

Optimise



Do You Even SEO Bro?

Lift Your Way To The Top

Finding Your Brand Voice

*There Are Millions Of Small Businesses.
How Do You Stand Out?*

Importance Of Culture

We're Cool, Clever, Creative. Are You?

How To Create A Killer Website

Still The Best Way To Keep 'Em Coming Back

Social Media Optimisation

*How To Be Found Even When You're
Not Being Looked For*

ADWORDS

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SEO

|

SOCIAL

|

WEB

Optimise

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LETTER FROM BEN

Hello and welcome to Optimise 2018!

This year, we've decided to switch tact and instead of doing smaller quarterly magazines, we've done one big bumper edition! So, welcome to 'Simple Steps For Small Business Success'!

We've sectioned our 2018 issue into four different 'steps', and as a small business owner you could be on step one, or almost at the top, so in this Optimise we've covered all bases! The expert editorial team at SponsoredLinX will be giving their individual expertise and perspectives into all the shades that make up the digital marketing landscape.

Step one is establishment, from finding your brand voice to establishing your niche and creating your initial social media profiles.

Step two is marketing, where you'll learn about designing a brand image, establishing a company culture and an in-depth break down of social media optimisation.

Step three is conversion where our own Rochelle breaks down her 5 W's guide, our marketing team will slip you some tips on landing page optimisation and we'll discuss things like bounce rate and killer websites.

And lastly, step four is all about retention, where you'll learn how to deal with your online reputation, how to establish a strong company culture and how to recruit the best people to continue your small business success.

You can find all that, plus much more in the pages of this magazine!

As for SponsoredLinX, 2017 was our biggest year yet! Across the board, our clients have seen incredible online growth as we continue to adapt and evolve to all the changes this crazy industry throws at us. Our workforce almost doubled and we've never been in a better position to get your business to the top of the page! Our excellent app, LinX, was launched to national acclaim, our free Convertopage service was a roaring success and our Facebook advertising team have gone from strength to strength.

2018 excites me above all else knowing that despite more than a decade of unparalleled success, we're only just getting started! I hope as you flip through our 2018 issue you learn a little something along the way, and if you feel as though there's something more you'd like to know, as always we're only a call away!

That's it for me. I hope the year ahead brings you and your business all the success in the world.

Ben Bradshaw

What you'll be expecting in this years' optimise...

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THE CONTRIBUTORS

Who you'll be expecting in this years' optimise...



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SUMEET BHINDI

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a small, red wooden house model. The hands are positioned as if supporting or presenting the model. The word "Establish" is printed in white, bold, sans-serif font across the front of the red house. The background is blurred, showing a white shirt and a dark blue jacket.

Establish



Small Business Success

There's No One Way To Do It

by Ben Bradshaw

What makes a successful business?

Honestly, there's no easy way to answer that. What I consider a success may not be what you consider a success. We all have an ultimate goal.

What is profit though without happiness or fulfilment? If you don't love what you do then why do it at all? So, what is the be all and end all to happiness?

Personally, happiness for me comes from having an idea and turning it into a reality. Going from bullet points on a scrap of paper to a full-fledged living and breathing concept. That may not be the same for you, but drawing happiness from these small moments have helped me create SponsoredLinX. Which, 12 years ago was a few words scribbled on a notepad and is now the country's largest digital marketing agency.

Starting a small business is a dream for many Australians, but it is daunting. In this issue of Optimise, my team of digital marketers are going to give you a few steps for success.

Step one is the establishment, step two is marketing, step three is conversion and step four retention.

If you're a small business owner, or you're teetering on making the jump to being one, I hope somewhere within these pages you'll find some wisdom.

My editorial team asked me to share some of the wisdom I myself have garnered over the years. Which, to be fair, isn't the easiest thing to do. I'll try with five tips, and let the rest of the magazine do the talking. Alright, here we go!

Tip #1 Turn Competition Into Inspiration

Research what your rivals are doing, and use what you learn to identify what makes you unique. Focus on your own purpose and connect with those who share similar values, and those who inspire you to greater levels of success.

Tip #2 Every Setback Is A Stepping Stone

It's important to stay positive wherever possible. Remind yourself tomorrow is a brand new day, a new opportunity to think differently, learn from your mistakes and use that to make better choices.

Tip #3 Focus On What You Do Best

When you're getting started there is a lot of temptation and pressure to diversify your offering. Stick to what you do best and do it better and with more focus than your competitors.

Tip #4 Beware Of Legacide

With that being said, what worked yesterday doesn't always work today. Innovation doesn't mean changing your product, rather changing your mindset.

Tip #5 Take Time For Yourself

There's not a lot more stressful than going it alone. The sheer amount you need to get through can make 24-hour days disappear in a blink. Despite your workload, if you do not take time out to be with your family, or hang out with your friends, you will fail. Taking a step away and enjoying the fruits of your labour is as important as anything else.

So, there's a few. I can wax lyrical about leveraging social media, hiring the right people, learning to say no and establishing work processes, but the truth is some of this is stuff you will work out for yourself.

Within this magazine are a variety of articles that deal with issues some small businesses face. If you're still looking for some help, we're only a call away. Growing small to medium businesses all across the country is what we do, and we're here to do it for you too.





How To Create A Killer Website

Still The Best Way To Keep 'Em Coming Back!

by Rebecca Patrick

Within digital marketing, a functioning and aesthetically pleasing website is one of, if not the most important element in business success. Contributing to a 5-15% increased conversion rate, websites are a must-have in order to enhance your lead generation in 2018. Not sure what it takes to create a killer website? We've got four quick tips to help get you started.

Include The Important Elements

Although it's very much up to the creator's discretion as to what should be featured, there are a few essential elements that are required for success. Firstly, a headline with an optional sub-headline. Create something that grabs the attention of your audience, you have approximately 3 seconds from when they first click onto your website in order to make a good impression, so get creative! The headline must be very relevant to the topic of why they have clicked through in the first place.

Secondly, a brief description. Only include the relevant information, such as what's being offered by your business, keep it clear and straight to the point.

Lastly, your webpage should feature at least one supporting image or video. What would this world be without visual content? Grasp your audience's attention with a video or image of your product or service. Quality over quantity applies in this situation - you don't want your landing page to be too busy.

Say No To Extra Navigation

The aim of a website is to encourage a user to take or undergo a specific action in relation to your business. This one purpose requires a webpage that will keep their attention until they perform said action. Whether it be making an enquiry, getting a quote or booking an appointment, a website must have easy navigation in order to find your call to action (CTA). Keep the navigation on your website to a minimum. An efficient webpage is easily operated, your customers should be able to find the outcome they are searching for almost instantly. Why not add in a navigation bar? That way, users can easily locate the answers they are looking for in a simple to follow context.

**"Quality over ..
quantity"**



Create A Clear Objective

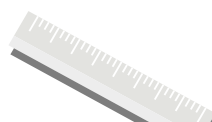
In order to create a high converting web page, the key is to make it clear what the page is about and ensure that the visitor understands what it is you want them to do. Refrain from including large amounts of images and texts. Don't flood your page with outbound links and other media, only include what is necessary. It is important to organise your content in a simple structure to ensure that your audience will find your call to action. It is especially important that your CTA is directly accessible, after all, it's the main feature of the webpage.

Ask Only For What You Need

When it comes to call to actions, it's essential to capture the visitors' contact details and, as a result will include a contact form. It's also important to only include key details in these contact forms otherwise your visitors will be discouraged if you require too much information. Keep it simple and straightforward. Simply asking for their name, email address and phone number is a sure fire way to get a lead that you are able to follow up on.

By creating a killer website, you are providing yourself with more opportunity to create high-quality conversions that will later turn into leads.

Whether it be a clear call to action or a simple navigation bar, every small change can positively impact your leads and conversion rate.





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The Best Social Media Channels For Your Business

You Don't Need To Be Everywhere To Be Seen

by Rochelle Lyons

Social media channels are best used for increasing lead generation with more motivated traffic and enhancing your brand awareness. It's important to research the platforms your competitors are using to see where they are most successful and add yourself to the mix. Each platform is designed to offer different results and it's recommended that you match your social media channels to your company's image, values and theme.

Facebook

Starting with the world's largest social media platform, Facebook offers a suite of marketing features that help you target your ideal audience and share content. We're talking original content, videos, sharing from someone else, the works! Facebook has often proven itself a highly effective marketing tool through its multiple advertising formats, analytical tools, and large user database. Being able to successfully pinpoint your audience through demographic targeting, Facebook can increase your awareness, following and engagement. Because of this, Facebook is an ideal choice for just about any industry or brand seeking to establish an online presence and take their marketing campaigns up a notch.

LinkedIn

While not boasting nearly as many users as Facebook, LinkedIn is ideal for B2B marketing, allowing professionals across a range of industries to connect and share achievements, goals and job openings. While it's not so much a place to sell your products or services, you will be able to connect with professionals in your industry which can open options to influencer posts and interviews that may help your brand become a thought leader in your field. LinkedIn Groups, a free feature of LinkedIn, is a great place to begin networking and providing insights, opinions and advice to others seeking answers to their questions or assistance with their own dilemma or research.

Instagram

Picture based platform Instagram is the best social media resource to show off your portfolio. This doesn't mean that Instagram is limited to photographers. This channel can be used for trades to display the solutions they have provided clients, for ecommerce shops to exhibit their product range, or for tech companies to show off their new toys!



"Content works"

However, Instagram demographics are still a little more targeted than that of Facebook, with the majority of their users aged 18-29 and more women using the platform than men. Nevertheless, it's an opportunity to get creative and try out Instagram for your business — there's a way to make it work for everyone.

Twitter

The rumour that you have to be quick and witty to go viral on Twitter is not true, and maybe it's not even your goal to get #TwitterFamous. Not only is it a platform that you can use to keep followers up to date with your business, but it's also a way for them to reach out to you. This can mean negative feedback (which they expect you to reply to within an hour), but, when handled right, can have many positive impacts upon your brand. And if your followers are staying up to date with you, you can also stay informed about competitors or influencers in your field. Twitter is also a great social media channel to follow competitors and find out what they're doing or offering that you aren't so that you can adjust your campaigns to work more effectively. Twitter is a fast-paced environment that is best used as a mix of self-promotion, consumer engagement and reaching out to followers and industry professionals.

YouTube

The reigning champion of video content, YouTube is a great social media channel to complement your other platforms. It's ideal for demonstrating expertise and allows customers to see your product or service in action before making a purchase.

Behind-the-scenes content and the like can also provide a look into your brand's personality. You can then also embed your YouTube video on your website to increase traction and engagement. In addition to being an audio-visual platform, YouTube also provides some options to simply advertise your brand.

You can broadcast an ad to play before a user's selected video begins or use a banner image at the bottom of another user's own video that can be clicked to close and is less obtrusive.

Yelp

Yelp is great for any business that wants to display customer feedback. With credibility and word of mouth being a great driver for traffic and sales, you can't afford to not establish your brand on Yelp if you're seeking reviews. By creating a business page on Yelp, you're opening yourself to 142+ million users. As all great social channels

do, Yelp has options to add your business hours, upload images and add a link to your website to further increase your chances of conversions. It's very much a community, allowing you to connect and engage with your reviewers. Much like YouTube, Yelp also offers advertising options for its platform and provides you with detailed metrics in your dashboard.

It's important to manage social media channels effectively. It's not good enough to create a profile and leave it there to compile virtual dust. It's equally ineffective to share the same message across each channel without first conducting research into what content works best on which platform. With a focused social media advertising campaign, you can see enhanced results in lead generation and consumer engagement leading to a better return on investment for your business.



Designing Your Brand Image

**There Are Millions Of Small Businesses.
How Do You Stand Out?**

by Tanya Howson

First impressions count, right? The impact we give consumers from the get-go is definitely what matters. Our brand is our first chance to impress. It is the representation and portrayal that sculpts our business.

Brand image is important for so many reasons. We define perception, inspire interactions, build trust and present an image through branding. Our mission as business owners and marketers is to impress. We want to influence, attract and retain consumers through our brand image and ultimately shorten the decision-making process by delivering an impression and imprint confidence in the consumers mindset.

How Do You Design A Successful Brand Image?

Let's start from the very beginning, as this is when it matters most.

Consider the demographic you're targeting as well as the product or service you're offering and how it will be appealing to its target market. The brand image is the deciding factor that determines what will attract the right consumer as quick as possible in as many ways as possible.

You need to build trust, as this directly impacts the consumer buying behaviour. A positive and promising brand image conveys success and encourages consumers to want to experience the same.

This positive brand image can make the decision process easier and increase sales and revenue.

Creativity Is Essential

Your image needs to be unique and attract the right attention. A brands' image is derived from both the words and creative used to describe them. It can be as simple as deciding on the logo, the colours and images or art that best represents what you are presenting, selling or offering. These decisions will capture the attention of consumers' minds by establishing attraction through words and visual appeal.

Inspiration can influence and define the importance in the mindset of potential customers. Positive reviews, consumer experiences, testimonials and happy clients promote and inspire the right attitude and perception. Endorse this activity through communication, advertising and marketing collateral. To inspire creates a perception of both positivity and attraction.

Positioning Your Brand In The Market

Doing this will convey the message that your consumers want to be and should be involved, purchasing, or utilising the service or simply experience your offering. We all want to be part of what is great and recognised. It's a need and a want. No one wants to miss out!

One brand we all can relate to is McDonalds. They've designed an image that portrays we should all be experiencing their offering or we're missing out. Does McDonalds offer the best service, the best food and beverages in the best locations? Well, that is for over the billions of consumers they have to decide on their own. But what matters most is they established a brand image that resonates, and one that everyone wants to experience at some point in their lives (and quite often continuously).





Strengthening Your Image

The strength of your image can also be enhanced through packaging, word of mouth, public relations, publicity, promotional tools and advertising. This is how you make your brand image different and stand out in the crowd. Continue to do what works for your brand. Don't repeat what doesn't as this leads to wasted resources.

Brand image conveys the business' character in a unique manner different from its competitors. To be specific, the rationale behind a consumer is "what will they benefit from by engaging with a business and brand?" This is purely determined by emotional experiences with the business - how did they feel and how did they benefit? Was there a mental and emotional connection between the consumer's behaviour in a positive and impactful way?

Define What Makes You, You

Ultimately, brand image is not created but rather automatically formed through consumers. We can influence decisions through the topics I have mentioned, however, in the long run, feedback from consumers, their expectations and their overall experiences defines a brand's reputation.

All businesses have a brand, and we all strive to develop and maintain a reputation to create a specific sense of meaning and feeling. Theoretical review and reflective methods are only one stage in designing a look and feel for the business. The brand image will always be associated with your reputation and credibility. Which is determined by the consumer audience.

Brand image is definitely the overall impression in consumers' minds that are formed from what we as business owners and marketers put into the marketplace.

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.

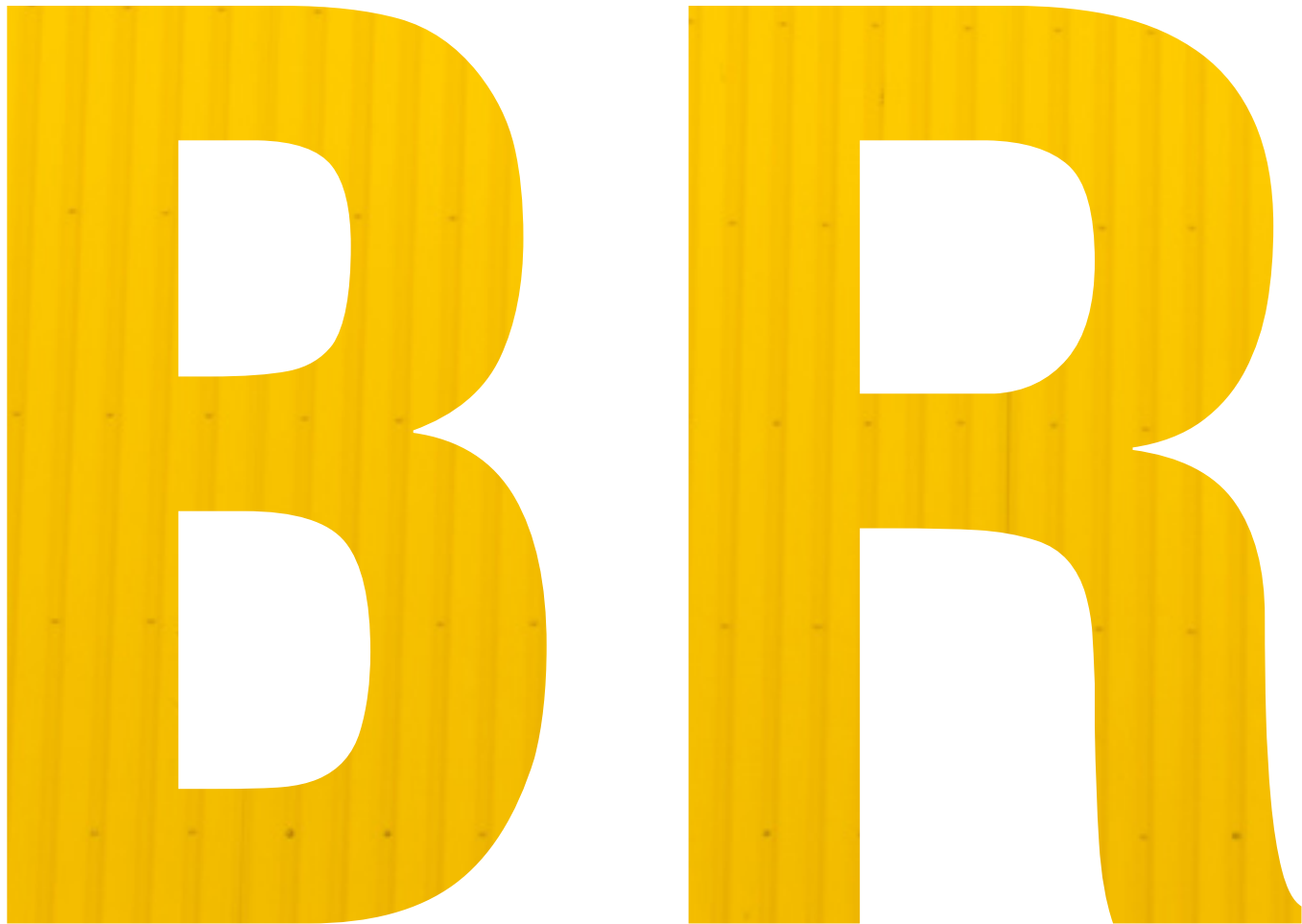
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Do You Even SEO



Lift Your Way To The Top

by Ngawai Mason

I love analogies!

What better way to explain a seemingly complicated concept than to relate it to something you're already familiar with...genius!

Take a concept like SEO (I'm sure you've heard the term floating around), a strategy to optimise a website for Google searches. Most businesses seem to know what it is, but very few understand its value or realise its importance.

I compete in powerlifting and I

think the best way to explain the importance of SEO is to think of Google as a professional sports arena, with websites being the 'athletes'. The 'best' athletes/websites get the honour of top position — all the accolades and the ultimate prize — and Google's ultimate prize is well worth the effort! Front page listings account for 94% of all search traffic with the number one position boasting 30% of that traffic by itself. From here on out, it's only going to grow in popularity the more we start to move towards digital.

What Does The Best Look Like?

In powerlifting, you train for three lifts: squat, bench and deadlift. The best lifters have the heaviest of those three lifts. In SEO, you optimise your website for three key components to rank; architecture, content & backlinks. The most optimised website across all these metrics, becomes the number one searched. Simple!



What Does It Take To Be The Best?

For a dangerous sport like powerlifting, it's not as simple as turning up untrained on the day and lifting 100kgs. You're likely to fail miserably, or risk injuries. SEO is the same, it isn't something you want to do on the fly. Best case, your rankings don't improve, worse case, your website gets penalised. In powerlifting, especially leading up to a competition, you train to a strict program under the guidance of a coach. In the same way, SEO should be approached with a clear strategy, monitored by an SEO expert.

How Long Does It Take To Be The Best?

Like anything, that depends, but it definitely doesn't happen overnight. In powerlifting, age, experience and genetics can give you an advantage. As a strength-based sport, if you invest in a good coach, follow a detailed training program, results that could take years on your own, can improve in months. The same goes for SEO — a good strategy, taking into account time to build trust with Google, can return optimal results quickly and efficiently.

Ultimately, businesses that are willing to invest enough time and resources into doing SEO properly reap the rewards. Success comes to those willing to put in the work in life and sport as well as in business. There is no prize for last place.

"Have a clear "
strategy

Social Media Optimisation: Get Your Business Seen Socially.

How To Be Found By Those Who Didn't Know They Needed You

by Kyle Connolly

So, you're ready to solidify your online presence. Your social media profiles are complete, you've created an AdWords account and even created an SEO strategy, what's next?

How Do You Get Noticed?

The internet is like a beehive, thriving with different interactive communities more connected than ever before. Social media optimisation is not just about helping you grow your company's online reputation on Facebook or LinkedIn. It's leveraging these online hives to boost your followers, your engagement, your website traffic and ultimately your conversions.

What Is Social Media Optimisation?

The easiest way to think about it is this: social media optimisation allows you to create and enhance your social media plan so that you're able to get measurable results. Having a solid media strategy is vital if you wish to build a relationship with your audience online.

It benefits your business in more than one way, by increasing your brand visibility you're ultimately generating more qualified leads.

By building a strong presence you establish yourself as an authority, it gives your brand much-needed visibility while at the same time educating the public on the nature of what it is you do. It increases your reach - as social media is easy to navigate, and it drives more



focused time and money on social media promotion, reach became less and less important. Now, the most important metric that we (and you) should measure is engagement.

Properly communicating should be top priority no matter your business size or budget. A study conducted by Buffer in the USA found that Tweets with images get 18% more clicks and 150% more Retweets. Why? They're engaging of course!

Now, how do we make our content more engaging? Let's break it down:

Step 1: Focus On Your Target

Getting more shares means knowing your audience, and what it is they want. Do this by getting in their shoes and understanding the content they consume. Once you're confident you've got what they want, you need to create the content to match.

Step 2: Leverage Video

If you take the time to study the social sphere, you'll find most users are sharing multimedia content, mostly on their mobile devices.

This is why video should be in your content strategy. A video that's to the point and engaging in every sense of the word.

Step 3: Entertain. Educate

Sales and social media do not fit together traditionally, which is why you need to focus on making your audience laugh, or your audience think instead of directly selling them your product or service.

Your content is shared more widely when it manages to inform and entertain. Your aim shouldn't be bashing them over the head with a

sales pitch. For now, work on giving them an experience rather than a sales catalogue.

Creating shareable content should be top of your list if you want better audience engagement. Period.

Be More Social On Social Media

Being social is the next step on the ladder of successful social media optimisation. While there must be an onus on the marketing side of things, it must not come at the expense of being active on social media.

Success on the social media landscape means being a part of it. Put another way, it means participating!

Once your social profiles are created and producing content, don't stop there! Take the time to view other profiles, commenting and liking their content. Sharing it on your own page. Networking means connecting with others and starting mutually beneficial relationships!

Add Social Media Share Buttons

The biggest change social media has brought has been the way we share information. Today, anything can be shared with others by a simple click. This is why you're missing out if your content is more than a button click to share.

When a visitor to your page, blog or website finds something they like, they should be able to quickly and easily share it with their friends and followers. By making it simple to pass your content on, the chance of relevant traffic goes up!

Here are the three best things about adding share buttons:

1: *Trusted Recommendations*

Social media has made it easy for people who share options to be

housed under one roof, helping them connect. People usually follow or befriend those based on knowledge and trust, so when a friend or colleague shares content they automatically trust their endorsement. They feel more positive about the content source and will check it out.

2. *Boosted Post Exposure*

The aim of published content is consumption, right? The moment your content is shared by a reader, it's seen by a new set of eyes. You get a new audience for your posts, a new audience means new followers which ultimately can mean more customers.

That being said, copying a URL, logging on to a social media account and then pasting can feel cumbersome to some. Hence social media share buttons make it easy to spread.

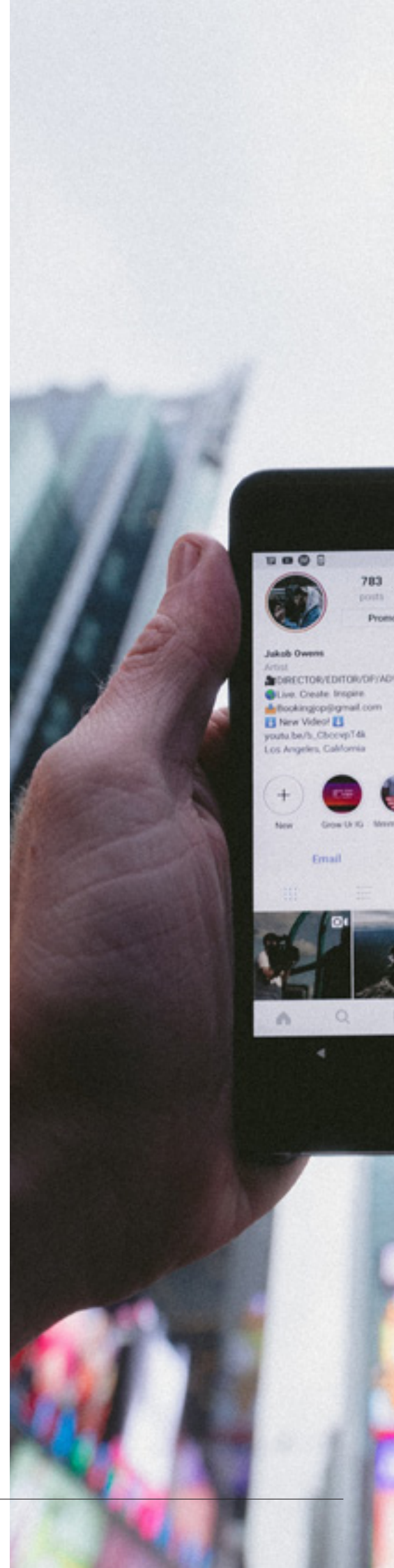
3. *Social Proof*

Social proof is a relatively new concept in marketing. Humans are hard-wired to show interest in things approved by others (that's why 'reaction' videos have blown up so much recently). Thus, having a large group of people show interest in content by sharing it with others on social media, the likelihood of others doing the same increases.

Social share buttons usually show the number of people who've shared said content. While there isn't much 'social proof' in a few shares, the results are great when shared by a large number of people (relative to your audience). When your site visitors see the post they're reading has been spread far and wide, it validates the content they're reading.

Optimise Your Profiles

Perhaps the easiest, and one of the most important steps you can take is optimising your social media profiles by doing the following:



Branded Cover Photos

Your cover photo needs your logo and contact details on it, simple. It not only accentuates your branding but looks more professional. Your aim should be on making a good first impression to any new visitors.

Link To Other Profiles

If they're following you on Twitter then they should be following you on Instagram as well.

Adding links to your other social platforms within each other makes it easy to connect in multiple ways. Both Facebook and Pinterest allow you to feature your other profiles prominently, and with others just ensure links to find you in other places are easily located.

Link To Your Main Site

Social media profiles can and will have a direct impact on site traffic. So ensure you link your main website to every platform. This not only positions your brand better but also lets followers know your profiles are official.

Start by listing your website in the 'about us' section on each social profile, and get it verified to make it more authentic

Fill Out Every Field

Empty or incomplete profiles are a big no-no. It's important you fill out every section with accurate information, and add a relevant and quality description that gives a clear indication of who you are, what you do, and where you do it.

Use Search Keywords

Choosing and using the right keywords in your website content is a well-known SEO practice, but don't stop there. Identify your primary SEO keywords and fit them in naturally within your social profiles as well.

Add them to headlines, to links

and even descriptions. Keep it consistent!

Optimise Your Social Media Content

As a business, seeking new prospects is one of your top priorities. Besides solidifying existing relationships, your content's aim should be connecting with those unfamiliar with you.

In saying this, social media content is no different to website content. Meaning not only can it get shared via websites and blogs, but can also rank high for relevant keywords in search engines. Here are two ways to rank higher:

Use: Keyword Driven Content

In order to boost search engine visibility, make sure your content is optimised for the right keywords. In other words, your social media content should be curated from the ground up to rank well in the SERPs.

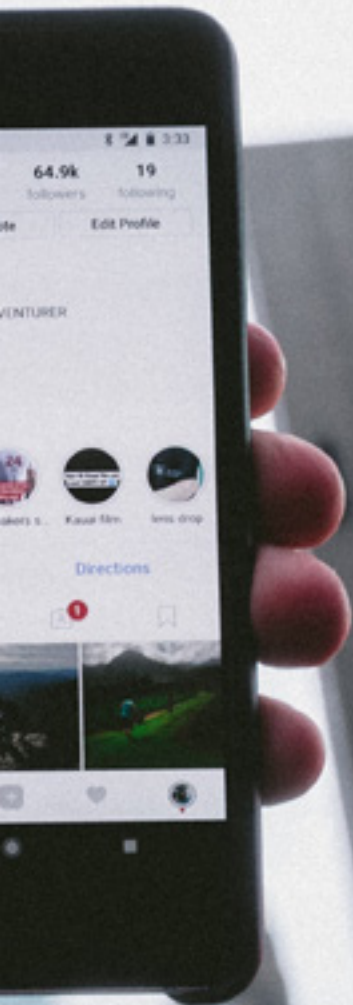
Publish: Social Posts That Are Backlink Worth

The days of social media content limited to one platform are long gone. Now you'll find embedded social posts everywhere.

Since you're putting in the effort to create great content, try to make it worthy of backlinks. Make the content relevant so professionals and big names in your niche link back to it. By gaining backlinks to your social profiles naturally, you're boosting your chances of being ranked for valuable keywords!

#Hashtag Your Way To The Top

No social media strategy is complete without the correct implementation of hashtags. They go beyond just labelling your content, they make it easily found! They're a great first step when looking for more exposure, generating audience engagement and getting new eyes on your



business. The right hashtags give better results!

Avoid Stuffing

The general rule of thumb with hashtags is less is more. A cheap trick was always attaching your brand to a trending hashtag, but this is a fool's errand as this will open you up to spammers.

Focus on using hashtags that help you connect with a niche audience that's genuinely interested in your brand and its offering.

Be Unique

Research which hashtags are followed by a dedicated audience, and if it fits attach it to your posts. Adding generic ones will make it harder to find, and be easily lost in the mess that is overused hashtags (see #blessed, #fail and #sorrynotsorry)

Find Out What's Trending

Trends come and go, but they have a strong influence on hashtags. If a particular trending hashtag can be related to your business, then leverage it by adding it to your content. Your post will be seen by a much larger audience, and while you may not catch all the fish, casting a net can lead to some good catches.

Optimise Social Media Ads

Organically growing your audience is great, but it does take time. So, if you're time poor, but not cash poor, then social media ads will probably lead to the best ROI.

When done properly, paid social media ads can prove

to be a cost-effective way to reach out to your target audience.

Test Multiple Ads

Researching what works best is a matter of testing multiple versions. Most successful social media ads are usually the third or fourth attempt. From establishing different copies to testing different imagery, every step you take to test various elements increases your chances of making a profit.

Create Custom Landing Pages

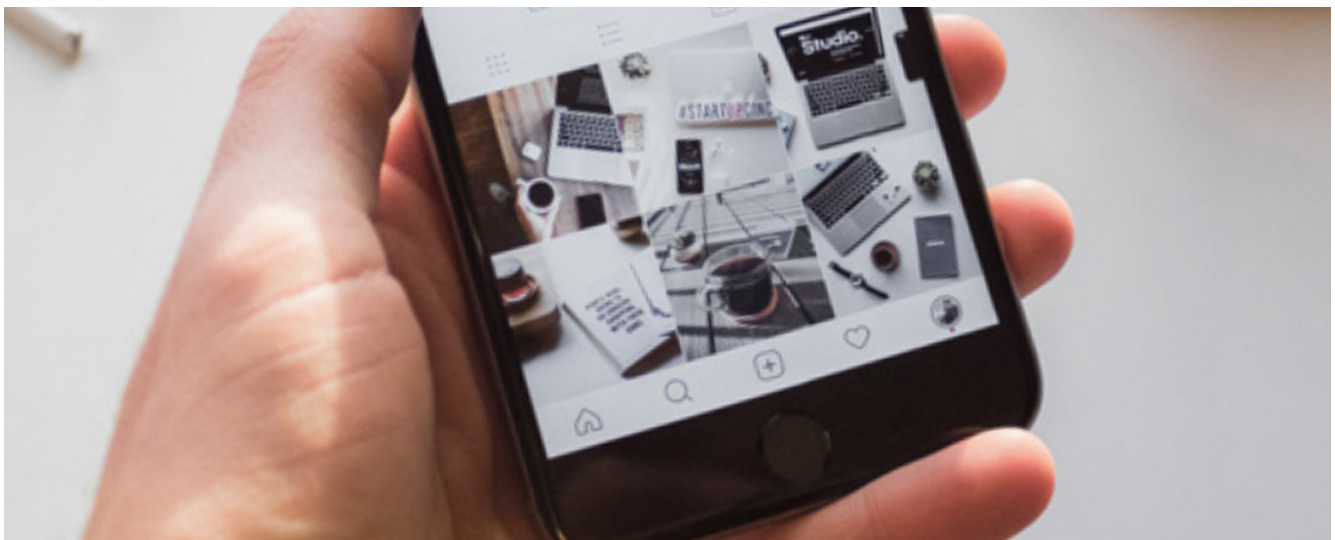
Ask yourself, if you're running social media ads then what's the purpose? If you're like most people, it's because you want conversions.

But in order to convert more people and make your paid ads a success, you need to look beyond the ad, and focus strongly on where clicking the ad takes the user.

With a custom-made landing page, the likelihood of conversions almost triples. The transition from ad to page should be as easy as 1,2,3, the copy on the landing page being an extension of the ad itself.

So there you have it. Social media optimisation adds the fuel you'll need for a successful social media marketing campaign. It's taking what exists and ensuring it gets seen. More eyes equals more clicks, equals more conversions. We've listed how to be seen both organically, and paid, and there's no reason you can't combine both.

So what are you waiting for? I'm scrolling through my Facebook now, and I'm looking forward to seeing you there soon!



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Receive customised and caring support from your Account Management via the app!
- ✓ **QUICK RESPONSES**
Get in touch with your Account Manager or request a callback in just one click!
- ✓ **USER FRIENDLY**
View all your normal AdWords data—such as daily, weekly and monthly insights, impressions and clicks—in an easy to read format.



Guide To Establishing A Business Niche.

How Do You Make Room In A Crowd?

by Rebecca Patrick

When a business is first starting out, it's a common error to aim to be the best at everything. From the best clothing store, writing the best recipes to owning the world's greatest interior design business. The truth is, it's almost impossible.

With over 2.66 million small businesses Australia wide, it's incredibly difficult to become number one across the market. It simply isn't realistic. The key to small business success is finding and establishing a niche for your brand. From there, you will be able to expand through your niche and find your perfect consumer. Let's dive in a little deeper, shall we?

Getting Started

Self-startups and self-made businesses are all encouraged to 'think big' in order to achieve success. As important as it is, it also opens the gates to potentially thousands of competitors also 'thinking big' while reaching for the same market, services and consumers. Although becoming just as successful as your competition is possible, your chances dramatically decrease when you all decide to pursue the same thing.

Specifying a niche for your business will provide you with the opportunity to stand out in the market with limited resources. By having a specific product or service that you provide to consumers, it makes it easier to describe what it is you do and therefore your marketing will prove to be more effective. Targeting a specific business niche will also place your website and brand in front of users who are ready to buy instead of casually browsing online.

Making A Choice

The niche you determine for your brand can be based on a number of concepts that aim to narrow down the interests of your potential consumers. When defining your niche, take into consideration the area you sell to and





operate in, the type of audience you are catering to, your price point and the method of sale (being subscription, via membership etc).

Let's consider a small business that wants to sell cupcakes online. In a saturated market, they could target their niche by selling their products only to the areas where they are able to ship fresh cupcakes to, aiming to be the most affordable cupcake service online or in the area, targeting consumers who are looking for a thoughtful gift or by offering subscriptions so as to ensure that workplaces and households are never without a batch of freshly baked red velvets.

By narrowing down your niche, a business is more likely to become successful as a smaller target is easier to navigate.

Backing It Up

If you are yet to decide on what niche you wish to target, why not do some brainstorming first? Whether it's writing down your ideas on paper or conversing with those around you, anything that will help you to collect ideas is beneficial. You will find it easier to run a business that is based upon an idea you are passionate about, so ensure that your brainstorm revolves around that.

Once that's done, we recommend that you take your research online. List the ideas that you've come up with and start looking at businesses that already exist in your target area, while also taking into consideration their niche's as well. By doing so, you will be able to find your potential competitors or discover any areas in the market that may be more targeted than you had initially expected. By conducting research, you are able to narrow down your choices and then make a final decision about the niche for your business. This niche doesn't have to be solely based on the products or services that you offer, it can also refer to price, location and a combination of things.

The reality is, many small businesses make the common mistake of thinking 'too big'. Trying to appeal to every demographic, selling all possible products in the industry and hitting every price point are not attainable goals that will bring you great success. By narrowing the focus for your small business and targeting a niche audience, you will be able to make smarter decisions and scale your business more quickly, leading to a larger profit in the long run.



Conversion

Bounce Rate - The Silent Killer

**Under Your Nose You Could Be Losing Business!
Is It Your Bounce Rate?**

by **Marco Cacciola**

It's almost standard practice that a businesses' website will be using an Analytics provider to collect and measure website data. Typically, this will be in the form of Google Analytics, which for those who are familiar with it, will know that it provides an incredible amount of information.

Within all this data, the things you will commonly see are reports on the Google Analytics home view. This includes knowledge about your website like the number of users, number of sessions, session duration and bounce rate across a nominated period. With so much data on hand many people wonder which of these figures they should focus on and what action to take.

Amongst this wealth of information there is one slice of data that can be a major source of confusion and this is the website bounce rate. Whether the source be from your SEO, AdWords or Facebook, this can help you assess your website's traffic.

Here, we'll take a closer look at bounce rates to understand what they are, how to determine what it means for you and how to reduce it if necessary.

What Do We Mean When We Discuss A 'Bounce' Or 'Bounce Rate'?

A bounce is when a user only views a single page in their session. The bounce rate is the number of bounced sessions divided by the total number of sessions. Get it?

How Does Google Analytics Determine This?

When loading a webpage that contains a Google Analytics tag, the loading of the page should trigger an event to say "something happened", which, in this case, means someone has viewed this page.

This data would then be immediately sent to Google Analytics. Each subsequent change of a page within a website is a separate event that allows Google to construct the data it provides us.

Therefore, if only one page is visited and no other events occur this means analytics will treat this as a bounce.

How Do I Assess A High Bounce Rate?

As digital marketers, we're often asked if it's bad to have users arrive on one page of a website and not visit any others. The answer is not as clear-cut as we might like, and also depends on the situation. In some cases, a high bounce rate may be a good thing, in other cases it should be treated as a catalyst to closely consider. Here are a few key things to consider:

Is Google Analytics Working Properly?

If this is an option you've considered then you wouldn't be wrong! However, if you notice a very sharp rise in your bounce rate

first. If Analytics only fires on your home page for instance but not on other pages, only the initial home page visit will track, meaning this will be counted as a bounce.

How can I check?

Open your Google Analytics account in your browser and go to 'Real-Time' in the left-hand bar, and then to the 'Content' section and in a new window visit your website homepage. After a few seconds your Analytics account should show a new session began on the home page. Navigate to other key pages of your website and ensure your Google Analytics account reflects this change as you move through. If you are on a page of your site and your Analytics account doesn't show the change after a few seconds try refreshing the page. If nothing occurs then investigate this further by contacting Google or your account manager.

Think about what users are doing on a page.

In certain cases, users may only need to visit one page on your website such as your contact page or perhaps you have a one page website. In the case of a single page website if there are no other pages to visit on the site this may mean no further events and result in a high bounce rate.

What can you do about this?

With single page visits, people may just be looking for a phone number. The solution here is to look at setting up strategic goals on these pages using Google Tag Manager.

"Perform better on" *mobile*

This lets you track when someone clicks a phone number or email creating an event to be sent to your Analytics account. As a result the session won't be considered a bounce because another action occurred.

Additionally, you will have valuable data in your Analytics account showing how many people have clicked to email or call you from your website.

Check how your website performs on different devices.

In some cases your website experience on a certain device can provide users with a frustrating experience. The biggest focus being on mobile (given we know more people are using mobile to search). Such is its importance, Google is introducing mobile first indexing for SEO to ensure users are presented with websites that perform better on mobile.

Assuming half your traffic is from mobile and the other half is from desktop, a mobile bounce rate of 80% (due to poor mobile experience) means you are potentially losing 40% of your traffic straight away!

How can I check this?

Firstly, check what your website looks like on your phone. Next, check the data and see the story

it tells. In your Analytics account go to the "Audience" section then navigate to "Mobile" then "Overview". This will provide you with a summary of users broken down by desktop, mobile and tablet. This will also show you the bounce rate by device category which may help find a potential opportunity for improvement.

If this is the case speak to your web developer to see what the best course of action is, or speak to our Digital Strategy team for a website quote.

Think about what users are looking for.

This is often overlooked, but understanding if there is a disparity between what a user is looking for and what your website provides may be the cause of a higher bounce rate. In an extreme example, if I am searching for a set of golf clubs but arrive on a page about a helicopter charter the chances are I'm in the wrong place and will keep searching.

Alternatively, if you have a page about the cost of your product but the pricing is hidden out of sight, this isn't providing the user with what they are after. Another consideration could be the design of the site, if your website doesn't look trustworthy users may be less inclined to stay.



How can I fix that?

Whether you're driving ads to a page or users naturally arrive, think about what they're after and how your page answers that query. Make the answer on your page clear - for example, making your fees easily visible on your pricing page.

If you're looking for insights as to why a page isn't performing well, look at similar websites and how they approach the same topics to see where you might improve. Adjusting the pages to better serve your users query will help them find the answer they are after and encourage them to stay rather than to look elsewhere for the answer.

How fast is your site?

Another consideration is the speed it takes for your page to fully load. The longer the load time the more probability a user will bounce. With a vast amount of

information available users want information as fast as possible and for many waiting is not an option.

What should you do?

There are many options that may be available depending on your platform which you should discuss with your web developer. These include, but are not limited to, leveraging browser caching, reducing image sizes and discussing speed with your website host.

With many considerations that can be made when it comes to bounce rate, these tips are a great place to start. The main takeaway is to understand the cause of your bounce rate so you can rest easy knowing why this may be the case, or take action to improve the experience for your users and reap the benefits of doing so.

Conversion Rate – Five W's Guide

How Do You Determine What Works And What Doesn't?

by Rochelle Lyons

Once you start investing in marketing campaigns, you'll realise how many different terms and metrics there are to measure the performance of your ads. Differing from 'click-through rate' and 'cost-per-click' is 'conversion rate' — a calculator that tells you how good your ad is at getting a potential consumer to do what you want them to. The higher the percentage, the better you are at marketing your products or services. However, these are just the basics of what a conversion rate really is and still leaves a lot unanswered. Let's delve in and explore the five W's of achieving a commendable conversion rate.

Who Uses It?

Conversion rates, in addition to other statistics, are something marketers usually invest themselves in when running their marketing campaigns. However, conversion rates and their tracking are not something that is exclusively restricted to use by marketers. It's also measured by small to medium business entrepreneurs who tend to handle their own marketing and advertising.

What Is A Good Conversion Rate?

Calculating an average conversion rate is an almost impossible figure to estimate. It depends on a number of factors including the industry, the product or service you're promoting, as well as the specific actions you're trying to track. The focus should not be on achieving a high conversion rate, but rather, gaining a valuable return on investment. Additionally, a conversion is not always a 'good conversion' if it doesn't result in a sale!

When Is It Applicable?

Whenever you run an advertising campaign, you can invest in conversion tracking to calculate your average conversion rate and monitor how your ads are performing. This will give you a chance to find out which ad works best to work on improving future campaigns with calls-to-action and offers that you know consumers will invest in.



Where Can I Keep Track Of It?

Keeping track of your conversions is the best way to measure the success of your marketing campaign, and luckily, there's an almost endless amount of software to help you do so. At SponsoredLinX, we're big fans of Google AdWords and Salesforce and recommend SalesforceIQ or Salesforce Pardot. In addition, HubSpot CRM, Insightly and WordStream Advisor are highly rated. These programs are designed to help you determine which campaign is more successful and provide the most value to your business.

Why Not?

What have you got to lose by investing in conversion rate tracking? There are a plethora of reasons as to why you should install tracking and essentially no excuse not to do it. It can help you determine which keywords and ads function best, shed light on where you may need to improve your user experience, assist you in making profitable marketing decisions, provide a data history on previous campaigns, assign a dollar value to what each click costs and create more opportunities for you to work on optimising your campaigns.

How Do I Calculate It?

Calculating your conversion rate is a simple process.

We've provided an example below:

$$\text{Conversion Rate} = \text{Conversions} / \text{Visitors} * 100$$

In this example, we'll say that out of 11,272 visitors, 1,946 of them converted and did what you wanted them to do. The equation would then be 1,946 divided by 11,272 which would equal a conversion rate of 17.26%.

$$1,946 / 11,272 * 100 = 17.26\%$$

And voila! That's your conversion rate and one of the most important marketing metrics you can track and quantify. While it's great to see your click-through rate, those clicks aren't going to be worth anything unless they take the action you want them to such as filling in a form, signing up for a newsletter or making a purchase. You can buy all the clicks you want, but if they aren't converting, your money is wasted. Installing a conversion rate code can help you justify your spending and adjust to suit the needs of your business.

Don't Cramp Your Site- AMP It

Smartphones Are Made To Distract. Here's How To Keep Your Page Relevant

by Nick Davis

WARNING: If you are an avid blogger and you haven't looked into Accelerated Mobile Pages, the following may be a real game changer for you.

In 2016, a study by Microsoft concluded that between the years 2000 to 2016, the average person's attention span had dropped from 12 seconds to 8. Attention span is an important thing for all forms of digital marketing – SEO, social media and paid advertising are dependent on an ROI for money spent. With SEO in particular, if you fail to grab users attention and they bounce back to the search results page, Google notices and looks more favourably on whoever they click next.

Thankfully, the AMP project is here to the rescue! Chances are you have been engaging in AMP search results without realising. You can usually spot them on a mobile search (usually by news sites) with a little lightning bolt next to them.

What Does An Accelerated Mobile Page Do?

If I had to sum it up it would be that it takes a simple and easy approach to mobile web design. Images that have reduced resolution and excessive HTML like animated sliders or contact forms are often given the flick. The most important feature of an AMP page is near instant load times and prioritising loading in the order of what the user needs to see.

With the decline in attention span, combined with potential load times, it is possible to lose half your traffic before they even see your site. Think about a user on a train who keeps losing their signal. They aren't going to wait around 20 seconds for your page to load when they can instead be playing a game on their phone

or retreating to music. People taking peeks at Facebook at work or the line at McDonald's don't have the time nor the patience to wait for things to load.

AMP pages are the internet's solution to impatience.

How Do AMP Pages Affect SEO?

When you create an AMP correctly, Google will be given a citation to the AMP version of your page and host a copy of the AMP on its own server. This means when mobile organic users come to load the page they load the superfast version Google is hosting, but you still get credit for it.

This also means people can get to it from Google even if your site is down. Don't worry about duplicate content either, the AMP version provides a reverse citation to Google that passes any authority back to the original page.

Additionally, having an AMP can even help you rank better on a desktop! Google recently announced mobile first indexing, which means a solid mobile experience is key to maintaining desktop rankings.

How Do AMP Pages Affect Social Media?

Do you have an ongoing blog? Are you struggling to maintain a solid share of users? If you haven't looked into AMP you are probably doing yourself and all your hard work a disservice.

When you share a page on social media, the platform will send a bot to your site to generate the preview image and text. This bot will also keep an eye out for AMP pages and automatically send mobile users to that version.

What Type Of Page Should Get AMP?

Currently speaking, we would prioritise single purpose pages such as blogs and news articles (news websites are currently the best implementers of AMP). It can be a little tricky converting the rest of a website to AMP but more plugins are becoming available almost daily, especially on WordPress. Some even enable e-commerce functionality. I would then recommend breaking down your site analytics and spot where mobile traffic seriously underperforms. This could be a good start.

If you are running CMS on a company owned platform such as Wix, Squarespace, BigCommerce or Nero, I would highly advise you reach out to them about building AMP functionality in future updates. They're on it, but it's worth your time letting them know you're waiting for it as well.

It's worth noting AMP is a relatively new venture and it requires constant monitoring to ensure it stays up to date with recommended guidelines. Not all platforms will allow them either. If you were to look into getting AMP integration to your site I would advise you request to view other examples of AMP pages built by the developer. Google Search Console also has a useful AMP verification tool that will flag errors.

People are impatient, we all are. We're the result of the high-speed world we live in. Seconds really do matter, and if you're serious about getting your business seen on mobiles then speak to your web developer today about an Accelerated Mobile Page.

Landing Page Optimisation

You Only Get One Chance To Make A First Impression

by Marketing Team

Landing pages ... AKA the gift that keeps on giving!

If you were to ask any marketer, creative freelancer or small business owner what they value most from their online presence, we're confident each will respond by saying landing pages.

Why? When visitors are driven to a landing page with the right offer, these visitors turn into leads or customers. Landing pages are created to drive various goals:

- Access gated content (eBooks, white papers etc.)
- Redeem a limited-time offer or discount
- Register for an event, or
- Make an online purchase

We're often asked how this differs from a website, and also what makes a landing page so successful.

Well, look no further. In this short article we've summarised what your visitors are looking for, and provided tips on what will make them convert after seeing your ad, opening your email, clicking on a hyperlink, or swiping up on an Instagram or Snapchat story.

Branding

It's important that anyone clicking through to a landing page you've developed can immediately recognise your brand. If a visitor gets a mild hint that the landing page strays from the brand they're just discovering, know, love or trust — it's game over.

They'll believe there's a problem with the page and exit within 3 seconds of it loading.

Don't make this simple mistake.

Top Navigation

Unlike a dedicated website, you don't want to feature a navigation bar on your landing page that enables visitors to click elsewhere and consume other information you've previously published. Always keep in mind that your goal is to make a visitor perform one single action i.e. fill in a form, subscribe to your newsletter or purchase your product/s.

Extra navigation will only serve as a distraction, so it's best to keep it simple with an image and page title in the top banner.



For some industries you could also include a click-to-call contact number.

Messaging

In almost all instances, visitors to your landing page have clicked through or swiped up after seeing an engaging ad or reading one of your messages.

For this reason, it's important you remind them through repetition and a quick deep dive of why they should share their details with you, or fulfill a transaction. If you're not already, take a minute to ponder "what is my value proposition?"

Here, we also recommend you integrate some graphics, images or vital stats e.g. 'X' people are going to this event; or only 'Y' hours remain until this offer expires.

Another option is to feature a testimonial of your company, product or services. You'd be surprised how effective this is in building confidence with the web visitor that they're about to do the right thing.

Forms

Here, you want to make sure the form is

- easy to see or navigate to,
- isn't overly complicated to input the required details, and
- if the visitor is purchasing a product or service you specify how

many form pages are part of the entire process.

Always keep in mind: time is a form of currency, and nobody wants theirs to be wasted.

The more convenient it is to submit ones details, the higher chance you have of capturing that new lead or customer.

Pro Tip #1

If your landing page requires a lot of scrolling on mobile devices, integrate a CTA (call to action) button that when clicked on takes your visitor to the bottom of the page where your form is located.

Pro Tip #2

Make it easy for your customer to complete the form or transaction. If the visitor has come from a social media channel or an email you circulated to your database ... do the heavy lifting for them by pre-populating the form with the details you have and are asking for.

By implementing this last tip, you'll be a titan of your industry like Amazon who pioneered 1-click ordering.

Having your landing page optimised to its full potential removes any chance of people clicking away dissatisfied.

First impressions count, so make yours great!

Creating High Converting Content For Your Business

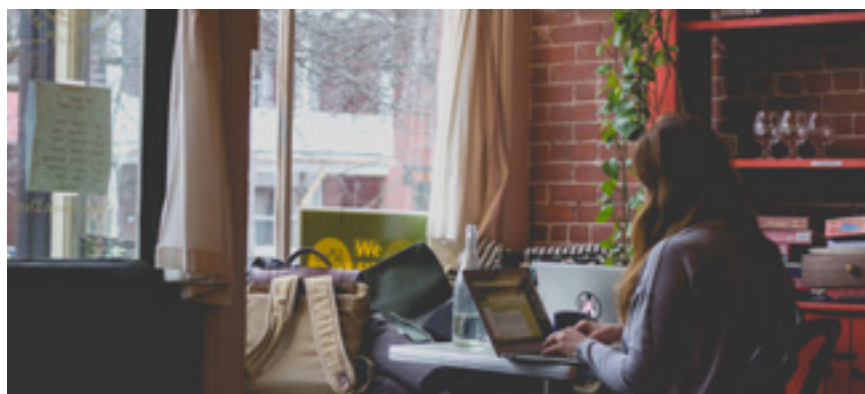
No Point Doing It If You're Not Making Any Money From It!

by Rochelle Lyons

As a content marketer, it is your duty to continually drive conversions. Maybe you think you're already relatively sufficient at your job, but is sufficient really enough for you? Obviously, the most important part of content marketing is the content itself, right? Well, let's look into how we can boost your business by creating high converting content.

Intriguing Headline

Your headline is generally the first thing readers will notice if they're doing an organic search or are already on your landing page or blog. You want your headline to stand out because this will be what determines whether or not your reader will continue or bounce. Hubspot and Outbrain recently did some research into what elements create a successful headline and found that those with eight words and end with a question mark result in higher click-through rates. If you want to start creating high converting content, try using words or phrases like 'new' and 'instantly'. Additionally, you can try negative words that focus on what the customer could lose if they don't read on and find out more. You can use sites like CoSchedule and Advanced Marketing Institute to analyse the strength of your headline.



Captivating Introduction

So you've caught your readers attention with the headline and now they're interested in learning more. Your introduction should intrigue your readers to continue on. Headline = Bait, Introduction = Hook. Introductions need to benefit the readers and should lead into the rest of your article. Your intro needs to be a continuation of the intriguing headline and offer readers a snippet of the value you are about to bestow upon them. As a general rule of thumb, introductions are usually broad but provide relevant background and information as to what's to come. Sometimes, it's easier to write the introduction toward the end, then surmise and condense what you've written, without giving away any spoilers!

Delightful Visuals

Visual elements make an unbelievable difference to the performance and statistics of your content. It is appealing and engages readers while adding more substance. It's great for breaking up your text into bite-sized chunks, making it more aesthetically pleasing and easier to read. If you want to create high-

converting content, we recommend using original graphics, charts and graphs, infographics, screenshots, or videos.

Compelling Call To Action

Your call to action should persuade your readers to continue engaging with your content and business. It could be urging people to subscribe to your weekly newsletter, download your latest eBook, or even call for a

"Persuade your readers"

free quote. Make sure your call to action is

clear, brief and to the point. Create exclusivity and urgency by using words such as 'now', 'today', and 'customer'. Focus on what the reader will benefit from your call to action and emphasise words such as 'free' and 'save'. Whatever it is, your call to action needs to be compelling enough to convince people to convert.

These are just a few effective ways to create high-converting content. Each of these steps goes hand-in-hand and must all be riveting enough to capture and maintain interest in your content. Of course, there is more to content marketing than the content alone, and there are always more steps to take than the ones listed today. However, implementing these four ideas is sure to drive your conversion rate higher.



Retention

Investing In Customer Retention: A 2018 Must

Engagement And Praise Are Key!

by **Kyle Connolly**

Due to the solemn fact that 90% of all startups fail within their first two years of operation, many are starting to consider whether the old rule of thumb of 10% budget spend on marketing is sufficient. Maybe, some of these startups would benefit from a more padded marketing approach of 15 or 20%.

When a prospect becomes a customer, that's great, but it doesn't signal the beginning of a fruitful relationship. Over time, the 'honeymoon phase' wears off, and even the most promising new customer can lose interest. In such cases, putting money towards a customer loyalty program may help solve the problem. As strong as a 'word of mouth' reputation can be, it can always use a little help now and then.

So, with almost half of the year gone, how do we ensure customer retention is a key marketing strategy?

Investment Is Key

A strong customer retention strategy (or CRS) is a tactic used to keep existing clients engaged. Those same techniques can be utilised to bring back one-off customers who've turned to a competitor.

While giving away things for free may seem like cutting your nose off to spite your face, the feeling of being rewarded creates a feeling of connection with a brand, adding

another level of commitment and the rush of racking up loyalty points for a future reward. Like a Woolworths reward card, or Coffee Club card, and pretty much every cafe in the world.

If you're like me, your inbox is currently jam-packed with marketing emails waiting to be read and/or deleted. Some would say having a good open rate isn't the goal for many of these businesses, rather, the goal is to provide a gentle reminder that the company exists in the hope they'll come back one day.

coffee, and more about personal recognition from the company for the loyalty of a long-term client. Think about creating a 'VIP Club', where customers who've been on board for years are given discounts, enhanced service, and free add-ons.

Print out a list of your customers and sort them by date. The top 10 (or top 100 depending on your scale) deserve something for sticking with you. It's these relationships that need nurturing.

In today's disposable society, where

"Reward your customers"

Make 'Em Come Back For More

Innovative customer retention techniques have never been needed more than they are now. For example, online gambling is an incredibly saturated field, with lots of companies offering a similar experience and relying on a multitude of techniques to keep the punters coming back.

The UK based Wink Bingo make use of a nifty 'spin the wheel' game to drive repeat deposits. For every \$10 spent on their site, you get to spin the wheel, which gifts you anything from extra funds to play with and bonus spins. This opportunity to win something is exactly what their target marketers want, delivering a reward for something they'd be doing anyway, at little cost to the business.

You need to find a relatable way to keep your clients interested. The standard 'loyalty card' is not a one size fits all solution.

Long-Term Recognition

A great and cost-effective strategy is long-term recognition. This is less about chasing that tenth free

the new iPhone is launched as soon as you buy the old one, and businesses are fine with pushing back on service agreements, it's still vital to remember the customer is always right.

Take a look at Uber, who's drivers rate their customers and will turn them down if their star rating is not up to standard. They're slowly haemorrhaging people to taxi services that will pick up any paying customers and won't force a surcharge depending on the time. The company-customer relationship has gone full circle, and it's not stamped cards or apps that track loyalty that is winning. Rather, it's the businesses that make a point of rewarding long-term customers with something special every now and then.

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We grow small to medium business online, and part of that growth strategy involves passing our decade of knowledge on to you. To see how we can help your business, get in touch on 1300 859 600 today, and let's work out a tailor-made strategy for growth!

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The Importance Of Culture - No Matter Your Size

We're Cool, Clever, Creative. Are You?

by Sumeet Bhindi

Culture in the corporate ranks has always been important, yet in my years in Human Resources, I've only really seen it become a popular point of discussion in the last decade or so. To some, it's become just a buzzword and lost its actual meaning due to the sheer amount of discussions surrounding it. However, in my opinion, I'd argue culture (and more specifically corporate culture) was never really overblown and has become even more important as the modern workplace continues to evolve.

The Benefits Of A Clear Cut Culture

Straight off the bat, there are clear benefits to having a unified company

culture that underlies your day to day operations:

Image

Your customers will view you as fun-loving and generous if they can see from the outside you treat your employees well. Depending on your target market, this could prove a boost in sales and customer retention.

Identity

Culture adds to the identity and values of your business. At SponsoredLinX, our culture is one that prioritises the setting and meeting of goals, and therefore our

individual employees are more likely to do this on their own. It's a good way to set and maintain the direction your employees take, and without it, it's hard to keep your values coherent.

Retention

A defined and strong culture attracts better talent, and more importantly, helps maintain that talent. When there's a sense of belonging, they're more likely to stay for the long run. Lower turnover means more time together, means fewer hires to deal with and better chemistry throughout the ranks.



These are ideas you're more than likely familiar with. Culture overall is growing in importance, which means all the above I've just listed will increase in line with that expansion. So, why is this emphasis on culture increasing?

Competition And Trends

One of the largest motivating factors is the fact that corporate culture is becoming a more popular consideration. More and more businesses are shifting their attention to creating more thorough brand cultures and preserving them through ongoing development. The reason behind this? Culture is being discussed more frequently. You may view this as a bandwagon scenario, that I'm encouraging you to focus on culture more simply because your competitors are. Remember this though, these are the people you're competing with both in terms of hiring new people and in terms of appealing to consumers.

If you don't at least keep pace with your culture, and at the same time find a way to differentiate yourself, then you'll be left behind!

The Millennial Factor

We just hired someone born in 1999, and there's one interviewing today born in 2000! Millennials are the generation driving the workplace changes in the near future. If you fail to attract this kind of talent then your growth will slow and you may eventually hit a talent shortage!

People twenty-five and under view the workplace a little differently than I do, and see culture as a massive part of choosing who to work for. Whereas years ago, salary and safety was the bottom line. If you don't have an appealing company culture then you're going to lose the war that is recruitment!

A Culture Audit

Hopefully, by now you can see your company culture is vital to your future, and with that in mind it could be time for a 'culture audit'. What this entails is evaluating where your company culture stands, see what's missing and establish a plan to make corrections. This is something you can do today!

Theory

How defined is your culture? Is it defined anywhere? If so, how specifically, and are these plans available to new starters? If you asked an employee for three words to define your brand, what words would they use?

Understanding

Take a poll of your worker's thoughts and assess whether or not they have a knowledge of your brand values.

Consistency

If your employees understand your culture, do they feel it when they walk in the door? How often do you see your managers or team leaders failing to live out your culture expectations? What small changes can be made to make people happier?

Honestly, though, there's no one way to establish a good company culture as every business is different. Everyone needs a consistent and strong set of values if you wish to remain competitive both internally and externally.

At SponsoredLinX we've been at it for over twelve years, but we strive daily to maintain a 'start-up feel'. We're cool, clever, creative - it says so on the back of our shirts!



Choosing The Right People For Your Company

You Can't Choose Family, Luckily You Can Choose Colleagues!

by Recruitment Team

Hiring is one of the most important things any business does. Every new hire affects the team, the culture, and company direction. Not only does it pay to invest time, resources, and research into the hiring process, it does add a massive value to your organisation overall.

Committing the wrong hire can be far more costly than investing the time to make the right one. The good news is, if you're ready to start hiring people for your company, it's a great sign that your venture is taking off! You've realised that you can't do all the work with your current resources and that you need to hire soon or your business will suffer. Hiring employees can be a tough thing to do; you have key roles to fill and need to identify self-starters that will make an immediate positive impact. So, where do you begin?

First thing first, you need to approach hiring in a sensible and organised way. Get excited by what new employees can bring to your team! You will initially need to define a hiring framework that will identify the key qualities

that you value as an employer. Every step in the hiring process - from resume review to interview training - is an opportunity to improve your final decision.

Whilst there is no exact science when it comes to recruitment, you are likely not going to be able to unearth qualified and experienced candidates by simply advertising on job boards. Think outside the box, be prepared and post your recruitment advertisements on niche areas and on your own websites, share the vacancy on all appropriate social media channels but also with your workforce (ask for referrals and reward them properly – your employees may know suitable candidates too!). Applications should then start pouring in!

It's imperative to get in touch with those waiting to hear back. You need to come up with a shortlist, so start by reviewing the cover letters and the resumes but always keep an open mind. The most qualified and experienced candidates are not always the best fit, always keep the management style and team personalities in mind when doing so.

Then start with a simple but warm phone screening – engage with the candidates, break the ice, get them to speak with you and share why they applied to your opening, get them to tell you what they think they can bring to your team. Once you have identified your top candidates, bring them in for a face to face meeting. Ensure you have prepared some interview questions, and preferably include some behavioural ones too - the last thing you need is for them to recite their resume.

Instead, seek to discover how the candidate's past



"Communicate " *honestly*

actions and experience relate to your core values and job responsibilities. Asking behavioural interview questions will help predict how the candidate will perform for your company. Depending on the role, it can be a great thing to put a recruitment panel together - a good combination is the line manager, a technical person and one of the recruitment team members – this will help in making a decision on which candidate to appoint to the role.

If by the end of your interviews, you're not able to make a call between several suitable candidates, you should then consider role plays, additional testing (i.e. psychometric, ability tests) and reference checks.

Last, but not least, be quick and communicate honestly with all candidates! The best candidates will be in high

demand, all the time – some will likely receive other offers from other companies if they are actively looking - including some that are more well-known than yours. If you want to compete, you cannot afford to drag your feet. You should also notify all other candidates you engaged with as a courtesy. Even though this role did not work out for them, it is worth maintaining relationships with strong candidates. Who knows, you might have another role for them in a not too distant future!

Choosing and hiring a new employee will always be a risk – there is no guarantee which new starters will and won't work out but defining what matters most for you and your brand, following a process that is well-rounded and projecting your company's values and standard will help you get there.

Managing Your Online Reputation

People Talk. Let Them. Just Make Sure You're Part Of The Conversation!

by Kyle Connolly

People are going to talk about your business. And, it won't always be nice things either. In 2018 where we all spend half our lives connecting online and on social media, managing your online reputation as a business is an important undertaking.

Why Should I Care What People Say?

Do you Google a company before you use them? I know I do, and I'm sure you do too. This includes going over their social media, as well as reviews and any news that pops up when I Google their name. Part of an effective online brand management is knowing how your customers are using the web. Your website may be the last place they look to find out information about you.

People are simply more savvy about marketing online. They see the value in the opinions of other consumers much more than anything you have to say about your brand. Customers will also pay more for a product or service from a company rated highly amongst the public.

If people are disgruntled with what you've provided, they're not going to send you a letter or contact the



newspaper; they'll call you out on social media and before you know it you could have a PR nightmare on your hands.

Social media is, by its very nature, a giant echo chamber of opinions and beliefs, so the smallest complaint could catch fire and spread uncontrollably very quickly.

So with that being said, how can you manage your brand's online credit?

Keep An Eye On Your Social Footprint

When you hear 'social media' you think Facebook and Twitter, right? Well, there's much more out there for people to vent on. Depending on your business size, perform daily or weekly sweeps across all social platforms checking for mentions on your brand or product name. In addition to being able to respond to problems (more on that below), you'll gain great insight into the current sentiment people are feeling towards your brand.

Remember to check all social media, not just the ones you inhabit.

Respond Quickly

If you are on social media (which you should be), people want you to be sociable. When customers reach out to you, they expect prompt feedback. Even if you can't address their needs immediately, let them at least know you've seen them. If you're posting content that people are engaging with, respond to curate a long-lasting relationship. Don't take yourself so seriously all the time either!

Encourage Advocacy

You can use your social media presence to cultivate a strong base of brand advocates. Give your existing audience, and grow a new one by sharing content your demographic enjoys, hosting competitions and encouraging discussions. Encourage user-submitted content as well, as things like user reviews are highly valued and trusted by others.

Brand advocacy can also be encouraged internally. A firm set of social media guidelines for your employees should detail the culture and nature of their reference to your brand in an open and honest way.

Ask For Reviews

Online reviews are incredibly powerful tools for attracting those still early in the buying cycle. If you're making your customers happy, urge them to post a review and express their experience. If you've got a large customer base create an email marketing campaign to encourage users to leave reviews.

And incentivise them to do so, offer things like discounts and shout outs to the best reviews!

Customers looking for products and services online value reviews above all else. Google and Yelp feature most prominently because they pop up along with search results, making your brand look more trustworthy.

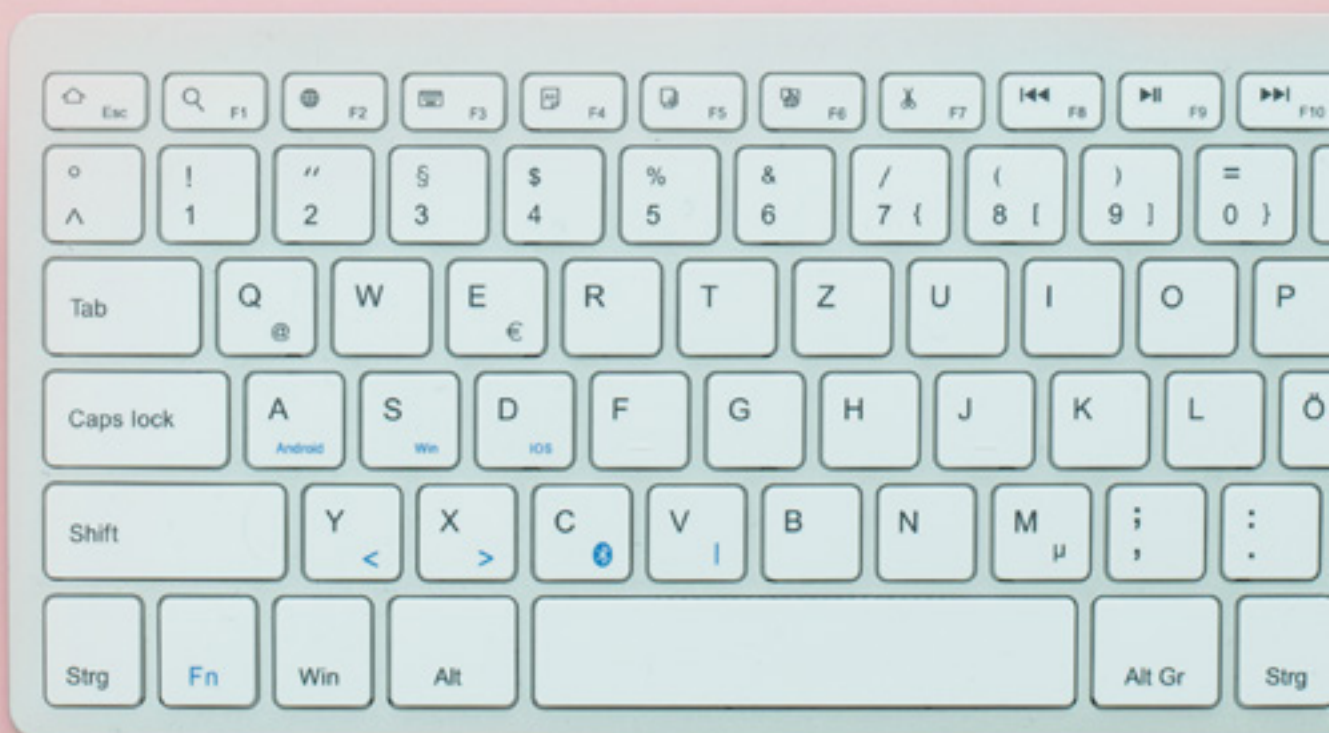
Always Be Transparent

Transparency leads to trust. In a world where millions of eyes are on everything you say, along with everything you've ever said, trying to hide things can result in some serious backlash. Practice open and honest communication on social media. Always be the first to admit your faults because if you try to cover something up, it will be found out. Guaranteed.

If someone is unhappy with you, don't hide their feedback or try and bury it under other content - address the issue!

Measured cultivation of your company's online reputation can lead to increased sales and a massive push in positive sentiment towards you. People are waiting for you to engage with them on social media, so it's vital you do it right.

Be careful, the world is watching!





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