

THE GUIDE TO

Winning More Business Online

Land more customers with a better website and online presence.



The Guide to Winning More Business Online

Your business's digital footprint is more important than ever, even if the work you do isn't conducted online. Local small businesses from hairdressers to landscapers to pet groomers all need a healthy online presence in order to win new customers. And a basic, bare-bones website won't cut it. In this guide, we'll show you how to optimize your website, online search results and more.

“ **46%** of small businesses are focusing their marketing efforts on digital channels. ~GetApp

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01 Are Websites Really Dying?

AOL Instant Messenger. The iPod Shuffle.
Subway's \$5 footlong.

What do all these things have in common?
They've become obsolete. OK, so we saw AIM's
demise coming years ago (I'm lookin' at you, Slack).
But the iPod Shuffle? That was a classic! It deserved
to live on, right? ... right?

What about business websites? Like many classic
tech staples before them, are business websites
doomed as well?

Not necessarily.

In the mid-1990s, e-commerce was the next big thing. Small business owners knew the internet would change how they ran their businesses. Instead of walking into brick-and-mortar stores, consumers were suddenly searching online for products and services, and buying them online when they could.

To help your business succeed online, we've gathered the following steps you can take to get the most out of your business website along with the rest of your online efforts, such as Google and social media. You'll attract new consumers and engage your customers.

81% of consumers research a business online before using its services. ~Zippia.com



02 Why Your Website Isn't Working

What's the most popular site consumers use to find local businesses?

- Google
- Yahoo
- Facebook
- TikTok



If you guessed Google, **guess again.**

It's Facebook, friends. That's right, Facebook is the most popular site consumers use to research and interact with local businesses. In fact, according to Kleiner Perkins, 78% of Americans have discovered retail products via Facebook.

Traditional search engines like Google are no longer the top way to get your business found online. While they're still important, they now serve up results other than static business websites to support consumer searches. Now, they're much more likely to share business profiles on ratings and reviews sites, for example.

Why is your website getting buried by things like social media and ratings and reviews sites? Let's take a look.

“ **69%** of consumers have been inspired by social media to make a purchase. ~Bazaarvoice

1. It's hard to find.

When you built your business website, you had to choose and purchase a website domain and web address (i.e., URL). How closely does the URL match your business name? Does it include your location? Is the spelling obvious and easy to guess?

With the sheer volume of websites out there, your website's URL probably doesn't exactly match what consumers might type into 1) their address bars or 2) search engines.

Because of this, your website is probably a little harder to find than you'd like.

2. It's all about your story, not theirs.

It's tempting to make your website all about your history, your goals and why you went into business in the first place. Small business ownership is a noble cause, after all!

And while this information is nice to share, it's not what consumers are searching for, and it's probably not what is going to win their business.

So, if your website's home page is more about you and less about what consumers really want, your website isn't doing its job in attracting consumers or converting them into paying customers.

38% of website visitors form their opinion of a business based on initial user experience.

~Zippia

3. It's too hard (or too painful) to take action.

Your website's main goal, aside from getting you found online, should be to get you chosen. That could mean different things for different businesses. For some businesses, that could mean generating phone calls to your business line, and for others that could mean generating online orders.

This next step you want consumers to take is your "call to action," or CTA.

Some common calls to action:

Contact us

Book now

Buy Now

Join Our Newsletter

Request a Quote



Many small business websites either don't make their CTAs clear, or they make them too difficult to act upon.

Perhaps there are too many links or buttons on their websites, or maybe the buttons are too tiny for fat thumbs to tap on a mobile device.

4. It just doesn't work.

Regardless of how effective you think your website is today, on the whole, business websites are converting consumers into customers at lower and lower rates.

Think you're the exception? Think you've done everything right on your website and it's working just fine?

Not for long.

Let's take a look at the outside forces that might detract from your website's effectiveness.

Here are three ways you can provide helpful information to your website visitors:

- ✓ Write in language that's easy to understand. Avoid using lofty jargon when explaining your services.
- ✓ Give them details that make you stand out. Do you offer evening appointments? Are your services environmentally friendly? These details will help you edge out the competition.
- ✓ Include answers. A frequently asked questions page is a great catch-all for typical questions you might receive.

03 Stay on Top of Search Results

We've touched on the fact consumers are changing how they search for products and services. They're turning more and more to social media sites and other online (and offline) sources.

But why?

Several factors influence how consumers search, which in turn influences the traffic you get (or don't get) to your business website.



“ *Most businesses are failing at local SEO. In fact, **58%** of companies still don't optimize for local search. ~BrandMuscle*

Search Engine Optimization

The first, perhaps the most prominent, factor influencing online search results is search engine optimization (SEO). You're probably thinking, "Wait! I plugged some keywords into my website, and my web developer tells me it's optimized for search!" ... and that may be true.

The problem is, SEO applies to more than just your business website and the keywords you incorporated within it. Your SEO is influenced by a number of factors both on and off your website.

- Loading speed
- Page speed
- Location-based keywords
- Average time on your site
- Clicks to your website from searches
- Fast bounces away from your website

But it's more than just your website. Search engines scour other places on the web for more detailed information on your business. And the more accurate information they find in these other places, the better.

Additional online factors that affect your SEO:

- Numerous listings on top sites
- Consistent information across your business listings
- The number of user-generated reviews you have
- User-generated ratings of your business
- Your social media presence and activity

With the number of factors affecting your SEO other than your website, it's clear your website only shares some of the burden in getting you found online. Focusing solely on optimizing your website for search engines won't do the whole job.

Search Engine Marketing and Pay Per Click Advertising

Another important element in online search results is search engine marketing (SEM), more specifically pay per click (PPC) advertising.

PPC ads are the links you see at the top of search results on sites like Google. They're marked with "Ad" or "Sponsored" identifiers showing users the results are paid for, rather than organic. PPC ads also can refer to banners you see on the sides, top or bottom of your searches and visited web pages.

While PPC advertising can be costly, it can be effective. For a small "per click" fee (or bid), you can ensure your ad's visibility ad to a specific type of person conducting a specific type of search.

Just how effective is PPC? The largest PPC player is (surprise, surprise) Google. According to 99firms.com businesses typically earn \$2 for every \$1 spent on Google Ads.

And a paid ad on the first position on the first page of Google has a CTR of 7.11%, according to AccuraCast. That's compared to an average click-through rate of 3% for other, lower positions on the results list.

In short, PPC works. And if you don't invest the time to develop an SEM strategy, the PPC campaigns of your competitors can negatively influence your business's organic search results.

Helpful Tip:

For better PPC results, use specific geographic areas. For instance, instead of a city name like Pittsburgh, use a neighborhood like Allentown or North Shore.

Voice Search

“Alexa, find a donut shop near me.”

Voice search is surging in popularity with consumers at home and via mobile. It's growing so much, 71% of consumers now prefer to conduct queries by voice instead of typing, according to Oberlo.

People use voice searches differently from how they used to use traditional searches online. For businesses, that means you can throw your traditional SEO strategies right out the proverbial SEO window.

For example, you might have centered your prior SEO strategy around knowing which keywords your target consumers searched for when looking for businesses like yours.



“Hey Siri, where's the nearest gym?”

But voice search doesn't care about these exact keywords. Voice search cares more about how people actually talk, and it does its best to answer their questions conversationally rather than formulaically.

The best thing you can do to adjust is to make the copy on your website, your business listings and your social media pages as detailed and conversational as possible.

Incorporate questions you think consumers are asking themselves (and their voice search systems) when they want to find a business like yours. Then, do your best to answer those questions right away.

04 How Consumers Drive Change



Think you own your online presence? **Think again.**

These days, the saying “the customer is always right” is truer than ever. The internet gives every customer, happy and not, a nearly anonymous place to share (or vent) their praises and frustrations for businesses they frequent.

And share they do.

Why do people share online reviews? As a business owner who may have received a negative review or two that felt less than fair, you’re probably not feeling the warm and fuzzies when you think about online review sites. You may even think people share reviews as a form of revenge or payback after having a certain experience with your business.

On the contrary. People share reviews for a couple reasons.

- 1.** First, consumers trust reviews they read about products and services online. According to Bizrate Insights, 32% of consumers say online reviews are the most important factor in leading to their purchases.
- 2.** Second, people have an innate desire to help others. There’s a sense of community online. Like being a member of a social media site, contributing to online ratings and reviews gives consumers a sense of belonging. They feel they’re contributing to the wellbeing of others in their local communities.

What's this mean for your business?

Search engines like Google know consumers love ratings and reviews. So, they're serving up search results that feature them prominently.

If your business has little-to-no reviews, you're going to get beat by competitors who do. And you'll get beat every single time. If you have reviews, but too many of them are negative, you'll get passed over time and time again.

It's on you to manage your online reputation so you look good to both search engines and consumers.

Quick steps to improving your online reputation:

- ✓ Manage your listings on as many sites as you can.
- ✓ Ask for feedback from customers immediately after the sale.
- ✓ Request reviews and follow up with reminders.
- ✓ Respond to reviews both positive and negative.
- ✓ Act fast to repair relationships with negative reviewers.

05 Take Control of Your Online Presence

Online presence is made up of more than you might have initially thought. And it's on you to maintain the information out there, even if it's not on your website.

The scary part: If you don't manage the online information about your business, consumers can (and will) do it for you. Social sites, search engines, business listings sites and others have begun asking consumers for their input on businesses near them or businesses they think consumers have frequented.

That means consumers can affect your online footprint with both fact and fiction (eek!).

If you want to control the online information about your business, you need a tool like Thryv. Thryv loads the exact information you want across the top business listings sites and locks it down. Then, it helps you engage with your online ratings and reviews and post to your social media accounts, all from one place.

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