that the checkout process is taking, these buyers despite being committed to the deal, simply abandon the shopping cart and move on.

Complicated check out process

Confused by complicated check out process buyers could decide to give up buying your product online, rather than try and figure out how the system works.

Registration process

There are several sites that have a pre-requisite to register before the final buying process can be undertaken. This can cause some buyers to abandon the shopping cart rather than register for the site.

Be Sure to Satisfy Customer Needs

Online businesses who fail to satisfy customer needs are finding that customers are leaving their sites, never to return. So what can you do to stem the flow and improve your customer retention?

A few well tested ideas and site improvements can make all the difference. The aim is to boost customer confidence in your site and what you sell.

Remember Abandoned Cart Details

Ecommerce website's need to remember the items that customers abandon and make it easy for them to buy when they return to site at a later date. Sweetening the deal with free shipping, coupons and special discounts is also a great way to encourage online shoppers to revisit your site to complete their purchases.

Add a 'save for later' button

It may be that your customer is busy or is interrupted in the middle of buying. You could substantially increase sales if customers feel they can come back to the site within a reasonable time and carry on with their order.

Consider return and money-back policies

Having a money back return policy shows customers that you stand by your product and increases their confidence in buying from you. It also shows that you care about the satisfaction of your customer. Specify clearly how the customers should handle the process of returning the item, and when and how they can actually expect to get their money back.

Maximize cross-sell opportunities

Cross selling is the strategy of pushing new products to current customers based on their past purchases. Cross selling is achieved by including in your confirmation email other items they may like. When the product is dispatched you can again include special product offers and other promotional items to encourage your customer to return to your website and buy some more items.

The essence of any successful cross-selling strategy is recommending the right product at the right time. To do this, you must have information on the purchase history of the customer and product relationships.

Quick page downloads

Minimize the use of graphics only to those that are essential to enhance the look of your site, and make sure that you compress the file size. Check your XHTML to avoid bloated coding. Make sure your site is designed using CSS and XXHTML to make it quick loading.

Keep your site easy to navigate

Use simple page design focused on moving customers toward the completion of their goal. Don't clutter the page with dozens of features and links that most customers don't want.

Make sure your cart software is up to date

If your cart software is more than two or three years old, chances are it's missing a lot of the features that are standard these days and that shoppers have come to expect. Like any online technology, shopping carts have come a long way and it may be time to update your current software.

Examine what visitors are searching in your site

Your site search can provide you with important information that can improve your conversion rate. Check what visitors are searching for in your site and make sure you have these products in stock.

Also watch out for those searches that do not bring any results - because this means that people are looking for products on your site that you do not carry. If a sizeable number of visitors are looking for the same products, maybe you need to consider stocking these products as well. If you are carrying those products and yet customer searches yield no results, then your search dictionary may not cover the terms used by the visitors. This indicates that customers are using different terminologies for your products that you did not expect, and the word is not included in your search dictionary. The customer is ready to buy - unfortunately, your site search does not anticipate other ways a customer will look for the product. In this instance, you must get your web design company to correct this problem.

Communicate product offers clearly

Use clear, concise wording. More importantly, explain clearly the prices and sales terms up front, and not at the very end of the buying process. By putting the total costs including shipping and other charges at the start of the ordering process, the potential customer can decide whether he or she is willing to pay the price for the product. Doing so will minimise the rate of shoppers abandoning your site's shopping cart.

Alert users that they are abandoning their shopping carts

One of the strategies being adopted by some big companies to prevent shopping cart abandonment is by having a popup reminder when a user it about to exit the site without purchasing any of the items placed on their shopping carts. Try offering an additional discount in these pop-up's. The downside, of course, is that many users block pop-up's so the visitor may not see your reminder.

Keep in touch to Stop Your Customers Departing

If a customer abandons their shopping cart find out why with a follow-up call or email. If they are prepared to respond, you can use the opportunity to make changes and possibly reassure or give them the information they need. You may even be able to win back the sale.

Google Bounce Rates and What They Really Mean

SEO experts usually add [Google Analytics](#) to their client's web pages as this enables them to track the success of their optimisation and promotion campaigns on behalf of the client.

Many SEO companies also send their clients a copy of the Google Analytics report, or at least a summary of it.

If a client sees the full Google report this will include a reference to an overall Bounce Rate. This is a measure that can cause confusion, especially as Google can show an overall bounce rate for a website and the bounce rate of all the individual pages.

Many people say that bounce rates below about 5%, or above 95% can signal some sort of technical problem with a website. And bounce rates of higher than 70% or 75% nearly always indicate a problem.

However, I believe bounce rates are not as clear cut as this.

Looking at the Google Analytics for QBS PC Help these show that the overall bounce rate 'site wide' is 73.28%. But for our home page the bounce rate was 44.80% and our blog's entry page only 30%.

Other pages have bounce rates varying from 0% (freelinkpopularity.XHTML) and 100% (removingtemporaryfiles.XHTML), so what does all this mean?

Let's analyse a few different scenarios to get a better idea of what a bounce rate is and what the figures really picture:

If a site has a splash page intro, with only the words 'click here' on it. The bounce rate is likely to be very low as the next move is to click the button and go to the sites home page.

A visitor is looking for sites selling widgets in order to find the best place to buy one online. They enter the widget product page from a search query, make a note of the site and then promptly leave. The bounce rate will naturally be high for these types of visitors.

A visitor spends longer looking at a page than the timeout period for a visitor session. This contributes to a high bounce rate.

The visitor has a query which is immediately answered by your landing page (not necessarily your home page). The bounce rate will be high.

The purpose of your site is for people to click on ad sense ads, and these ads are well-targeted on your page. You want that bounce rate to be high because it shows that people are clicking on the ad sense links and are moving on to visit another website, hopefully to provide you with some commission.

You attract a lot of traffic for a very general keyword. Only a small proportion of these visitors will be looking for your particular product or service. The bounce rate could be very high because of those that just leave your site.

The thing to remember is that a high bounce rate is not always bad news. If someone visits your site as a result of a Google search they could enter your site via any number of targeted pages, find exactly what they want and then leave. There's a very happy visitor, but the bounce rate is closer to 100% rather than 0%.

It's also worth noting that there are a number of technical issues which could make a bounce rate artificially high.

Most search queries can be categorized as:

- navigational queries
- transactional queries
- informational queries

These account for 80% of all search queries.

The queries represent people who need more information before they are ready to take action. If your site has an FAQ page this could help most of these individuals get the answer to their questions.

For example, a search for "widget start-up times" indicates a person who needs more information before making a purchase. Instead of sending them to a product page, provide the information they need, and then send them to the appropriate product. Always take time to provide any needed information before asking for the sale.

You can find the main keywords people use to find your site through Google Analytics "entrance keywords." It's a good idea to sort these keywords on bounce rates and average revenue to spot opportunities and problems.

From these entrance keywords you can learn:

- Whether you are having a problem with certain kinds of traffic. For example, if you have a very high bounce rate with your paid search, you can drill down to learn if it is caused by bad keywords or bad ad copy.
- Whether you are having a problem with certain pages. From there, you might use Google Website Optimizer to test your site.

If you have a problem on the whole site you should consider some form of user testing.

Website Accessibility Guidelines

With website accessibility high on the UK Governments agenda web designers should certainly incorporate standards of design that allow site access to everyone, regardless of their health.

"The power of the Web is in its universality. Access by everyone regardless of disability is an essential aspect" said Tim Berners-Lee, W3C Director and inventor of the World Wide Web.

This means that web developers and designers should adhere to the excellent guidelines prepared by the W3C.

By adopting these precepts the sites designed will be truly accessible to all, including the search engines who love a well-structured site.

Accessibility in design

To achieve user friendly websites we must include support for site visitors who cannot differentiate between certain colours and for visitors who use devices that have non-colour or non-visual displays. This can easily be achieved by using CSS to change colours and even produce plain text based pages for viewing or printing.

Presentation and Style

A consistent style of presentation on each page allows users to locate navigation elements more easily. The ability to skip navigation elements can help your site visitors to find important site content. This helps people with learning and reading disabilities but also makes navigation easier for all users.

XXHTML for document structure and CSS for layout

Good practice is to use XXHTML to convey the document structure of a web page and cascading style sheets (CSS) to control the layout and presentation of the page.

Misusing mark-up for a presentation effect (e.g. using a table for page layout or a font tag to change the font size) makes it difficult for users with specialised assistive software to understand the organisation of the page or to navigate through it.

Web pages that use cascading style sheets for layout and presentation are able to be read accurately by browsers that do not support style sheets and by browsers that have disabled the support for style sheets because the basic XXHTML page includes all the descriptive text for that document.

Specify the language used

It's good practice to define the primary natural language of the website in the header section of the XHTML (e.g. xml:lang=en-gb if your site is written in English). Doing this helps screen readers to discover the language your pages are written in, so it can pronounce the words properly when it reads them aloud. This feature also helps Google in providing search results, even if you are writing in English, but especially if you are writing in some other language.

Page Titles

Check that each document has a unique and descriptive title and that the title does not use excessive punctuation.

There are no clearly defined rules for which characters to use as title separators. However, document titles should definitely not contain punctuation used for decorative purposes, for instance :: Title :: or == Title ==. Each punctuation character may be read out loud by screen readers, which will make listening to the titles very tedious.

Another screen reader, Apple's VoiceOver, reads "»" as right pointing double angle quotation mark. That rules out that character for use not only in document titles, but also in links, where it unfortunately is quite popular.

So what can be used as a safe page title separator?

The general consensus seems to include the following choices:

- site name | page name - browser name
- site name - page name - browser name
- site name : page name - browser name

At QBS PC help we use the second option, the dash.

Another good reason for good page titles is that Google displays them in its search results. It also ranks keywords higher when they appear in a sites page titles.

Metadata

By providing good and descriptive metadata search functionality is improved. For instance, when several META elements provide language-dependent information about a document, search engines may filter on the Lang attribute to display search results using the language preferences of the user.

Text Size

Use relative units (ems, percentages) rather than absolutes (pixels) for font sizes and line heights. This will allow all users to easily change the text size for comfortable viewing.

Another good reason to use relative units is that Windows Internet Explorer will not allow readers to resize text that has been sized in pixels.

The ALT Tag

Make sure a meaningful text equivalent is provided for every image (e.g. via the "alt" tag). Screen readers read it, text-only browsers display it, Google finds it easy to index, and visual browsers can display it as a 'tooltip' or on the status line.

Many people misunderstand the real meaning of the alt attribute. It is meant to provide meaningful, informative text that should be used as an alternative when an image or other graphical object cannot be displayed. So this simple step of using alt tags can be a great help in making your site accessible.

Links

Opening links in new windows can confuse or disorientate visitors, especially those using assistive technology devices and software. So it's best to avoid the target="_blank" option and let people leave your site when they click on an external link.

The target of each hyperlink should be clearly identified with an informative link title, meaningful enough to make sense when read out of context.

Form Fields

Use descriptive labels for all form fields and make sure that users can tab successfully through your form fields. This allows screen readers to intelligently announce what a particular input element is, by reading the label.

People, who are blind, have difficulty seeing, or who are using devices with small or no displays are unable to scan the page to get an overview of a page or to quickly find a link. These users will often tab from one link to the next or review a list of available links on another page (e.g. a well-designed site map).

Consider Different Devices

By using cascading style sheets different results can be produced on a web page depending on whether a site is accessed via a browser, a text-to-speech reader, a mobile phone or a PDA.

Printing site pages using CSS

Using CSS your pages should render well when a page is printed.

To see the output of a page when it's printed, click File, Print Preview *(this works for Firefox and Chrome, my favourite browsers. If you are using Internet Explorer 7 or later you have to click the arrow by the printer icon and choose Print Preview from the displayed list).*

If your print display looks less than perfect, get your web designer to create a CSS based print page to tidy things up.

JavaScript

Where visitors have turned java scripts off in their browsers try and provide equivalent information on an alternative accessible page so they can still see it. Even better follow the advice above and use XXHTML to convey the structure of the web page and cascading style sheets to control the layout and presentation so that your sites pages will still work with older browsers.

Social Marketing Guidelines

Social marketing is often used a supplementary add on to SEO campaigns as used wisely it can propel visitors to your website. However, before you undertake this step all the other SEO steps must be completed so your site is in good shape to receive more traffic.

The largest social network is currently Facebook but the newly launched Google+ may increase its user base very quickly. Another very popular social hangout is Twitter.

Set Up A Facebook Business Account

Go to the Facebook sign up page and create your Business Account - http://www.facebook.com/.

As you go through the set-up process, remember that you must categorise your company in the right area to help people find your business.

Setting Up a Business Page

One of the first things you need to do when you set up a new Facebook Page is to give it a title. A tip with this is to think about using rich keywords related to your business that you would like to be found for. Use your own collection of keywords and choose the main one that currently attracts people to your website or blog.

You also want to choose a good, clear photo for your Facebook Page. This can be a personal picture or your company's logo.

When setting up your page you will have to decide if you want visitors to be able to post messages for everybody to see or if you only want your own messages shown. It may be best to allow everything, as this will help to build your content faster because people love to post messages.

When you are logged in click Edit Page at the top of the page and edit your settings by then clicking the Update Info link. Select the options you require for your business.

If the posts become out of control or unflattering, you can always delete individual posts or change the settings later.

One of the great things about Facebook is the ease of set up. Setting up a business page is really just about carefully finding your way around and following the various prompts.

Other Tabs

Dropdowns from the Edit Page include an Update Info link where you will see your settings page so you can create a full-length version of your company information.

There are also Tabs on the left of the Update Info page for Custom Facebook Apps that you can choose to add to your Business Page, like RSS feeds Pictures and other applications.

Once you fill in all of the basic information, save everything.

You have now successfully created your Facebook Business Page.

Provide Interesting and Useful Comments

It is important for you to let people know about your Business Page. This is where having an already active Business Page comes in handy because if you already have a lot of people who are interested in your Company, you can suggest your new Facebook Business Page to them.

Just like in other areas of social media (blog's, LinkedIn Twitter, etc.), it's extremely important to provide interesting content to your readers.

You should add fresh content and updates to your Facebook Business Page on a regular basis (daily or weekly). This will keep your fans returning to your page. And Fans that do return, are far more likely to become paying customers at some point.

When you update your Facebook Business Page you'll need to find a good balance between getting your business message across to your Facebook Fans without commercially spamming them. Keep the updates light and useful rather than advertising-heavy.

Offering regular and useful content will naturally encourage interaction because you are giving people something to respond to. You don't need to come up with all the content yourself, either. You might just link to an interesting article or blog post you have found on the web that's related to your business or industry.

To help with this content creation you can search for applications that can pull your blog posts or twitter tweets straight into your page. These plug-ins are not hard to find. Just use Google and search for the plug-ins you need.

Ultimately, the more time you invest in your business's Facebook page, the better response you will get from it.

Marketing and Branding

Marketing and branding your Facebook Business Page can take time. You can't just set up a Business Page and hope that people find you. If there is nothing on your page that interests people, no one will become a fan.

Try posting open-ended questions to entice responses from your fans such as what is your favourite widget? What do you like about this widget or how did you find our widget?

Posting links and photos are also a great way to get people interested, plus they are more visually appealing so people are more likely to pay attention.

Posting links that point to your website has the benefit of pushing people to your site to find out more about you and your Company. Try posting on your Business page every time you update your blog.

You have to be a little proactive about getting Fans, especially when your Page is new.

A couple of good ideas are to add your Facebook URL to your email signature and use the free badges and widgets that Facebook provides and add them to your website. And don't forget to mention your business page in your blog posts and your twitter tweets. If you have a newsletter, mention your Facebook Business Pages to your subscribers.

The more people in your network who find out about your page, the more friends you can make, and the larger your network becomes.

Once you have some supporters of your Page, you want to encourage more dialogue and interaction between yourself and them and even among each other. The biggest impact comes from simply having conversations with people.

Facebook Advertising

Facebook Advertising is a worth exploring. This allows you to place small display type ads in the right sidebar of Facebook pages and profiles. Currently it's not as effective in pure responses as a well-targeted Google AdWords campaign. But it's not really the same kind of vehicle and in any case you won't find Google AdWords in Facebook at the moment.

Advertising space is a bit limited in these Facebook ads so use it wisely. Your headline (25 characters) should grab attention immediately with a strong benefit. There's another 135 characters, in the body of the ad, you can use to attract your potential followers. You also have the option to upload an image. Take this option. It may be the most important aspect of your ad as Facebook users are very image driven (it's the largest photo sharing site in the world) and the visual graphic you choose will make or break an ad.

To find out more about advertising with Facebook see this page - http://www.facebook.com/advertising.

Customising Facebook

There are many more things you can add to your Facebook Business Pages such as customisable app's, connecting the main page to your Twitter feed and blog. There are many other app's and widgets to choose from.

The introduction of Facebook Apps is probably one of the most popular things done by Facebook. They released their API so that developers and business owners could collaborate

to create fun and cool applications that engage users. The applications created so far widely vary in purpose - some are fun games, some are useful, some are directly related and tied into businesses and some are just plain utilities, but still useful.

Many popular applications have hundreds of thousands of monthly active users and that information speaks for itself.

If you want to read more about creating your own applications for Facebook, you should check out the Facebook Developers page. Once you have an application created, be sure to add it to your profile and to your Facebook group and page.

Facebook Widgets

In addition to the app's you can also make use of Facebook Widgets that can help spread the word about your new Facebook Business Page. You can check these out at http://www.facebook.com/facebook-widgets.

Once you have something like this on your website and blog, visitors can just click on it and they will land on your Facebook Business Page where they can become a fan.

Finally

If you don't have a Facebook Business Page yet, head over to http://www.facebook.com and get started. You won't regret it!

Using Twitter to promote your business

Twitter is a micro-blogging platform that is free to use and is available to everyone. But there is a certain degree of etiquette involved in any type of social networking, so here are a few suggestions about how to promote your business by using Twitter.

Set up an Account with Twitter

The first thing to do is create your twitter account and then populate it with interesting tweets, which is Twitters way of describing a micro-blogging post containing no more than 140 characters.

Before you get too involved with this new account and all the tweets you intend to do, take some time to choose or design a customised Twitter background for your business page. Far too often individuals and even businesses go for the common default ones provided by Twitter. Here's a really good blog post that's all about twitter backgrounds and why you should keep away from the default ones - www.mashable.com/2009/05/23/twitter-backgrounds

Once you start to deal with your tweets, re-tweets and a growing list of followers, its best to use a free tool like Tweetdeck to help you with your Twitter marketing campaign. Tweetdeck is a desktop application that allows you to review and post updates to your Twitter Account. You can even use this tool to update your Twitter and Facebook pages at the same time!

Tweetdeck lets you sort the people and businesses you follow into groups and allows you to limit the number of tweets you view at any one time. It also lets you remove all the tweets you have seen with just one click.

Adding Interesting and Informative Tweets

By adding tweets that are interesting and relevant about your products and services, you can keep your tweets current and therefore popular with Twitter users. You should also add relevant news about your 'industry' to keep your Tweets interesting and varied.

To build up a following you should begin following people and businesses that are already using Twitter. As you follow others, most of them will follow you back. This is an important step as a blank Twitter account will not attract anyone.

You can use Twitter to point people to content on your website perhaps to articles you have written or the products or services you want to sell.

Bear in mind that Google indexes Twitter so your Twitter business page can appear in the organic search results.

So how can you follow others?

The best way to follow others is to do some research.

Go to Twitter.com and run a search by using keywords that are related to the industry you are targeting. For example if you are trying to sell an application for Apples IPhone you would search using the keywords such as IPhone, IPhone App and IPhone Apps and anything else that might find people who use Twitter and own an IPhone.

If your tweets are interesting to your readers you will find that other people will begin to follow you as they stumble across your Twitter business page.

Another way to pick up followers after you have logged-in is to click the Find People option at the top of the page and then enter keywords, related industries, locations or other details to locate potential followers and begin following them.

Always respond when your followers tweet you. If you do not keep up with you hard earned following it may begin to crumble. If you have a large following to maintain outsource you re-tweets or assign the task to one of your employees. Also make use of twitter tools like Tweetdeck to help with your twitter marketing campaign.

As you develop your Twitter marketing campaign you need to keep your followers engaged so you will have to tweet often, preferably daily or weekly.

Ensure that you re-tweet relevant tweets from other Twitter followers. If they then start to follow you will begin to benefit from all their followers. Re-tweeting is certainly one of the fastest ways to build your own Twitter followers.

By checking search.twitter.com frequently you can look for your brand name to see what customers are saying about your company. You can follow these tweets whether they are good or bad and get involved in the conversations. Your customers will be thrilled when you thank them for their kind words or even rectify a problem for them.

The ability of your customers who use Twitter to contact your management team is an invaluable resource. This one to one exchange permits you to keep close tabs on customer viewpoints, concerns and interests and is a great way to tap into social networking to test new ideas and to ask for customer feedback.

Avoid Spamming your followers

Beware - if you start to spam your followers they will quickly un-follow you. Spam activity includes things like only tweeting about your own products or services or re-tweeting the same URL time and time again. Too many frivolous tweets can also be classed as spam.

It's best to avoid these sorts of tweets if you want to continue to build up and retain your Twitter followers.

A few really useful Twitter tools

Twitter Feed

Twitter feed let's you show your blog posts directly in Twitter. It also allows you to post your tweets to your blog (by installing a WordPress widget). This two way interaction can push Twitter users to your Blog and get your Blog readers following you on Twitter.

http://www.twitterfeed.com

Twuffer

This is a Twitter tweet scheduler and is very easy to use. It lets you tweet ahead and lets you select a posting schedule by day and time. if you are publishing content about your product or service this is a great tool to use. Set your tweets days, weeks or a month ahead and feed content to readers in addition to your regular tweets.

http://www.twuffer.com

TweetBeep

This great little application let's you manage your online Twitter reputation and sends email alerts whenever someone tweets about your name, your business or your domain name. This is really useful if you are concerned about branding and online identity.

http://www.tweetbeep.com

Quitter

If you want to know who has stopped following you sign up for this service. This can be a useful tool to help you find out what a reader hated about your recent tweet that caused them to stop following you. This lets you fine tune your tweets so you can retain your following.

http://www.useqwitter.com

Twitoria

Here's the best way to find out which people never use Twitter or post infrequently so you can delete them right from the Twitoria website.

http://www.twitoria.com

LinkedIn was launched way back in 2003 and is promoted as 'the place where professionals stay connected'.

A basic account with [LinkedIn](#) is free, with additional features available to paid subscribers.

As with other networking sites like Facebook, users set up a free account and put together an online profile, only with LinkedIn these profiles look more like resumes and CV's. While some social networking sites produce lists of movies, music, bands and favourite quotes, as evidence of a person's persona, LinkedIn emphasizes professional affiliations, work experiences and job titles as its primary themes.

This networking site provides a huge array of services, but you will not need to use every last one to reap the benefits of having a LinkedIn account. In fact, LinkedIn can be very low maintenance, which can be a huge benefit to busy professionals.

For users who aren't actively seeking work or clients, logging in just once a month can pay off with huge results.

To set up a basic account LinkedIn requires little more than an email address and a password to get you started - although there's no benefit in using the service if you don't also fill in your profile.

The profile is very similar to a resume, with a summary section and job history prominently displayed. LinkedIn prompts you to upload other information about yourself, including a photograph.

Until your profile is completely filled in, the site will remind you periodically to complete the process - and it's mutually useful that it does. Users will get more out of LinkedIn when their profiles are complete. And the more user data the site has, the better an experience it can deliver.

The next step is to connect to people you know. You can find them by importing names and addresses from an email program. Most of the big webmail services are supported, but to grab contacts from Outlook, Apple Mail, and other desktop email clients, you need to first create a .csv, .txt, or .vcf file and then upload it to LinkedIn.

As you connect with co-workers, friends, business partners, etc., LinkedIn will begin to suggest people you may know based on shared relationship and company affiliations. The suggestions are unobtrusive and easy to accept or hide with one click of the mouse.

Although you can use LinkedIn to find people profiles which are related to a business or service, most people will use it to find jobs, or if you are a recruiter to find candidates for jobs.

If you have a big network and a lot of contacts which are connected to your LinkedIn network, you'll end up higher in the ranking of searches.

Naturally heavy LinkedIn networkers are using every trick in the book in order to increase their number of contacts and to give each other recommendations to end up high in the rankings.

Quality is therefore very relative on LinkedIn, especially since you cannot communicate directly with one-another. It only has email options, no instant messaging or Skype integration. You really have to know where to look and what to do in order to be effective.

Is LinkedIn Good for Business Users?

The new LinkedIn Answers service lets you ask a question to your network who can then give you an 'Answer'. It is published for everyone to see, so it does have a great positive effect on quality on the network by adding a lot of useful information.

Answers are also rated as 'good' or 'best'. But sadly you just need one 'best' Answer to get to the Leader board, where the quantity counts again; the more Answers you give, the higher you get on the Leader board. LinkedIn are still tweaking this service and will undoubtedly improve it over time.

[See LinkedIn's own description of Answers](#)

This new feature makes LinkedIn a bit more business friendly because it lets you express yourself to your personal network. Also it does the same the other way around, making it possible to select certain communication styles amongst your network and targeting that effectively. This is definitely a first step toward a real business use of LinkedIn.

Tip: *If you have a big network and a lot of contacts which are connected to your LinkedIn network, you'll end up higher in the ranking of searches.*

LinkedIn is taking the first steps towards a more quality oriented network with 'Answers'. LinkedIn networkers are now openly asking 'how can we make real business use out of it, make money with it?'

Somewhere in the near future LinkedIn will have to address that need, because serious competition is just around the corner and could give networkers a real alternative.

Despite some drawbacks LinkedIn is one of the best and well known portals for job seekers and recruiters. But now it is slowly becoming a worthy addition to the social armoury of all online businesses.

Is Google + A Good Place To Promote Your Website?

Although Google+ is a comparatively new social networking phenomenon it has great potential as a business tool that can help to keep your site featured on Google's search result pages. However like any social network to make full use of Google+ your friends and customers must frequent it.

So what is Google+

Google+ Pages allow every business big or small the chance to maintain a Google+ profile and use the service to communicate and interact with existing customers and offer incentives and promotions to attract new customers. Google+ pages help you build deeper relationships with customers by sharing your thoughts, links, photos and promotions with the right people at the right times. Want to offer a behind-the-scenes look at your product team in action? Highlight a unique sale? Get live, face-to-face feedback by holding multi-person video chats with customers all over the world? With Google+ Pages, you can share what matters in a way that matters most to your business.

The Basic Features

Circles

Different people have different interests, and on Google+ the way you talk to your followers can reflect that.

Circles make it easy to group them in ways that make the most sense to your business, such as location, interest and more. You can share the right messages with the right groups to make your content more relevant to all your Google+ followers.

You can create meaningful Circles by dragging contacts from the top of the screen onto to the Circles at the bottom of the screen. You can create as many Google+ Circles as you like and call them anything you wish. Your contacts cannot see which Circles they're in and each contact can be in multiple circles.

When you post something (a photo, video, text or link) you can choose which of your Circles can see it, or whether it should be visible on the web.

If you wish you can delete any Circle you've created.

Streams

Steams are like a Facebook Newsfeed - everything being shared by the people in your Circles, be it words, pictures, videos or links.

The Google Plus Streams are not as easy to scan and read as a Newsfeed – although the Stream page itself is a clean enough design, but the focus on comments can make it a bit confusing to work through at a single sitting.

You can also filter Streams by Circles (Friends, Acquaintances, Customers etc.)

Publish posts

Once people are following your page, how do you start talking to them? You can use your stream to post relevant content, including photos and videos, and even engage your followers directly by asking questions that start discussions. You can make your posts public so people can find them using search, or use Circles to tailor specific messages to specific followers.

Sparks

The Google+ newsfeed channel, which you fill either by choosing one of the pre-sets (cycling, fashion, films, football), or by running a search (and it auto-suggests categories as you type).

It's currently easier to share a story from within Google+ than it is from the web – grabbing a story within Sparks to is as easy as hitting 'Share' (while sharing a story from the outside web means copying and pasting links into the Share box on Google's new universal tool bar).

If Google continues tweaking Sparks and Streams, it may have just invented the killer personalised news service.

Hangouts

Hangouts let you set up one-click video conversations with customers and colleagues alike. You can get face-to-face product feedback, help customers solve problems or simply get to know them better.

Collaborate with remote colleagues on shared documents in real time - all over high-quality, easy-to-use video chat. You can even broadcast and record your conversations using Hangouts On Air, letting you reach thousands of people around the world all at once!

SPECIFIC BUSINESS FEATURES

Private sharing - When you create a post, you can now label it as "restricted." This will limit its visibility to those inside your organization (plus a few external partners if you so choose), and can't be re-shared with anyone on the outside.

Administrative controls - Administrators can set up company-wide sharing defaults for posts and Hangouts.

Hangout & Calendar integration - Since July, Google Plus users have been able to organize Hangouts directly from Gmail, and open Google Docs documents during those meetings. Now, users can attach Hangouts to Google Calendar events, enabling attendees to join a Hangout directly from the Calendar entry or original invite.

These business tools are available for free through to the end of 2013, but users will then need a paid subscription to Google's cloud-based software for businesses, Google Apps, for continued access.

Understand your Google+ activity

Google's measurement tools will soon make it easier to understand your Google Plus activity: what people are saying about your business, how many +1's your business receives and how these affect your traffic.

Google Plus search

Search on Google+ can help you as much as it helps your customers. You can search keywords, names or anything else, and use your search results to understand better what people are saying about your brand, reward your fans with rebate coupons or even jump in to help resolve customer service issues.

Ripples

Ripples let you see your posts spread across Google Plus, who's sharing and re-sharing your content and whose opinions matter. Use it to identify influencers and add them to a circle, or see how communities are formed around your content.

Social reports in Google Analytics

How do +1's affect user behaviour? A new set of social reports in Google Analytics will show you. Measure +1's and how engagement on your site changes when personalized recommendations help people find your content across Google products.

Also you'll be able to see which of your web pages people are sharing or engaging with within Google Analytics.

Easy Guide to SEO Index

FINAL NOTE: *QBS PC Help do not recommend any particular SEO company as we believe in letting our readers decide for themselves about the company they wish to use (a simple search "seo companies UK" using Google will reveal many UK sites offering SEO services).*

Another eBook to Read

The Easy PC Repair Guide

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Learn how to remove unwanted programs, put your bloated Windows Operating System on a crash diet, optimise your hard drive with a few mouse clicks and speed up your computer using the tools provided by Windows.

This unique guide also covers the installation of computer memory modules, graphic cards, hard drives, power units, CD/DVD drives, processors (CPU) and motherboards. And it is well illustrated to help guide you through the many complexities of the computer world.

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