

THE DEFINITIVE WEB MARKETING GUIDE



**PROVEN STRATEGIES
FOR TOP-PERFORMING
WEBSITES**



MARKETING • PRINT • MAIL

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The Definitive Web Marketing Guide

Proven strategies for top-performing websites

The amount of traffic on the Internet should no longer come as a surprise to marketers in companies of all sizes and across all industries. Recent research shows:

- 97% of Internet users in the U.S. research shopping information on the Web.¹
- 71% of Canadian consumers use the Internet to research products.²

Yet, only 67% of U.S. small businesses have websites.³ And, an online presence is even more limited in Canada with only 36% of small businesses having a company website.⁴

Simply having a website is only half of the battle. In this environment, if you build it ... they won't necessarily come. It takes an integrated, holistic approach for an effective Web marketing program.

Does your company have a website? Does the site you have just need a little more attention? Or, do you want to jump-start your Web marketing? You'll find this guide is filled with practical tips, ideas and strategies to get you thinking about solid Web strategies and how to employ them.

¹ Google

² Statistics Canada

³ 2010 State of Small Business Report by Network Solutions and the University of Maryland's Smith School of Business

⁴ 2011 Canadian Broadcasting System

Website: A Business Must-have

A company website is at the heart of what can be a powerful Web marketing strategy to reach your target audience. It's frequently the first exposure a large segment of prospects will have to your organization. With some careful planning, you can make it easier for people to connect with your business by having a website that is:

- Balanced in function and aesthetics for a positive visitor experience
- Easy for buyers to find
- Fully-integrated with the rest of your marketing efforts, online and offline

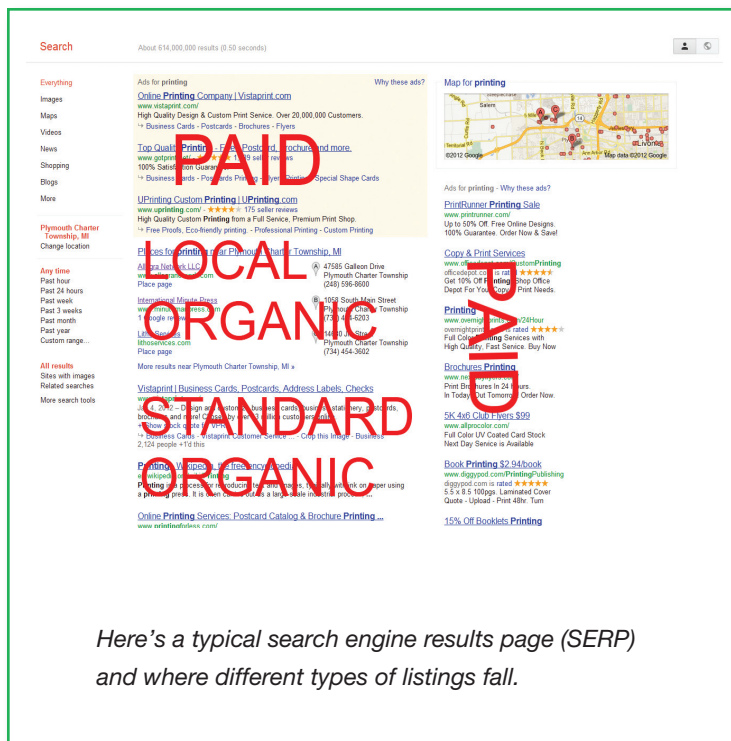
Search Defined

On the following pages, we'll show you how to make simple changes to your website and other online strategies that will help your target markets to find you. Here are some “terms to know” that you will be seeing throughout:

Organic Search – Targeting your website with keywords so that it is returned in the top results when a user types terms into a search engine (Google, Yahoo!, Bing). Marketers use search engine optimization (SEO) to capture organic search.

Local Search – Listing your business on local search engines, like Google Places or Yahoo! Local, for users searching for services in a specific geographic area.

Paid Search – Advertising on specific sites or using a pay-per-click (PPC) program through a search engine, known as search engine marketing (SEM).



Here's a typical search engine results page (SERP) and where different types of listings fall.



Web Marketing Basics for Business

The first step in your Web marketing strategy is to choose a domain name, or URL, for your website. The URL is important for two primary reasons:

- It identifies your business and differentiates you from your competitors.
- It is the first thing search engines read when they “crawl” your website to return results to users.

The only real obstacle in choosing a domain name is that it might already be taken. If your business or nonprofit organization is local, adding geographic keywords can help open up options in terms of availability. Dashes between words – while not ideal for memorability – can do the same.

Here are a few more tips for your domain name:

- **Make it catchy.** Create a URL that’s easy to remember.
- **Keep it short.** Make it less than five words or fewer than 20 characters.
- **Strike a balance.** Balance length and keywords, but don’t use abbreviations just to keep your URL brief. It doesn’t have a significant impact on SEO nor does it make it easier for users to remember your Web address.
- **Think ahead.** Avoid choosing something that can be obsolete in a few years.

It’s possible that you have had a website for years, and the URL no longer reflects the scope of your business. Perhaps it’s too long or you have any number of reasons why you want and should change it. Changing a domain name, if done properly, is a straightforward process. The old domain can be re-directed to the new one, capturing any lost traffic. This 301 re-direct can also maintain most of the “SEO link juice” the old domain had.

Web Design Do's and Don'ts

The look and feel of your website should accurately reflect your brand and support your other marketing materials and channels. All components work together to deliver a consistent brand identity.

Here is a design checklist based on usability studies of millions of Web users by Jakob Nielsen, a user advocate and former Sun Microsystems engineer:

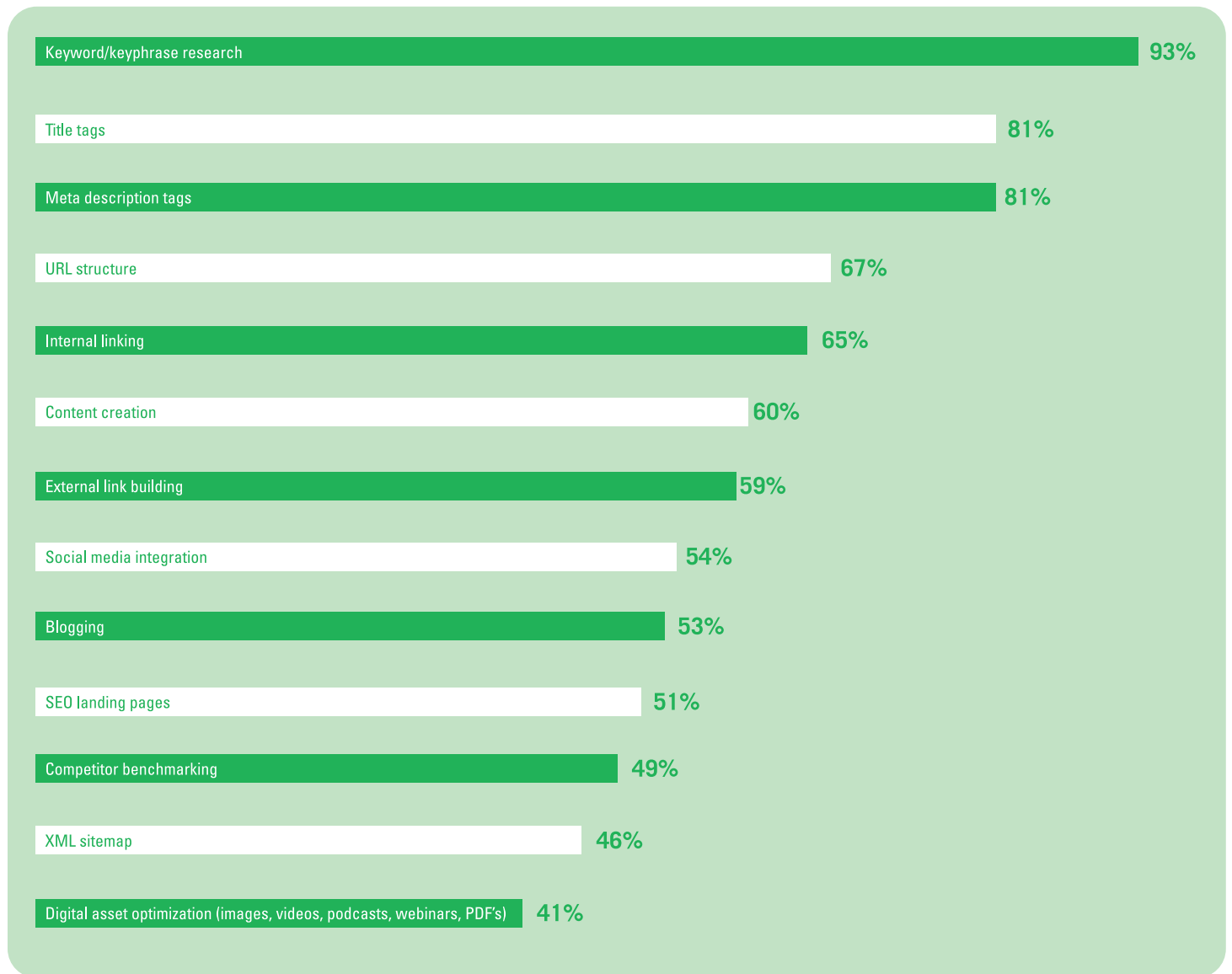
DO'S:

- Include a one-sentence tagline on the home page that summarizes what the business does
- Design to let users resize text and print in portrait format
- Clearly indicate what the user will find at the site and provide proper navigation support
- Provide straightforward headlines and page titles with good use of product photos, when applicable
- Make obvious what's clickable, and use standard links with link text colors that change after user access
- Name pages for search engine visibility and provide search functionality, if the site has more than 100 pages
- Design for consistency and familiarity at every level with name and logo on every page
- Use meaningful graphics only — and sparingly
- Use anchor text to structure content space, and break up long passages into multiple pages
- Group all corporate/contact information prominently in one area and in every form users may want
- Begin link names with the most important keyword

DON'TS

- Don't collect email addresses without a privacy policy
- Don't use too much "Flash" as search engine crawlers cannot read non-text items
- Don't leave outdated information on the site
- Don't do anything that looks like an ad
- Don't do anything that produces overly-long download times
- Don't have a search function that doesn't deliver
- Don't build pages in PDF format or require users to open new browser windows
- Don't require horizontal scrolling or constant vertical scrolling
- Don't break or slow down the "Back" button

Which of the Following SEO Tactics has Your Organization Used?



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Search Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2011, N=1,530



Get “Sticky”: What Brings Them Back for More?

After searchers find your site, are you engaging them and enticing these potential customers to keep coming back? A website should have:

- **Strong calls to action.** According to Web marketing expert Seth Godin, you should “force yourself to design each and every page with one and only one primary objective” – a clear and obvious call to action. Display calls to action prominently and use action verbs: “View demo now.” “Download now.” “Sign up for a free...” “Take a tour.”
- **Useful tools and resources.** Develop a page to post videos, white papers, how-to articles, tip sheets and tutorials. Content and links are important for effective SEO which will help consumers find your website.
- **Interactivity.** Offering message/discussion boards and a forum for visitors to comment and communicate with each other are additional ways to keep visitors on your site longer. Polls or surveys will do the same.

Perfect Your Portfolio

A consumer is on your website – right now – checking you out. Evaluating you, your approach, your philosophy and most importantly, your work.

A fair amount of businesses use case studies to highlight the success of the work they’ve completed. Case studies can show the full result of a project, but an emotional engagement with the prospective customer tends to be lost amongst the charts and statistics. Many businesses use a portfolio page, if appropriate, to show their work. Examples would be before/after shots of a home renovation, a designer showcase or fitness center success stories depicted visually.

The problem is most businesses also fail to update them.

Better stories come along as do better clients and customers. So why, then, do we showcase our older and less-perfect work in our portfolios? To get these newer pieces onto your portfolio page, consider adding it as an item in your standard workflow for website updates.

How to Get Found ... Organically

A study by Chitika/Nielsen Online shows that about 96% of users never scroll past the first page of search results. SEO is an ongoing process with many factors impacting performance. Google, for example, changes its search algorithm an average of once every 17.5 hours.

Follow these three steps to help your listing land on the first page:

1. Include keyword-rich content. For search engines like Google and Yahoo! to find your website, you'll need to use keywords and keyword phrases on your website that are the same or similar to what someone types in a search bar. Strive for 2-3% "keyword density." Avoid artificially "stuffing" keywords or your page could be flagged for "keyword spamming."

2. Be precise with title tags. These are probably the most important combination of words to help your audience find you. Title tags appear at the top of a browser when a visitor lands on your site. Seomoz.org recommends that these words represent an accurate and concise description of the content on your site.

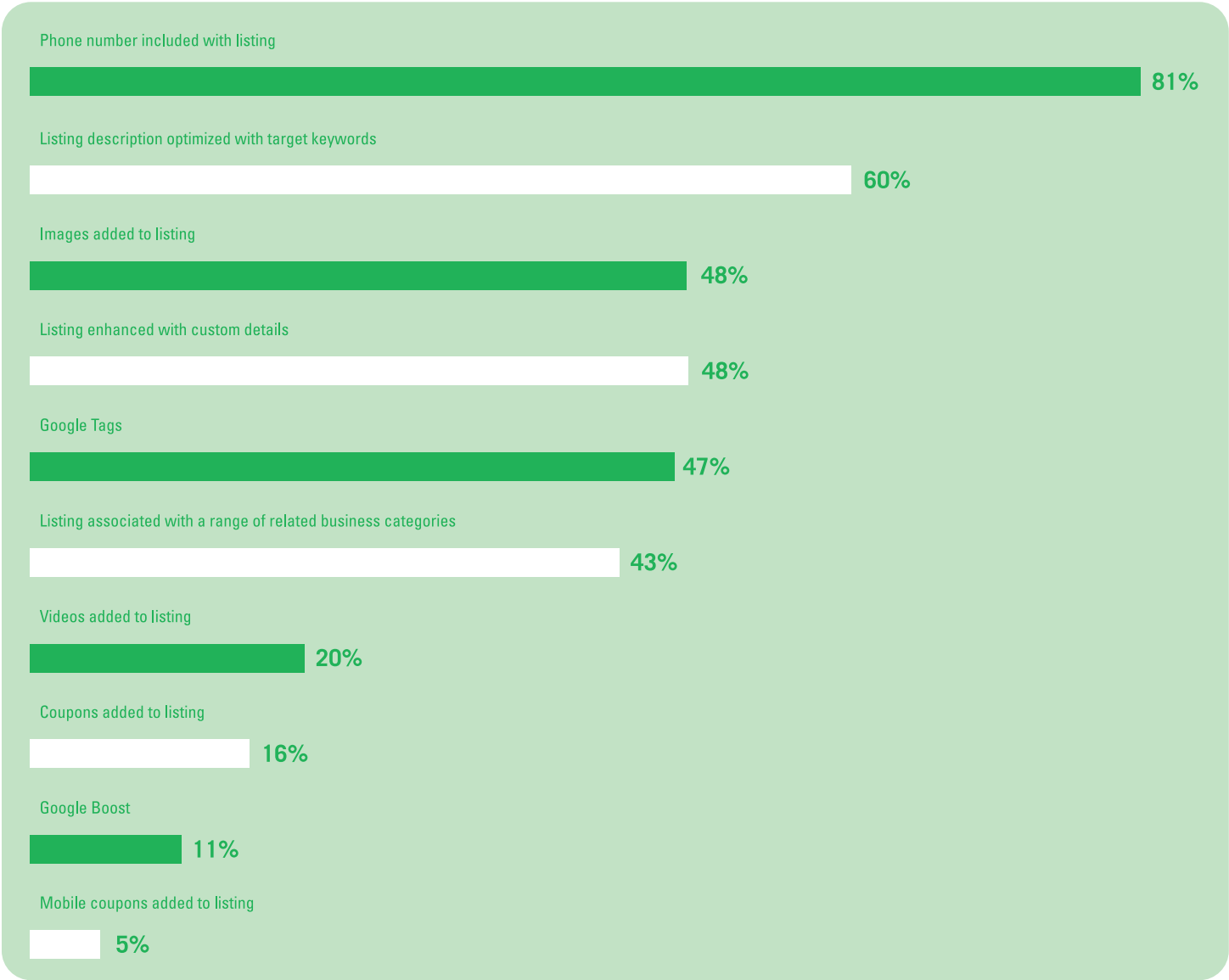
Keywords should appear at the front of the tag. However, limit your content because only 70 characters will show up in search results. Be sure to leverage your branding, but be aware that many SEO experts advise that only well-known, big-name brands be placed at the front of the tag.

3. Motivate with meta descriptions. While not important to search engine rankings, meta descriptions are like miniature ads describing the content of your site when people read through search engine results. According to Seomoz.org, good use of meta descriptions will prompt consumers on search engines to click on sites with a compelling message.

As with title tags, brevity is recommended because search engines generally cut off tags exceeding 160 characters. If you have multiple website pages, be sure you have a different tag for each page.



Local Business Listing Tactics Used for Local Search Purposes



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Search Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2011, N=1,530

Stake Your Claim with Local Search Engines

According to Google, nearly three billion monthly searches on the popular search engine have **local terms** like “hardware stores Phoenix, Arizona.” Still, just 15% of small businesses are claiming their local listing on Google Places.

When setting out to improve visibility in local search results, the first thing to do is claim your business’ local listings. Because 70% of online searchers will use local search to find offline businesses, it’s the single most valuable thing you can do. And, it’s a pretty straightforward and simple task: just fill in boxes and click buttons.

After the ninth identical “description” box, however, it can start to feel tedious and time consuming. It’s only human to start looking for ways to speed up the process, and what would work better than not filling out all of those fields? Surely, just skipping a few couldn’t hurt.

Ah, but that **completeness is where the effectiveness of these local listings lies.**

The prominence and visibility from many local listing sources is affected by the completeness of a profile. If the information isn’t there, a search engine doesn’t have much to go on. In addition, completeness of a profile can affect the conversion of a visitor to that page. Make it easy for users to find the information they seek.

If you’re setting out to claim and populate local listings, a solution to combat this profile fatigue might be to create a template document with the basics each profile will want. As you create each profile, simply copy and paste the information from your template into the fields.



The Local 9

Building listings and mentions of your business on other websites is a great way to increase visibility in local search. These are some of the best and most powerful sources:

- Google Places (www.google.com/places)
- Bing Local (www.bing.com/local)
- Yahoo! Local Basic (listings.local.yahoo.com)
- Yelp (biz.yelp.com/signup)
- InfoGroup/Express Update (www.expressupdateusa.com)
- HotFrog (www.hotfrog.com)
- Best of the Web Local Free (local.botw.org)
- YP.com (www.yellowpages.com)
- Localeze (www.localeze.com)

Other sites, like InsiderPages and Kudzo, are also strong sources of referral traffic but often involve complex setups or sometimes require a small fee.

Pay Attention to Online Reviews ... Positive or Negative

The quickest way to business disaster is to develop a bad reputation. Often, the antithesis is true as well, with good word-of-mouth encouraging new and returning customers. While this space was dominated for years by offline interaction, now more than ever a business' online reputation is a major factor in its success.

If correctly set up, monitoring your online reputation is a fairly automated task. Google Places and Bing Local notify a claimed listing owner of new reviews, and many other services do as well. Where most business owners fall short, however, is what they do, or don't do, with these reviews. Often they are ignored or worse: negative reviews are met with hostility.

Ignoring reviews, either positive or negative, seems like the easiest road to take. Like most things in life, though, easy isn't best. Acknowledge good reviews, and thank the people who left them. Showing activity in a reviews section of a website lets viewers know that the business is concerned with its reputation. It wants to do right by its customers and it will engage with them wherever they are.

The same goes for negative reviews. Acknowledge the review and the problem. Address it sincerely, and if necessary, correct whatever business issue occurred to cause it. Do this publicly and quickly, and you may just find that once-negative review has turned into the most positive testimonial you have.

Is Paid Search Right for Your Business?

Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising can be an effective part of your marketing mix. Although more than 80% of search engine users say they never click on PPC results, overall conversion rates of sites using PPC is three times higher than sites that use organic SEO.

PPC ads are often displayed to the right of the free listings on Google, Yahoo and other search engines under the header “Sponsored Links.” These ads are keyword-specific, so that advertisers can arrange ads (for example, Bob’s Discount Kitchen Cabinets) to appear when search results are shown for keywords such as “kitchen remodeling.”

Consider the following advantages when determining whether you should conduct a PPC test campaign:

- Readers connect quickly with PPC ads that meet their search criteria, meaning you gain a prospect whose interests directly align with your product, service or organization.
- PPC ads can be posted quickly, with the advertisement directing new visitors to your website.
- Measurable results which means you can soon learn what appeals work and which messages need tweaking.

The Immortal Blogging Question: Why Do I Care?

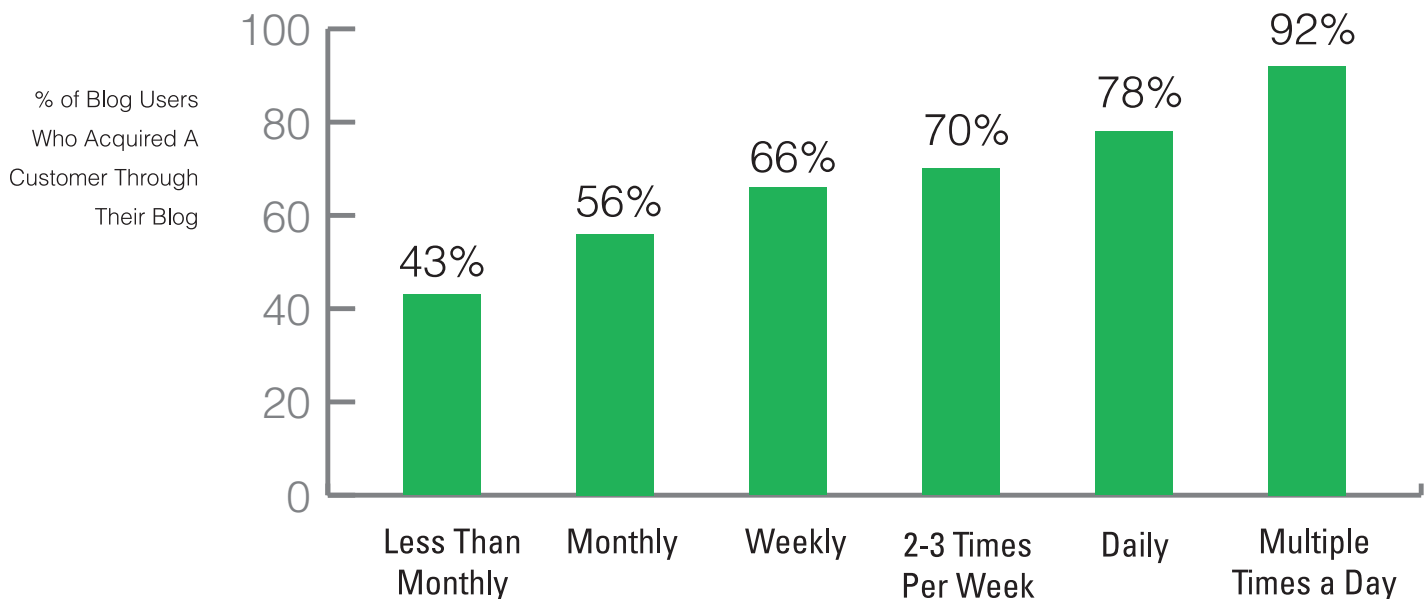
Blogging is a great inbound marketing technique. It can capture and engage an audience with your brand and business unlike any other marketing channel. Through blog content you can relate to your audience of potential and existing clients, convey important topics, and keep yourself top-of-mind. It's marketing storytelling.

Just like with any other form of storytelling, before you can engage with your reader you have to hook them. Because developing these hooks can be difficult, many bloggers tend to ignore them.

Those hooks, however, drive readership engagement levels. It's one thing to write good content and it's another altogether to get people to read it. Further, it's even better when people share that content with others. And no one wants to share slow or un-engaging content.

If you're having trouble writing good blog post hooks, step back and ask yourself one question: Why do I care? Ask it honestly, and ask it of the part of yourself that didn't just write the piece. Work that into your blog post hook.

Blog Post Frequency vs. Customer Acquisition



The 2012 State of Inbound Marketing
www.HubSpot.com/SOIM

Build Credibility by Adding Social Media to the Mix

SEO is a very interdependent channel. It affects many other Web marketing efforts and is impacted by them. Signals from social media pages, the infrastructure and content of your website and many other aspects of an online marketing strategy all come together to influence search engine rank and the long-term success of a search marketing campaign.

TIP: Employ a social media campaign. Social signals are becoming a more important search engine ranking factor, and a good social campaign can encourage backlinks.

The 2011 “The Faces of Social Media” study reports that some 38 million U.S. adults ages 18 to 80 (12% of the total population) say they turn to social media to find new products and brands, or when they are making purchase decisions. According to Search Engine Watch, one-third of Canadian consumers rely on social media when making purchasing decisions.

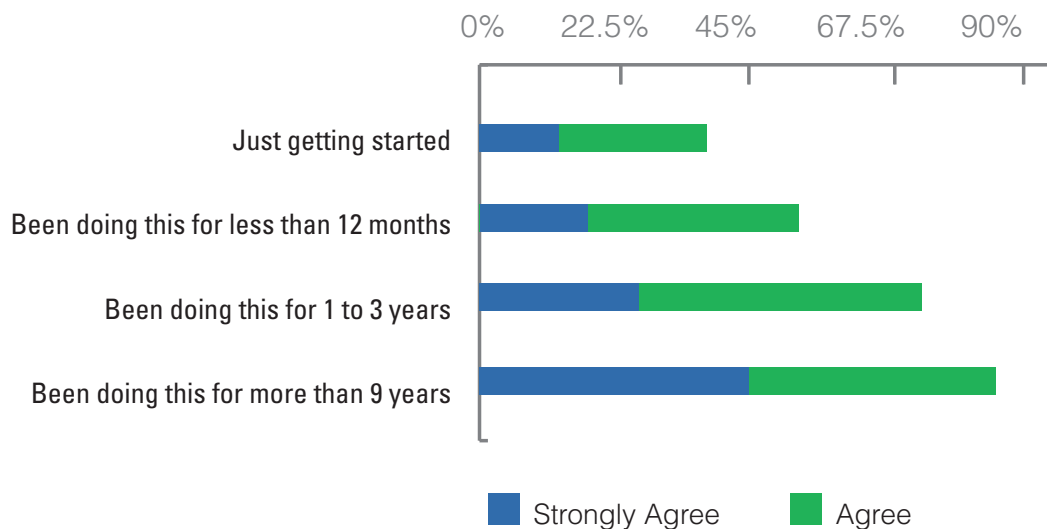
Benefits of Social Media Marketing



Source: Social Media Examiner “2011 Social Media Marketing Industry Report”

Does Social Media Improve Search Rankings?

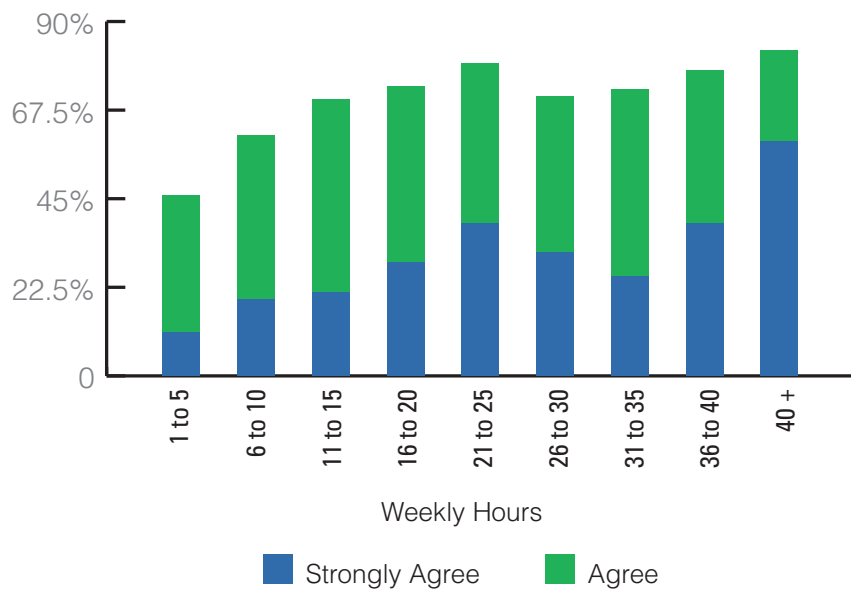
According to Social Media Examiner, nearly 73% or more of businesses that had been using social media for a year or longer reported improved search engine rankings.



Source: Social Media Examiner "2011 Social Media Marketing Industry Report"

How Much Time Invested in Social Media Marketing?

At least 65% of those investing a minimum of 6 hours per week in social media marketing saw improvements in search engine rankings. Business-to-business marketers reported better results (66%) than business-to-consumer enterprises (59%).



Source: Social Media Examiner "2011 Social Media Marketing Industry Report"

Mobile-izing Your Site

What is the one change you can make to your website to reach a whole new audience? Make it mobile. There are more than 70 million smartphone users in the United States¹ — with almost 80% using these mobile devices for shopping-related activities.² In fact, 68% of mobile users visited a business online or in person after using their device to conduct a search, with 53% actually making a purchase.³

33%

Only 33% of advertisers have a mobile optimized website.

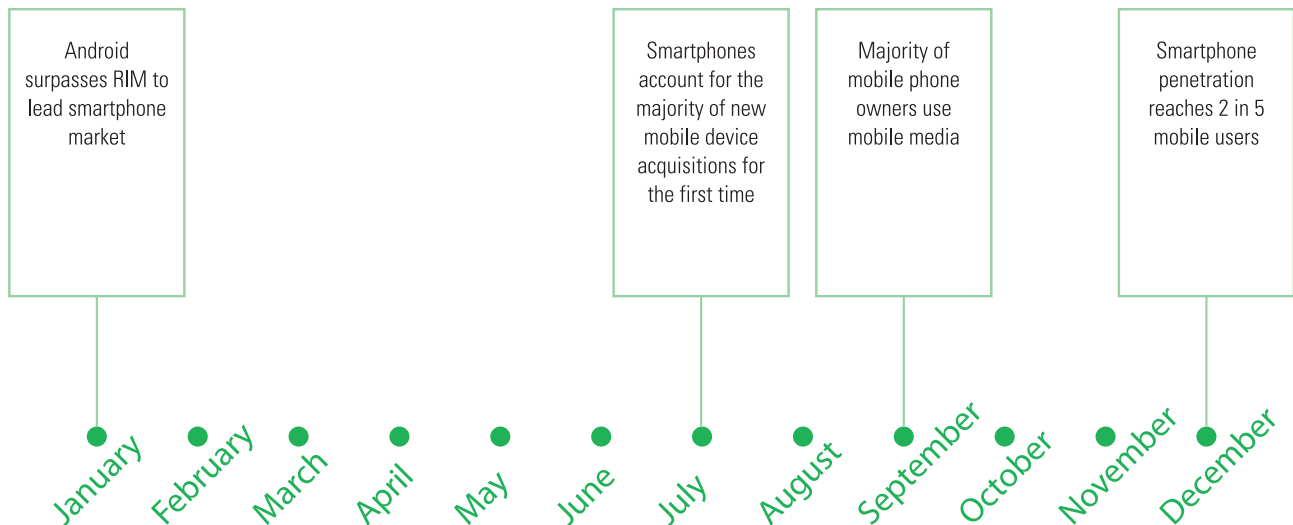
Source: Google/Ipsos/TNS

One in five Canadians with smartphones use their phones to research product recommendations and reviews — with 7.6% using their phone to make a purchase, according to a 2011 study by Delvinia.

But many businesses both large and small may be missing out on this opportunity. According to 2012 Mongoose Metrics, just 10% of all websites are optimized for mobile users — and data from Network Solutions shows that only 15% of small businesses view mobile marketing as “extremely” or “very valuable.”

TIP: Set up your pages for vertical rather than horizontal scrolling. Seek platforms for animation, video and interactivity that are mobile compatible as Adobe Flash is unavailable for many mobile applications.

Smartphone Adoption Now Reaches 2 in 5 Mobile Americans in 2011



Source: comScore

¹ eMarketer, 2011

^{2,3} Google Research, 2011