I Have Made My Website, What Is Next?

During the construction of your website we have been focusing on design, layout and technical issues and not focusing on marketing the site. It won't take you long to realise that web marketing is as bigger job, if not bigger, than actually making a website. It is also an area in which a lot of money is changing hands at present, and probably this trend will continue into the future. So what is next?

1. Links, Links, Links

You need to immediately find inbound links to your site. The first place to start is with directory websites such as Yellow Pages, Neighbourly or Finda. Make sure you have a pin and a listing on Google Maps – which is very important for mobile searches. Do not delay in this task.

Getting inbound links from other websites greatly advantages you in two ways:

1. firstly you start getting traffic from the link as soon as it is live
2. secondly, Google will have more conduits into your site and therefore will find your site easily and index it more quickly.

More importantly, though is that each inbound link into your website will be viewed as a vote of confidence by Google and the other major search engines. The more votes of confidence that Google collects on your site the higher it will move you up the search results pages.

Guidelines for Linking

This is about inbound links – links that bring traffic into your site (outbound links do little for your ranking):

1. links should be “themed”, meaning grouped by industry e.g. if your website sells books, getting inbound links from book shops, book clubs, libraries and other authors would be the best approach. Conversely, getting random links would not be nearly as valuable.
2. Geography counts too. Getting links from other websites in your city, town or locality is much better than far off places like Russia, Nigeria and Brazil.
3. Surrounding your link with a sentence is far more valuable than a “naked” link on its own, especially if the label for this link is simple “click here”. A naked link is split out on its own and offers Google no context.

PageRank™

It’s worth mentioning two Google resources at this point: the Google toolbar (formerly built into the Chrome browser, but now deprecated) and the Google website for Webmasters. The Google Toolbar had an important tool on it that measured the current page’s PageRank™.

PageRank™ is a patented Google technology that ranks pages according to Google’s own special algorithm – now hidden from the public, as it was abused and gamed by the SEO industry, but still used as a ranking factor. The Toolbar used to show you the rank of any page from one to 10, 10 being the best.

Even large websites that have good traffic find it difficult to get a high page rank. If your site has a PageRank™ of five, in NZ would be *very* good.

The Search Console

The Google website for Webmasters, now called The Search Console, is an import resource to find load errors on your site, upload a sitemap, find out what keyword phrases are bringing in traffic to your site. You can also “disavow” spammy links to your site here as these links can hold your site back.

2. On Page Optimisation

You should be careful not to remove critical keywords or keyword phrases from your website after it has been built and optimised.

Your homepage, in particular, should repeat your most important keywords a number of times. This is called “keyword density” and has its own science. There are online tools to help you count and compare keyword density between websites.

As a general rule, you need to have your critical keywords in your page title and headings and naturally sprinkled throughout the body text of your page. Where and how many times on the page your keywords appear is *very* important.

Have a look at your competitor’s homepages and count the number of times their critical keywords appear on their homepage. If they understand SEO, they will be backing a single phrase per page on their site, and not trying to go after many phrases on one page.

The WordPress content management system has a special, page by page title, description and keywords fields for you to complete. You will find these fields underneath the WYSIWYG editor.

The three that start with “Meta” are the ones to focus on. Meta means “information about information”. These three fields

give you the opportunity to feed information to search engines directly. What you write here will come up on the Google search results pages.

But on-page optimisation is about a lot more than just meta tags. In fact everything on a page: its headings, the amount of text, the frequency and density of keywords, how the HTML is structured… all count towards its PageRank™. Ideally, each page on your site would be optimised for a different search phrase. You will need expert help with this, see the “SEO” link above.

3. Build E-mail Lists

E-mail marketing is cheap and fast. You will need to study up on issues of compliance regarding the Spam act, but if you can satisfy these requirements, e-mail can add real dollars to your bottom line. There is no need to hesitate, you can simply start collecting e-mail addresses and sorting them into groups immediately in your desktop mail client.

Once you get over a couple of hundred e-mail addresses you will need a more robust e-mail marketing solution (than sending e-mail from your desktop as most ISPs choke large volumes of outbound e-mail).

Websites such as mailchimp.com offer free email marketing for the first 1,000 contacts. Their software will report on bounced mail and on who opened and who clicked which links in your outbound email. The software also manages unsubscribes, making your email compliant for spam legislation.

MailChimp has HTML templates that allow you to dress your email up, but note that a plain text email will pass through spam filters more easily than its HTML counterpart. This is because spam filters look for hypertext links and images in email and can falsely categorise you HTML email as spam.

MailChimp also has mobile apps so you can monitor “campaigns” (outbound messages) and see stats on your lists and sent mail. You can also use these apps to harvest email at your POS or tradeshow stall, say in conjunction with the chance to win some product or service. More on email marketing here.

4. Accelerate with Google Ads

You *may* wish to consider a Google Adwords campaign – although Adwords has become quite pricey as more and more people compete for the same keywords. You probably need to allow a budget of $500 -$1,000 per month as a starting point.

It is going to take some time to get the organic search engine position that you want – more than 3 months and probably more than 9-12 months, so Google Adwords and Facebook advertising may offer you an immediate solution.

If you are *not* working on linking as described above then your website will never really perform very well on search engines. If you need immediate traffic to your site from Google then you may consider running a Google ad campaign for the first 3 to 6 months after your website goes live. Here is more discussion on paying for ads on Google’s Adwords platform.

5. Social Networking

There is still a lot to understand about social networking and how it can be used to market websites. Be wary of hyperbolic statistics that do not relate to NZ and Australia as social networking sites are used much more in the US and UK.

Also, social networking does not apply to every type of business e.g. pubs and clubs do well with Facebook when promoting a visiting band. A manufacturer will *not* do well; they will collect 12 “likes” and 2 “friends” and their Facebook page will float out there as negative advertising.

Although there are some spectacular examples of social networking creating massive traffic to a website, in most cases there is an enormous amount of time invested in building an audience before networking would produce any money.

Many businesses, for example, have a Facebook page and use it to interact with their customers but converting this interaction into sales is tricky and can even contravene the user policies of the social networking site.

So how do you profit from social media? Take opportunities to make *good* connections with people you think have some interest in your business. If you are in the professional services area, use *LinkedIn* and build a network there, then post regularly to it to engage and converse with these contacts.

Or use *Neighbourly* when you have to target people close to you e.g. you are a cafe offering drive-through coffee at a fixed location. Having a scattered social network won't work for you.

Instagram and *Pinterest* if you are a photographer or designer. Facebook if you are a band or hold events. In other words, its horses for courses. You may find only 1 or 2 social networking sites get you any traffic.

Finally… blogging

You're reading one now. Regular content changes to your own website are very important. They can open up 25% more traffic to your site and establish you as a expert in your field.