90 Day Plan to Search Engine Success

Your Road Map to Web Marketing Success

Follow this plan to beat your competitors on *search engines and sell more*.

A website is a powerful marketing tool – if used correctly. It is not a "set and forget" tool. Gone are the days of building a simple website and then sitting back while you wait for the phone to ring. While it may be a potentially powerful marketing tool, it is also like a garden – it needs to be maintained in order for your audience (and business) to grow. So you have your shiny new website. Now what? Here is your road map to web marketing success.

Week 1: Google Local Places

Claim your pin on Google Local Places. To ensure you are the rightful owner of the map pin or business, Google runs a verification process which includes sending you a postcard with a PIN. This stops other people claiming your PIN or pretending to own your business. Why is this so important? Your local places listing will occur in search results in summary beside a map when a city or town name is used in a Google search query. Also, your listing is verified with a real-world verification process making the information you supply very valuable to Google and its partners. Your business information will occur on *all* Google mapping applications like Google Maps, Google Earth and Google Android apps.

Week 2: List on directory sites

List your web address on major business and links directories such as:

- in NZ Finda, YellowPages and TradeMe‘s service directory…. and any directory sites, large or small, you can find on Google.
- in Australia TrueLocal, Hotfrog, StartLocal, YellowPages and Local Business Guide

The process of getting inbound links is called building “link popularity”. It means getting more links to your site than your competitors. *Google views links going to your site as votes of confidence in your content.* If you don’t have link popularity, your site won’t perform on search engines.

How many? More than 100 will be required. Over what timeframe? 3 links a month is the ideal way to build link popularity but run slowly if you add too many links too quickly then search engines will see this growth as unnatural, and you may be penalised in terms of your search engine placement.

Why should people give you links? No reason, they don’t owe you anything. You’re just asking. Record all the links you request and the day you requested them. You will need this information in weeks 6 and 8.

Week 3: Promote your URL

Now you have a web address, you may need to update your off-line marketing. Does your business card carry your new web address (also called a URL)? Can you add your web address to a uniform? Letterhead? Classified advertising? To the back of your car? To your office signage? To the signature of your email messages. Put it up in lights: it’s arguably more important than your business phone numbers.

Week 4: Build Email Lists

Start building a spam-compliant email list(s) so you can communicate quickly with your customers and prospects. There are many great web-based email marketing systems available but start at MailChimp. The first 2,000 contacts are free and DWS (Dynamic Web Solutions Pty Ltd) can integrate this system into your content management system quickly when required.

It is important to note that unless you have your customer's permission, your messages are illegal and are "spam". Your clients need to "opt in" to your mailing list. A good way to do this via your website is to have a tick box on your contact form saying "Keep me informed" or "Send me newsletters". Some web sites offer a free giveaway, an incentive if people join their mailing list. Generally, mailing lists don't work without offering something of real value to the customer.

Week 5: Social Networks

Anecdotal evidence suggests social networks can be used to build good traffic to your web site, but be careful, a lot of time is required to build an audience for your Facebook page, Twitter feed or LinkedIn profile. If you work with professionals LinkedIn is your starting point: build your profile then "invite" others to "connect". If you own a pub or event-based business, a Facebook page can be used to engage a customer group and create a community around your product or service. Twitter, a microblogging site (much more popular in the UK & US than Australia and New Zealand) can be used to send service updates, expert opinion or whatever would add value to your audience. Some people believe social networks will replace email marketing and traditional CRMs. A warning, the spectre of MySpace hangs over all these sites: here today, gone tomorrow.

It is worth noting that there is a difference between a Facebook Profile and a Facebook Page. A page someone can

“Like”, and it will appear on their status stream and their profile as a “Like”. The number of “likes” will also appear at the top of your Page and over time can help show people how popular your business is.

Week 6: More Links

Return to the hunt for links. Find another 3. Getting links is like watering a garden, do it regularly and your traffic will increase month on month.

Record all your linking activity in a spreadsheet: the title of the site, the URL, the date you asked for the link, the email address of the person you wrote to or telephoned.

Week 7: Mobilize

Mobilize your web site. Ask DWS to install a mobile-friendly plugin on your web site. Searches on mobile phones are now outstripping searches on desktop machines. Our mobile-friendly software will reorganise your site on a mobile phone and make it faster to load. This will be helpful until mobile data speeds improve.

Week 8: Review

Its time to review: where did you get to with your linking effort? How many can you count? Where else can you look? Do you have any business associates who sell a complimentary or aligned product? Can you reciprocate a link with them? Your WordPress links panel is the ideal way to link out to other sites. Once you have linked to them, you have some leverage to ask them to link back to your site. This is called “reciprocal linking”. Its not as valuable as unreciprocated links from pages with high Google PageRank™, but it is better than no link.

Week 9: Water the Garden

Change your web site! This is why we made it with a content management system. If you were Google and you had to decide which site to put first, would you advance a site that had not been changed in the last 2 years or one that is being changed once a month? So frequent changes to your site are good. Try to repeat critical keywords in headings and throughout the text of your page. DWS web sites are SEO-friendly and provide you with a way to add title, description and keywords to every page, which are some of the ingredients to getting your site found on search engines.

Week 10: Tools to Help you Close Sales

There are a number of software additions to your site aimed at getting you talking or chatting (in text) with your customers:

By phone…

- *We Call You Now*: users click a call back icon on your site, they give their phone number and a VoIP server calls you, then rings them back putting you in touch with visitors to your site in real time.
- *Skype*: integrate Skype "I'm Online" button on your site.

By chat…

- *Who's On*: see who is entering your site and what pages they are looking at as the visitor arrives. Engage them in a chat if they seem stuck on a page.
- *IM*: short for "instant messaging. Allow your customers to initiate a chat session with you to answer questions or get help. These work well for retailers.

The text chat tools rely on you being in front of a computer much of your day, so phone may be preferred.

Week 11: Web Stats

With all this diligent marketing activity, what is the outcome? How can you benchmark or compare month to month? Is traffic growing? Whether it is Google Analytics or DWS's very detailed server stats, you can find out where your visitors are coming from, what search phrases they use, what sites sent traffic to you, where they are in the world and just as importantly, how many are visiting your site each month/week/day/hour… and many, many more metrics. Ask DWS for a PDF report each quarter or to integrate Google Analytics into your site. If you can measure it, you can manage it.

Week 12: Summary

The 90-Day Plan is actually your every 90-Day or any day plan.

- Get as many links as you can. Build links up slowly or "organically".
- Change and grow your web site's content.
- Build email lists. Segment them. Send only relevant offers or information.
- Create profiles on social networks. Build an audience.
- Review and repeat the above.