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Internet Marketing News

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Welcome

Technology stands for progress, for innovation, and for knowledge, and it's why our Q3 Optimise Magazine is our dedicated Tech Issue. While technology may stand for all these things, some of us still question it; we're frightened of what technology can do and what information it can gather about us. It's as though we haven't quite come to terms with the technological revolution which seemed to come out of nowhere for those of us who weren't paying attention. The truth is, we're engaging with and utilising technology in everyday tasks, and we cannot envisage our lives without it, (whether we know it or not). Our Tech Issue has been created to help enlighten you to the online avenues now available to help your business grow online, all of which would not be possible without advancements in technology.

Within the pages of this issue you'll find plenty of articles dedicated to 'top tips,' and 'how to' lists on getting the most out of digital technology for your business; safely and successfully. Make sure you check out page 15 where you'll find an article on how to keep your Google accounts secure. Pages 22 and 23 provide you with an extensive list of the best apps you can find, specifically created for small businesses in mind.

With all of this exciting news, you may have thought we'd be too busy to remember that special 'once-every-four-years' event that is fast approaching. But don't worry, we definitely have not! Truth is, we're just as excited about the Olympics as the next person, and we've got a double page spread on the lessons small business owners can learn from big brands, and how to lawfully 'cash-in' on the five rings. Remember, all of these lessons will be just as applicable when the Commonwealth Games hits the Gold Coast in 2018!

In other news, Google has been making some changes and as always we've got our eagle-eye watching the giant search engine for how these changes will affect you! Heard of featured snippets? Noticed Google's new search engine results page layout? Read on and you'll learn about all of this and more! Also, don't forget that you can always check out the SponsoredLinX Academy between issues for the latest up to date online resources at www.sponsoredlinxacademy.com.au.

Finally, we are also excited to announce that SponsoredLinX were recently awarded the 2016 APAC Facebook Award, and were also recognised amongst Anthill's 'Top 50 Innovators'. Well done to our SponsoredLinX team for all their hard work!

Enjoy!

Ben Bradshaw
Editor in Chief, Optimise Magazine
CEO & Founder of SponsoredLinX

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makes people **click**.

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THREE TECH TRENDS TO WATCH

Shaping the future of business

"How did I miss that?"

At some stage you've probably asked yourself this question. Missed what, exactly? I am referring to digital and technological developments. Believe it or not, there are still small businesses that do not own a website and have zero presence online. The innovation and advancements we are now seeing affect all categories of business and the economy. It no longer warrants comment, for example, if your business has a website, but it certainly warrants comment if you don't, and not in a positive way.

So how did technology become synonymous with business transformation? The truth is that business is no longer pigeon-holed into being offline or online; business is both, and businesses need to embrace these two mediums in order to service their customers and clients successfully.

We are increasingly being surrounded with a digital intelligence network, also known as ambient intelligence, and it comes from the explosion of digital technology in almost every object surrounding us. From our multiple devices, our smart TVs, and our Internet connected things, this neural network is expanding and learning more about us and what we want every day. It's helping us to achieve new heights, and as we move forward, the achievements we're marvelling at today will become the norm tomorrow.

Don't be left scratching your head wondering how a certain business-changing technology passed you by. The first step to overcoming this is by simply being aware of what is being developed and what trends are emerging. If you can keep yourself informed, you'll be better educated when it comes time to making a decision as to whether you want to invest or not.

To save you from the time consuming task of researching these trends yourself, we've collated the most intriguing and promising tech trends right here! Trends allow you insight into what problems we are faced with and how we are trying to solve them; allowing you to peek into the future landscape of your business. And you can't tell me that kind of foresight is useless.

Tech Trend #1 – Blockchain

You've probably heard of blockchain when hearing mention of bitcoin. Blockchain provides an open decentralised database of every transaction involving value, through the use of cryptography and math. Essentially it works as a distributed ledger.

For example, when you and a friend chat/talk/text message each other using modern technology such as a smartphone, you can do so without the need to send your message through a third party. So when you press 'send', your message goes from point A (you) directly to point B (friend). When you

are dealing with money though, the transaction must be completed through a trusted third party. So if you need to transfer money to your friend, instead of dealing with them directly as you would with a text message, you have to use a financial institution to carry this out for you.

Blockchain eliminates the need to utilise a third party, and transactions are verified through the open decentralised database community. In 2009 we experienced the global financial crisis, and a lot of people lost trust in banks. The potential for blockchain uses are endless and could be used for anything from collecting taxes to significantly reducing money fraud, due to the fact each and every transaction is recorded on a public ledger. As William Mougayar describes in his book, 'The Business of Blockchain: Promise, Practice, and Application of the Next Internet Technology', "… the blockchain cannot be described just as a revolution. It is a tsunami-like phenomenon, slowly advancing and gradually enveloping everything along its way by the force of its progression".

Tech Trend # 2 – Automation

For some, automation is something to be feared. For others, it's something to embrace, and truth be told, automation is already happening. Jobs and roles which were once thought to be indistinguishably operated by humans are now being performed by technology. Artificial Intelligence, deep machine learning, big data; these are all contributing to the automation movement. With the scope for human error erased, roles such as analytical inquiry are performed with perfect accuracy. According to Aidan Cunniffe in his article for TechCrunch, the automation revolution could happen in as little as 15 years, unlike the industrial revolution which spanned centuries. However, technology automation is also creating jobs. For example, 20 years ago jobs such as 'app developer' and 'market research data miner' did not exist at all.

Tech Trend # 3 – Bots

Leading on from automation in a sense, all of this would not be possible without

bots. Recently chatbots have been gaining a lot of exposure in the media, and it's easy to understand why brands are so interested in using them to service their customers. Everyday tasks such as booking a dinner reservation, ordering an Uber or making an appointment can all be completed with a bot. The reason we're seeing and hearing more about bots now is because the artificial intelligence software that powers them has dramatically improved. Also, at Facebook's F8 conference this year, Facebook launched chatbots on their Messenger platform, now allowing businesses to deliver automated customer support. The seamless integration of people chatting with friends to chatting with a business, signals the beginning of a whole new way to engage with customers.

Lauren O'Connor

Get In Touch

Don't be left out in the cold wondering how to take action for your business. Call SponsoredLinX and let us show you where to start. Call us today on 1300 859 600.

HOW TO CASH IN ON THE FIVE RINGS

The relationship between small business and the olympics

By Mark Reidy

It's an event that happens once every four years, and like many, it's a favourite of mine. What might start with us watching mainstream events, like track and field, swimming or the velodrome cycling, quickly expands to others we never would have imagined ourselves watching. There's also nothing quite like the feeling of seeing a fellow Aussie as they give it their all, and the way Australia rallies behind them. Who else remembers backing Tom Slingsby as he took gold for sailing in 2012?

During this time, late nights, weekends and commutes to work become filled with catching up on all the latest Olympic news and the sports you are now suddenly passionate about. So, how do marketers and businesses make the most of this period of immersion in the five rings and the excitement around the world's best battling for prized Olympic gold?

The answer can be seen from past behaviours of big brands. For example, Sony ran a game called 'The Armchair Games,' in which you could control an online character and make them perform an olympic sport in their everyday life. For example, your character might do a long jump onto a couch in order to win a brand new Sony TV. This was one of my favourite games at the time, and although it wasn't branded with Olympic rings, it served as a playful use of the sports excitement to generate buzz around their brand.

However, it isn't just about sport and the athletes; companies need to be aware of the change in behaviours from people searching. For example, during the London games in 2012, travel-related search interest on YouTube nearly doubled and new trends and hashtags appeared.

Where will these trends appear and on what platform for 2016? London 2012 truly was the Facebook/Twitter era, with more access to athletes and opinions including:

Michael Phelps
twitter.com/MichaelPhelps/

Usain Bolt
twitter.com/usainbolt

Jessica Ennis-Hill
twitter.com/J_Ennis

Fast forward to now and it does appear that the social landscape has shifted, with user created content being king. Larger media outlets are struggling to catch up, while the demand for hyper local news has seen the rise of Snapchat. With the local story feature that allows events like the Super Bowl, the Oscars and many other global events, it is no surprise that Snapchat quickly partnered officially with the Olympics.

This new partnership shows how important Snapchat has become; no longer is it seen simply as a way for pre-teens to send each other pictures without their parents seeing. How can local businesses use this to their advantage? The first step is to look at how best to use this new market, and ways to drive new customers to the business. Snapchat has released a new feature, where people or businesses can buy a geofilter.

The important message from last Olympics was to take part in the conversation and to have those two way conversations with your customers. Some things you could try include offering deals or promotions around the time of the Olympics (be warned however, you won't be able to mention or use the Olympic logos directly), and making sure you are using your messages over social media in order to stick to your branding strategy. After all, the last thing you want, is for your company's weak points to be highlighted.

If you do want to get into a big event like the Olympics, make sure your comments are relevant and correct. If unsure, please don't post.

Another area that is rapidly growing is YouTube. As the audience for YouTube expands, the battle between ads and content rages. Users want to see the content faster, but understand YouTube and content producers are funded by ads. Google has gone a long way towarding improving their user experiences; introducing six second bumper ads, which utilise the video format of the hugely successful app 'Vine' (which only allows six second clips). For example, just a quick search of 'the best vines' will present you with an endless arrray of creative and engaging six second clips. This is the new challenge: for the marketer to present information to increasingly impatient users.

Another important way to use these messages is to tailor the video to the content that the user is looking for. If your company is promoting a new opening location for your sports store, a search for anything related to Olympic highlights would be a great chance to show your video.

Now that you have an understanding of how some brands have leveraged the current and past Olympics, the same can be applied to the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games. The games will see athletes come from around the globe, and with them spectators and supporters who will need goods and services. These athletes can make great brand ambassadors, and with any luck, may in the next two years challenge on the global stage or the next Olympics. Just like any business venture, it could be a great investment.

Get In Touch

If you're keen to start utilising YouTube new six second bumper ads, get in touch with the digital marketing experts at SponsoredLinX on 1300 859 600.

Snackable Videos are on the Menu

YOUTUBE "BUMPER ADS"

By Drew Ioannides

This year marks a milestone year, with internet usage set to topple 1 Zettabyte (1 Trillion Gigabytes) by the end of 2016. It seems we have become extremely efficient at consuming huge volumes of data from an almost infinite number of services worldwide, but one of our favourite choices for data deliciousness is video streaming services. Now accounting for two thirds of the world's internet traffic, video and audio streaming services have more than made their mark on our day to day lives. Whether it be the latest episode of Game Of Thrones or cute cat videos we just can't seem to get enough and as our ability to find new and interesting content to amuse ourselves with increases, so too does our skill at avoiding unwanted interruptions. Ads and popups are no match for our swiping and clicking, so the problem remains this: with a generation so engrossed in their content, how do you get your product or service in front of them long enough to have an impact?

The answer? Force them to watch! Okay, so it may not have been the revelation you were hoping for, but there is a certain skill in learning how to 'force' people to watch without driving them away. Google has already rolled out video ads in the past that cannot be skipped, but they don't go cheap. Many companies are paying huge sums of money for the privilege of showing their ads uninterrupted, and now it seems that we common folk can have part of the pie as well.

In an effort to improve video ad engagement Google has released new YouTube 'Bumper Ads,' which are essentially six second ads that cannot be skipped. Designed as an add-on to longer TV style YouTube ads, Bumpers should reinforce an existing message or allow it to reach more viewers. Half of 18-49 year olds pick up their mobile devices to stream video and prefer it for a personalised viewing experience. According to Zach Lupie, Product Manager for YouTube video ads, these new six second Bumper Ads "are ideal for driving incremental reach and frequency, especially on mobile, where 'snackable videos' perform well".

If you are focusing on branding and awareness, Bumper Ads are perfect for improving awareness and building familiarity with your products. If you can create an emotional connection to your service offering before a user is in need of it, you are far more likely to have a user follow through with a purchase or desired interaction with your business.

Bumper Ads can also be coupled with Remarketing to help a past visitor or even an existing customer to connect with a new product or service. In the world of online advertising, getting noticed and engaging with someone in order to create a new advocate or customer can be an extremely difficult battle. So keeping your existing customers engaged should be very high on your list of e-marketing priorities. Even from your favourite retailer, an email about a great new piece of tech or designer look at half price can go unnoticed, but interrupt someone's hilarious fail video and suddenly you've made a sale or reaffirmed a wavering customer's loyalty.

While we can never truly predict the impact our advertising will have on our target audiences, diversifying your online marketing strategy can give you a far better chance. As mentioned earlier, coupling Bumper Ads with more traditional YouTube advertising can be a great combination. However, combining it with the Google Display Network banner ads and Remarketing, or perhaps even Text Ads on the Google Search Network or Google Shopping, and you have a powerhouse of internet marketing resplendence.

Whatever combination you choose, get creative with your marketing strategies and make sure you're engaging with your customers at every stage of the buying process. This way, when it comes time to reach for the plastic, it's your business they are opening their wallets for.

Get In Touch

Interested in using video advertising for your business? Contact SponsoredLinX on 1300 859 600 to discuss how your business can benefit.
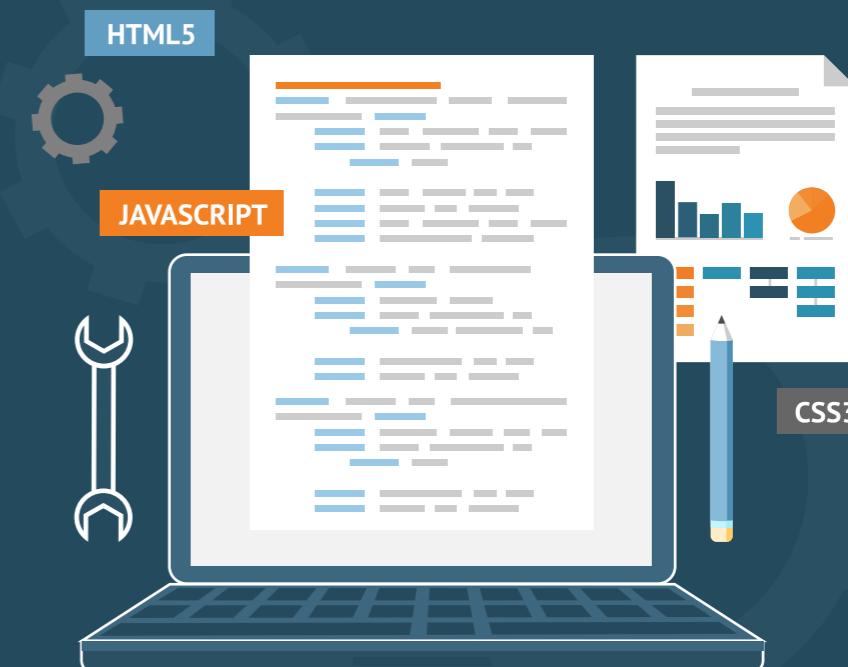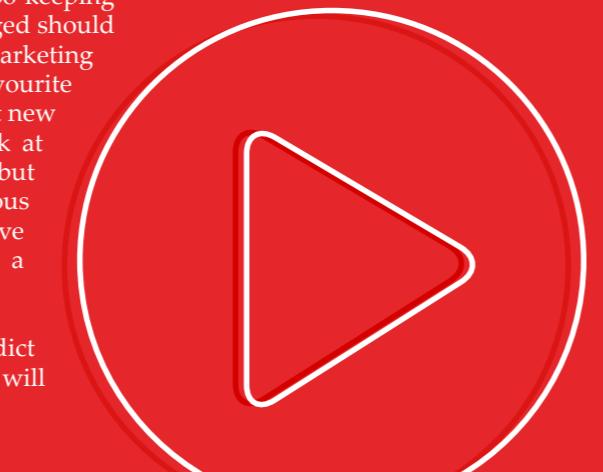
TOP 20 REQUIREMENTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL WEBSITE IN 2016

No, we're not exaggerating!

26 years ago the world's very first website went live. If you want to check it out, visit: info.cern.ch.

The site is text only and was created by a British computer scientist named Tim Berners-Lee in 1990 while working at the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN).

It's more than fair to say that websites have come a very long way since then. Colour graphics, video, hyperlinks, deep architecture and structure – the websites of 2016 are a far cry from the early days of the web.

So to help bring your website as close to 2016's cutting edge as possible, here's our top 20 requirements –

there's no particular order, but they're all vital, so let's get started.

1. A lead grabbing piece of content
When people come to your website, offer them something – a free guide, a book, a monthly newsletter – in exchange for an email address. That's a lead you can follow up on and in 2016 this is fast becoming a standard.

2. Responsive presentation
Your website must be responsive to different devices and be able to look great whether viewed on an Apple iPhone, a HTC tablet with Android or a Dell PC. Without this, you can lose clicks and customers.

By Doug Carpenter

3. Lots of interesting content
The successful websites in 2016 and beyond will have plenty of great quality content for readers – everything from blogs to infographics, freely showing expertise while building a brand.

4. Make a statement
People buy your image as well as your product, so tell them what you stand for, what you believe in and what you want to achieve. Tailor your website's copy to tell your story as much as possible.

5. A unique "About Us" page
Your 'About Us' page should be as interesting, personal and memorable as possible – explain the why as much as the how. Customers want to know your story, not just a list of the awards and accolades your business has won.

6. Video
Video is fast taking over the web. To be among the best, create and then embed video content on your site. It can be anything from a guided tour of your facilities to an interview with the boss. A great video will bring eyeballs to your site and help generate leads.

7. Newsletter subscriptions
A regular electronic newsletter is a brilliant way to connect with your customers to keep them abreast of all your new developments. It's also a razor sharp piece of marketing that allows you to build up your brand, develop trust and make sales. By offering a newsletter through an email subscription, you can build up a big database of potential sales and spread your business's reach far and wide.

8. Simple, effective architecture
Your website should be so easy to use that it feels instinctive. Clear menus, easy to read pages and responsive search features will help create an enjoyable user experience and will ensure your site is an effective business tool.

9. Top level security
Internet security is a huge issue and your website must be as secure and safe as possible, especially if it's designed to handle private and financial details. The more safety features you have, the more trust your customers will have.

One of the quickest ways to lose your search traffic is through having your website hacked or infected with Malware. Keep on top of your website updates and security.

10. User Tracking and Analytics
The back end of modern websites can offer an amazing array of data that details what your customers are looking at, searching for and interacting with. By implementing user tracking and analytics, you can understand your customers and client behaviour and use them to tailor your content and appearance to maximise traffic flow and eliminate weak spots. By harnessing the power of data with user tracking, you can offer a greatly enhanced user experience and ensure your website performs at the highest level.

11. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)
In a nutshell, you need to ensure that big search engines like Google can find your content easily. It's also worth investing some time in optimising for other search engines like Bing or Yahoo as these may allow you to rank a touch more easily and pick up some extra traffic.

12. Long scroll
Traditionally, most websites are designed to put their best, most striking content 'above the fold' at the top of the main page, with the rest accessible by scrolling down. With the proliferation of mobile devices, scrolling is now standard, so you can spread your content out. A striking image or page layout "above the fold" can be used to lure people into scrolling down, providing a compelling, deep experience where you can show off all of your great content.

13. No more stock
Stock images and stock icons are a well-used short cut for many websites. They can allow a site to be built quickly, but the downside is they are unoriginal and date quickly. Many sites are now ditching their stock elements in favour of using their own images and designing their own icons. By using more organic elements, you can make your website look much more interesting and unique – and it will be a truer representation of you and what you stand for.

14. A blog
We said earlier that content is king - and a blog holds the keys to the kingdom. Make your posts as interesting, fact filled and sharp as possible and you'll build up a readership and authority in your sector.

15. Easy to use contacts page
The purpose of a website should be to generate leads – and a contacts page that's easy to navigate is crucial. Have all of your details listed; make sure they're accurate and up-to-date.
It is also wise to have a phone number, email or contact form on every page of your website. Don't make users go looking for a way to contact you. If you are using a phone number anywhere, make sure it's 'click to call' on mobile devices.

16. Dedicated service pages
You should have one, tailor-made page for each product or service that you offer, with the home page taking care of everything else. Keep the site neat and clutter-free. By segmenting all of your services you have a better chance of converting relevant traffic from paid and organic searches.

17. Sharp, relevant graphics and great design
Yes, there are great 'Do-it-Yourself' website builders out there, but just because the tools are good doesn't mean you will be the best person to use them. If you aren't sure about design and what you are capable of building, hire an expert.

There's no excuse for a poor-looking website anymore. Invest in a good-looking site and you'll see the benefits, but make sure the look and feel fits your brand.

18. Social Proof
In other words: show, don't tell. If your website makes a range of claims about the quality of your service or your skills, you need to back it up with some proof. Things like customer testimonials, case studies and social medial elements like live feeds can help you illustrate what impact you are having on the world. This will give you far more credibility and authority and may even result in increased traffic.

19. Fast loading time
Website loading speed can be tweaked to almost light speed levels if you hire an expert or get your team onto it. Images can be compressed, or you could even introduce a content delivery network to help serve your website data. A fast website will result in more interactions, more leads and better results in search engines.

20. Micro interactions
Micro interactions are where a person using your website encounters prompts, messages, effects and movements that give them an enhanced feeling of truly interacting with your content. An example of this would be a simple animation when a button is interacted with, giving a feeling of realness and control. Micro interactions are sure to become more common and ever more sophisticated, so get ahead of the curve and think how they can become a part of your site.

In 2016, technology has advanced so far and become so accessible that the websites developed by the world's best companies can be at the same level of quality as even the smallest firms.

Get In Touch

Want your business' website to be up there with the best? Speak with the web design experts at SponsoredLinX today on 1300 859 600.
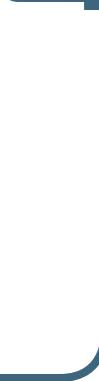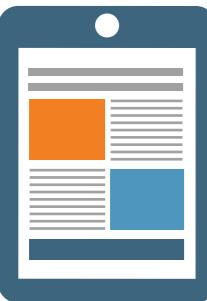
Help your business rank on Google Search with a tailored SEO campaign.

As with any science-based methodology, we too have a SponsoredLinX Search Engine Optimisation service which follows a procedure to secure a profitable outcome for our clients.

Speak with the capable team here at SponsoredLinX today on 1300 859 600 to see how our tried and true SEO Management Services are just what your business needs to successfully rank in Google's organic search results.

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Stay smart and safe online

6 TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR GOOGLE ACCOUNTS SECURE

By Aimee Devitt

Safety online is paramount for all of us that use the internet. We hear of the horror stories of account hacking and identity theft ripping across the internet by the truck load. So it really is important that we are diligent about keeping our accounts secure.

Did you know that Gmail is the most popular email service on the internet? Most of us these days use more than one Google Service; this could be anything from Google AdWords, Google Analytics right through to YouTube. With these services your Gmail account assumes more importance since it's your Gmail identity that gains access to all of these services. If your Gmail account gets hacked, the hacker will have access to all of your information on Google Services.

How scary is that!?

As the common saying goes, "it is better to be safe than sorry". Here we will look into a few tips that will help in keeping your Google accounts safe. No security is foolproof but we can ensure that we take the proper steps to make sure we are adhering to best practises for information security. This will go a long way in keeping our personal information safe on the internet.

Two–Step Verification
Two–Step Verification adds an extra layer of security to your account. With this process, you will still be required to sign in with your password as per normal, but will also have a second measure for access sent to a mobile device; for example,a code sent to your mobile phone. Once this has been set up you'll be taken to a verification settings page. This is where you will review and add any back up telephone numbers. The next time you sign in you will receive a verification code via text message.

Email Recovery Options
Losing access to your Google accounts can be frustrating. To make sure you can get back into your account quickly and securely, add password recovery options. Having a recovery email address or telephone number makes it easier for you to gain access to your account if you ever find yourself in a situation of being locked out or forgetting your password.

Create A Strong Password
Probably one of the most important parts of Google Account security is ensuring you have a really strong password.
Don't use personal information or common words as your passwords. Create something unique that is not related to your personal information. For example pick a password that is a combination of letters, numbers and symbols. This makes it extra difficult to guess. Also stay away from using sequential characters like 'password1234' or 'abcd1925'. Another point is to ensure you use different passwords for different accounts. This helps in case any of your other accounts security is compromised so the hacker will not have access to everything. Keep your passwords different for each account.

Change Your Password Often
Most of us forget to do this and it is one of the most simple steps to do, not just for our Google Accounts but all accounts we use. There is no set rule for doing this but try to change it at least 4 – 5 times per year. Set yourself a calendar reminder if you really want to get organised.

Use Secure Networks
It is imperative to be extra careful whenever you go online using a networkyou don't usually use. For example using free Wi-Fi at your local mall, the library or even the local café down the road. The service provider can monitor all traffic on their network and at times this can include your personal information. Check to ensure that the service you are using encrypts your connection to the web service which can make it a lot harder for someone to see your activity.

Google are pretty good with this as they will encrypt the Gmail connection between your device and Google. However, it does pay to be diligent when using other networks you would not normally use.

When you're signing into Gmail, you should check to make sure the web address begins with https:// (and not just 'http://'). This signals that your connection to the website is encrypted and more resistant to snooping or tampering.

Lock Your Screens
You would not go to the local grocer to do your weekly groceries and leave your car door open right? The same applies to the devices you use. You should always lock your screens on your computer or phone when you are not using them. This is especially important if you are using your device in a public place or if you use your mobile phone or tablet, as these devices are more commonly misplaced or lost.

These tips will help in ensuring your Google accounts are not compromised.

Get In Touch

Online security is becoming a more prevalent issue these days, which is why we regularly post articles on the SponsoredLinX Academy Hub. To read more about how to keep your online activities secure, visit the SponsoredLinX Academy today at http://www.sponsoredlinxacademy.com.au/

TECHNOLOGY AND SEO

How advancements have changed the way we search

By Adam Conroy

SEO has come a long way over the years, shifting from a handful of guidelines to follow when building a website to a massive variety of complicated strategies with an entire industry set up around them. SEO techniques evolve over time, both in response to changes to Google algorithms and technological advances (the algorithm changes themselves are often made possible by the tech advances). With things changing so frequently it's interesting to look back and see just how different SEO methods today are, and this can be helpful in making predictions about how things will develop in the future.

Google algorithm changes arguably cause the biggest changes in SEO methods. All of us in the SEO world march to the beat of Google's drum and whatever the current algorithms are looking for is what we need to be delivering. In 2011 Google released their Panda update

which changed the game for website content. No longer was keyword stuffing an effective strategy because Panda was looking for well written and informative content that human users would find valuable. Bad content on the other hand could get you penalised and the concept of Google dropping your site's rankings for poor quality signals was born, resulting in a lot of drops for people with duplicate or spammy content.

Google followed this game changer up with the now infamous Penguin algorithm update in 2012. Penguin changed the SEO landscape significantly because it was specifically targeting black hat SEO techniques and link spam. For too long the SEO industry had been cluttering sites with dodgy SEO practices and the creation of link farms. Penguin tipped the SEO industry upside down and SEO specialists had to adapt fast.

For the first time Google was making a very clear statement that low quality SEO practices would not be tolerated. Most of the less sophisticated black hat techniques died out around this time but there will always be people out there trying to game the system. This change also led to link building becoming a sort of specialty within the SEO space.

Since these two big shake ups we have seen a series of less dramatic updates from Google that indicate a softer approach, seeing minor dodgy practices being simply ignored more often than causing the devastating ranking drops that Panda and Penguin introduced. The most recent big update was Google's mobile update, frequently dubbed 'mobilegeddon'. This update was in response to changes to technology and society. The advances in smartphone technology have led to the devices becoming an important part of most people's lives, and with mobile search very swiftly rising to become such a massive market, Google had to react. This one was kind of a no brainer though, as you shouldn't need Google to drop your rankings to convince you to get a mobile site - especially when there are more mobile searches happening than desktop.

Increases in smartphone use have also facilitated the exponential rise of social media. Although, the level of impact from social media on SEO is up for debate, there's no question about whether search engines are factoring these signals into the equation. Google aims to deliver a personalised search service to every user and the information provided by a person's online profile and activity is crucial to providing that. Advances in social media technologies have also led to those platforms being used as search platforms with 30% of internet users in the USA now using social media to find content.

Advances in technology allow Google to provide an ever improving service. The development of Google's 'Rankbrain' technology just would not have been possible several years ago, and as things continue to advance they will be able to make more and more sophisticated algorithms that learn on their own. It's not yet at the artificial intelligence level we can all imagine, but it's certainly heading there - which opens up all kinds of possibilities. For now Rankbrain is the latest game changer from Google, but as with the algorithm learning from users' search behaviour, SEO specialists need to give more thought than ever to user experience. For people with the right approach to SEO, this shouldn't change too much because most of Google's changes over the years boil down to them attempting to connect users with genuinely relevant businesses. SEO should be about showing Google that your business is genuinely relevant to the people searching for your product or service.

Despite all of the advances in technology and their effects on SEO, there is a big limiting factor that tech advances have yet to solve and may not do so for many years. This elephant in the room is text based search. Almost all forms of search are entirely based around text search and so the creation of keyword relevant text content remains a massive part of SEO. Google's search by image allows you to upload an image into Google and the search engine will display similar images. This technology is still very much in its infancy, but as technology advances we will likely begin to see this and other forms of search rise to prominence. The SEO landscape of the future is likely to become incredibly sophisticated and complicated as these technologies rise.

Get In Touch

The trajectory that SEO has been set on, thanks to the likes of Google, will mean big changes for your business online, but with SponsoredLinX you can adapt to this changing SEO environment. Get in touch today on 1300 859 600.

TECH ADVANCEMENTS IN PPC ADVERTISING

The technology you never knew you couldn't live without

By Ian Sorohan

Think back 10 years ago...

Nobody even knew what an iPhone was back then. We were all living in our worlds of bulky desk computers, heavy suitcase sized laptops and phones that were just that; phones.

In the last decade technology has advanced so much that we are practically handcuffed to it. You set an alarm on your smart phone, wake up and check the weather on your smart phone, make sure you have no events that day on your Google calendar, check the bus timetable on the way to the station, order your coffee from an app on your watch... The list goes on and on.

These advances in technology have ensured that it has become so ingrained in our day to day lives, that it would be folly not to use these advances to the benefit of your marketing.

Not unlike the jumps in technology, marketing has also been moving forward in leaps and bounds. Let's look at a few examples of how technology is making its mark in online advertising.

Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising was created in the Desktop Age and was designed specifically for the purpose of advertising to desktop users. Your potential customers would spend their days or nights staring at a PC - or potentially a laptop screen. Both essentially desktop browsing.

In these early days, Google implemented the first conversion codes - which are snippets of html that are added into your website 'Thank You' page, in order to track leads.

From these beginnings PPC has expanded to take in mobile phone and tablet traffic, and in doing so has used the advancements in technology to bring in more options for tracking; eclipsing the humble conversion code.

With our shift towards mobile traffic (mobile users made up more E-commerce traffic for the first time since late last year) Google's technology needed to shift with it.

We've seen changes to the way search advertisements are delivered to a PC browser versus the same ad on a mobile device. Some of these changes include different platforms such as websites, mobile apps, YouTube and even games. We all remember the right hand ad changes recently, a change which appears to be based on a switch to a more mobile screen friendly setup.

Mobile ads have also begun to see other advancements lately, such as call extensions and Google forwarding numbers - which allow a user to call a business directly from their initial search. Users can then use the location extension in the ad to find their way to the product they need. For example, let's say you've called and the product you're after is the last in stock - this is where the location extension can help, assisting you to find your way to the store by the fastest route possible with Google Maps. This will soon be updated with the option to display promotions or specials for businesses directly on the map!

Over the years we've also seen changes to the way websites are designed. For example, no longer is the 'thank you. html' a staple design of a website -

instead, we see contact forms which reload with a thank you message. Google's analytics URL tracking also needed to advance, and with that change along came Tag Manager. This allowed for more advanced ways to track users through your site, along with their interaction and (most importantly) whether they had been converted.

Further changes to tracking has also meant that we can create remarketing cookies to attach to users browsers. This means you can 'follow' your potential clients around from site to site, and allows you to re-advertise that coffee machine they were looking at buying when the weather suddenly took a right hand turn into winter.

The time frames between that initial search and click and an actual lead or sale dramatically shifts between industries. Without the update in remarketing technologies these possible leads would be lost to your business.

Now in just the last few weeks, we've seen more changes from Google, as they attempt to meet our ever growing consumption of technology (which sees the average user switching between three or more devices, up to 10 times an hour). Users will research on their laptops at breakfast, look further into a service or product offering during their commute to work (on their smartphone) and then make their purchase from their work computer an hour later.

Google's technology is advancing to ensure that the initial click at home, which led to the research on the train, which then led to the purchase at work can be tracked across devices, giving advertisers a better understanding of how business campaigns are working to provide return.

Cross-Device tracking is already making waves in the marketing world and this is only going to become more important as the time goes by, not to mention an update to in-store conversion tracking.

Marketers, advertisers and the businesses that are spending the money all want to know that their ads are bringing in sales.

Imagine if you could attribute the next person who comes into your store to buy that $1000 Smart TV to a click on your ad text - without any enquiry forms, quote requests, or even call tracking - simply by tracking that initial click on a mobile device to that same person heading across town to your store the next day? Wouldn't that be something!

Who knows what the next advancement is going to be? That said, whatever it is, I can almost guarantee you'll be able to find some way to use it to your advertising advantage.

Get In Touch

You can be sure when the next wave in technology advancements come along in the PPC world, SponsoredLinX will be there ready and waiting to take advantage of it for your business. Work with SponsoredLinX today and call **1300 859 600**.

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The latest Aunt Agony and DIY hero!

WHAT ARE GOOGLE SNIPPETS?

By Fiona Hoy

Have you ever had a question you needed the answer for quickly? Maybe you spilt red wine on the new carpet? (Who hasn't). Or perhaps while wandering the supermarket shelves, you wondered what to make for dinner? Almost always Google has the search result for you, but we often have to scour through all the listings to find exactly what we're after - and in this day and age "ain't nobody got time for that".

As you know, we are all becoming more time poor and if you're anything like me, your working day generally exceeds the standard eight hours when you factor in travel time. This leaves very little time to think about the other daily stresses of life, and before you know it, it's 10 o'clock at night and you need to be up and out of bed in a few hours to do it all over again.

So, what's the solution? Google feature snippets! Most people haven't realised what the purpose of a feature snippet is and how useful it can be for solving a problem quick smart. You can find this at the top of a Google search when you ask a question in Google's search bar. It will tell you what you need to know - whether it be a natural headache remedy, nachos recipe, how to clean your oven or the population of Australia in the 1900s. So, it's good to know that Google is here to help, giving us instant answers in the form of easy to read snippets.

Before the internet became a big hit, we had advice columns in magazines and newspapers. Though, these were often directed at the female audience and referred to as Aunt Agony. As different magazines were made available as a source of information to readers, people took the opportunity to write in asking questions about how to solve every day problems. Responses could take weeks! Now, Google snippets give us the answer.

There are three different types of Google snippets, but the most common form is a paragraph. Research by Rob Bucci of STAT showed that out of 1 million different searches, 81.95% were paragraph snippets. To see an example of a paragraph snippet,

try Googling 'nachos recipe' - you'll see that it gives you a fast three sentence paragraph explaining how to make nachos.

The second highest showed 10.77% of the results were list snippets, or ones that were bulleted and numbered. This kind of snippet is good for individual step by step guides such as 'How to build a deck,' which shows a Bunnings DIY five step result. Though the snippet is very basic and building a deck is not, you can click into the snippet to get the full description of all the different aspects you need to consider.

Only occasionally, or 7.28% of the time, will you come across table snippets that are more useful for the likes of statistics. For example, when I searched 'Population of Australia 1900s,' I found that in December 1900 the population of Australia was over 3.7 million, and over a century later (in September 2009) it was over 22 million.

Mobile devices are currently responsible for approximately 51% of Google searches in the USA. With mobile searches steadily increasing, snippets are now able to provide us with information on the spot regardless of where we are.

What does this mean for you? Businesses need to ensure that they are targeting the most relevant keywords for the correct part of the buying cycle. For example, if someone is researching "How to fix a crack in a wall?" they are not yet ready to purchase, and not ready to contact a service provider. But you can't blame them, they're just trying to be a good Aussie and figure how to do it themselves first!

Get In Touch

Learn what keywords you should be targeting with the SEO specialists at SponsoredLinX on **1300 859 600**.

TOP TEN APPS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Business hacks to make your day more productive

By Nativity Dunbar

XERO

Get excited, it's a one stop accounting shop! An award-winning software application made in NZ and spread across the globe, it's used by countless businesses to keep finances in check with cost effective plans starting from as little as $25 per month.

Advantages
- Holistic accounting and bookkeeping software that helps you manage quotes, invoices, bills, bank statement reconciliation, self-service payroll and superannuation.
- Free 30 day trial with an unlimited amount of users.
- Cloud based, no downloads required unless you want direct iPhone and android access.
- Access it from wherever you want (laptop, iPad, PC).

Google

Known as the online powerhouse for communication, storage collaboration and management apps suited to productive and savvy working teams, Google Apps is a central hub for Gmail, Hangouts, calendar, Google plus social media, Drive, Docs, Sheets, Slides, Sites, security administration and archives.

Advantages
- More security settings than other office based software!
- User friendly and easy to access from any device.
- You can restore previous documents before changes were applied, and share documents easily while collaborating more efficiently with internal chat.
- Way cheaper than Microsoft Office 365, it provides central platform access to all of the software you need to produce administration work for.

Asana

A very funky and intuitive project management tool that teams can use to manage tasks and collaborate on small to large projects.

Advantages
- You can use the Asana platform for free.
- Tasks have email integrated notifications so when it's updated, all team members will know.
- Attachments are allowed in tasks and projects, so this is great for teams who don't work together in the office.
- You can also integrate deadlines with your online calendar, and if you turn on your hacks in the settings, you will get a surprise appear on your screen when you complete a task.

Insightly

Used as a sales customer relationship management system and project management tool.

Advantages
- Manage leads, contacts, organisations, partners, vendors and suppliers. See everything from background, email history, events, projects or opportunities.
- You can integrate it with Google Apps for work, Evernote, Dropbox, Xero and more.
- Automatic server backups, high grade security encryption and Insightly is iPhone and Android compatible.

Square

This is one of the best inventions to hit the innovation era; digital card payments via a small device plug in. It's a mobile card reader and point-of-sale app.

Advantages
- Perfect for start ups and market stalls that want to process card payments but don't want the daggy merchant bank facility that relies on a connection.
- Just plug it into your iPad or smart device and the inbuilt software will activate
- Low fees per transaction and it's only a one-off $19 for the Square device itself.

Canva

An innovative application that allows anyone to establish aesthetic graphic design artwork for marketing purposes. Graphics made easy in an instant for a small fee or for free. Look out Adobe Indesign and Photoshop, Canva is slowly taking over with its brave approach.

Advantages
- Quick user tutorials are easy to follow if you are just starting out.
- User friendly, easy to use drag and drop function for images and text.
- Pre-made templates, fonts, stock images and colour customisation that's on-trend.
- Setting up a user account is free and easy.
- You can upload your own logo and images.
- Allows you to create infographics and social media content.
- Purchasing image stock is affordable at $1.

DropBox

A large file storage and sharing system that you can use to hold documents, photos and music in the cloud.

Advantages
- Access the same account across your PC, iPad, iPhone, Android and smart tablet.
- Share links via email and SMS to friends, family and co-workers.
- No more bouncing emails due to large file attachments, just share a simple link.
- It's free until you need more storage space.

LogMeIn

Remote access your computer (PC or Laptop) through your phone so you can work on the go, wherever you are. Let's admit it, we have all been shockingly caught out, needing something that's on our computer at home, wishing it was on the device in front of us.

Advantages
- Access your computer/s from any device.
- Store, share, and collaborate on files in one click.
- Print remote documents to local printers.
- Keep computers and users up and running.
- Empower workers to stay productive from anywhere.

Bamboo HR

An online Human Resources software that logs staff information like next of kin, banking details, leave requests/approvals, time in lieu and allows applicant tracking.

BambooHR helps small and growing companies transition from spreadsheets to a Human Resource Information System (HRIS) that adapts to their changing needs.

Advantages
- Self-service platform for staff.
- Customisable metrics dashboard for insights and reporting.
- Tracking and file organisation capability.

Evernote

An intuitive note capturing system that can be accessed on all of your connected devices.

See something you want to read later or may become useful in the future? Save it on Evernote!

Advantages
- Make notes, capture photos and share them with others.
- You can establish a free account for up to 60 MB of uploads per month.
- Easy to use on any device.
- Can be used on an individual basis or for business teams.

Get In Touch

Liked this list? Thinking of implementing some of these apps to help your business run smoothly? Then you'll want to head over to the SponsoredLinX Academy Hub at http://www.sponsoredlinxacademy.com.au/ to pick a whole array of useful information!

THE TRADE OFF

The Exchange Between Technology and Data

I'll admit – hearing about 'digital disruption', 'digital adoption', 'innovation', 'technological advancement'… it can all get a bit monotonous at times. I'll also admit that I am guilty of touting the benefits of what these terms represent, but I also have a legitimate reason for doing so. You see, I genuinely believe that for businesses of all sizes to secure a successful future, digital and technological innovations are essential ingredients to making this happen. Yes, change can be daunting and the unknown impact of these changes can be scary, but the risk of not using these ingredients because of fear is not worth it. One of these fears is cyber security and the question of how secure our information really is online. The truth is if we want to embrace these digital and technological changes, we are going to have to relinquish some of our personal data, but there is certainly a correct way of doing so. With the myriad of digital devices we knowingly and unknowingly interact with on a daily basis, it pays to be aware of the following…

IoT (Internet of Things)
The Internet of Things was signalled as a great wave in technological innovation to help make our lives easier… right?! With such an array of devices and objects now 'connected' the scope for people to hack into your private information has grown. One aspect you might not have thought of is 'smart-connected' cars. Vehicles can 'speak' with other vehicles (V2V) and with connected infrastructure (V2I) therefore exposing your car to threats (Google 'hacked Jeep' and you'll see what I mean). The solution? There is software that you can purchase to protect your car, just as you would purchase software to protect your computer. The IoT can help make your life easier (think of gadgets such as Google Nest and Amazon Echo) but stick to reputable, well recognised brands which assemble secure devices, as they will likely have built-in security features. Ensure your Wi-Fi is secured to WPA2 and always ensure your passwords are strong but memorable (and keep them to yourself)!

By Ben Bradshaw

Bots
You will have heard a fair bit of online chatter around 'bots'. Bots aren't something new, but advancements in machine learning and artificial intelligence has signalled the development of bots which are much smarter at performing automated tasks than before. Recently, Facebook Messenger announced at their F8 conference the introduction of chatbots in collaboration with businesses which use Messenger to engage with customers. The risk here relates to malicious bots which have been designed to steal personal data. As Karissa Bell wrote for Mashable Australia, "…there's no analogous mechanism for bots. Hypothetically, you could begin interacting with, say, a shopping bot and have no idea that it's a fake meant to steal your credit card info or other personal information". Platforms such as Facebook are going to need to watch bot activity very closely and strike that golden balance between convenience and protection. Again, only deal with reputable brands and businesses to protect your data.

Security by Design
In May this year Gumtree suffered from a security breach in which customer details such as email addresses, names and phone numbers were compromised. Remember, it's not just your data that you need to be concerned about – but also the data you have stored on your customers and clients too. From a business perspective, it's vital that your security software is regularly checked and up to date. The way you store customer information must be compliant with all legislation. If you design your data collection processes with security and privacy at the forefront, you're more likely to be impervious to attack. From a user perspective, there are precautionary steps you can take to minimise the impact of an event like this. Firstly, regularly change your password to your most sensitive accounts (think financial information). If you can, install a two-step verification process. Also think about having a secondary email account. This can be very useful if you ever need to recover your primary email account.

Microsoft's Four Pillars
If you're looking to a business for guidance to help model your own security plan, try looking at Microsoft, who have developed the 'four pillars'. David Markus reported for Smart Company that Microsoft's Satya Nadella announced at the beginning of the year that 2015 saw "160 million customer records compromised, 229 days on average between infiltration and detection, and $3 trillion of market value destroyed". While these shocking statistics refer to cyber security breaches on a global stage, what is increasingly prevalent is that companies are battling a 24/7 attack when it comes to security. As a result, David Markus reported that Microsoft is working with the following four pillars:

1. *Privacy to ensure your data is private and under your control.*
2. *Compliance with managing your data in accordance with the law of the land.*
3. *Transparency about the collection of data and the use of your data.*
4. *Security for everyone's data.*

In the end it comes down to how much of your privacy and data you are willing to trade off for the benefits of utilising technologies which will make your life easier. Just think, when you use your GPS, you are allowing a device to track your whereabouts. When you sync your smartphone with your car so that you can play your Spotify playlist, you're allowing your car and smartphone to exchange data. When you enable your home's smart thermostat to save on energy bills, you're allowing a device to track your movements. Even smartphones enabled with fingerprint security are worth a mention! You're already trading your data for the use of these technologies, and now that you're accustomed to doing so, how many of you would be willing to give up these benefits?

So with that, let me rephrase my statement: it comes down to how you are willing to trade off your privacy and data for the benefits of utilising technologies, which until now you never realised you didn't want to live without.

Get In Touch

Don't be complacent when it comes to being informed about cyber security – check out my website at www.bbradshaw.com to learn more.

converto pages 2.0

Your New Secret Weapon

WHY SMB'S SHOULD EMBRACE THE CLOUD

By William Zhang

Today, more and more Australian businesses are relying on the cloud to help their business run more effectively, efficiently and securely. But for some, the cloud still remains a mystery.

Simply put, the cloud utilises the Internet to access virtual machines and digital files. Through cloud computing, the digital content can be accessed over the Internet from any device at anytime with an Internet connection. Cloud computing has also progressed to offer full servers and applications online that were previously tied to a workstation or a local server.

The cloud is redefining the way small businesses actively do business. Here are four benefits for small-business owners to consider when deciding to use the cloud over local infrastructure.

Cost Savings
Cost Savings Setting up your own IT infrastructure for your business often includes many capital expenditures. These include purchasing valuable space for your server room, like application, database and VoIP servers, as well as the cooling systems that these servers require. In the cloud, however, these expenses can be eliminated; you pay for exactly what you use during each month. Most cloud services provide utility based models where you only pay for what you consume, with no long term contract or commitment. This can help small businesses avoid large upfront costs. In addition, cloud vendors generally provide free technical support and server upgrades. This happens seamlessly behind the scenes, and doesn't require involvement of key personnel within your company.

For small businesses especially, those savings are invaluable.

Data Security
The most recent survey on cloud computing conducted by Dresner Advisory Services, as stated by CEO Ericson, revealed that security concerns are a primary barrier to adoption of cloud computing. Many companies would fret over the security of their data when it is stored in a remote location. In fact, cloud storage has actually proven to be safer than on premise security measures. Most cloud providers constantly update and improve their security systems, including encryption techniques that keep the data from being accessed by any unauthorised source. Compared to an in-house

storage solution, the security of which might not be monitored consistently by busy IT staff, vendors have entire departments devoted to protecting users' data.

Increased Flexibility
One of the most alluring benefits of cloud computing is being able to access work-related files and information from any device in any place at any time. Essentially, cloud helps you replicate what you can do in an office full of people, except to do that when you are travelling, or when you are at home, or wherever that suits you. This increased flexibility allows you to be more productive by maximising the use of your time to get your important things done.

What's more, increased mobility and flexibility in the cloud can lead to additional cost savings. For instance, small-business owners can opt to implement BYOD (bring your own device). Employees can work on devices they already own and are comfortable with, such as tablets and laptops.

Greater Integration
Businesses need to employ specific applications to run the functional areas of their business, like payroll, invoicing, HR, CRM, Marketing etc., and it's essential that each of the individual applications talk to each other. Without seamless communication between applications and services, business processes slow down. Adopting a cloud-based business solution creates multiple opportunities for integration and simplified integration. Cloud-adapted small businesses have the option of integrating with various cloud-based providers.

Small businesses can take advantage of specialised services that integrate with back-office operations, from human resources to marketing to accounting. These opportunities for integration give small-business owners more time to focus on the more critical areas of business.

Get In Touch

Arm your business with even more online marketing tips and tricks and visit the SponsoredLinX Academy today at http://www.sponsoredlinxacademy.com.au/

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THE NEW GIRL, CONTROL FREAKS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

A SponsoredLinX Triple Threat

By Luke Greensill

There is an old adage that "a [tradesman] is only as good as his tools". I find this to be quite poignant, as I enjoy tinkering on my cars and bikes on the weekends – and the one thing I find that has let me down in the past is poor quality tools. Alongside that, being without the correct tool for the job in the first place is also less than advantageous. The same principal applies to digital marketing, albeit without the skinned knuckles and grease-stained palms.

SponsoredLinX has a number of proprietary tools that have been created in-house by skilled members of our team to augment our effectiveness. As a digital marketing industry leader it is in our best interests to maintain momentum with our innovative practices so we can continually provide our clients with the best possible service value on a day-to-day basis.

Recently, we enlisted a new employee named Erica, although she does not occupy a desk, eat other people's lunches in the fridge, or leave dirty coffee mugs in the sink. Originally I assumed she was a repeated no-show, but discovered that Erica is actually ERICA (Evaluating Results In Client Accounts), a rather self-explanatory acronym for an account management platform, developed in-house and in a similar vein to Kratu.

Prior to ERICA's launch, Client Managers lacked an automated tool to batch-check every client's account and its various metrics at once, in real time. This manual method was time consuming and did not provide an efficient approach to meeting the ever-growing needs of our client base. By having this data presented on a single page and in an intuitive table based format, the potential for human error is reduced exponentially. Thus ERICA benefits both SponsoredLinX and its clients mutually, as the time originally spent by a Client Manager manually investigating these metrics can now be invested in optimising accounts accordingly; as a result, potentially increasing ROI for clients.

Another key aspect of our business is our ability to assess the virtual 'health' of an existing AdWords account for the purpose of providing a prospective client with an idea of how a SponsoredLinX managed account could benefit them. AdAdviser is another proprietary piece of software we have developed for that purpose, and additionally for assessing currently managed accounts; allowing us to ascertain their effectiveness using benchmarks derived from 10 years of AdWords data we have collected. Prior to this, a Marketing specialist would perform the checks over an average 30 minute span, however with the implementation of AdAdviser this has been reduced to a swift 30 second process with reduced margins of error.

The third product I want to mention is our Client Panel, which was built with our clients in mind who had previously attempted to manage their own accounts prior to signing on with us. An Australian first; the SponsoredLinX Client Panel provides a centralised location for clients to get an intimate understanding of their managed marketing efforts in real-time, 24 hours a day. In addition to the value this adds to a hands-on client, it also allows for a considerable amount of transparency in our operating procedures by providing up-to-date information, itemised billing information and performance statistics.

The aforementioned platforms are but a few of the tools we have developed for SponsoredLinX staff and clients to have at their disposal, but are the ones we are most proud of as they provide the greatest benefits to the services we provide. New projects are constantly in development, and existing tools are constantly being refined and improved to reflect ever-changing markets and Google's own frequent changes.

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If you think that your business' online presence is overdue for a health check, I strongly encourage you to visit SponsoredLinX.com.au and register with us for your free check – you can't afford not to!

The future is direct and connected

FACEBOOK F8
CONFERENCE

By Lachlan Dann

In the world of social marketing, Facebook's F8 conference is our Super Bowl and our Wrestlemania rolled into one. The two day event, although primarily aimed at developers and marketers, is where the company announces its biggest innovations, and previews services and features that will be integrated in the year ahead. In this article, we'll be looking at the biggest announcements coming out of this year's F8, let you know how they'll benefit you and your business, plus I'll be dusting off my crystal ball and telling you where Facebook may be heading with these latest innovations.

Facebook launch bot platform for Messenger

Firstly, a lot of people will be asking what a chat-bot is and how it has the potential to help your business, so let me set the scene. Facebook's Messenger and WhatsApp services process over 60 billion messages each day, which is three times more than worldwide SMS figures. The Messenger app is the fastest growing communication app in the world, with now close to 1 billion users. Now, imagine if customers and clients had the ability to message your business directly to order a product, book a service, make an inquiry, ask a question, get advice… the applications are limitless. Now, for some larger companies, you'd need to hire staff around the clock to sustain this kind of service, but Facebook has announced that the bot era has officially begun. Bots will be able to help field questions and could represent a major new channel for commerce, customer support, and possibly even media. Currently, there are bots

for CNN that allow people to have relevant news messaged directly to them, while 1800-Flowers have a bot that allows users to order and receive recommendations based on their favourite seasonal flowers. Meanwhile, there's even a cool little bot named "Poncho" - which is a cat that tells you about the weather, gives you recipes if you tell it you're hungry, and will even give you a bit of sass if he doesn't like what you're putting down!

Does the rise of social networks spell the end for SMS and voice calls?

A few months ago, I predicted that the future of Telco provider plans would likely move toward data only; the reason being that we will basically no longer need a telephone number. With the massive popularity of Facebook's messaging apps, it's almost a certainty now that we'll be seeing a transition to mobile plans that see a growing amount of data. But the switch won't be activated by the app providers, and certainly not the telco providers, it will be by the handset providers. We've already seen the integration of iMessage with iPhones, so the next step isn't too far away.

Facebook will now let any camera stream to Facebook Live.

Live video is going to be a huge tool in your marketing arsenal. Not only is Facebook now providing live video access to pretty much everyone (previously it was only available for authorised

pages through the 'Mentions' app) but they are now understanding that the applications for this are almost as limitless as chat-bots. For consumers, all you need to do is follow the story of the 'Chewbacca Mom' and her rise to fame as she live-streamed her unboxing of a Chewbacca mask. Her joy and laughter were seen by over 150 million people around the world, which resulted in her getting interviews on the Ellen Show and receiving over $420,000 worth of gifts since. For education, Facebook Live have hosted a live video chat with NASA astronauts in space and given people a real insight into what it's like to live in zero gravity. For media, the NRL launched an interactive broadcast quality State Of Origin pre-show on their Facebook page. And lastly, businesses have the ability to live stream anything from new product launches, to Q&A's with their audience, giving consumers more connection to business than ever.

Zuckerberg says augmented reality glasses are 'what we're trying to get to'

The focus for this F8 is far more focused on developers and tech than ever. With the revival of virtual reality through their Oculus Rift, Zuckerberg has gone on record in his keynote to share his optimistic view on the future direction of virtual and augmented reality. He's stated the company is working on "a

whole new set of social experiences" across VR platforms. Some people might be thinking it's only a fad, but the 'reality' is that "virtual reality has the potential to be the most social platform on the planet, because you actually feel like you're right there with another person". Where they are aiming is a 'Heads Up Display' style of Augmented reality, much like where Google was aiming to go with the Google Glass, where the news and information you want and need are displayed in real time and interact with the environment in front of you.

Facebook unveil open-source 360-degree video camera

F8's last big tech unveil came in the form of one of the most interesting cameras you've ever seen - a 360-degree camera that can shoot video in 8k. The kicker with this is, they are open-sourcing this out to developers and companies. In an effort to kick-start the VR revolution, they've announced that all the specs and schematics for the camera would be available to developers to allow them to use the work and advances that Facebook have achieved to diversify content and hardware available for VR.

Facebook are focused on the future

In just one infographic, Facebook proved why they are the juggernaut of the social

world. Zuckerberg openly unveiled the companies 10 year roadmap, which looked pretty socially focused for the first 5 years, with focuses on their social ecosystems (Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, WhatsApp), and refining of their video and search offerings (360 and live video, search and business pages).

Where the wow-factor came in was the last part of their 10 year plan. The first focus is on connectivity, with plans for drones, satellites, terrestrial solutions and basic internet access for countries and regions that aren't able to access it. This will improve world-wide connectivity and allow for things like education in underprivileged countries. The second focus is on AI and furthering their efforts with the vision, language, reasoning and planning of artificial intelligence. Lastly, there will be a big push on software and hardware advancements in VR and AR, particularly with mobile VR, Oculus Rift, Social VR and AR technology.

FACEBOOK VS WEBSITES: DAWN OF LANDING PAGES

Why the "Which is Better?" Debate Might Not End the Way You'd Expect

No matter the topic, if you get two people in a room together, there's going to be a topic they disagree on. The Red Sox vs The Yankees, Schwarzenegger vs Stallone, Nintendo vs Sega. History is riddled with examples of comparison, and the Online Space is no exception. It's time to look at one of the hottest debates this side of Ovens vs Microwaves. Facebook or Websites; which is better for your business?

Apples and Oranges

Although we see a lot of comparisons between the two platforms and they do share a similar purpose, the differences between their function can be seen in leaps and bounds. On the surface we're comparing two different pieces of fruit, but if you dig deeper, we're looking at a Sports Car and a Motorcycle. They'll both get you from A to B, but what type of journey are you looking to take?

The Book of Faces

Facebook, putting it bluntly is one heck of a dynamic tool. Not only can it give a way for people to find your contact details, or read more about what you do and offer, but it's a creative outlet to connect with your customers and clients.

Have a new product? Make a post so people are notified. Looking for feedback on a service? Reach out to your current fans and users to get information straight from the horse's mouth. Unless you have an interactive forum on your website (and let's face it, that's pretty few and far between these days) these are features that an ordinary landing page just doesn't offer.

By Mr. E. Nigma

One of the biggest restrictions in my opinion is the lack of ability to customise your page. You have the option of a Cover Picture and Profile Image, but other than that, your options are rather limited.

Sites of the World Wide Web

The benefits of a website are as diverse as they are in depth. The ability to make a website look the way you want and do exactly what you want is something that a social media page just can't offer.

This dynamic ability is one of the strongest reasons that websites will just not give in to the rise of social media. Something as small as being able to choose the colour scheme for a site can completely change the experience a potential customer or client can have.

Showing the personality of a business, or expressing a message the way you want it expressed – this is the beauty of your own website.

In my professional opinion, the strongest tool that a website brings to the table is being able to appear in front of searching customers using Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) or Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising. When people are actively looking for the service or product you offer, these spectacular sources let you jump right in front of them, and show these people just how helpful you can be.

Now more options also come with more work and potentially more costs. The in depth and extensive nature of websites mean that they often take a high level of skill and education to modify them the way you'd like. Platforms such as Wix and Wordpress

do their best to streamline the process, but when it comes down to it, the complexity of the work is all defined by how complex you want your site to be.

A Match Made in Heaven

There is actually a third option that a surprisingly large amount of people don't consider. Using both Facebook and a website can be a powerful force indeed. They can be used to push Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising through Facebook, or through other mediums such as Google AdWords or Bing search marketing.

Using this combination, you can establish a stronger presence online, being in multiple places just waiting for your customers to see what you can offer. Not only do these multiple avenues open you up for ways people can find you, but it opens the door to people who exclusively use one method or the other, and in this case, more is certainly better.

Which Side Will You Choose?

As with any comparison, we have pros and cons for each

option. Does this make one choice better than the other? This isn't a simple yes or no question.

If you're looking to connect with your audience and make sure new offers and options are available to them, Facebook is likely your best bet.

If you want to offer a thorough and hearty option for your customers to browse and learn more, whilst still being able to contact you to find out more, a website would suit your needs.

For some people, there isn't a choice; using both Facebook and a website in connection with each other is a more suitable option. The question is - where do you fit in?

Get In Touch

If you want to find out which option may be best for you, get in touch with SponsoredLinX - your friendly neighbourhood Facebook and Website specialists.

Our best advice for small businesses

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MARKETING BUDGET AS A SMALL BUSINESS

By Nathan Moody

Whether your marketing budget is $500 a month or $50,000 - it is crucial that your marketing yields a return on your investment. Depending on your industry this return may come in many forms of 'conversions' – be they direct sales, subscribers, leads or quote requests, it is of utmost importance that you know the value of your average closed deal. From here, with a little common sense and a healthy dose of scepticism (N.B. I don't use the word optimism here, as it's always best to work with worst case scenarios in business and marketing) you can determine you targeted Cost Per Acquisition (CPA). This will be key in deciding the allocation of your marketing expenditure. With that said, every business is different, and marketing strategies will vary greatly depending on your business's needs and goals.

Below are some simple tips to take into account, especially when working with a smaller budget.

1. Know Your Annual Marketing Budget, And Commit To It
Successful marketing requires trial and error and it takes time to fine tune a campaign to the point where you are showing the right ad, to the right person, at the right time. It is better to work with a smaller budget at the start of a campaign, and then, when it is fine-tuned put the extra money into what works. There is no point just throwing all of your marketing budget into a month or two of advertising just to see if it works. The trick is to invest a small percentage of your marketing budget into finding out what gets results, and then scale up when it becomes profitable.

2. Focus On High Profit Products & Services
Let's use the example of an E-commerce store here: one that has products ranging from $5 a unit to $5,000. While we need to take into account that the higher end products will likely have less search traffic and may not sell as often as the cheaper ones, we want to ensure that if someone is searching for it, they found it from your business (ideally with a better deal than anyone else). Selling 1,000 items with a $1 profit per unit vs 1 item with $1000 profit? The big thing here is how many people you need to bring to the site for each amount of total sales. Even if the cost per click (CPC) in AdWords is significantly more expensive for the more expensive product, the return on investment makes this a no brainer. As such, segmenting your budget via campaigns that are product/profit specific is a great idea, as this will ensure that the cheap products don't use up all your budget to the detriment of your more lucrative ones.

3. Know Your Targeted Audience
There are two main factors to this; location and time. You have a product or service that you can provide so you only want to

advertise it to people that you can provide it to. Firstly, let's look at location. As a service provider let's assume you are in Sydney. Sydney is a big place, if you live on the north side, do you really want to be doing quotes on the south side? In this case I would be recommending radius targeting so that your ads are showing to people in your local area. A secondary plus side to this means that you aren't competing with the savvy advertisers on the other side of town, meaning cheaper CPC and a better position. For an online retailer, the same applies, especially when it comes to shipping and delivery. A friend of mine recently found his 'free delivery on orders over $500' biting him back, when an order came in for outback FNQ and the delivery fee cost far more than the sales gross profit. This is essentially the same as budget scaling- start local, find out what works, then expand!

4. Stand Out From The Crowd.
This isn't just about having the best ad. This is about having the best perceived value, whether this be the best product, price, service or guarantee (ideally all of the above). The way to achieve this is to know your competitors. Find your point of difference and put that front and centre on your site, and include it in your ads. This will greatly assist your chances of immediate conversions, and that is what this is all about at the end of the day!

There are a multitude of other things to consider, like remarketing, email promotions and the display network… but there are only so many words that can fit on a page, so I will have to leave those for another day. Until then- Happy Marketing!

Get In Touch
Ensure your marketing budget is being allocated with expert knowledge only to be found at SponsoredLinX!
Contact us today on 1300 859 600.

GOOGLES NEW SERP LAYOUT

What small business owners need to know about

By Amy Ambrose

If you're wondering why Google's search engine listings are looking a little bare, you wouldn't be alone. Google has recently rolled out an update to the layout of its SERP (search engine results pages) to remove paid listings from the right hand side of the page; this means that there are now only seven listings (half of which are located way down at the bottom of the page) rather than the previous eleven. These changes to the landscape of the SERP layout has marketers speculating about the impact it could have on the way we search, and the result for businesses on their paid and organic listings.

Google's SERP layout is not something that changes very frequently. Alterations to it are the result of the changes that Google has noticed over time to our own search behaviour. An eye mapping study in 2005 indicated that the listings on the right hand side of Google's search results were receiving less attention, and that visual patterns were mapping a more vertical reading than the previous F pattern. This, combined with Google's recent algorithm change towards showing preference towards mobile optimised sites, are just two of the many reasons your search results are now more concise. There are less options clouding users judgement, giving precedence to the listings that remain.

The reduction to the number of advertisements that will make it in the top three paid positions makes it even more valuable to businesses than before,

causing the battle for top spots to drive the cost per click up. A fourth position will show for 'highly commercial queries', which will mean for some searches that organic listings will be further down the page. All of this will mean a cleaner user experience overall but will drive up the importance for all positions on the first page.

For this reason, it is even more important to ensure that your organic listings are looking their best. This includes a strong converting title and description for listings that will set your business apart from your competition. It is also essential to start thinking about mobile optimisation for your website. Sites that are already complying with this are seeing an increase to their rankings for both mobile and desktop search.

If you are a brick and mortar business, you can further improve your exposure and ensure that you are still sitting above the fold for local keywords by creating a 'Google My Business' local listing. This will have you sitting snuggly between paid and organic results as organic search results tend to drop down the page for these queries.

What does this mean for organic listings? Having less listings on the first page may mean that all top listings see more click-throughs as users attention will be less divided. Also, the impact that will be seen from the increased amount of space taken up by top listed paid results, may mean that new strategies will have to roll

out to make the most of these changes for SEO.

For instance, long tail keywords that have long been heralded for their converting value (as they are a more refined search query being further down the buying cycle) will be the most likely to show up on the top of the first page, as they won't have to compete with paid listings. The key ID is to create a keyword strategy to target long tailed keywords, as well as also supporting your 'Google My Business' local listing rankings.

So what should you take away from all this? Improving the quality and ranking authority of your website is more important than ever, in order to secure your position in the new layout of the first page for important keywords. This means having a strong keyword strategy, good content, and ensuring that your website is mobile optimised. Together, these aspects work towards complying with Google's standards, in order to increase the potential for your business to show up in organic queries for both mobile and desktop searches.

Get In Touch
When making sure your SEO strategy is working in unison with your Google AdWords campaigns, there is no one better for the task than SponsoredLinX. Get in touch today on 1300 859 600.

DIGITAL HOROSCOPES

LEO

Your finance stars have finally welcomed the Moon's presence this quarter which means there is change in the air. Converting the opportunities that will come your way could be decided on the smallest detail, so ensure that you're always testing new options to optimise your online marketing efforts.

VIRGO

The wheels are in motion and have been since as far back as January 2016. New strands are now entering an online business project which puts you in a unique place strategically; this is because a rare Mercury eclipse signals a highly profitable fortuity waiting to present itself.

LIBRA

The full Moon in your work sector signals a serious game changer on the horizon for your marketing efforts. The real journey will begin when you embark on a new venture to engage with a previously untapped target customer audience. Remember to keep your expectation in check, as lunar forces can make you a tad unrealistic.

SCORPIO

Everything has a yin and yang, and this quarter will see you embracing both sides of search engine marketing; PPC and SEO. With Mars in retrograde from your money stars, you can finally start phase two of your business marketing strategy. With the Sun's return though, make sure you're always testing and reassessing.

SAGITTARIUS

Lucky Jupiter has arrived in your business sector, and this alignment could not have come at a more opportune time. For you, things will seem to just 'fall into place' this quarter, but don't be fooled. All that hard work, research and preparation is now finally paying off. Monitor your online streams and start experimenting with new ideas.

CAPRICORN

Discard what you thought you knew wasn't possible when it comes to marketing online, as Pluto's retrograde is creating new avenues for financial success. During the first quarter of the new financial year make a new commitment to extend your investment in your best performing online marketing platform.

AQUARIUS

Your annual business review is now over, and with the Sun leaving your business sector, now is the time to put into action all of the lessons learnt from last year. Pluto is hanging around for another month; taking advantage of his presence means you should focus on actively engaging with your business community online.
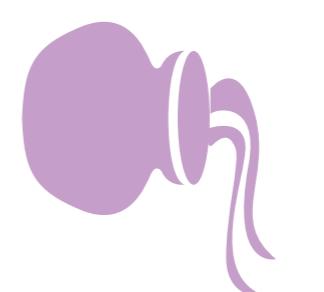
PISCES

The Sun has left your finance stars and while you may be missing its bright presence, Venus is making her first move into your business sector for the first time in a decade. The untapped potential she brings has the power to provide a level of foresight and clarity you never knew you were missing.
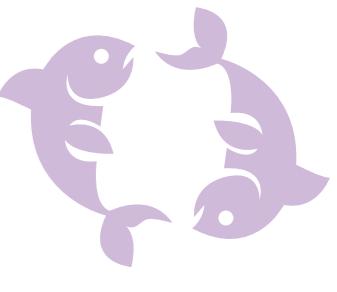
ARIES

Your determination and grit is what has always set you apart from your competition, but you're approaching a time when you need to add a new quiver to your bow. With the Sun beaming in our business sector during the first quarter of the new financial year, it's time to start exploring new online revenue channels.

TAURUS

Planetary activity means you can leave those uneventful months behind you to embrace the new wave of opportunity and leads coming your way. Saturn is approaching a long stay in your business sector, so start targeting new keywords now to make the most of it.

GEMINI

If you knew then what you know now you would have invested in Search Engine Optimisation a long time ago. Luckily you have a chance to make up time, especially with the current lunar vibes and Jupiter's return to your business stars. You professional and business intuition is at its sharpest now, so go with your gut feeling.
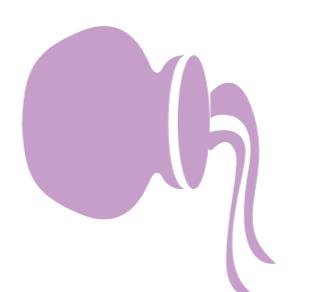
CANCER

Untapped potential income this quarter all comes down to Pluto's reappearing presence, but it's what you decide to do with it that counts. If you've been stalling on a new online marketing channel, then now is the time to get the wheels rolling. Your working fuel will propel your business to success.

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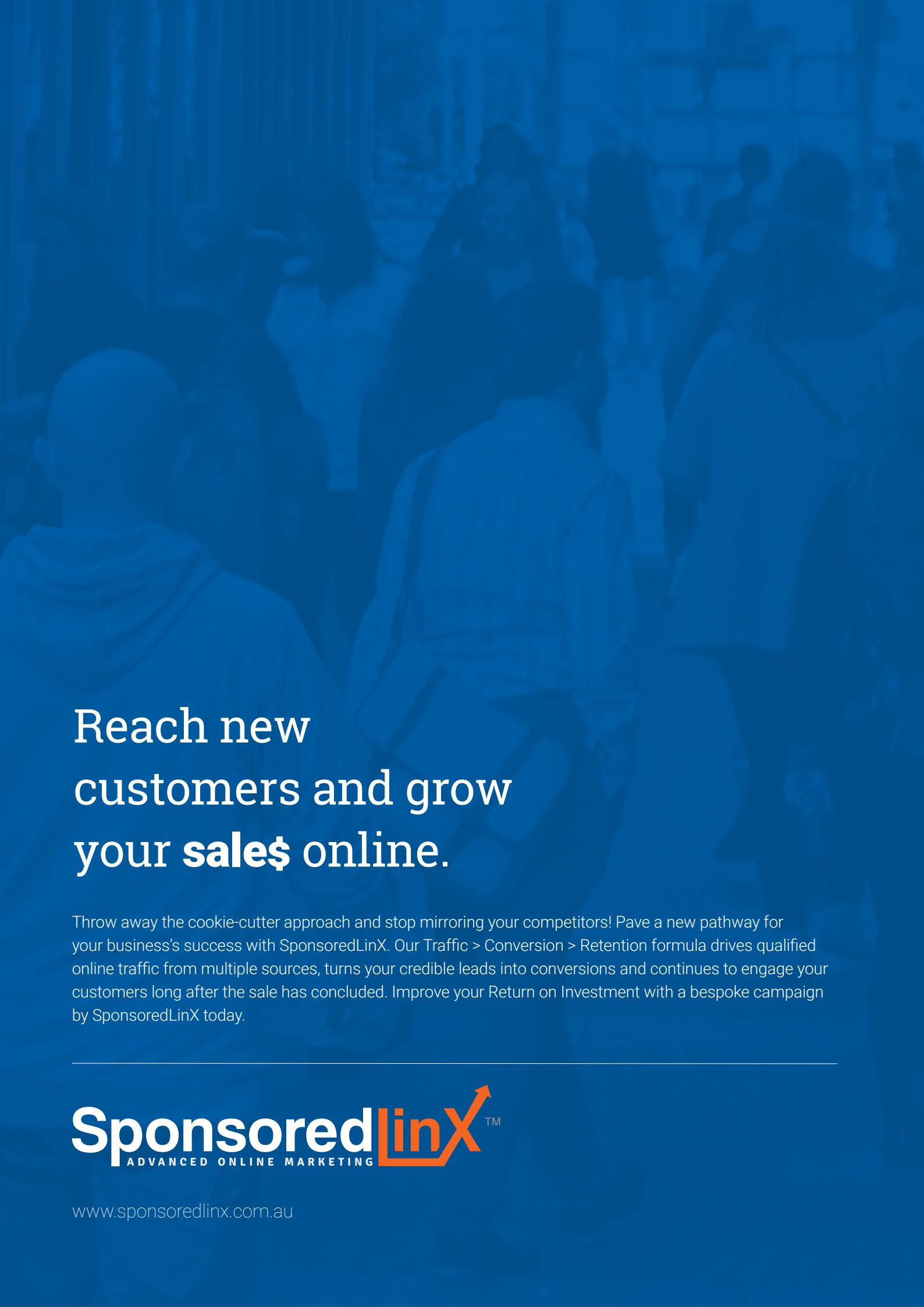
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