

## Making the most of your website

You can't afford to build a website, pay for hosting, and then sit back and wait hoping people will stumble across your site. You need to actively promote your website in order for it to work for you.

To make the most of your website, you will need to incorporate your website address in your all business communications, look at the more complex area of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), and consider pay-per-click advertising.

It is also important to update your site with fresh information and images on a regular basis, to encourage return visits to your site.

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## Promoting your site

To increase traffic to your website, you need to promote it. You should incorporate your website address into all your business communications. This would include adding your website address to your:

- Business cards
- Email signature
- Letter heads, compliments slips, quotes, invoices and statements
- Advertising and promotion material
- Vehicle signage.

If you're using blogs or social media to promote your business, it is also a good idea to occasionally use these outlets to direct people to your website. It is possible to overdo self promotion, so try to limit your use to when you add something useful or newsworthy on your site. Otherwise people will either ignore your posts or stop following you on the various social media sites.

[Find out more about social media in our guide on using online social media.](#)

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## SEO

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) helps to ensure your website is found among the millions of web pages now on the Internet. It involves some small but important adjustments to your website to get the highest possible ranking in search results when people type key words or a search phrase into a search engine like Google, Yahoo! or Bing.

Good SEO will make your website as search engine friendly as possible, while keeping the needs of the reader in mind. This involves:

- Changing text on your website to include selected key words
- Adding meta tags, titles and descriptions (using key words in these)
- Careful URL construction
- Adding links to other related pages within your site
- Adding links to relevant external pages
- Making sure important information is indexable by search engines. For example, Flash content can't be read by search engine robots.

The purpose of SEO is to help search engine robots identify what your website is about, which will boost your ranking on the search results page of search engines. The top three links on the first page of search engine results get the most clicks or web visitors. The click rate drops considerably for lower rankings.

Your SEO strategy should target identified key words that people are likely to use when searching for a business like yours, to improve the ranking of your website. You can use online tools like [Keyword Discovery](#), [Wordtracker](#) and [Google keyword tool](#) to identify the key words with highest volumes.

Search terms that are used often usually have many websites competing for the top rankings. When competition is extremely high, it may be difficult, or impossible, to improve your ranking. In this case, you might need to refine your key words to something more niche or specialised to improve your page rankings on search engines. Although this could lower the volume of visitors to your site, it is potentially to your advantage to attract visitors with your specific niche interest.

Each page on your website should be optimised individually using a few different key words. Search engine robots are then likely to include more than one of your pages in the search results.

Page titles and descriptions have a significant influence on search rankings, so try to include your exact target phrases in each element. Ensure the URL of each page includes a target search term because search engines check words in the URL for relevance.

It is also a good idea to submit a sitemap to the major search engines via their webmasters.

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## Pay-per-click advertising

You might want to consider Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising options like AdWords on Google. Rates and terms vary between the various search engines, but PPC advertising allows businesses to choose to pay search engines to list relevant adverts on the right-hand page of search engine results. They then pay the search engine each time a visitor clicks on the link to their site.

For AdWords on Google, the three businesses who offer Google the highest payment per click are listed in a lightly coloured block marked as a sponsored link, above the search results. This is another way to influence where you appear in search engine results.

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## Track visitors to improve your site

Your website designer or Internet service provider will probably provide a website analytics package that enables you to see how people use your website. You can also install a code on your web pages to make use of free analytics programmes like [Google Analytics](#) or [AWStats](#), or buy a commercial analytics package. This will allow you to:

- Track how many people visit your site and how long they stay.
- Analyse the paths your customers take when navigating your site and identify where people drop out of the purchasing process.
- Discover how people find your site and which keywords are working.
- See average order values, and data about repeat visitors.

It is best to change or optimise one thing at a time on your site and then track the analytics of your site to see whether it improves your statistics, before moving on to the next change.

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## Update your site

It is important to update your site with fresh content and images. Visitors will stop coming back to your site if information appears old and stale.

Try to customise and target your content. For example, a cosmetics company should offer seasonal advice like preventing over-exposure to the sun in summer, or update their site with a range of awesome eye shadow tones for winter. Similarly, a hardware store would focus on different products and provide useful advice for customers depending on the season.

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## Check your links

Because part of your search engine ranking depends on the internal and external links to your site, it is a good idea to check that all the links on your site are working. If your website only contains a few pages, you can do this manually, but it might be quicker to use free programmes like [Xenu's Link Sleuth](#), which will do this task for you. Alternatively, you can buy commercial products like [LinkScan](#) or [Web Link Validator](#).

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