

10
REASONS
— YOUR —
WEBSITE
DOESN'T GENERATE
LEADS

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Preface

At We Do Web Content, we work with a lot of attorneys, but they all come to us with basically the same problem: they have invested all this money in a website, perhaps even some search engine optimization or a few pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns, but gain very few new clients. So what went wrong?

If successful Internet marketing was the result of just buying a website, then every site on the Web would see a steady stream of visitors eager to become new clients. Unfortunately, the Internet does not work that way and a basic website is just not enough to attract and keep a new visitor let alone convert him or her into a lead or client without some additional planning and work.

For example, let's say you are a personal injury lawyer who specializes in car accident claims. You decide to create a main page for your website that says you handle car accident claims. But what if your reader doesn't know why he or she needs a lawyer after a car accident? Just telling the reader that you handle car accident cases is not going to convert that person. There are likely hundreds of other lawyers in your geographic area claiming they handle the same cases. So what sets you apart?

The first step in creating a website that not only adds value to your brand, but also provides your potential clients with the answers they are searching for on the Web is to develop a content strategy identifying the questions that keep them up at night... and the keywords they are using to find said answers.

This guide is designed to address your questions about:

- What keeps your website from converting visitors into clients;
- How those visitors will find your website among the hundreds of other lawyer websites in your area;
- What content strategy is and how to develop one (including the topics and content formats to focus on); and
- How to layout your Web content for ultimate readability.

You wouldn't go into court without preparing for a trial first. Don't make the same mistake when it comes to your law firm's Internet marketing. The Web content strategies outlined in this guide have helped thousands of websites attract and convert new clients, and they'll work for your website too!

Reason # 1: You Have Little to No Content

While there typically are multiple reasons why any one particular website doesn't succeed at converting its visitors into paying clients, one of the most pervasive and consistent issues across the board is a complete lack of interesting and informative Web content.

The first thing you need to realize is that your website is your voice on the Internet. Its content is a direct representation of you. When someone goes to your website, for better or worse, it's the first (and sometimes the last) impression potential clients will get of your business. For this reason, every single part of your website matters from the layout (think usability or user experience) of the pages to the colors and font styles you choose to work with, and most important, the words you are putting up on each page.

A website that just consists of a few random pages that does little more than tell people your name and what you sell is not a marketing strategy; it's not even an effective advertisement.

No matter the product or service offering, there is always something you can write about and post to your website. For example, if you're a professional event photographer, your readers might be interested in posts about choosing the right photographer for their big event, what time of day is best to shoot outdoors or the three ways they can ensure their kids will take great portraits.

People Go Online to Read Information, Not Ads

Perhaps the most important thing you need to realize is that your potential clients are savvy. When they are on your website, they realize you are a company trying to sell them a product, whether that product is a tangible object or a service. They expect to be marketed to while they visit your website, but at the same time, they aren't there to read an ad, they want information to help them make an informed purchasing decision.

That is where your Web content comes into play. This is your chance to show off what makes your business unique, valuable and worth the time and energy of your website visitor. To go back to Marketing 101, you can't convince someone you are great by telling him or her that you are great, you have to *show* that person. Online it's your content that shows your reader WHY you are the right choice.

When your entire website is a few short pages that stick to the bare bones facts about your business, you aren't showing your readers anything they really want to know. You are not giving them the information they are looking for, you're not showing them why you are any different from any of your competitors, and you certainly aren't going to convince them in any big numbers to give you their contact information, let alone their business.

What Your Web Content Actually Does

Your Web content—main pages, articles, blog posts and FAQs—are all basically a network of who you are, what you do, why you do it, and most importantly why your business can truly provide something special for your clients that your competitors cannot. Once again, you don't gain this kind of trust and interest by just telling someone your company is great on your home page, you need to show him or her, and your Web content does that work for you. That's because your Web content is really the beginning of a conversation with your reader that develops into a business-customer relationship.

When you don't have any content on your website, you can't even begin to have that conversation. On the Internet, you aren't physically able to engage directly with every visitor, that's what your website does. And, on your website, it's your content doing the speaking for you. When there is no content, well, you're basically giving your visitors the impression that you have nothing to say. It's the equivalent of having a store full of merchandise, but no sales associates to greet the customers or answer any of their questions.

Of course, it's not just about putting up content for the sake of putting up content; it's about what you say, how you say it and the intent behind each piece of content you create. That's why we've written this guide, to demystify why content is such an important component of online marketing and how by doing it the right way -- giving your visitors the type of information they want and need before becoming your next customer -- you can convert those visitors into leads and ultimately paying customers.

Reason # 2: Your Content is Not Search Engine Optimized

In case you're a newbie to the crazy and ever-changing world of online marketing, I'd like to start by defining the term "search engine optimization" or "SEO" in 2012. When a website or piece of content is SEO'ed by today's standards, it is smoothly and ethically infused with the terms your target audience is using to find your business' products or services on the Web.

Generally speaking, this is the science -- and art -- behind obtaining the highly coveted spots on page one of the major search engines like Google, Bing and Yahoo. Basically, if you want to "drive traffic" to your website so that people can buy your products or hire you to perform a service, you have to make sure they can find you on the various search engines. In a lot of cases, you can land a spot on page one for a number of quality terms through SEO Web content. However, SEO has become quite complex over the years. That's because some online marketers got really good at gaming the search engines' algorithms. As the old adage goes, "One bad apple can spoil the bunch."

If you compare today's Web content standards to what they were before Google unleashed its zoo animal algorithm updates (you can read all about them [here](#)), you'll be shocked to see what websites got away with just a year and a half ago and how well some of them ranked for the top terms in their industries. Well, those days are officially over. In fact, any website caught publishing low-quality or duplicate content will eventually feel the wrath of Google with penalties ranging from a drop in page rank/traffic to being blacklisted from the search engine's results pages.

These days it's all about creating quality Web content. What does Google consider quality? Everything I've covered in this book so far, as well as Web content that is rich in keywords that are truly relevant to your business and that informs and satisfies searchers' inquiries.

Google has become quite sophisticated in separating the wheat from the chaff. So, rather than trying to outfox the search engines, focus on optimizing your content properly with these **handy tips that deliver real and lasting results**:

1. Research your keywords.

The goal in researching keywords and phrases for most Web writing is finding the exact terms people are using to find a particular product or service with the least amount of competition. You may not agree with this theory, and you might fight to the death about wanting to be found for the most competitive key words and phrases in your industry, but I've got news for you. This is not always effective marketing.

While highly competitive keywords can drive traffic to your website, they may not do much in the way of converting visitors to clients. This is why keyword research is critical

to the success of any online marketing campaign. Research and hard data moves you away from assumptions therefore saving you time and money.

There are many tools – free, as well as fee-based – on the Web that you can use to perform keyword research. Some of my favorite freebies are from Google's suite of products. They are Google Analytics, Webmaster Tools (for intermediate and advanced marketers), AdWords and Instant.

Did you know that Google Analytics can also provide you with the following information about your website:

- Where visitors come from and what do they do on your site;
- Which keywords resonate most with your prospects and lead to conversions;
- Which online ad is the most effective;
- Where people leave your site; and
- Which pages retain visitors the longest?

Use this [handy checklist](#) to configure your Google Analytics account today!

Outside of Google's empire you will find other powerful tools like Wordtracker and SEMRush. Both are fee-based but offer reasonable monthly payment plans and a 30-day free trial!

The free keyword tools I mentioned above provide valuable data about the monthly search volume of each term, their level of competitiveness, related keywords, as well as each term's cost-per-click should you want to enter into a per-per-click marketing campaign. The paid tools offer all of this and more, such as how many other websites are targeting the same keywords organically, as well as through pay-per-click ads, and how much potential a keyword has to generate leads.

When reviewing keyword lists, circle back to your target audience and its various segments. Remember that each group will be at different stages of your business's buying cycle (from curiosity to action).

For example, the content needs of the person who searches with the term "personal injury lawyer" in whatever city they live in will differ vastly from the person who searches for information using the term "constant headache from car accident." The former searcher is likely closer to hiring an attorney than the latter who is just starting to research a possible legal issue and medical condition that may or may not be linked to a previous car accident.

Additionally, you'll want to consider the terms that are already converting your website's visitors to clients (you can get this information through your website's analytics service).

2. Evaluate your keywords.

Here's what I tell our clients who are dead-set on targeting only highly competitive keywords: before you put all of your eggs in the expensive, high-competition-keyword basket, **test the effectiveness of your business's most important phrases with some pay-per-click (PPC) advertising campaigns**. With PPC you'll know right away if the terms you have chosen to focus on are the real moneymakers for your business.

As I mentioned in the [previous chapter](#), it's important to exercise patience with your online marketing endeavors. Not everything you do will be a quick hit, especially when it is to occur organically. You have to decide at the outset that you're in it for the long haul and truly give your content the time it needs to blossom. Of course, there will be times when you will have to refine your focus. This shouldn't be seen as a failure but rather an opportunity to improve. That's the beauty of online marketing – you can try something new, measure its success and modify if needed.

3. Use your keywords naturally.

Each article or blog post you create should center around two to three key phrases and/or words. Trying to use more will hurt the quality of your piece. You'll also want to incorporate synonyms for each key phrase/word you use. Think of the terms your target audience might use in a conversation when describing their situation to a family member or friend.

Once you've identified your piece's key phrases/words, you have to make sure they appear enough times for the search engines to notice, but not too much that they classify it as SPAM. The object is to weave these key phrases into your content naturally and when it makes sense to. The success of your keyword density will depend greatly on how good you (or your writer) are at working the phrases naturally into your Web content. This is where We Do Web Content outshines the run of the mill part-time writer. **Before we devise a Web content strategy or put our fingers to the keys, we learn about:**

- **you and your business** - why does your business exist, how do you want to be perceived by your customers (this will dictate the voice and tone of your Web content) and what sets you apart from your competitors;
- **your target audience** - who are they, what answers are they looking for and what will drive them to buy; and, lastly,
- **your online marketing goals** - what will it take to achieve them and how do we align them with your prospects' goals.

Keyword density and flow go hand-in-hand; if your piece doesn't flow well, it doesn't matter how many key phrases and words are used, no one will read the content long enough to complete your call to action.

4. Use your keywords in the places that matter most.

Think of your key phrases and words as seeds. If you plant them in the right places, where they will get plenty of sunlight (attention), they will blossom and ripen for the picking.

So, save the (keyword) stuffing for your Thanksgiving dinner and place your key phrases and words where they will matter most to the search engines:

1. Title Tag
2. URL
3. H1 Tag
4. Body Text
5. Anchor Text
6. Image Name and Alt Attribute

Title Tag - a page's title tag is what appears as the royal blue active link on a search engine's results page. It is a page's most important SEO element and where you want to strategically place your key phrases and words.

To craft a well-optimized title tag, follow these steps:

1. Keep it between 65-70 characters with spaces;
2. Make it appealing to the Web searcher;
3. Place your most important keyword at the beginning;
4. Make sure it corresponds with the content on the page; and
5. Write a unique title tag for each page you create.

10 Reasons Your Website Doesn't Generate Leads

The following screen capture illustrates the importance of a title tag:

The screenshot shows a Google search for "Victorian clothing for rent or sale in Dayton OH". The search results are divided into "Organic" (non-paid) and "Paid" (AdWords) sections. Annotations highlight the importance of title tags in both sections.

Organic Results (Non-paid):

- Victorian Clothing Sale** (buycheapr.com/Victorian-Clothing) - Annotated as "These are the Web user's search terms (referred to as 'keywords')".
- Victorian Clothing** (www.premierclothing.com) - Annotated as "These are paid advertisements (referred to as 'AdWords' or 'Per-Per-Click')".
- Victorian Clothing For Sale - Want To Look Hot Tonight** (shopzilla.com/Clothing) - Annotated as "These are paid advertisements (referred to as 'AdWords' or 'Per-Per-Click')".
- Vintage Clothing Dayton Ohio** (vintage-clothing.oppine.com) - Annotated as "This is the page title. Now you see why it's so important to write a strong page title!".
- CLOWN MAKEUP** (www.cylex-usa.com/clown%20makeup.html) - Annotated as "This is the listing's Meta description (or snippet). If it contains the Web user's keywords and is written a persuasive manner, chances are they will click on your business's listing. SCORE!!".
- Downtown Columbus Ohio lofts condos + homes for sale for rent + ...** (www.movedowntowncolumbus.com) - Annotated as "This is the listing's Meta description (or snippet). If it contains the Web user's keywords and is written a persuasive manner, chances are they will click on your business's listing. SCORE!!".
- Mobile Homes - Dayton Daily News Deals** (classifieds.daytondailynews.com) - Annotated as "This is the listing's Meta description (or snippet). If it contains the Web user's keywords and is written a persuasive manner, chances are they will click on your business's listing. SCORE!!".
- Lovely restored Victorian Home for sale \$275000 - Single Family ...** (residential_for_rentFor Rent) - Annotated as "This is the listing's Meta description (or snippet). If it contains the Web user's keywords and is written a persuasive manner, chances are they will click on your business's listing. SCORE!!".

Paid Results (AdWords):

- Clothing In Victorian** (www.nextag.com) - Annotated as "These are paid advertisements (referred to as 'AdWords' or 'Per-Per-Click')".
- Rent Clothing** (pricedumper.com/Rent Clothing) - Annotated as "These are paid advertisements (referred to as 'AdWords' or 'Per-Per-Click')".
- Clothing For Rent** (www.hellonetwork.com) - Annotated as "These are paid advertisements (referred to as 'AdWords' or 'Per-Per-Click')".
- Target's Weekly Ad** (www.target.com) - Annotated as "These are paid advertisements (referred to as 'AdWords' or 'Per-Per-Click')".
- Victorian Clothing Sale** (beso.com/Victorian Clothing Sale) - Annotated as "These are paid advertisements (referred to as 'AdWords' or 'Per-Per-Click')".
- Clothing For Rent** (shopping.yahoo.com) - Annotated as "These are paid advertisements (referred to as 'AdWords' or 'Per-Per-Click')".
- Dayton For Rent** (dayton.local.com) - Annotated as "These are paid advertisements (referred to as 'AdWords' or 'Per-Per-Click')".
- Sale Clothing** (www.dealtime.com) - Annotated as "These are paid advertisements (referred to as 'AdWords' or 'Per-Per-Click')".

Annotations:

- These are "organic" (non-paid) search results based on the keywords used. As a business, you can achieve an organic listing with search engine optimized content. (BTW, that's what we specialize in!)** - Points to the organic search results.
- These are the Web user's search terms (referred to as "keywords")** - Points to the search query.
- These are paid advertisements (referred to as "AdWords" or "Per-Per-Click")** - Points to the AdWords results.
- This is the page title. Now you see why it's so important to write a strong page title!** - Points to the title tag of the "Vintage Clothing Dayton Ohio" result.
- This is the listing's Meta description (or snippet). If it contains the Web user's keywords and is written a persuasive manner, chances are they will click on your business's listing. SCORE!!** - Points to the meta description of the "CLOWN MAKEUP" result.

URL - A page's URL should also contain the key phrases and words from the body text in a manner that will make sense to both the Web searcher and the search engines. Like your title tag, your URL should be clear and concise.

H1 tag - Page headings are often used by the search engines to associate the relevance of a page to a searcher's query. Therefore, when you are creating a page, carefully think about its main heading and section headings and which ones are worthy of an H1 tag. Then, work your key phrases and words naturally into each heading.

First and last paragraph of the visual portion of the page - Aim to start the body of each page you create with your key phrases/words and place your most important key phrase/word closest to the beginning of the first sentence, usually within the first three to four words. Reverse this technique in the last sentence of your page.

Body Text - Always work your key phrases and words naturally throughout the remainder of the page.

Image name and alt attribute - Today's Web users expect sites to use images to break up the text on the page. Not only do images add beauty and texture to your website, but they offer you the opportunity to write an optimized description of the image. Caution: this is not a place to stuff keywords. While you want to incorporate the keywords being used on the page to describe the image, your focus should be on writing a useful and meaningful description for those searchers who are visually impaired or using other means to access your website.

Once your page is complete, I suggest you perform the "read aloud test." If the text sounds awkward or unnatural, rework it until it flows smoothly. You can also ask a friend for his or her opinion on a piece before publishing it. As you write more and more optimized pages, you will inevitably become numb to the sound of your key phrases and words. The unnatural suddenly becomes natural. Be careful not to fall into this trap!

Reason # 3: Your Content Doesn't Tell Your Visitors YOU'RE the Solution They Seek

When was the last time you remained engaged in a conversation with someone who spoke only about themselves and how totally awesome they are? Keep in tune with your audience and customers. Know what they are thinking. Let them know you are listening. Deliver what they really want, take chances and don't be afraid to surprise your audience (in a good way).

Focus On the Reader

Your Web content should always focus on satisfying the inquiries of the various segments of your target audience. If all your content does is talk about your expertise, awards and associations, it will only satisfy searchers who are at the tail end of the buying cycle in which they are performing a side-by-side comparison of your qualifications with another firm. But what about the searchers who are at the start or somewhere in the middle of the buying cycle? This type of content will alienate searchers who visit your website to find answers and research their specific situation.

Almost every lawyer on the Internet goes on and on about his or her experience and awards, so what sets you apart? In reality, your awards and associations mean more to other lawyers than they do to your clients. Did you choose your last plumber based on an award they received from a plumbing association? Probably not. Awards are nice, but they aren't going to convert your Web visitors into clients.

Your expertise is what sells you as a lawyer. But it's not about *telling* people you are a legal expert; it's about *proving* that expertise through informative content and demonstrating through leadership. Many of your website's visitors want answers to their legal questions and easy-to-follow explanations of complex legal issues.

For example, if everyone could easily read and understand a statute, they wouldn't need a lawyer, so copying and pasting a statute onto a Web page is not helping anyone. If you want to explain what a particular law means and how it may impact your clients, you need to explain that in a clear, straightforward way.

Once you start understanding what information your potential clients care about and how to write it in a way that they can understand, the closer you are to developing a Web content plan that will start converting those visitors into new clients.

Discover What Your Clients Care About

Think about the questions your clients ask you over and over again. These questions are truly your best market research. Your potential clients are online everyday trying to find answers to their legal problems. Many of them may not even realize they need a lawyer yet.

Specifically addressing the legal concerns your ideal client is facing and writing about them in layman's terms will not only help you appear in more organic search engine results, but help you prove that you are a lawyer who actually knows a thing or two about the type of law you practice.

For example, let's say your practice specializes in car accidents. If all you have on your website is a main page that says, "*If you were hurt in a car accident, hire me to file a claim,*" you're not telling your readers anything they don't know (or couldn't figure out on their own).

If, however, you have a series of articles, blogs and other Web content that discuss and offer valuable insight into whether or not someone qualifies for a personal injury claim, the process for filing one in his or her state and how damages are awarded, that reader is going to see first-hand that you really know what you're talking about.

The early stages of any Web content development plan should begin by asking yourself:

- Who is my target audience?
- Are there various segments to this audience?
- What does each group look like (age, gender, education, occupation, etc.)?
- Where in the buying cycle does each group fall?
- What information will satisfy each group's queries?

If the content on your website is not adequately addressing each group's concerns, it isn't going to help you or them.

Take Chances with Your Content

Not every piece of content on your website has to be an informational article. Blogs, which are by nature less formal than articles, are great opportunities to show a little personality and take a few chances. This is where you can publish your ideas and opinions about your law firm, local community events and current events that affect your clients.

For example, if you are a DUI defense lawyer and your state is about to enact legislation that increases the penalties for DUI convictions, write a blog detailing why this new law is a bad idea. It's OK to get a little controversial as long as you stick to your practice areas and your ideas are presented in a way that does not alienate your audience. If you are a personal injury lawyer who represents victims of drunk driving accidents, you would perhaps applaud this new law instead of focusing on its faults.

Blogs are also a great way to get feedback from your website's visitors. You can create polls, ask questions and encourage responses from your readers to learn their opinions on certain topics. Blogs are meant to create conversations, so it's important to moderate your blog and respond to the comments your readers post.

Whatever you decide to write about, just think of your clients first. What kind of information is valuable to them? How can your unique legal insight help those readers realize that they need your legal services? Finding new and engaging ways to communicate with your potential clients is the first step to conversion -- so don't be afraid to take a few calculated risks with your Web content.

Reason # 4: Your Content is Stale

Whether you decide to write your Web content, hire someone full-time to write your content in-house or outsource it to a company like We Do Web Content, you have to post new and relevant content daily. That's right. We said "daily."

Search engine giant Google and its close competitor Bing basically control the fate of your website. Either you play by their rules so you get found on the first page or two of organic search engine results for your most important keywords or you end up in a black hole on page 10,000. And, a big part of what these search engines look for is fresh, relevant, quality content.

You see, it's a search engine's job to visit the billions of websites in existence, scan their content and determine where to place them for any given search query. One of the criteria that tells a search engine a website is worth ranking is when it is updated with relevant and quality content.

When you really think about it, equating those updates with some level of relevancy makes perfect sense. After all, an online magazine that only updates their stories once a month will not have the same relevancy as a newspaper that is updated daily.

Likewise with your Web content, creating an article or even a library full of articles but not updating that information for months or even years will result in a lot of outdated content that isn't very useful or relevant by today's standards. If there is another website posting information just like yours, but that website is posting daily blogs, weekly articles and other new content, the search engines recognize that your competitor's site will likely have the most relevant content for certain search terms and move your website further down the line.

New Content Means Keeping Pace with Your Readers' Needs

While constantly updating content isn't the #1 factor in Google's algorithm, its significance should not be ignored. Additionally, constantly updating your website isn't just important to search engines, it's important to your readers too! After all, things change and people are looking for accurate information.

As the old saying goes, *the only thing constant is change* and just because you wrote a really great article a few years ago does not mean that article can stand the test of time like works of fiction can. Laws change, circumstances change, businesses change, and ignoring all those changes just makes your company look outdated. Old content may not even address the current needs or attitudes of your ideal client, which just creates another barrier that can hurt your business online.

Great Web content comes from listening to what your clients and potential clients are saying and then creating content that directly responds to those needs. Are there areas of your business or industry that just really confuse people? Write a few articles breaking those areas down into more manageable terms your clients can understand. Are you getting the same questions over and over from your customers? Turn them into a library of FAQs (frequently asked questions) and let your website help answer those questions for you.

When it comes down to it, there is no excuse for a website filled with stale, outdated content. If you don't have time to write the content yourself, hire an employee or another company to write it for you. But thinking that your website can run on autopilot with a few articles from 2008 is not going to drive readers to your website or convert them to customers once they've gotten there.

Reason # 5: You Don't Come Across as the Expert

Once again, selling might be the misleading term because even though you are technically selling your products or services, the “sales” part of your content should never be the main focus. That is what an advertisement is for. Your Web content, on the other hand, plays another vital role in your marketing strategy -- informing your reader while simultaneously [selling yourself as the expert](#).

When you offer insightful and informative content on your website, you become *the expert*, the trusted source that people turn to when they think of your industry. When you show your customers that you actually know what you are talking about by providing well-researched, well-written content on your website, you are marketing that expertise without being a pushy salesman.

Being looked at as an industry expert goes a long way in building a relationship of trust with your online reader. Building trust is never easy, but on the Internet where scams run rampant and you can't even look someone in the eye, it's only that much harder to gain a loyal and trusting readership, let alone loyal and satisfied client base.

When You Publish the Right Content You Become the Expert

Of course being a reliable and honest business goes a long way with returning customers, but how do you build trust with someone through your website? You show him or her that you know your services inside and out by:

- providing a library full of fantastic, informative and relevant Web content;
- publishing daily blogs that show visitors you are in-tune with what's going on RIGHT NOW; and
- establishing an online [reputation as a valuable resource](#) for your particular niche.

This isn't to say you should give away all your trade secrets, but you do need to find a happy medium that still provides the information about your services that your potential clients are already searching for. This means using some of the knowledge you've gained through your years of practicing law and making it accessible to your audience. This means discussing the topic in a way your audience will understand, even if they've never had any previous experience with a lawyer.

When you become the expert, you also increase the opportunities for readers to share your content and links with their friends and family, sending even more potential leads right to your website.

Reason # 6: Your Visitors Aren't Being Told What To Do

One click -- that's all it takes for a visitor to take action on your website. That action could be to become your next client or customer, or it could be to hit the back button and continue his or her search. So what are you doing to grab your visitors' attention? How are you directing them to stay and explore your website?

Calls to action (CTAs) are hands down one of the most important elements of lead generation. **You should have at least one call to action for each stage of your buying cycle** and place it on all of the pages that are relevant to the offer.

Choosing Your Calls to Action

So how do you decide what calls to action to create for your business? This is an excellent question! First, examine the various segments of your target audience. Where does each group fit within your buying cycle? Then work to create an enticing offer for each group.

For example, you should have a unique offer for the following types of searchers:

1. **Informational** - *"I want to learn/research my options."* This person will fall for free downloadable **reference guides, eBooks, checklists and fact sheets**;
2. **Navigational** - *"I've heard of you and I'm interested in learning more about your company."* A searcher who is interested in learning more about your company will want to read your "About Us" page and a **free trial** of your product or service; and
3. **Transactional** - *"I am ready to try/buy your product or service."* Direct this person to a **clutter-free, conversion-oriented landing page**.

Where to Place Your Calls to Action

It is said that your homepage alone should have at least three calls to action. And, in addition to your website's homepage, you should **place calls to action within your content, newsletter, email campaigns, employee email signatures, presentations** (if you speak at industry conferences and seminars), **videos, pay-per-click advertisements**, and the **company's social profiles** (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.).

The only pages you should not add calls to action to are the landing pages you will create to delve into each of your offers. In other words, don't distract the buyer. **Keep your landing pages clean and focused on conversion**. You should even **consider removing all navigation and links** to other pages.

Whether you are selling a product or service, **your call to action should always flow with the page and be placed "above the fold."** When a design element is placed above the fold, it means your visitors will see it without having to scroll down the page.

Now that you have a sense of the offers and calls to action your business needs to create, you'll have to start working on their graphic design and copy. In this book, we will only focus on writing the copy.

How to Write Killer Call-to-Action Copy

As with any copy you create, you have to be clear in both the information you are imparting and the action you want the reader to take.

Here are the top three questions your copy has to answer for the visitor:

1. **What's in it for me?** In order to convince people that they must have what you've got, you have to effectively **convey the value of the offer**. When you follow my advice about creating a unique call to action for each stage of your buying cycle, this exercise won't be too hard. Start by listing the top three benefits of your offer. Next, put them in order of importance. Now take benefit #1 and trim it down to just a few highly impactful words and use them to **form a powerful statement or pose a question to the reader**. For example, say you wrote an introductory-level eBook about marketing. Perhaps your call to action can read something like this: "Learn All There is To Know About Marketing in this FREE 45-Page Guide!"
2. **Why should I do this today?** Think about the times when you've bought something impulsively. Was it because the item was on sale for a limited time? Could it be you bought the item to get something else for free? No matter your reason for buying, the point is you took the seller's desired action, which was to buy now. You have to **be bold and firm and create urgency in your calls to action**. Whether you're running a limited-time offer or a seasonal promotion, tell your readers when they need to act by. Or if your offer is evergreen, create urgency by adding words like "now" or "today" to it. **Take a look at these examples:**
 - a. Get Free Shipping on Orders Placed through Dec. 23!
 - b. Today Only - Be Our 500th Newsletter Subscriber and Receive a \$50 Amex Gift Card!
 - c. Start Your Free 30-Day Trial Today and Get a Bonus Gift!
 - d. Do You Hate Dealing with Insurance Adjusters? Call Now to Get Them Off Your Hands!
3. **What should I do next?** Once visitors click on a call to action, they should land on a page that contains detailed information about the offer and clearly tells them what they have to do to get it (i.e., call your company, complete a form, share the page with their network, etc.). If the context is off or the final action you want the visitor to take isn't clear, he or she may become confused and leave the page before the conversion process is complete.

Measure Your Calls-to-Action Success

To be successful on the Web, you have to set goals for every piece of content you create. Your calls to action are no exception. It's important to note that certain calls to action will perform better and faster than others, especially the ones you include in marketing assets like your newsletter and email campaigns. That's because these people are already familiar with your brand and are more likely to buy.

On a month-to-month basis, you will want to measure the effectiveness of each call to action you create, **keeping your eye on the following key metrics:**

- **Click-through Rate** - How many people saw the offer and what percentage of them clicked on it?
- **Clicks to Submissions** - Of the people who saw the offer, what percentage of them actually completed your lead capture form?
- **Views to Submissions** - Of the people who saw the offer, what percentage of them completed the lead capture form on the corresponding landing page?

When your benchmarks are not being met, don't get discouraged. Instead, challenge yourself to write better copy or tweak the design and/or placement of the offer.

Reason # 7: You're Not Connecting with Your Visitors

A website is a sales tool, but if all of your Web content is just a sales pitch, you aren't effectively communicating with your reader and he or she won't respond the way you want them to. If you want your website to start converting readers, you're going to have to give them what they are looking for, which is insightful and engaging information -- not just a few cute taglines.

As you already know, when you run a business, your customer isn't just buying your products; they are buying into your brand and what it stands for. That's because people don't connect with products or services, they connect with other people. The more your Web content can transcend just talking about objects or services and start talking about people, you can make that connection.

For example, let's say you are a company that sells security systems for people's homes. You can have a Web page with a description of your alarm system and how it works, or you can start a conversation about why home security is important and show your customers through your articles, blogs and other Web content how to make their homes safer through safety tips, your company's community involvement, local crime statistics and so on. It doesn't take much imagination to see which version customers will respond to.

Put a Little Personality in Your Writing

It's easy to cast blame on certain topics as being boring to most people, but more times than not it's just the writing that's boring, not the topic. When you want to write engaging and informative Web content, you need to make sure the content is actually engaging. That means adding some personality and style to your writing. Any topic can be interesting when it's presented in the right way and contains valuable information or insight.

Just because you are a lawyer doesn't mean your Web content should read like a listing of statutes; in fact, that's the last thing you want to do. If you want to connect with your readers, your content should sound like it was written by an actual person, not a machine. That means explaining difficult or complex concepts in a way that people outside of your industry can easily understand.

Don't be afraid to occasionally insert some lighthearted (though appropriate) humor, or use stories and real-life illustrations to drive your point home. It's OK to get a little personal, just remember that you're still a business and the information you choose to share with your audience is a direct reflection of your business. Once again, people connect with other people, so when your content can include a story or example that people can relate to, you're continuing to build the relationship between you and your readers.

There are many different angles you can take to discuss any topic, it's just about finding the one that's the most relatable to your readers but still gets your main points across. There will naturally be some trial and error when it comes to exploring new ways to write and edit your Web content, but it's all part of the process and each time you try something new, you learn a little more about what works and what doesn't for your ideal clients.

Reason # 8: You're Not Moving With the Times

For some of us, change is a real challenge causing unwanted stress and strife in our lives. We will do whatever it takes to keep our worlds intact and remain in our comfort zones. However, if you want to make it and survive on the Web, you're going to have to become real chummy with change.

Trust me. I know it stinks to have invested thousands of dollars into a website, only to learn a few years later (possibly sooner) that its design and/or functionality is outdated. Or, learning that your business has been missing out on hundreds of valuable prospects because visitors can't view or navigate your existing website on their smart device. And, what about your lack of presence on the "social" scene?

It's a lot to keep up with, I know. But it's the world we live in.

This may sound a bit dramatic on my part, but there are very few humans left on this earth who willingly choose to interact with other humans on a face-to-face level. The majority of people in this world *love* and fully embrace technology. I often wonder how we ever lived without our smart phones. I mean, how many people do you know who will actually use their phones to call and speak to others? Single digits maybe? Most of the people I know would rather send 20 shorthand text messages than to call to ask someone where they want to go for lunch! You can test this theory the next time you're out in public. Discretely observe the people around you and count how many of them have their fingers glued to the screens of their smart phones. And, then ask yourself: does my business reflect the times?

Technology moves at the speed of light, and it's our job as businesses that market on the Web to keep up with it.

Every day searchers are presented with beautifully clean, fast-loading websites that boast snazzy graphics and images, user-centric interfaces and interactive media. Not only are these elements highly desired by Web users these days, but they are somewhat expected. They are also a big part of why people will return to a website. Businesses who are with the times know this, and therefore act on the things that make the most sense for their bottom lines.

To bring your static, brochure website to the 21st century, here's what you'll need (list adapted from an [article posted on Mashable.com](#) in February of 2012):

- **A good URL.** One that makes sense with your business (preferably your company name) and that is also available on the social platforms, i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Google +, LinkedIn, Pinterest, etc. If your business name is taken or you're having trouble coming up with a suitable domain name, you can get ideas at Panabee.com and NameVine.com.

- **A logical site map.** How a website is structured plays a huge role in how it will rank with its visitors and the search engines. So before you get started on choosing a color scheme, font styles and images for your website, focus on the layout and intuitiveness of the design. Then, run it by a few friends to ensure it makes sense and refine accordingly.
- **Good hosting.** This is one aspect of having a website that should not be taken lightly so resist the temptation to skimp! You want your website to be hosted with a mainstream provider who also offers technical support 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- **Clear navigation.** When it comes to navigating a website, it's a lot like navigating a city you've never visited before. You count on clear directions to find things and recognizable signs that will help you get to and fro the busy streets. When you are laying out your navigation menu, use terms people recognize -- About, FAQ, Contact, etc. -- over cute or clever terms.
- **Your contact information.** This must-have might sound obvious, but you'd be surprised how many businesses don't provide their site's visitors with all of their contact information or don't list it properly. You should list your business's phone number, address (and the ability to get directions) and email address, as well as provide a contact form on a dedicated "Contact Us" page. Be sure to list these items as text so people can click your phone number to call.
- **Powerful and recent testimonials.** Businesses selling products or services need testimonials on their websites and online business listings. I, for one, never buy anything anymore without reading about other people's experiences with the product or service I am considering. So, make sure you appease searchers like me with helpful reviews that are recent.
- **An FAQ page.** People have questions. Lots of them. And, your site should provide clear and concise answers. 'Nough said.
- **Social media integration.** Do you have and maintain profiles on all of the major social networks? If you're a bit of a social recluse, it's time to come out and play with your prospects. Create business profiles on ALL of the social platforms and actually participate and maintain the content. Then, promote your presence on your website with social buttons.
- **Mobile-ready version.** Make it a point to mirror the quality and user experience of your website for mobile devices. This is truly a must! Especially since most people searching for products and services using their mobile devices are almost always ready to buy within one hour of searching, according to Andy Chu, director of Bing for Mobile.

What are some of the things your website doesn't need? Flash, background music or anything that auto-plays including video. I say this because flash can significantly slow down your website's load time, which can hurt its ranking with the search engines. Additionally, flash doesn't always work properly on every computer, especially the older ones, and it doesn't play at all on mobile devices. This can negatively impact a user's experience. As for background music and anything that autoplays, well, it is simply annoying to most of us. We like to be the ones in control of what we listen to and watch on the Web, not the other way around.

Reason # 9: Your Content is Not Memorable

I know I sound like a broken record, but developing your brand and knowing what your brand really means to your target audience is vital and provides the groundwork for EVERYTHING you do to market your business, online and offline.

Now that we got that out of the way, let's talk about ways to make your content memorable. After all, it's not just about getting your content read but remembered. I will start by defining "memorable." When I say "memorable," I'm referring to the techniques we can apply to our content to keep our readers engaged, help the information linger in their heads and compel them to take action.

- **Use attention-grabbing headlines.** Writing a good headline is more than half the work of creating a good piece of content, but it's not always easy to come up with one. So what's a marketer to do? Well, I can tell you what we do at We Do Web Content... if you've got old newspapers and magazines laying around the office or your house, go through them page-by-page for headlines that catch your eye. Next, dog ear or tear out the pages that excite you and pin them to an inspiration board you see every day. Print media not your thing? No problem! Browse your fave news websites or blogs in the same manner, collecting and printing the sexy headlines that come across your feed. Now pin those to your inspiration board. Next, aim to start every piece you create with an enticing headline that clearly tells your visitors: "I/We have the answer or solution you seek."
- **Write with emotion.** I like to tell my writers to approach each piece they create as a conversation with just one customer or client. When you enter into a piece in this manner, the dialogue is more natural and the tone is usually on the mark for that segment of your audience. Sure emotion (i.e., enjoyment, shock, humor, etc.) has its place and only you can determine what and when it is appropriate, but when the time is right, you stand a very good chance of making your content memorable. Some people may refer to this as "wrapping a fact in a story." Just remember to employ sound story telling techniques so your piece doesn't fall flat.
- **Present your content in chunks.** For me, there is nothing worse than to be presented with a Web page I can't easily scan. Surely you've seen these pages before -- big, long blocks of text. No sub-headers. No visuals. Just text. And, lots of it. Don't make this same mistake. In other words, don't skimp on good writing just learn to present the information better.

I always instruct our writers to logically outline their discussion points before creating an article or blog post. The writers' discussion points then become the "chunks" or "sub-headings" they will use to break up and add interest to the text using the proper font hierarchy (see below). I also require our writers to **keep sub-headings to one line and paragraphs to 60 words max.** These rules help

keep our content on-track and make scanning much easier for the reader. A solid group of sub-headings will tell enough of the story on its own.

- **Employ a font hierarchy.** A common practice is to use a font size percentage of 14px for the body text of a page and 24px for its sub-headings. As far as style and legibility goes, you can't go wrong with a san serif font like Helvetica.
- **Bold and highlight text when it makes sense to.** If you want your readers to come away with at least one or two things from an article or blog post, make it easy for them by bolding or highlighting key sentences. Be careful not to overdo it though, as it will defeat the purpose and frustrate your readers.
- **Use visuals.** If you work in an industry that consists of complex concepts, offering your website's visitors informational articles and accompanying videos, breaking down these concepts in bite-size chunks will be the way to go. Beautiful and relevant images also do wonders for breaking up text and getting your content shared on the social networks.
- **Quiet the noise.** So many of the businesses that have come to me for help use their websites as a virtual car bumper, cramming their ads, pop-ups, social icons, newsletter sign up, etc. on the page, distracting readers from the value of the content. I am not suggesting that you nix all of your calls to action. What I am recommending is that you leave some part of the page white so your content can breathe and shine.

Whichever technique you decide to use during your quest to make your content memorable, make sure you stay consistent. Jazz up your content with visuals when appropriate, but be careful not to use images that will dredge up bad thoughts or memories like car wrecks, someone in a wheelchair, etc. And, rather than trying to describe everything with words, use illustrations and visual guides. This aids learning and consumption, which means your content will be far more successful.

Reason # 10: You're Not Setting Goals for Your Content

What's the point of creating all of this amazing content for your website if it doesn't produce the results you desire? Sure, there will be times when you'll create content for personal reasons, but this book is about your business and generating leads, which is why the topic of setting goals is so important.

For any content marketing campaign to be successful, you need a well-devised strategy. **Every page you create or update should tie back to one of your main business objectives.** You should also take into consideration the type of content you will create (article, blog post, video, etc.) and distribution channel (your website, social network, video sharing website, etc.) you will use to promote it.

Before you create or update any content, first **ask yourself: Why I am creating/updating this particular piece of content?** Is it to:

- drive more new visitors to your website (aka "traffic");
- increase the amount of pages visitors look at (aka "page views") once they're on your website;
- increase the amount of time visitors spend on your website (aka "time on site"); or
- to compel visitors to subscribe to your RSS feed, sign up for your newsletter or take you up on your free/trial offers?

Other goals might include enhancing your reputation or building relationships with fans, advocates and the general public. What you have to do as a business is figure out the behaviors you wish to evoke in your target audience and work backwards to create the content that will drive those behaviors.

Once you know what you want to achieve with each piece of content you create, the easier it will be to **establish benchmarks and measure its success** against them. No matter the business goal, however, you should always strive to create pages that enrich the Web. You don't want to add to the massive amount of poorly written/structured, information-thin pages already in existence. This can be accomplished through research (lots of it!), mainly through social listening. **Find out what your target audience is spending time on, the kinds of content they're sharing with their network and what questions they're asking.**

Have you identified any content gaps? Excellent! Now **work on filling those gaps with the content you create.**

Now let's get down to brass tacks -- setting goals and measuring results. You can set individual goals and measure the success of each page you create by examining the following metrics over time through your website or social media analytics service:

consumption; sharing; lead; and sales. If you use Google Analytics to track your website's statistics, you can learn how to set goals [here](#).

It's extremely important to note and understand that in order to justify the expense of creating quality content, **you have to allow enough time to pass**. If you are looking at what actions took place this week or this month, you are looking at too small of a data set. It all goes back to understanding your target audience and how it is going to take in the information you are putting out.

For some companies, analyzing their website's analytics over time can be a time-consuming and complicated task. I suggest you **hire a data/reporting junkie** who will happily do this for you on a monthly or quarterly basis, or ask your SEO provider to add this service to your agreement.

Bonus - Reason # 11!

You're Not Cross-Selling Your Content

Having a successful content marketing strategy includes having a diverse range of content on and off your website; however, you need to be aware of how all of that content works together, as well as separately. While none of your content should sound like a big sales pitch, you can actually cross-sell your content through a deliberate linking strategy.

Think about it, you want to keep your readers on your website as long as possible or until they feel comfortable enough to make a purchase, an appointment, sign up for your newsletter, etc. So when they get to the end of an article, what's to stop them from leaving your site too early? Your links to other relevant content on your website, that's what!

As you develop your Web content over time, you'll naturally generate lots of articles and blogs that are related to each other on some level. Instead of letting all that content fly solo, use your Web content as a networking opportunity to keep your readers enthralled. With each new piece of content, you can lead your reader to the next area of your website you actually want him or her to visit.

Through this internal linking strategy, you are simultaneously helping to strengthen your position as a knowledgeable industry expert while giving your reader the information he or she needs to make an informed decision on being your next client.

Reinforce Your Position as an Industry Expert

Another bonus that comes along with a purposeful internal linking system is that you also increase the likelihood that your reader will find a piece of content he or she wants to share with his or her network of family and friends.

While a sales associate in a store can cross-sell different items based on a conversation with a customer or seeing what products he or she is interested in purchasing, your Web content will be the force that is trying to anticipate your reader's next move.

Your links and "call to action" messages should always be used to reinforce the other areas of your website and therefore your business. While not all readers will follow the trail of links you have laid out for them, without those links there is nothing directing your readers to where they need to go next.

All of your online marketing strategies should work towards the same goal: conversion. The chances of a visitor deciding to become a client after reading one article or blog are pretty slim, but when he or she is presented with page after page of great content, all leading him or her to your contact form, that person will be more apt to give you his or

her contact information. And, if by chance that reader isn't ready yet, knowing that you are constantly updating your website with new relevant content will give him or her a really great reason to come back.