INTERNET MARKETING COURSE

BY MARK THOMPSON

STAYONSEARCH.COM
Thank You for signing up for my free Internet Marketing course. Regardless of if you are a newbie or an experienced Internet Marketer; I guarantee you will find this course to be extremely useful. I hope that by the end of this course you will be able to apply some of these marketing techniques to your company or personal marketing strategy. If you have any questions about any of the material that is covered, please feel free to e-mail me at mark@stayonsearch.com and I will do my best to respond back with an answer, as soon as I can.

What's Included in the Course:

Week 1 - Strategy: Setting Goals, Expectations, and Roles/Responsibilities

Week 2 - Market Research & Analysis: Know Your Target Audience Before Spending Marketing Dollars

Week 3 - Paid Search: Using Pay-Per-Click Strategies to Drive Relevant Traffic that Converts

Week 4 - Search Engine Optimization: How to Gain Free Exposure and Traffic Using Search Engines

Week 5 - Content Creation: Creating Compelling, Valuable, and Viral Content

Week 6 - Link Building: How to Find Quality Link Building Opportunities

Week 7 - Local Search: Capturing Localized Traffic to Your Website

Week 8 - Social Media: Build Your Brand, Drive Traffic and Form Relationships Using Social Media

Week 9 - Making Money: How to Monetize for Your Website or Blog

Week 10 - Website Analytics/Testing: Understanding Your Audience and Increase Conversions

Bonus - Tools of the Trade: The Internet Marketers Toolbox
WEEK 1 – CREATING A STRATEGY

Your strategy is the foundation for your Internet Marketing efforts, so it is important to identify what you are looking to get out of your marketing strategy. Too many marketing campaigns fail because a company fails to take the time to recognize clear objectives and goals. They start spending money and resources without having a plan on what they are looking to accomplish. Don’t let this happen to you or your company!

Let’s walk through step-by-step how you can understand what your goals are and set realistic expectations for when and how you can get to where you want to be.

UNDERSTAND YOUR GOALS

Whenever I work with a new client, I also ask them a series of questions to help me, as well as the client understand what it is we are trying to achieve. I have put together a list of questions (along with detailed explanations) that you should answer yourself or your client, to help formulate your goals and objectives.

1) *What are the primary goals for your Internet Marketing efforts? What are your secondary goals?*

This is an extremely broad question because your goals can be anything that you are looking to improve, on your website or within your organization. It could be quantitative factors like increase sign-ups, downloads, twitter followers, blog comments, time on site, Facebook fans, purchases, etc… It can also be qualitative factors such as improving company efficiencies, customer service, minimizing failure, or better understanding your target audience.

Once you have identified those goals, you should place them on a scale of importance so that you can prioritize which goals are most important to you or your company. Depending on how you prioritize your goals can change the way your strategy is structured.

2) *Are you looking for short-term or long-term results? If both, what are they?*

Depending on what your goals are and when you are looking to see results, it can change the methods and tactics you use. For example, if you are looking for instant results, using tactics like Paid Search and E-mail Marketing are going to yield much quicker results, compared to tactics like Search Engine Optimization and Social Media.

If you are looking to incorporate both a short and long term strategy, you should outline the tactics you will use for each.

3) *What KPIs (key performance indicators) are important to you?*

Key Performance Indicators are going to be the data you want to use to track if your strategy is successful or not. For example, if you are going to be redesigning a website, the KPIs for the redesign could be Time on Site and Bounce Rate. The goals and KPIs are going to be to increase the user experience and increase Time on Site and lower the Bounce Rate. Depending on your goals, your KPIs will vary.
It is important that when you are tracking KPIs that you have a baseline set. A baseline means that you have benchmark data to compare when you began your campaign, with the data moving forward.

4) How will you be tracking the success of each marketing campaign?

For each marketing campaign, you will want to make sure you have some sort of way to measure the effectiveness. For tracking data on your website, you will want to use something like Google Analytics so that you can track user engagement. If people will have the option of calling by phone, using a phone tracking solution like Google Voice or Voicestar will allow you to use a unique tracking number to see call data. Other tracking options like coupon codes, printable certificates and tracking URLs can also help to measure and track your campaigns.

5) What budget, resources, and time do you have to devote towards your Internet Marketing strategy?

Having a strategy is great, but if you don’t execute on it, it means nothing. Whatever tactics you decide to implement you need to make sure you have the appropriate resources to support it and see that it is successful. This can include hiring experts, giving employee training, outsourcing, and any other people that are going to be used to help execute the strategy. In terms of budget, you will need to plan to spend money on design, development, tools/software, advertising, premium accounts, etc… For time, depending on who is executing on the strategy; may mean using many of your internal employees, which can take away from other responsibilities and aspects of your business.

6) Have you accepted room for failure?

Let’s face it, when does a marketing strategy go 100% the way you planned it? Not very often. However, the more time you spend on the strategy, the more you can reduce failure. But even with the best strategy, comes some sort of failure. You need to plan for failure and setbacks. If you have failure planned in your strategy it can make overcoming those failures much easier. Before you go into something, know what the possible consequences could be.

Especially with things like landing page optimization and running paid search campaigns, failure is inevitable. However as you begin to test you will continue to improve and maximize ROI.

Creating Your Internet Marketing Strategy

I don’t want to go into to many details as far as which marketing strategies you should choose, but I do want to give you an overview of what your strategy should include.

Target Audience Profile: Something that I have found extremely useful is creating an audience profile for who your target customer/user would be. Creating a factious name, company, position, and interests can help to keep in mind the type of person you are catering to during your strategy creation.
Keyword Research: I will be going into greater detail on keyword research during week 2, but I thought I would at least mention how important it is. Understanding what your audience is searching for to find your products and services is huge (especially for PPC and SEO). Putting your brand and website in front of people who are actively searching for what you do, it a great way of building an audience and creating sales.

Competitor Analysis: This is another aspect that will be covered during week 2, but again I thought it should be mentioned as an overview to your strategy. Identifying who are direct competitors both from an industry standpoint and search engine standpoint will help to find your strengths, weaknesses, threats, and more importantly YOUR OPPORTUNITIES.

Outline of Tactics: Your strategy should include which IM tactics you will be using to help accomplish your goals. Things like SEO, PPC, Email Marketing, Social Media, Retargeting, Website Testing, etc. are all tactics. However you should take it another step further and breakdown each of the tactics and what is included in each. For example, if you are implementing SEO to your site, you may want to list out a content development strategy that involves a blog integration, blog content creation, press release submission, article submission, and guest blogging. By doing this, you can have a better understanding of what needs to be done to complete each of these tasks.

Timeline: I use a software program called Preceden to help create a timeline of milestones and key points in the strategy. Of course there are many other timeline tools out there, so I’m sure you could figure out a system that works for you. The point is to outline events in your strategy that are important and include checkpoints/milestones in your strategy.
**Expectations:** Expectations should be in line with what you outline as your short-term and long-term goals. You should also keep in mind these three things that will help dictate when you can start to see results.

1. Current Conditions of the Website
2. Competition/Industry Saturation
3. Willingness/Components of the Strategy

These factors are ultimately what will tell you how easy or hard it will be to gain search engine visibility. It is important to have a full understanding of each tactic and how long it will take until you start to see results.

Other posts I have written on Expectations:

- 6 Shocking Truths About Internet Marketing
- What to Consider When Assessing SEO Expectations
- 4 Tips for Agencies on Setting Expectations

**DELEGATING ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

Now that you have your strategy in place, you need to begin delegating responsibilities across your company or contractors. Everyone that is part of the strategy should know what it is they need to do. This may include a learning curve and time for training to get everyone up to speed on what it is they should be doing and the RIGHT way of doing things.

When you are about to move forward, make sure all people involved have the following:

- Overall Timeline & Milestones
- Individual and Department Action Items
- Individual Deadlines & Goals
- Follow Up Meetings Scheduled

Some people may need more handholding than others, so make sure there is someone that is leading the charge and assisting in making sure the strategy and execution is going smoothly.

**WEEK 2 – MARKET RESEARCH & ANALYSIS**

It's funny how many people think they know who their target audience is, what they search, who their competitors are, and what their customers want. But until they actually do the research, they are just assuming. Assuming in Internet Marketing can lead to wasted time, resources and money!

**KEYWORD RESEARCH**
Keyword Research is vital to any effective search engine optimization campaign. If you optimize your site for the wrong keywords you could miss out on lots of traffic and potential customers that are trying to find what you do. I have broken up the keyword research process into phases to make it easy to understand.

1. **Initial Keyword List**: To start your keyword research you want to brainstorm a starter list of keywords, phrases, and terms that you feel people would use to find you. Since you probably have a pretty good idea about your industry, you could probably come up with 5-10 keywords that people would use to find you. That list that you just created will act as a starting point to find other keywords and phrases that you may have missed or didn't think about.

2. **Analytics Data**: If possible, look through your analytics data to see which keywords people used to find you. Ideally if you have goals set up, for example, you are tracking a thank you page on your contact form, sort your keywords by contact forms submitted. This will help you find keywords that most importantly converted to leads or sales.

3. **Keyword Research Tool**: There are plenty of good keyword research tools that you can use to find additional terms, along with their search volume. Even some of the free keyword tools out there are almost, or as powerful, as the paid tools. Put your initial keyword list into these keyword tools and they will generate a huge list of related terms that you can add to your master keyword list.

4. **Analyze Your Master Keyword List**: Once you have come up with your master keyword list, find the words that are most relevant to what you do and the content on your site. Use those keyword tools to see how often each of those terms are actually being searched.

5. **Test in PPC (Optional)**: I made this step optional because some smaller businesses simply do not have the budget to spend on pay-per-click campaigns. However if you are able to, test out those keywords in Google Adwords or Yahoo! Search Marketing. PPC advertising is great for seeing if those terms are actually getting searched. Once you have enough data that is statistically significant you can pull some hard numbers to show which keywords/phrases are being searched.

6. **Implementing those Keywords**: Once you have come up with your list and possibly tested them, you can then optimize your site for those keywords. Use those keywords in your title tags, meta tags, throughout your content, links, etc… We will talk more about implementation during the Search Engine Optimization week.

**List of Free Keyword Research Tools**

- [Google Adwords: Keyword Tool](#)
- [SEO Book’s: Keyword Suggestion Tool](#)
- [WordTracker’s: Free Keyword Suggestion Tool](#)
- [Trellian’s: Free Search Term Suggestion Tool](#)
- [Microsoft adCenter Labs: Keyword Forecast](#)

**Silo Your Keyword Research**

Once you have established your list of keywords, you will want to create silos or keyword themes for better optimization. A good rule of thumb is to only try to optimize for one theme and 2-4 keywords per page. The graphic below is a great example of how a website should be structured and optimized.

**Homepage:** Insurance Company, Insurance Provider, Insurance, Top Insurance Company  
**Travel Insurance Page:** Travel Insurance Company, Travel Insurance Provider  
**Car Insurance Page:** Car Insurance Company, Auto Insurance, Auto Insurance Provider  
**Health Insurance:** Health Insurance Company, Health Insurance Provider
As you will see, the site is structured and optimized starting with the broadest term(s) for the homepage and then is broken up into themes or categories and consistently gets more specific as you get into the different types of insurance they provide.

Take note that the more broad and competition there is in an industry, the harder it will be to achieve organic rankings for the keywords/phrases you are trying to optimize for.

**Optimize for the Long-Tail**

Basically what optimizing for the long-tail means instead of trying to optimize your site for the most competitive and highly searched keywords/phrases, you try and optimize for a large number of keywords/phrases that have less competition and have fewer searches. This model proves that if you
take all of the less searched relevant keywords, collectively it adds up to be more volume than optimize for the fewer keywords that are highly searched.

The graphic below shows a nice illustration of how the long-tail works. You will also notice that terms that are more descriptive have a higher conversion rate. So by optimizing for the long-tail you potential can drive more traffic to your site and convert more visitors into leads/sales.

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

When analyzing your competitors online, it can be totally different than your direct competitors that you battle with in real business. When optimizing your site to rank well in the search engines, you are going up against the other competitors that are ranking on the 1st page of Google.

Once you have done your keyword research you should know which primary and secondary keywords you are trying to go after. Put those keywords in Google and see who ranks on the 1st page. These are the websites we are going to want to analyze to see how hard it will be to move past them in the search results. To analyze competitor websites, you have to understand how the Google algorithm works.

The graphic below was a survey done by SEOMoz that asked 72 industry experts their opinion on the most important factors on how the search engines rank websites.
Now that you can see how the search engine algorithm is broken up, we can begin to analyze our competitors. As you can see there are both on-page and off-page factors that need to be looked at to get a good idea of a competitor's search engine credibility.

**Competitor Analysis Tools**

- SEO Toolbar
- SEO for Firefox
- Internet Business Promoter (paid)
- Website Auditor 2.0 (paid)

Regardless of what tool you use to extract the data, you will want to make sure you get the following data – Inbound Links, PageRank, Pages Indexed, Domain Age, Alexa Rank and Social Media stats like Tweets, Bookmarks, etc… On top of what a tool can give you, you should also do the eye test. Look at each of the sites to review the quality of the content and on-page optimization. Look at their Title Tags, Meta Description tags, H tags, site architecture and crawlability. When I talk about crawlability, I mean are there any issues with the site getting indexed properly by the search engines. Look for flash, javascript, dead-end pages, etc…
The below graphic is taken using Website Auditor 2.0. However you can use other free tools that can compile this data. The SEO Toolbar will allow you to compare this data side-by-side for up to 5 sites at a time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General domain statistics</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Factor</strong></td>
<td><strong>Value</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain Google PageRank</td>
<td>PR 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexa Rank</td>
<td>55695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compete Rank in Compete.Com</td>
<td>121039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic according to Compete.Com</td>
<td>15803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages indexed in Google</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages indexed in Yahoo!</td>
<td>495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages indexed in Bing</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain Google Popularity</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain Yahoo! Popularity</td>
<td>19951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMOZ Listing</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahoo! Dir Listing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain Age</td>
<td>2 year(s), 9 month(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain IP</td>
<td>205.185.187.144 / US</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WEEK 3 – PAID SEARCH**

Pay-Per Click Advertising is simply paying for every time a user clicks on your ad and enters your website. There are a number of PPC ad network, must notably Google Adwords.

Paid Search, specifically Google Adwords pay-per-click is not what it used to be. 5 years ago you could get traffic for around $ .30 per click, with little to no competition at all. Now days Google Adwords is a saturated advertising platform! Clicks have increased 10x from what it was 3-5 years ago and you need a much larger budget to compete. However with that being said, you can still drive a lot of traffic and sales through Google Adwords. There are lots of other ad networks like Facebook Ads and MyAds (MySpace ad network) where you can still drive quality traffic to your site for a lot less.
Because Google Adwords is the most popular PPC network, we will use Adwords as the example for setting up a PPC account. Even if you use other advertising platforms like Yahoo or Bing’s Search Marketing platforms, you will still want to structure your campaigns the same way.

**How a PPC Account is Structured**

**Account:** Your account will be your high level over-view that includes all of your campaigns, ad groups and keywords. This is where you will enter in basic account information, billing information and contact preferences.

**Campaigns:** Each campaign can target a different location, language, use a different daily budget and is typically specific to a certain theme or topic. Within each campaign there will be Ad Groups and keywords that you are bidding on within each Ad Group.

**Ad Groups:** Each Ad Group is even more targeted within each campaign. For example you may have a campaign for “Auto Insurance” and within that campaign you have Ad Groups for “Car Insurance”, “Truck Insurance”, and “Motorcycle Insurance”. This will help to keep your PPC ads extremely targeted and relevant depending on what the user is searching. It also will help with Google’s Ad Quality Score, which we will discuss soon.

**Keywords:** The keywords that you bid on are specific to each Ad Group they are contained in. You want to make sure that any keywords you bid on are very relevant to whatever the Ad Group theme is. For example if you were in the “Car Insurance” ad group, you may want to bid on “affordable car insurance”, “discount car insurance” “best car insurance”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Account</th>
<th>Campaign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unique email address and password</td>
<td>Start &amp; end dates&lt;br&gt;Daily budget&lt;br&gt;Google Network preferences&lt;br&gt;Language and location targeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billing information</td>
<td>Start &amp; end dates&lt;br&gt;Daily budget&lt;br&gt;Google Network preferences&lt;br&gt;Language and location targeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Account preferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ad Group</th>
<th>Ad Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One set of keywords&lt;br&gt;and/or placements&lt;br&gt;One or more ads&lt;br&gt;CPC or CPM bids</td>
<td>One set of keywords&lt;br&gt;and/or placements&lt;br&gt;One or more ads&lt;br&gt;CPC or CPM bids</td>
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<td>One set of keywords&lt;br&gt;and/or placements&lt;br&gt;One or more ads&lt;br&gt;CPC or CPM bids</td>
<td>One set of keywords&lt;br&gt;or placements&lt;br&gt;One or more ads&lt;br&gt;CPC or CPM bids</td>
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<td>One set of keywords&lt;br&gt;or placements&lt;br&gt;One or more ads&lt;br&gt;CPC or CPM bids</td>
<td>One set of keywords&lt;br&gt;or placements&lt;br&gt;One or more ads&lt;br&gt;CPC or CPM bids</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reason that you want to have focused ad groups is so that your ads can speak directly to whatever the user is searching for. If your ad can match what the user is searching for your CTR or Click Through Rate will increase dramatically.

Ok, so let's look at the difference between a successful and less successful ad.

**Successful ad:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLR Digital Cameras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLRs On Sale, 80% Off Most Cameras!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted Best After-Sales Service,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.CameraShopSite.com/SLR">www.CameraShopSite.com/SLR</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination URL:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.camershopsite.com/SLR.html">www.camershopsite.com/SLR.html</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Less successful ad:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online camera store</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>we sell all the main brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>great prices here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.camershopsite.com">www.camershopsite.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination URL:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.camershopsite.com">www.camershopsite.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Like anything in marketing, you need to make sure you have enticing ad copy. It needs to stand out from the rest of the ads and convince the user to want to click on YOUR ad.
The Anatomy of Successful PPC Ads

Once you have structured your account, bid on your keywords and created all of your ads, it is time to target your ads for better performance. Depending on your goals and who you target, you are going to want to show your ads to only relevant users who are in the areas you cater to and at the times they are searching for your products and services.

Geo-Targeting

Almost all PPC networks have the ability to let you target a certain geography area. This will allow your ads to only show up when people in your local area are searching for the keywords you are bidding on.

Negative Keywords

TARGETING YOUR ADS

Once you have structured your account, bid on your keywords and created all of your ads, it is time to target your ads for better performance. Depending on your goals and who you target, you are going to want to show your ads to only relevant users who are in the areas you cater to and at the times they are searching for your products and services.

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Negative Keywords
These are keywords that you DO NOT want your ad to show up for. Say you run an upscale jewelry store. You would not want to have your ads show up for keywords like “Cheap” or “Inexpensive”, so those would be negative keywords in your Ad Group.

Match Type

There are 3 different match types for your keywords; broad match, phrase match and exact match. Broad match will show your ads if someone uses a keyword in their search query, regardless of how they used the keyword. Phrase match only allows your ad to show up if they use your keyword or phrase in the exact way that you are bidding on the term. With exact match the user has to search the exact keyword/phrase that you are bidding on. The more targeted your match type is, the less traffic, but the more targeted your traffic will be. This is something you will want to play with to see which gets the best return.

Day Parting

This feature will allow you to pick at what part of the day or week you want your ads to show up. If you know that your users are searching during normal business hours, you may want to limit you ads to only between 8-5. You can use your Google Analytics data to see what hours of the day users are more likely to convert.

A/B Split Test Ads

You can also run multiple variations of you ad to find the ads that perform the best. This is EXTREMELY importantly when you are running PPC ads. A simple change to the headline or call to action can dramatically change your click-through rate. If you are doing Facebook ads, remember that the image is about 75% of what makes a user click…so test images in Facebook!

Bidding

When you are first launching a new PPC campaign, you are going to want to watch it like a hawk for bid cost and placement. Ideally I always try to position my ad between ad spots 2-4. This way you are not paying top dollar, but your ads are still showing above the fold and receiving a good amount of clicks. Keep adjusting your bids based on your average position. But also look at what keywords are converting and adjust your bidding based on what converts!

COMPONENTS OF THE GOOGLE QUALITY SCORE

From Google:

“The AdWords system calculates a ‘Quality Score’ for each of your keywords. It looks at a variety of factors to measure how relevant your keyword is to your ad text and to a user’s search query. A keyword's Quality Score updates frequently and is closely related to its performance. In general, a high Quality Score means that your keyword will trigger ads in a higher position and at a lower cost-per-click (CPC).”

So with that being said a Quality Score is calculated every time your keyword matches a search query -- that is, every time your keyword has the potential to trigger an ad. So let’s take a look at the different factors that make up the quality score.
Click Through Rate (CTR)

Your ad click through rate is simply the number of times your ad was shown (Impressions) divided by the number of times your ad was clicked. Having a high CTR will help increase your ad quality score.

Keyword Relevancy to Search Query

You want to try and have your keyword/phrase match the actually search query that is being performed by the user. The closer your keyword is to the exact search query will help reduce your CPC.

Account Historical Performance

How your campaigns run historically will have an impact on your ad quality score. If your campaigns are highly targeted, contain relevant keywords, ad copy and landing pages, you should have no problem with having an effective PPC account. Make sure you keep weeding out the bad keywords that are not performing, tweaking ad copy, and making your landing pages as relevant as possible.

Ad Copy

Using the keyword/phrase in your ad copy will help improve your ad quality score. Google will also bold your matching text in the ad, which helps increase click through rate. If you create a well written, compelling ad, Google will most likely increase your ranking and lower your minimum bid amount.

Destination Landing Page Quality

Creating a landing page that is specific to the users search query will increase your ad quality score. For example, if you are bidding on the term “reebok sneakers”, you would want to create a landing page on your site that talks specifically about Reebok sneakers. If you have a special offer in your ad copy, you would want to have that offer again on your landing page.

Landing Page Load Time

The amount of time it takes for your landing page to load now has bearing on how your ad quality score is calculated. Google just recently added load time as a factor to try and get developers to create pages that are fast loading for a better user experience.

Creating Landing Pages

Instead of sending your paid search traffic to the homepage or an interior page on your site, it is best to send the user to a landing page that is set up for high conversions. One of the advantages to PPC advertising is the ability to send traffic to any destination url of your choosing…so take advantage of it.

Make Your Landing Page Relevant

Depending on the keywords you are bidding on, you want your landing page to reflect those keywords and what the user is looking for. Including the primary keyword in your headline and content will help make the landing page more relevant and increase your quality score.

Use an Enticing Offer
No matter how nice of a landing page you create, if your offer sucks, nobody will want to download/buy your product.

Add a Lead Generation Form

Integrating a contact form will make it easy to register, sign-up or purchase whatever you are providing. It can also be a way of generating an in-house email marketing list to communicate further with the user.

Use a Call to Action

Web visitors need to be told what to do when they visit a web page. So saying something as simple as “Sign-Up Now!” tells the user what they should do. Of course there are thousands of other calls to action that will make the sure want to complete the action you want them to.

WEEK 4 – SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION
Search engine optimization is the active practicing of improving your websites ability to rank in the natural search engine results. Each of the major search engines have a proprietary algorithm that makes up how they rank websites. Even though the algorithm is a close and guarded secret, Internet Marketers have a pretty could idea of how it is made up.

Below, we will walk through the three main elements of the algorithm, which include Domain Attributes, On-Page and Off-Page factors.

**DOMAIN ATTRIBUTES**

**Domain Age**

How long your website has been around can play a role in how well you rank organically. That is not to say that a newer website can’t rank well, but it definitely will help if your site has been around for at least a few years. The reason that is, is because search engines tend to trust websites that have been around longer, because they have built credibility over the years. Google also has something called the “Google Sandbox” which basically says that for a short period of time (usually 3-6 months) your website will not really rank for any of your primary keywords. This is an introduction period if you will, that allows the search engines to assess your website and its credibility.

**Hosting/Server**

There are probably thousands of hosting providers out there. Some good, others not so good. This is an area where it is worth it to pay the extra money every month to have a great hosting company with excellent tech support. If you go with one of those hosting companies that charge $5/month, there is a better chance of your site getting hacked, limited support and less hosting options. It’s just better to use trusted hosting companies like MediaTemple, GoDaddy or Host Gator who have proven to be great hosting companies.

The server that you host your website on can play a role in your organic rankings. There are really two main types of servers…dedicated and shared. If you are on a shared hosting plan, that just means that your website is hosted on a server and the same IP address as many other websites. A dedicated server is a server that is dedicated strictly to your website and no others. If you decide to put your website on a shared server, know that if a website on the same IP address is doing something unethical or contains explicit content, it can potentially hurt your rankings. It is unlikely, however it is something to be aware of.

**Domain Credibility**

Search engines will also look at your domain as a whole to see how credible it is. This will include many aspects including domain attributes, on-page optimization, and off-page optimization.

**ON-PAGE OPTIMIZATION**

**Title Tags**
The most important on-page SEO tactic is having keyword rich title tags. Using the keyword research we discussed in Week 2, you will want to add unique title tags for every page, depending on the topic or theme of each page. The title tag is also the hyperlink in the search engine results that people will click to go into your site.

Meta-Description Tags

Your meta description tag, while it should contain the keywords or phrases you are optimizing for, is meant really for the end-user. The main reason is as shown in the graphic above, this gives you a snippet of text that is meant to entice the user to want to click your website.

Alt Tags

Since a search engine is unable to understand what an image or graphic is showing, you can use an alt attribute that will explain to the search engine what the picture is showing. For example, if you post a picture of a red rose, you may want to add an alt tag as “red rose”. This can help your images rank well when people do image searches in search engines.

H Tags

Heading tags are headlines or titles that are used in the content area of a web page. Heading tags help the user to quickly scan a web page for the information they are looking for, as well as place emphasis in search engines. That is why it is important you use your primary keywords in the heading tags as well.

Content Optimization

For the actual text on the page, you want to make sure you are using multiple variations of your root keyword/phrase. For example, if your root phrase is “Atlanta Plumber”, using variations like “Plumbing Services in Atlanta” or “Professional Commercial Plumber Serving Atlanta” will include your core keywords, while still making it appealing to the end-user.
URL Structure

Ideally you want to use short and clean URLs that are as close to the root directory as possible. Adding keywords in the URL can help with optimization, but don’t over-due it and stuff keywords in the URL just for the sake of optimization. Also try to use hyphens instead of underscores in your URL naming convention, as search engines recognize hyphens as word separators.

It is always best to use static pages, instead of dynamic pages. Dynamic pages are created on the fly and have various parameters in the URL (ie: ?=%) that make it hard for search engines to index those pages. Static pages are much cleaner, easier to index, and keep the same URL.

This Anatomy of a URL guide from SEOmoz, should give you some additional insights into the structure of a URL.
Load Time (new)

This is a fairly new factor that search engines have taken into consideration into their algorithm. They have added this factor because search engines wanted to reward websites that deliver content to their users as fast as possible. For sites that load slowly, it can ruin the site experience and make a user leave. If you do a Google search for “decreasing page/website load time” you should find plenty of articles on how to help speed up your site.

OFF-PAGE OPTIMIZATION

Inbound Links

An inbound link is a link coming from another site into yours. This can be a link from a blog, forum, wiki, directory, video/image site, or any other website that links to you. The way that search engines value links is similar to a popularity contest. The more votes (or links) you get, the more popular you become.

There are 5 main factors that search engines look at when they analyze a website’s inbound links.

- Number of Links
- Relevancy of those Links
Credibility of the Website Linking to You
Anchor Text of the Link
How a Website Links to You

The anchor text of a link are the words that actually hyperlink to your website. Search Engines place more value on links that are keyword-rich and relevant.

Homepage vs Internal Page Links

How you go about building your links between your homepage and internal pages can significantly help your ability to rank for the long-tail. Remember that search engines rank individual pages, not the domain. If all of your inbound links are going to your homepage, that minimizes the chance of your internal pages to rank for the long-tail.

How you Acquire Links?

SEOmoz created an in-depth report that talks about which link building tactics are the most effective for Search Engine Optimization. I highly suggest that everyone reads this report in detail to understand which link building tactics are more effective.

Effectiveness of Link Building Tactics for SEO
Using something called “Blackhat SEO”, webmasters or marketers are trying to manipulate their site to trick or fool the search engines into giving their website higher search engine rankings. These tactics used to be very popular about 5-7 years ago, but are not nearly as effective anymore because of the evolution of the search engines. Even though these tactics can potentially get your website penalized or banned, it is still important to understand them.

**Doorway Pages**

Doorway or portal pages are created to improve their rankings in search engines for particular keywords/phrases. These are pages that are specifically designed for search engines only. The idea is to make search engines think that users are seeing one page, when they are actually seeing another.

**Cloaking**

Blackhat cloaking is a way to serve up a doorway page. It is when a website displays two different sets of content, one for the search engines and another for the user. The idea is to try and trick the search engines by giving them content that is strictly to move up in search rankings. The user however will see something completely different that is more user friendly and easy to read. Based on your IP address, they are able to tell if you a search bot or a actual human.

**Duplicate Content**

There are a number of ways you can display duplicate content. One way is to copy and paste their content onto tens or even hundreds of pages within their site, specifically to add more pages and content to their site. They could also create a totally new website or microsite that contains the exact content as the original site. People do this to add inbound links to their site as well.

**Hidden Text & Links**

The idea here is to add hidden links and text that only the search engines can see. Usually a developer will make the text the same color as the background so it is not visible to a user. The text or links usually have keywords or phrases repeating multiple times, in order to try and fool the search engines into thinking your page is more relevant for those keywords.

**Keyword Stuffing**

Keyword stuffing is exactly what it sounds like. You are trying to stuff as many keywords or phrases onto a page as possible in order to rank higher in search results. Normally developers will hide this text so it is not visible to users.
Step one of SEO is driving targeted traffic to your website. Step two is converting those users once they get to your site. Giving an engaging user experience will help to increase your conversion rate and bring in more leads/sales. An outstanding user experience involves a simple and easy-to-use site structure. Having a clean design, a consistent layout, and high-quality content, will make it easy for users to find what they are looking for.

Tips for Great Usability

- Use Headlines to Breakup Content Sections
- Make the Text Easy to Scan
- Use Consistent Navigations, Color Schemes and Layouts
- Make All Pages Accessible Within Two Clicks
- Make Things Obviously for the User
- Explain Processes and Concepts Using Graphics/Imaginary

Conversion Optimization

When a user visits a website, they want to find what they are looking for fast and efficiently. It is important to have a site that is built for leads and/or sales. Even if you drive all of the traffic in the world to your site, it doesn't matter if it is not set to convert. Using call to actions, special offers, lead generation forms, eye-capturing headlines, and easy to find contact information can be the difference between a visitor and a customer.
Recommended Testing Software

**Google Website Optimizer:** The Website Optimizer tool is a free product from Google that allows you to perform A/B and Multi-variant tests on your web pages. It is meant to help increase your conversion rates by improving the quality of your landing pages by testing different elements on your page.

**ClickTale:** ClickTale provides usability testing software that will allow you to actually see a user’s browser session and visitor heatmaps to help improve user experience and conversion rates. This is an awesome tool for anyone who is looking to test landing pages!

**WEEK 5 – CONTENT CREATION**

**Writing for the Web**

The style of writing for the web is much different than writing for print or magazines. It is more conversational and easier to digest. That is one of the reasons I found blogs so intriguing, because the content was not like trying to read the Encyclopedia Britannica.
When people are searching for something on the web, they want what they are looking for IMMEDIATELY. Users are ADD, scanning and skimming content to find what they are looking for. That is why when you are creating content for a website or a blog, you want to have compelling headings. User’s eyes will gravitate to headlines, bullet points, and graphics to determine if they want to continue reading.

There have been a number of eye tracking studies conducted to show where a user’s eye travels on a webpage. As you can see from the graphic below, the user’s eye looks at the baby’s face, then the headline. This is why making sure having compelling headlines and engaging graphics is so important.

Using Content to Drive Back to Your Site

Whenever you are creating content on the web, you want to make sure you are referencing your website or main site that contains your products/services. From the graphic below you can use Q&A, PR, Article Sharing, Picture/Video Sharing, Forms, other Blogs, and News sites to build inbound links to your website.
Finding Topics to Blog About

When you first start to blog, it may seem easy to come up with topics to blog about. But as you continue to blog, you will notice that it becomes harder and harder to keep coming up with unique topics you can write about. There are a number of techniques that you can use to keep coming up with interesting blog topics to keep your content stimulating.

- **Perform Keyword Research:** Using a keyword research tool like the Adwords Keyword Tool can help find new phrases or keywords that are related to your industry, which may spark a new idea.
- **Monitoring Chatter and Discussions:** Sometimes by just listening you can find all of the ideas you will ever need. Start to monitor what people are saying, questions they are asking, topics they are interested in. Read the comments people are leaving on blogs...you may be able to write a post that addresses a question or different position you have about an existing post.
• **Ask Your Readers:** If you are not sure what to write about...ask your readers. Send them an email or write a post asking them what topics they would like you to write about.

• **Use Mind-Mapping Software:** A trick I picked up from professional blogger, Darren Rowse is to use a mind-mapping program to branch off of different topics, into sub-topics and sub-sub topics. Below is an example of how you can use mind-mapping software to branch off to create tons of unique blog posts. You will see that each theme or topic keeps branching off to another angle or sub-topic that is related to the main theme. You can essentially do this for hundreds of broad topics.

![Mind-Mapping Diagram](image)

**Creating a Blogging Schedule**

If you are going to manage a successful blog, you need to dedicate time to writing. Creating a blog schedule is the best way to set aside time that is focused on writing content. By having your scheduled mapped out it can help keep you focused and maintain a consistent blog posting schedule. This will prove to be extremely useful once you have multiple blog authors who are contributing to your blog.

**Focus on Quality over Quantity**

The last thing you want to do is create content just for the sake of getting a post on your blog. It will prove to be better to take your time and make sure it is of high value, then to rush through it and create a post that is sub-par. So of the most successful blogs out there only write 1 post a week...but those posts are extremely insightful and well thought out.

**Guest Blogging**
If you are looking to continue to grow your blog, guest posting can be a great way of exposing yourself to new readers that may not have found you otherwise. Giving other industry blogs with a similar audience, quality content will help to earn you credibility and a new following.

**Writing Rapid Blog Content**

One of the hardest things that people have trouble with, is coming up with new blog post topics to write about. Personally I go in waves of coming up with new ideas. So when I am in a brainstorming mode, I try to squeeze as many topics out of myself as possible. I also find that post ideas will come at random times. Sometimes while I’m reading another post, at the mall, in the car, on the phone, etc…

So be prepared for when you come up with that killer idea.

- Keep a notepad with you wherever you go
- Use a web-based application like [Evernote](https://evernote.com) to manage your blog post topic list
- Add key points that you don’t want to forget to write about

People that read a lot of blogs or content, usually read from an RSS aggregator to help speed up the process of reading their favorite blogs. This is a great time to bookmark content that you may want to reference later in a blog post. If you find an awesome image, video, quote, data; bookmark it and this way you can quickly access it when you are writing a post that it is relevant to.

I would recommend using a firefox extension called [Read It Later](https://readitlater.app) to help bookmark content that you want to reference later.

Whenever I am starting a post, I will start by outlining the Main and Sub Topics for the entire post. This helps with not having to stare at a blank screen with nothing on it. If you have an outline, it can help to get your thoughts down and makes it easier to write. Using a mind mapping program like [SmartDraw](https://www.smartdraw.com) will allow you to easily outline the structure of your post and key points you want to make sure you include.
The best way I have found to write content is to not agonize over every word and sentence. If you do that, you find that it take 5x longer to deliver a post. Similar to not letting your pen lift up from the paper, don’t let your fingers stop typing. Keep writing, writing, and writing, not stopping for spelling errors or punctuation mistakes. Just keep throwing out ideas and content, until you can’t write anymore. Once you have a stopping point where your thoughts are not coming naturally, you can go back and fix all of the mistakes. You may also want to run certain words through a thesaurus to help spice up the post a little.

Once you have the blog post structured how you want it, its time to add relevant images and/or video. If you bookmarked some relevant posts, now is the time to start adding references. If you don’t already have images or video that you plan on adding, you may want to go to places like iStockPhoto, YouTube, and perform various Google searches to find other quality content to add.

Even though the goal is to create fast blog content, you still need to review it and make sure there are no mistakes. If you have other resources and people that can help, you may want to pass it on to an editor or someone that can review the content for you.

**RICH MEDIA: WEBINARS, VIDEO & PODCASTS**

Rich media is becoming more and more mainstream. With the evolution of rich media sharing sites like YouTube, Flickr, and iTunes and the decrease in prices for HD cameras, screen sharing software, and other rich media technology, it makes it very easy for anyone to produce great rich content.

**Creating Webinars**
Webinars have helped companies bring an interactive environment that allows presenters and attendees to communicate with each other in a visually pleasant and stimulating environment. Another advantage is because it is virtual, you can have as many attendees as you would like. Using WebEx or GoToWebinar you can easily create, invite, manage, and record your own webinar.

How You Can Use Webinars

- Product Demos
- Training Courses
- Interviews
- Presentations
- Bonus Content for Products

Creating Videos

Videos allow you to convey messages that are not always able to be conveyed through plain text. For example, a real estate agent may shoot a video showing the interior of a home he/she is trying to sell. With video you can give the viewer a clearer picture of what the house looks like and explaining key features of the house. This totally beats showing pictures of the house and using text to display the features.

What You Will Need to Shoot Quality Videos

- HD Video Camera ($150 - $300)
- Video Editing Software (Free - $100)
- Tripod ($30) (Optional)
- Video Hosting (Free)

As you can see, it doesn’t take much to create video content. However you can take your videos one step further by hiring a professional video editor to properly edit the video and use fancy transitions to make it look nice. However to shoot, edit, and upload your videos can be completed in a few hours.

If you are looking for a great resource for how to create outstanding video content for the web, I would strongly recommend visiting Gideon Shalwick’s blog or download his free report, Rapid Video Blogging.

Creating Podcasts

More and more web users are consuming content through audio or podcasts. Similar to someone turning on the radio, people can download audio content and listen to it while they are doing other things. Like video, podcasts are easier to consume and is more engaging than reading text.

When you create audio content you open your brand up to an entire new audience. For one, you can cater to the visually impaired. You can also gain exposure on a little website called iTunes!...not to mention hundreds of other podcasts directories that receive significant traffic.
What You Will Need to Record Quality Podcasts

- **Skype** (Free)
- **Pamela for Skype** ($30)

Similar to creating video content, it doesn’t take much to create a podcast. Basically all you are really doing is recording a phone call. Conducting interviews is probably the most popular form of podcasts, but you can also use podcasts for radio shows, training and converting text to audio.

**SOCIAL BOOKMARKING CONTENT CREATION**

Social Bookmarking sites have been a great source of traffic and inbound links, however understand the type of content that each community enjoys and are willing to share with other community members is extremely important. One of the best ways to know what type of content has the best chance of going viral is by being an active member in each community. However that can be very time consuming and tedious, so I thought I would create this guide you can follow to help create content specific to each social bookmarking community.

I would recommend that you read the 5 part series I wrote called [The Ultimate Social Bookmarking Content Creation Guide](#). This is an in-depth post that talks about the difference between Digg, Delicious, Mixx, Reddit and StumbleUpon…and creating content specific to a certain social bookmarking site.

**Content-Style**

Regardless of what social site you are looking to create content for, there are some similarities for the types of content that gets shared and have a better chance to go viral.

**Lists:** Usually list-style posts like "# Ways to Improve Your Subject" seem to do very well and spread rapidly. For one, social media users like quick posts that are easy to scan, so by making quick and entertaining posts in list format.

**Images:** Images are one of the fastest ways to convey your message/point. Also, with the rise in popularity of Infographics, they have become very popular within social networks like Twitter and Facebook.

**Videos:** Fun and entertaining videos are always a hit. Because videos can cater to a wider audience, they can be watched by any language and location.

**Roundups:** If you have a collection or wrap-up that is focused on a certain topic or theme, it can go viral. For example "The Best Collection of Sports Movie Images" could be the title of a post that gets shared rapidly. Words like "Best" "Ultimate" Greatest" "Complete" can help your roundup post do well.

**Tutorials:** If you have a post that gives a detailed tutorial on a specific topic it can do very well. Incorporating pictures and videos to help explain the topic will boost the likeliness of it getting hot.

**Attention Grabbing:** Headlines are extremely important since that is what users see to determine if they will read the rest of the article. Adding (Pic) or (Video) at the end of the post title can also help indicate the type of content it is.
There is no clear blueprint for creating viral content per say. What works for one company, could totally bomb for another. Since the term “Viral Marketing” was coined by Seth Godin, generally rich media like video and audio content has a better opportunity to go viral. Especially for video, video can appeal to any person and language. When trying to create content that you think will go viral, pay attention to trending topics, what people are searching for, and always keep your audiences needs in mind.

**Characteristics of Viral Content**

- Easy to Share
- Encourages Participation
- Is Funny, Controversial, Breaking News, Unique, Innovative/Ground Breaking
- Creative
- Appeals to a Larger Audience

**How Viral Content Can Impact Your Business**

- Drive a tremendous amount traffic
- Bring in lots of quality inbound links
- Build brand awareness and credibility
- It encourages comments and interaction

Probably one of the most famous case studies for viral content promotion are the “Will It Blend” videos. BlendTec is a company that sells blenders and they created a viral marketing campaign where they would put popular products like the iPhone and iPad in their blenders. For people watching, they would take a guess if whatever they put in the blender would blend or not. This spread rapidly across Facebook, Twitter and the Blogosphere, reporting millions of views for each of their videos.
Link building is essential to any website that wants to climb in the search engine rankings and stay there. What a lot of people fail to understand is that this is not as simple as finding as many links as you can. If a website is to be consistently successful in the search engines, it has to possess a natural link profile.

A good link-building strategy should appear natural, and not forced or manipulated. Ideally, the search engines are looking for a steady collection of relevant links from good quality sites, over a period of time. The links should be from a variety of sources.

- **Link Velocity:** Do not add 100 links in 2 days then none for a month, before beginning another mad burst of link-building. Sporadic linking can look like you are link spamming, search engines look for consistency and continuity.

- **IP Diversity:** Having 20 links all coming from a variety of small blogs or hub pages you have created may satisfy the criteria for having links from different sites, but it will not fool the search engines. All these links come from sites with the same IP address and suggest that you are falsely manufacturing links. Get backlinks from a variety of sites with different IP addresses.

- **DoFollow/No Follow:** There is a significant number of SEO experts who believe that you should mix “NoFollow” and “DoFollow” links in your link building efforts. Some of them even go so far stating that 10-20% of your links should be from “NoFollow” sources to appear natural. NoFollow links are links that pass no “link value” in regards to the search engines. Website use the NoFollow tag to discourage spammers or to not pass value to a site that the webmaster is not familiar with.

- **Link Popularity –** Search engines place greater importance on links from trusted sources and authority sites. Google has its PageRank system but the other search engines also look for high-quality links. The more quality links you have, the better you will rank. A larger amount of low-quality reciprocal links, or off-topic links, may suggest you are blog spamming or using a link farm/exchange.

- **Topical Relevance:** Keep your content fresh and updated and a steady flow of links coming in to your site. Search engines are looking for sites that provide up-to-date information and relevance. If you keep your content on-topic and have good links gradually pointing to your site, the search engines will start to regard you as an authority over time.

- **TLDs:** TLD stands for Top Level Domain, which is just the domain extension like .com, .org, and .net. Historically search engines have placed more value on links coming from .edu, .gov and .org extensions because they have proven to be authoritative organizations and resources.

**WHY CONTENT CREATING IS YOUR BEST LINK SOURCE**

Before we get into how to research opportunities to acquire links from, we need to talk about one core concept that is usually overlooked by website owners. In order for HIGH QUALITY websites to want to link to you, you need to have something of value on your site. If you are just requesting websites to link to you and all you have on it is BUY FROM ME, nobody will link to you. However if you have high-quality content that is of value to the target audience, you have a much higher chance of gaining links.

Another thing to remember is that as you continue to create quality content, you will build links naturally. Through the course of time, more and more websites will take notice of your content and link to it from their websites, blogs, and social media profiles. If you are doing things right, you may never even have to
go out and scour the web for link building opportunities. This is of course the hardest and most time consuming tactic for building links, but by far the most effective! Keep this in mind whenever you are looking to build links to your site.

RESEARCHING LINK OPPORTUNITIES

One of the best ways to find quality link opportunities is to research your competitors and those websites who already rank well in the search engines for your keywords and phrases. Tools like Internet Business Promoter and WebCEO are SEO suites that provide a complete set of tools allowing you to research your industry, analyze your website and find relevant link partners. You can also use free tools like SEO for Firefox and Backlink Watch that will do a good job as well.

Using these tools will help you to pull important site data link PageRank, Alexa Rank, Inbound Links, Pages Indexed, Domain Age and other important factors that search engines look at to determine the credibility of a website. Finding the page where your competitors are receiving a link from, may be an easy way for you to find places that you can contact to get the same link.

Blog Commenting: Most blogs are NoFollowed due to the overwhelming amount of spam people leave. But there are some blogs that will provide a DoFollow link when you leave a comment. Finding industry blogs with high traffic, which you can leave a comment on, can help earn a link, drive traffic, and great industry credibility.

Forum Posting: Leaving comments in forum can be an economical and effective way of building links. Most forums allow you to leave a signature with your comment that can include a link back to your site.
You want to be careful about not spamming these forums and actually providing value. Doing a search for “keyword forum” will help you to find forums in your niche.

**Social Bookmarking Sites:** Social Bookmarking content creates a link on that specific site. However most social bookmarking sites are NoFollow, but can drive a lot of traffic. If you are looking for a list of social bookmarking sites that are DoFollow, check out this post.

**Article Submission Sites:** There are hundreds, if not thousands of sites that allow you to submit articles. Typically they will allow you to add links in the article, which you can then link to your website. Some sites like EzineArticles and GoArticles are better than others, but this can be an easy way to gain quality links.

**Q & A Sites:** Websites like Yahoo! Answers, AnswerBag, LinkedIn Answers, and Answers.com are great ways of getting links and traffic to your site. Some sites nofollow, but you can still reap the benefits by getting traffic to your site. Spend an hour or two a week answering questions that people have. If you have some useful resources or articles, link to those.

### CREATING LINK BAIT

Link Bait is simply creating a piece of viral content that people will want to link to and share across the web, typically through forms of social media. There are a number of different formats that link bait comes in, however they all have one thing in common. People WANT to share it! In order for something to be considered “Link Bait” it must have one or all of these qualities ~ Original, Viral, Compelling, Comprehensive, Conceptual/State of the Art, Highest Quality, Controversial, Funny, Breaking News…and the list goes on. The point is that it cannot just be any ordinary piece of content. There needs to be a new angle or way of presenting information for it to be worthy for people to share.

Link Bait comes in all different shapes and sizes. Here is a quick list of different formats link bait can come in.

- Infographics
- Videos [Funny, Outside the Box]
- Top x Lists
- Controversial Topics
- Complete Guides and Reports
- Interesting Polls and Surveys
- Topic Specific Recaps and Roundups
- Interviews

- Free Tools and Software
- Awards
- Giveaways, Freebies, and Sweepstakes
- First to Discuss
- Widgets
- First to Cover Breaking News
- Inside Look/Preview

### LINK BUILDERS TOOLKIT

If anyone is looking for a reference to use that already has taken the hard work out of finding high-quality websites to gain links from, check out my [Link Builders Toolkit](#). It has over 1,400, PR3+ websites where you can gain links from.

**What's Included in the Toolkit:**
Local Search is becoming more and more prevalent, as marketing on the internet becomes more targeted and focused. Also with the search engines integrating local business results (see graphic below) it is important to have a well-established local business profile and website.

### Over 160 Blog Directories
### Over 30 Classified Sites
### Over 100 Content Sharing Sites
### Over 80 Coupon/Deal Sites
### Over 400 Directories
### Over 30 eBook Sites
### Over 25 Event Sites
### Over 30 Forum Sites
### Over 50 Local Sites
### Over 40 Photo Sharing Sites
### Over 35 Podcast Sites
### Over 300 PR/Article Submission Sites
### Over 35 Q&A Communities
### Over 65 Review Sites
### Over 60 RSS Submission Sites
### Over 50 Social Bookmarking Sites
### Over 50 Social Community Sites
### Over 45 Shopping Sites
### Over 35 Twitter Sites
### Over 35 Video Sharing Sites
### Over 60 Free Website Creation Sites
### Over 15 Wiki Sites
If you are wondering how the search engines go about rankings the listing in the local business listings, here are some tips.

**Complete Profile:** You want to make sure that you fill out ALL of the fields that are relevant to your business. Things like store hours, contact information, business address, forms of payments, etc…are essential for showing up in the local results.

**Proper Categories:** Make sure you pick the proper categories that are related to your business. Depending on what the user searches and which categories you have chosen, it can trigger your listing to rank.

**Business Proximity to the City:** This is something you cannot control, unless you plan on relocating your business, but how close you are to the center of the city plays a factor. If you are trying to rank for Dentist Denver, but your location is 20 minutes outside the city, it is unlikely your business will show up in the results.

**Local Reviews:** Make sure your customers are leaving positive reviews about your business on your profile. Google will also pull in reviews from YellowPages.com, CitySearch.com and other local business directories, so make sure customers leave reviews on those directories as well.

**Verify Your Listing:** Probably the most important thing you can control, is verifying your listing with each of the search engines. This means that they know that the information you provided is given by the business owner. In order for them to verify they either send a postcard with a validation pin # on it, or they will call the phone number you provided with a pin #.

### Submitting Your Local Business Listings

- [Google Local Business Center](#)
- [Yahoo Local Business Center](#)
- [Bing Local Business Center](#)
- [Best of the Web Local](#)
- [Yelp](#)
- [Hotfrog](#)

#### LOCAL BUSINESS RESOURCES

There are a number of tools you can use to help you with the submission and management of your local business listings. Below are two resources that are essential for helping you manage your listings.

**GetListed.org**

GetListed will check to see which of your local business listings have been verified in the major search engines, BOTW, Hotfrog and Yelp. It also gives you suggestions on things you can do to improve the quality of your listings.
Universal Business Listing

This local service is a real time saver for anyone who does not want to manually have to go in and submit their listings to all of the search engines. It also syndicates your listing to over 20 other local directories including Yellowpages.com, Superpages.com, and InfoUsa.com. For $30/year it is worth every penny.

David Mihm’s – Local Search Ranking Factors

A select group of the top SEOs and Internet Marketers in the industry were gathered to put together this survey of what the most important factors were when it comes to local search. This report is the bible for determining the ins and outs of how you can improve your local business listings.
ON-PAGE LOCAL SEO TIPS

When a search engine crawls the content on your site, if they notice local triggers on your site, it will help them understand that you are a local company and will index your site accordingly.

Here is a list of Do’s and Don’ts for on-page local optimization.

DO

- Add your local city, state, and region keywords within the ad copy on your homepage
- Add a local area code with phone number on EVERY page of your site
- Add your local business address on EVERY page
- Create individual location pages for EVERY location
- Add your keyword or local phone number in your meta description tag

DO NOT

- Create hundreds of location pages with duplicate content on each of the pages. This will HURT your rankings
- Repeat the location keywords multiple times just to try and stuff keywords to trick the search engines

Using Micro formats

The hCard microformat is a standard method of semantically marking up your HTML to inform the search engines (and other devices/applications) very precisely about which part of your page text contains addresses, phone numbers, and other typical directory listing info. Here is an example...

```html
<h1 class="org">Orpheum Theatre</h1>
Madison, WI
<div class="address"><div class="adr">
<div class="street-address">216 State St</div>,
<span class="locality">Madison</span>,
<span class="region">WI</span>
</div>
```
The concept here is that the microformat makes it very clear to the search engine what the business name is, versus street address versus city, etc. Without a clear tag on the data, search engines have to use clues like commas, line breaks, spaces and such to try to parse out all this info to match their business directory listings, and there’s such a range of formatting possibilities that a large degree of potential error is introduced. Using semantic labels reduces chances for interpretation mistakes.

Create an hCard Microformat

LOCAL GROUP DEAL SITES

Group sites have been the latest craze. You have probably seen some of these sites popping up everywhere, offering a significant discount to the consumer. The concept is for the retailer to sell their products or services in bulk, to the general public at a discounted rate (usually around 50%). This can be a great way to not necessarily make a lot of money for the retailer, but can exposure your brand and store to a new audience that may not have found you otherwise.

Here are a few of the big players. I would recommend signing up for free and receiving their daily specials that are local to your area.

Groupon

LivingSocial
With the evolution and wide-spread use of smartphone devices, it was only a matter of time until location-based applications and services would start to be developed. Local based services delivers content to a users mobile device depending on where they are located. It is a new way to deliver a targeted marketing message to users in a specific geographic location.

Through location based marketing advertisers and local business owners are able to present a special or promotion when someone visits or is near your store. You can reward customers who visit your store often, as there are incentive-based offers that you can give them. However in order for the person to receive this message they have one of the location-based services installed on their smart phone.

**Foursquare**

Using your smartphone, users can “Check-In” to places they visit, notifying anyone that is following them of their whereabouts. Earn points and unlock badges as you start discovering new things and places. If you have visited somewhere more than anyone else, you can become the Mayor and earn freebies and specials. Leave feedback and recommendations for people that are looking to try a new location, earn promotions/discounts, and explore your city in a new and exciting way.
Gowalla

Very similar to Foursquare, Gowalla allows you to “Check-In” to places by using your smart-phone, notifying your friends and followers of where you are. You can earn pins for accomplishing things, plus items you can pick-up and drop for discounts.

WEEK 8 – SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has changed dramatically in the last several years. What started out as a platform for teenagers and college students to connect with their friends has evolved into the perfect setting for brands (both personal and business) to engage with their targeted demographic.

THE TOP SOCIAL NETWORKS
There are many, many social networks out there to choose from, from the mainstream to the ones targeted for specific interests. No matter what your niche or industry, the following are the top social networks that everyone should be using.

Facebook

Facebook is the second most popular website in the world, following right behind Google. Facebook allows you to create two different entities for your brand:

1. **Personal Profiles**

   Personal profiles represent an individual. They are not meant to be used for businesses. With a personal profile, you can connect with others as friends and then share everything from status updates, links, photos, video, applications, and much more. Personal profiles have the most versatility; however they only allow you to have up to 5,000 friends as connections.

2. **Fan Pages**

   Fan pages can represent an individual, public figure, brand, business, or website. You can have an unlimited number of fans with your fan page (a bonus in comparison to the personal profile). You can share the same types of things with fans as you can with friends of a personal profile.

   Fan pages have two major benefits, besides unlimited connection capability. With fan pages, you get to use Facebook Insights, their built in analytics tool to measure your fan growth and interaction you’re your fan page. The other major benefit is getting to message or “update” your fans based on demographic information such as location, gender, and age group.

   The one downside to only having a fan page is that you cannot reach out and connect with others through your fan page, like you can when you add people as a friend through a personal profile. In order to gain fans, you would need to promote your fan page via Facebook Ads or through other mediums such as your own websites, other social networks, email list, etc.

   The best way to get the word out about a fan page is by having a personal profile linked to it as the admin, and sharing your fan page with your friends.

Branding
Whether you are using a personal profile or fan page, here are a few essential tips for branding yourself or your business.

**Custom URL**

Whenever you setup a personal profile, you should have the ability to create a custom URL for your profile once you have verified your profile via mobile text. For a fan page, you must have 50 fans before you can create your custom URL. Once these items have been met, visit [http://facebook.com/username](http://facebook.com/username) and choose your username carefully – once you have selected a name, it cannot be changed.

Creating a custom URL will make your profile or page URL shorter, branded, and easier to share with others via business cards, email signatures, and so on.

**Picture**

Your profile or page picture size on Facebook can be 180 x 540 pixels. This means that you can not only include your headshot, but you can create a customized image that tells people more about you. Mari Smith, one of the leading guru’s on Facebook, has the following for her custom page image.

![Facebook Profile Picture](image)

**Information Box**

Both personal profiles and fan pages have a small information box beneath your photo. This is the perfect place to put a brief description about yourself, your brand, or your business as well as a website URL so people can see what your page is about and get to your website immediately.
Welcome Tab

This one pertains to fan pages more than personal profiles. With fan pages, you can have custom tabs that serve as landing pages for your fan page. These tabs can be used for anything from mailing list signup forms, website information, personalized video greetings, or a combination.

How to Find People to Connect With

Going from the standpoint of having a personal profile, you can find people interested in your niche and industry by looking through related popular groups and pages. People are usually happy to get to know
someone else interested in the same things – just be sure to send a personalized message saying where you found them so they know you’re not just out to build a large friend’s list. Another great way to find Facebook connections is through forum signature links, email signatures, and social networking links on blogs in your niche.

Building Relationships on Facebook

There are lots of ways to interact with people on Facebook, including private messaging, writing on a user’s wall, commenting on activity, liking activity and posts, interacting through applications, tagging them in posts, and so on. Also new to Facebook is Questions and Answers – providing useful answers will definitely help you get to know others while demonstrating your expertise.

YouTube

YouTube is the #1 site to share videos. YouTube videos are not just limited to their site alone – they come up in regular search results as well, making them a huge benefit in getting exposure for your brand. For example, just imagine you had a golf store, and you

Branding

Whenever you create a YouTube account, you will get a YouTube channel. You can customize your YouTube channel with a custom background image, as well as add your website URL to your profile. To keep your channel active aside from uploading videos, you can subscribe to other channels and add videos related to your niche or industry to your favorites.
Premium Google advertisers also get some additional HTML coding abilities for their YouTube channels, allowing them to link out to other websites, channels, or social networks.

**Building Relationships on YouTube**

YouTube has direct messaging capability, and you can connect with others by subscribing to their channel or actually becoming friends with them through their channel. You can comment on other user’s channels and videos as well.

**Twitter**

Twitter is one of the easiest sites in terms of getting followers for your brand in virtually any niche or industry, and since your main activity is composed of 140 character messages or updates, it is an easy social network to maintain.

**Branding**

To create the perfectly branded Twitter profile, you will need to customize the following.

**Background Design**

A custom background design is extremely important in setting your brand apart from others on Twitter. If graphic design is not your forte, there are some great, inexpensive services out there that can design a background for you for around $100. As you can see from the following examples, Twitter backgrounds can convey a great deal of information about your brand before someone even gets to your bio or tweets.
Bio

Your Twitter bio can contain 160 characters. Be sure to include pertinent keywords in your bio, but also make it a sentence, not just a block of keywords. There are several Twitter directories and other sites that allow people to search Twitter users by their bio information; therefore it’s important to make sure you will be found on Twitter with the same terms you want to be found on through search engines.

Picture

A square photo for your profile will appear everywhere, including on other people’s profiles when you are following them, next to tweets on sites that pull in latest tweets by certain people or on certain topics, in Twitter management tools like HootSuite, etc. Therefore, it’s important to use a good image that is recognizable in any size. If you’re looking to interact with others, it’s good to have a face over an icon or logo, unless it is a well known icon or logo for your brand. Also, it doesn’t hurt to use your brand name as the filename for your profile picture for SEO value.
How to Find People to Connect With

There are a lot of ways to find other Twitter members that share your interests, including:

- **Directories:** Twellow, WeFollow, and Just Tweet It are just a few of many Twitter directories that allow members to list themselves based on particular topics. You should list yourself in these as well so others can find you.

- **Twitter Lists:** Once you find some influential Twitterers in your niche, look at their Twitter lists. You will generally find one expert follows many others.

- **Services like Tweepli** allows you to analyze followers of another Twitter user to determine which ones are the most active and likely to follow you.

Building Relationships on Twitter

Building quality relationships on Twitter begins with following others in your niche or industry and interacting with them through mentions using @theirusername. Answer questions, retweet tweets that you know your followers will like as well, and reply to any Direct Messages that they send you. These are sure-fire ways to build good connections on Twitter.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a networking site for professionals to connect with others in their industry to create strong business relationships. Although it is not as highly trafficked, it is the network that will give lots of lead generation opportunities.

Branding

LinkedIn profile customization is all about the information you place in your profile. Areas such as the headline and current job descriptions, for example, have a huge weight on search engine rankings for your profile.

Profile Information

The LinkedIn profile should be more than just your resume. LinkedIn experts suggest using the most amount of information possible. Instead of listing specifics and bullet points, write your summary and job descriptions in detailed, paragraph form like a story so people can get to know your expertise. This information will also help search engines rank your profile according to appropriate topics.
Websites

Although LinkedIn offers default My Blog, My Website, etc. options, you should never use these. Opt instead for selecting Other, and using your name or brand or keywords as custom anchor text for your website URLs.

Public Settings

When you create your profile, be sure to make your profile public so that people can see all of your information so they can see why they will want to connect with you.

Custom URL

Finally, you will want to create a custom URL for your LinkedIn profile. This will make it a lot easier to share on business cards, websites, and also make it look well branded.

How to Find People to Connect With

LinkedIn connections are a little more difficult to come by compared to Facebook and Twitter. You will want to only connect with those you know – people can mark invitations to connect as someone they do not know or are uncomfortable with, which can lead to a lower response rate.
not know, which will cause LinkedIn to actually limit your account to where you can only send invitations to people whose email addresses you know.

The best way to make connections is by getting to know someone a bit outside of LinkedIn, then requesting them to join your network. Great opportunities to connect with people include when they put a LinkedIn profile link on their website or business cards, and whenever you meet them or see them present at an event. Always include a custom message so that people know who you are and why you want to connect with them.

Another way to make connections is through interacting in groups or the LinkedIn Answers section. If you provide useful information to others in your niche, they will more than likely want to reach out and connect with you.

**Building Relationships on LinkedIn**

The best way to strengthen your relationship is by making a recommendation. By recommending someone, you will help boost their profile and let them know that you find them highly valuable. Many times, this results in them sending you a reciprocal recommendation, which strengthens your profile as well.

Other ways to connect with your network includes private messaging and commenting on other user’s activity in the Network Activity stream. And if you happen to see someone in your network has asked a question, be sure to answer it when you can to remind them of your expertise and helpfulness.

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**LEARNING ABOUT YOUR NICHE / INDUSTRY**

Aside from connecting and interacting with others on social networks, one of the biggest values in social media is the ability to learn more by simply monitoring public conversations.

**Social Media Keyword Research**

There are many social media monitoring tools that allow you to search for specific keyword phrases and see real time discussion on a variety of networks, and the best part is that most of these tools are free.

**Social Mention**

One of the top social media search engines is [Social Mention](#). You can enter a keyword and search for the latest mentions across blogs, microblogging networks (like Twitter), bookmarking networks (like StumbleUpon), comments, events, videos, images, Q&A sites, and so on.
Twitter Advanced Search

Are you looking for updates specifically on Twitter? Twitter's own Advanced Search allows you to search for not only keywords, but to filter results by location, sentiment, people, and date. You can setup an advanced search here, and then use Twitter management tools such as HootSuite to plug these queries into streams so you can continue to monitor them.

More Social Media Search

For more social media keyword search engines, take a look at the top 25 social media keyword search tools and engines.

Competitor Research

Social media provides businesses the opportunity to get an insight on their competitor’s marketing strategy, and allows them to learn from it and implement similar tactics to strengthen their own campaigns.

Did you know you can research your competitors on social media as well? For example:

- You can get a peek into a competitor’s client list by looking at their fans on Facebook or followers on Twitter.
- You can see their social media strategy by following your competitors’ profiles to see what activity gets the best (or worst) response from their followers.
You can see what people are saying to their competitors by filtering their Facebook wall settings to show only what other’s say, or setting up a Twitter search for mentions to your competitors’ @username.

You can setup daily emails through sites like Social Mention for a brand to see what networks they are mentioned on.

The possibilities of what you can learn about competitors or experts you admire are endless. And check out this post to learn more about using Twitter to spy on your competition.

WEEK 9 – MAKING MONEY

In order to monetize a website, you need to have traffic first. Don’t expect to make a full time income off of a website that has little to no traffic. After you have got traffic, which is the hardest part, monetizing should be much easy.

When you are trying to monetize a website or blog, it is important not to put all of your monetization techniques into one basket. It is good to diversify and have multiple streams of income. This way if one of your streams runs dry, you have others who are putting up the slack.

Remember that every industry and audience is different so not all monetization methods will work well for every industry. Testing a combination of these strategies to see which gets a better return, will help to maximize your revenue.

MONETIZATION METHODS

Product Reviews

One way you can make money is by reviewing a 3rd party product or service. Basically it is where you do a write up of the product or service and describe how it works, it’s features/benefits, who the target audience would be, and how it solves a specific audiences problems. Usually great product reviews will include images, screenshots, demos, videos, or audio that will help the user understand what the product does.

There are a number of websites that bring together advertisers and publishers specific to paid reviews. The most popular include ReviewMe, Pay-Per-Post, and SponsoredReviews.

I should state that if you do decide to go this route, that you should truly believe in the product. It should be a product that you actually use and would recommend to a friend.

Start an Affiliate Program

In order to start your own affiliate program on your blog, you will need to have a product to sell. This will allow others to sign up for your program and start marketing your product(s) for you. The affiliate would then get a cut of how ever many sales they make, that resulted in traffic they drove to your site or landing
page. Starting an affiliate program can essentially create an army of marketers working for you, however you only pay them when they produce sales.

Some of the more popular services you can use to setup your affiliate program are ClickBank, Ejunkie, LinkShare, and ShareASale.

Join Affiliate Programs

On the flip side of things, you can become an affiliate for other peoples products and promote them on your site. For everyone that you drive to that site and they purchase, you get a cut. Again if you have a significant amount of traffic and a loyal readership, it should make it easier to get people to purchase products you promote on your blog. Just like paid reviews, you should try to stick with products that you believe in, unless you explain why you don’t like a certain product.

Probably the most popular affiliate programs are the Amazon Affiliate Program, ClickBank, Linkshare and Ejunkie. However depending on the site, they can be using one of hundreds of affiliate programs out there. Usually you can find a link in the footer of their site that says “Affiliate” that will explain how to sign-up for their program.

Google Adsense

One of the oldest forms of making money through your blog is through Google Adsense. Basically this is where you add a line of Google Ads on your site that are relevant to the content on the page. For each ad that someone clicks, you get a commission for that click. Depending on the industry your commission on the click will vary.

For savvy website visitors like in the Internet Marketing industry, Google Adsense ads are not as effective because the visitors are aware of what the ads look like. Similar to how peoples eyes have been trained to look away from banner ads, because they have seen them for so long and understand that the banner is just trying to sell something to you.

Sell Banner Ads

Banner ads are fairly simple ways to monetize your blog, however they are usually not as effective in terms of driving traffic to the advertisers website. Some ad networks will work on a PPC model, where you only make money when someone clicks on the banner ad, however others will set flat monthly fee to the advertiser. Some of the more popular ad networks that will help to sell banner ads for your blog are BuySellAds.com, OIO Publisher, andDoubleClick.

Sell Text Links

A topic for debate and a bit grey hat are selling text links on your website. Why it is such a topic for discussion is because people who are looking to manipulate the organic search results by purchasing links on quality websites is seen as unethical. If you feel this way, you can always sell the link and use a NoFollow attribute so that they will not receive the link value.

If you are looking for some text links networks you can try Text Link Ads, Link Adage, Text Links Forum, Text Link Brokers, and BackLinks.com.

Add a Job Board

Another way you can monetize your blog is to add a Job Board. Posting industry specific jobs that are available for your visitors to view and apply to, can be very enticing to Job Recruiters. Normally these
type of job boards are cheaper than places like Monster and Career Builder and have a more targeted audience.

A good example is the Job Board that I launched on StayOnSearch. Currently it is free to post a job, so I would encourage any companies who are trying to find qualified Internet Marketers to post their job openings. If you are wondering how I created this job board, I used a WordPress Theme called JobPress, which has all of the functionality built for you.

Create a Membership Section

A way that you can really make a lot of money, but requires the most time and effort is to create a membership section on your site that offers premium content. Only people who pay for the membership will have access to the premium content. Typically this includes additional videos, whitepapers, interviews, podcasts, webinars, etc…that are not offered to a normal visitor.

Some of the top Internet Marketing membership sites include SEO Book, Huomah, and Blog Mastermind.

Create and Sell a Product

You can also stick to being an affiliate and selling other peoples products, however the down side is that you will only get whatever the affiliate decides as the percentage of the sale. If you are serious about making money from your blog, you should really create your own product(s). Creating eBooks, training courses, tangible products, videos, podcasts, etc… are all great ways to make money from your blog.

Keep in mind that when you are creating a product, you should really have a reason as to why people should pay for your content. Since there is so much free content already out there, you need to have a competitive edge and selling point as to why people should spend the money to pay for your content.

Newsletter Sponsors

If you have a large marketing list that you send periodic updates to, you could try to find a relevant advertiser who would want to sponsor the newsletter. Usually this means you add the sponsor’s banner ad or blurb about them somewhere on the newsletter. Similar to traffic numbers, the more subscribers you have to your newsletter the more you can charge advertisers.

Consulting

Offering consulting services can be an easy way to make money. If your blog is meant to educate people on a particular industry, it only makes sense that some of the people reading your content are going to need someone or a company to help with strategy or implementation. Have a section on your blog that talks about your consulting services and how they can contact you.

WEEK 10 – WEBSITE ANALYTICS & TESTING

When it comes to Internet Marketing, everything comes down to the data. The reason is that the data doesn’t lie. What is great about marketing on the internet is being able to track EVERYTHING and make adjustments based on what you analyze. Since Google Analytics is the most well-known and free solution out there, I will be going in-depth to show you what data you should be looking at, and how it can impact your traffic and conversions.
UNDERSTANDING TRAFFIC DATA

Keyword Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Visits</th>
<th>Pages/Visit</th>
<th>Avg. Time on Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>status updates that get attention</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>00:00:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>common screen resolution 2010</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>00:00:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compelling headlines</td>
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<td>web design screen resolution 2010</td>
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<td>screen resolution web design</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>stay on search</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>00:01:18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Google Analytics: *Traffic Sources >> Keywords*

This is probably one of the most popular reports that people look at. Everyone wants to know which keywords people used to find their site. It also is a good indication of which keywords are leading to more qualified traffic and sales.

Traffic Source Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source/Medium</th>
<th>Visits</th>
<th>Pages/Visit</th>
<th>Avg. Time on Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>stumbleupon.com / referral</td>
<td>4,581</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>00:00:51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>google / organic</td>
<td>4,662</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>00:02:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(direct) / (none)</td>
<td>3,488</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>00:02:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sponn.com / referral</td>
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<td>00:03:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facebook.com / referral</td>
<td>877</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>00:02:33</td>
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<tr>
<td>twitter.com / referral</td>
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<td>1.55</td>
<td>00:11:84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>google.com / referral</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>00:02:10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Google Analytics: *Traffic Sources >> View Full Report*

This is probably my favorite report to look at. This traffic source report will show you the distribution of how your traffic found your site. For many companies you are running multiple marketing campaigns at one time. You may have a banner ad running on 5 different websites, doing some social media marketing on Twitter and Facebook, and sending out weekly newsletters. With the referral traffic report you can see exactly how many visitors each referral source brought and how engaged those people were.
What I also want to know is, of all of the traffic sources, which was the most qualified and let to a conversion. Just because you got a lot of traffic from one source, doesn’t mean it is the traffic you want coming to your site. Users who take action and complete a goal are much more valuable than people who stay for 5 seconds and leave.

**UNDERSTANDING ENGAGEMENT DATA**

**Entrance Pages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Entrance</th>
<th>Entrances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/</td>
<td>318</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>/10-seo-bloggers-to-watch-in-2010</td>
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<td>17.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>11.28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>/optimal-screen-resolution-for-web-design-2010-update</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>8.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/optimal-screen-resolution-for-web-design</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Google Analytics:  *Content >> Top Landing Pages*

It is important to understand what pages users are entering on when they get to your website. For new visitors, this will be the first time they browse your site, so you will want to make sure the page they land on is engaging and compelling. *Are they landing on the homepage? a service page? a viral blog post?*

For a typical company website, it is normal for the majority of users to enter on the homepage or a service page. For a blog or news focused site, it is not unheard of for popular posts to be the top entrance page. Look at the top landing pages and the bounce rate side-by-side. *Do you notice a page that has a noticeably higher bounce rate than the other pages?* There could be a number of reasons why this is.

1. The page was not relevant to their search query
2. The content was not engaging enough to keep the user on the page
3. They were reading that days blog post, then left (usually enters via direct traffic)

Look at the page and see if there are things that can be improved from a design standpoint.

1. Try a different content layout
2. Try a new call to action/offer
3. Test a different headline
4. Test different graphics/icons/fonts/colors

Which ever are the top landing pages, these are the pages that get the most attention. Whatever the clients objectives/goals, try to work in ways you can incorporate those goals onto the page. *Add a quick contact form, make the phone number prominent to entice users to call, create a download graphic, etc…*

**Exit Pages**
In Google Analytics: Content >> Top Exit Pages

If visitors are consistently exiting on a certain page(s), look at the page and ask yourself why? Similar to landing pages that visitors are entering on, look to see if there are ways to improve the page. Typically individual blog posts will have high bounce rates because the user reads the post then leaves. In order to keep the user engaged in the content, try adding relevant links to other content throughout post. For e-commerce sites, try adding similar or complimentary products that the buyer may enjoy.

Bounce Rate

In Google Analytics: Visitors >> Visitor Trending >> Bounce Rate

Just to define Bounce Rate quickly, it is when a visitor enters a page, then leaves without visiting another page or is idle for over 30 minutes. As we discussed, bounce rate is a more useful statistic for e-commerce site, rather than blogs or news sites because there are more variables to take into consideration. Users who visit blogs frequently bookmark web pages to view later, which can skew results.

Nevertheless, web designers can use this information to help gain insight on what pages need attention. Try using a testing software like Google Website Optimizer to run A/B and Multi-Variate tests to improve page engagement.

Time On Site
In Google Analytics:  Visitors >> Visitor Trending >> Time On Site

Usually the longer you can keep someone on a site, the more likely they are to convert into a lead/customer. Many times you will notice a correlation between bounce rate and time on site. If the visitors time on site is very low, typically the bounce rate will be very high. So what can you do to keep people on your website longer?

1. Add a video that explains the service/product
2. Add graphics that help explain the content
3. Make sure there is a consistent layout across all pages
4. Fix any broken images or links
5. Add a poll or survey
6. Incorporate social media features (Google Friend Connect, Tweetmeme button, etc…)

Goal/Conversion Funnel

**Purchase Made**
461 visitors finished | 5.22% funnel conversion rate

In Google Analytics:  Goals >> Funnel Visualization

Probably the most important data to look at is the goal visualization funnel. This graph will show you where visitors enter the conversion process and at what step users exit or complete the funnel. This graph can identify flaws in your sales process. It could possibly be that an error is occurring during the process and users are unable to move on to the next step. It may also be that your checkout process involves too many steps or that you ask for too much information so nobody is filling out the form. Especially for e-commerce sites, it is important to optimize the checkout process by minimizing the number of steps it takes to purchase and offering multiple payment and shipping methods.

Here are some quick tips to help with the checkout/goal funnel.

1. Add fields that are MANDATORY only
2. Remove “Optional” fields
3. Explain that you do not spam
4. Add secure payment logos
5. Give multiple payment/shipping options
6. Show a cart summary during the process
7. Remove unnecessary steps or combined

Browser Type
In Google Analytics: Visitors >> Browser Capabilities >> Browsers

When looking at browser types it is important to see which browsers and browser versions people are still using. Just because a website looks fine in Firefox 3.5 or IE 8 doesn’t mean that someone using IE 6 will not have issues rendering the page.

Seeing browser stats will make you aware of which versions you still need to make sure the website renders properly in. If you notice that less then 1% of the visitors are using IE6, it probably is not worth your time to figure out why something is not working properly.

To find out how to test your site in all browsers (Including mobile ones), have a look at our post on how to test a blog.

Screen Resolution

In Google Analytics: Visitors >> Browser Capabilities >> Screen Resolutions

5 years ago web designers used to design a website for 800 x 600, now with flat screen monitors becoming the norm, the **minimum screen resolution** is usually around 1024 x 768. Screen resolution data can have a big impact on how you design your site. Analyzing resolution data over a period of time can allow you to see trends in user monitors.

Mobile Devices
In Google Analytics: Visitors >> Mobile >> Mobile Devices

With the innovation of smart phones and other mobile devices, there has been an increase in mobile web usage. This has made web designers rethink how they design web sites. Using Google Analytics, you can start to see an increase in the amount of mobile device traffic. Now that people are browsing websites on their iPhone's and Blackberry's, designing a mobile version of your site (or for blogs; ensuring your normal website displays well) is imperative to cater to these visitors.

A/B TESTING

By definition A/B testing or split testing is testing the effectiveness of one landing page over another. Normally the current landing page will be used as the control, and a second page with some changes to the original will be used as the experiment.

There are a number of different elements that can be tested including colors, fonts, layouts, graphics, icons, headlines, offers, etc.

For this example, I will be using the Google Website Optimizer, a free testing tool that allows you to perform and track A/B and multivariate tests.

Identify the Page to Test

Decide on a page you would like to test. It’s recommended that you choose a page with high traffic so you can gather data faster and make a conclusion.

Once you have chosen a page, decide on one element that you would like to use as your testing element. Be bold when it comes to your testing element. If you simply change one word in a headline or change a color from black to grey, your chances of seeing noticeable differences are minimal.

Choose the Conversion Page

Decide on a desired goal that you want to track. That can be a contact form submission, a download, a purchase, a sign-up, a time-on-site goal, etc.

If you are tracking a form submission, purchase or a sign-up…you will want to have a unique “thank you” url that you can use as your completion page. This is the url you will add in the goals.

Setup Tracking Scripts

In order to track your experiment properly you will need to add tracking scripts to your control, test, and goal pages. Depending on which testing software you use, it may very slightly, however they are very similar when setting up the tracking. Usually it will be a small snippet of java-script code. For Website Optimizer you can see the full installation guide here.

Decide on Traffic Distribution

Depending on the number of tests you are running, you will have to decide on what percentage of your traffic will be displayed the control page and version A, version B, etc. If you’re testing 2 pages, splitting the traffic up with 50% for each page is the simplest way to do it.
I would recommend starting with only one variable (i.e. your normal page, plus a page with one thing changed), unless you have a large amount of traffic to send to multiple test pages.

Analyse Your Results

Your testing efforts mean nothing if you don’t analyze the results and implement changes based on them. Google Website Optimizer has great reporting features that allow you to see which variation was more successful.

In this screen shot you can see the different variations that were tested, the estimated conversion rate, chances to beat the original page, and the actual improvements. The green percentages are improvements, while the red are variations that perform worse than the original. To the far right you can see the number of conversions and impressions that each variation received. Again, it’s important to state that unless you have a high number of conversions, you may want to start with one variation.

MULTI-VARIATE TESTING

A more complex test, the multivariate test allows you to test multiple page variables at one time. Unlike A/B testing, multivariate testing can essentially test endless variable combinations.

The only limitations are the amount of time it will take to gain sufficient data to come to a reasonable conclusion. The more components you add to a test, the longer and more data you will need to complete a test.

The process of designing a multivariate experiment is very similar to setting up an A/B testing experiment, however, what to test is slightly more involved. This graphic is a great representation of how each user is shown different elements on a page.
It should be said that you can perform these testing techniques on not only web pages, but email marketing campaigns, banner ads, and paid placement campaigns.

It should also be noted that you should always be testing. Just because variation A beat out your original page, doesn’t mean you should stick with that page. Try testing variation A with variation B to see if you can continue to improve.

Website testing is becoming a main component in more and more company marketing strategies. Marketers are beginning to realize that improving the conversion rate for existing traffic can be much more effective than trying to drive more traffic and convert less.

**BONUS – TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

This is a bonus I thought I would give to you guys, as a special thanks for signing up for the free course. Hopefully you have found some great content and will apply some of the techniques I mention to your websites.

Below is extensive list of tools that many of the top industry Internet Marketers use to help them with various daily tasks. Everything from research/analysis, to web analytics software, to managing social media campaigns. I urge everyone to take a look at these tools and keep this guide handy, as a quick reference. Being able to maximize your time and be more efficient is very important, so these tools should help.

**KEYWORD RESEARCH TOOLS**

- Google Adwords Keyword Tool
- Google Adwords Traffic Estimator
- Google Search-Based Keyword Tool
- Google Insights for Search
- Google Sets
- Google Trends
- Trillian – Keyword Discovery
- MSN – Keyword Forecast
- MSN – Detecting Commercial Intent
- Quintura
- SEO Book – Keyword List Generator
- SEO Book – Keyword Suggestion Tool
- SEO Book – Keyword Typo Generator
- Urban Dictionary

- Wordpot
- Wordtracker
- Wordze
- Actual Keywords
- Keyword Smash
- YouTube Keyword Tool
- KwMap
- Wordstream – Keyword Niche Finder

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS TOOLS

- SpyFu
- Alexa
- Compete
- SEM Rush
- Feedcompare
- Quantcast

- Majestic SEO
- SEO Quake
- SEO Toolbar
- SEO for Firefox
- Keyword Spy

PAY-PER-CLICK TOOLS

- SEO Book – PPC Keyword Wrapper
- SEO Book – Negative Keyword Wrapper
- Local Adwords & Keyword List
- PPC ROI Calculator
- Google Adwords Editor

- Combine Keywords
- BidMax
- BidRank
- KeywordMax
- PPC G-Test Calculator

LINK BUILDING/ANALYSIS TOOLS

- Backlink Watch
- Link Diagnosis
- NetConcepts – Link Popularity Checker
- SEOmoz – Open Site Explorer
- SEO Book - Hubfinder

- SEO Book – Link Harvester
- SEOmoz – Juicy Link Finder
- Link Partner Tool
- BackTweets
- LinkVooDoo – Backlink Analyzer Tool
SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

- Ping.FM
- Social Mention
- OnlyWire
- Flowtown
- Trendistic
- PostRank
- Google Hot Trends
- Who’s Talkin

Twitter

- Hootsuite

WEBSITE ANALYTICS/RANKING TOOLS

- Google Analytics
- Woopra
- KissMetrics
- Google Website Optimizer
- Get Clicky
- Mint
- ClickTale
- Rank Checker

- Rank Tracker
- Feedburner
- Bit.ly
- Google Alerts
- Trackur
- Google URL Builder
- Userfly
- CrazyEgg

WEBSITE ANALYSIS TOOLS

- Website Grader
- WooRank
- Lipperhey
- SEO Rush
- Search24Online
- Pear Analytics
- Internet Business Promoter
- Web CEO
RICH MEDIA TOOLS

Video
- TubeMogul
- Traffic Geyser
- HeySpread
- LinkedTube
- Overlay
- Ustream

Audio
- Audicity
- Pamela
- Odiogo
- Casting Words
- Talkshoe
- Hipcast

THANK YOU FOR TAKING MY COURSE!

If you guys have any questions about the information explained in the course, please feel free to e-mail your questions at mark@stayonsearch.com and I will get back you as soon as I can.

Hope You Enjoyed the Course!

Mark Thompson
- StayOnSearch.com

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