

A GUIDE TO YOUR WEBSITE'S SUCCESS

# MY WEBSITE'S LIVE... NOW WHAT?

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For many years now I've been building websites for people. It's a job I love doing and I enjoy providing clients with great looking, functional websites.

But there's more to it than this. I know that websites can be built on - improved and expanded over time so that they continue to be a useful asset that's always up to date and attracts new customers and leads.

Too often what happens is that the website goes live and then... crickets.

After a while the website is closed down because it's perceived as just another business cost. I want to avoid this happening to you, because if you're in business and you need leads and sales, closing your website is not the answer.

Getting a site up and running is just the beginning of the process. I'm sure you hear marketing experts everywhere saying that without a web presence these days you may be left behind and find yourself out of business.

They're right. Without a website, or at least a good marketing plan, you could well disappear off the radar.

So, if building a website is just the start... you need to know what follows. The purpose of this guide is to help you understand what can be done in order to see a return on your investment, and make sure your website is working for you.

## Build it and they will come... right?

Occasionally I receive an email roughly a week after I've made a website live, asking "Why can't I find my website in Google search results when I type in [this string of words]?"

The answer is complicated, as is the whole subject of search engines and page rankings. This guide contains an overview of how Google works, which is a start in answering the question.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is a topic that could fill a book in itself. If you'd like a more comprehensive overview please visit [www.i4design.nz/about-seo](http://www.i4design.nz/about-seo). If you'd like to go deeper still, just Google "what is seo and how does it work?" You can choose the answer from over 46,000,000 results.

The first and most important thing is to focus on creating a useful, information-rich website, and write pages that clearly and accurately describe your product or interest. This is the foundation of your content marketing strategy. If you don't get the basics right, you're tying one hand behind your back from the start.

It's important that your website's content (text, photos, illustrations, videos, etc) is valuable so that you attract and convert prospects into customers, and customers into repeat buyers. The type of content you share is closely related to what you sell; in other words, you're educating people so that they know, like, and trust you enough to do business with you.

Audiences don't stick around for weak commercials or carbon-copy content. They need to be moved. If your content doesn't do it, they'll go elsewhere. It's a big web out there, full of delicious distractions to tempt them away.

And yes, you can move your audience even if your topic is "boring". Everything we do as people creates mini stories — you can use those for content, even for technical topics like law, medicine, manufacturing, or accounting.

## Set up a blog and start writing

If you have a small site — say, a home page, a services page, an about page and a contact page — that's only four pages for search engines to index.

A blog is an effective way of publishing new content regularly. Every time you add a new blog post you have a new page on your website, and it's all housed under your blog so your website doesn't get cluttered with pages here, there, and everywhere.

Starting a blog is a simple way to give your business a voice. It can give your audience a glimpse into your business while also promoting your products and services. People are also more likely to buy products or services from businesses they feel they "know." Having a blog that you regularly update will allow your readers to feel like they know you, even if they've never met you.

Posting fresh content to your blog that is relevant to your niche and insightful to your customers can also reinforce the idea that you know what you're talking about and help establish you as an expert in your niche. You are building trust. The more you

show that you are well-versed in your field, the more likely your customer will trust you to supply what they need.

When people have questions, they Google. When they're stuck, they Google. When they need advice, they Google. All day long, everyone asks Google all sorts of questions. And every time someone asks Google a question, they're articulating an intent. They're saying, "I'm trying to do this" or "I want to solve this" and those are the kinds of folks you want visiting your site. But that means you need to write those blog posts that contain the answers to their questions.

If you're finding that it's difficult to come up with the right words, or you can't find the time, then you may find that hiring a copywriter is a good option for you (and your business). Get in touch if you need advice on who to reach out to for help, or talk to me about signing up to the [i4design Content Creation Growth Plan](#).

## High-quality images build customer's trust

Consumers rely on getting an accurate idea of what a product will be like before deciding to purchase. If you have high-quality photographs of your products posted on your website, you can boost your sales and improve your business.

Website images are not there for no reason or to just look pretty. Each image uploaded in websites should be strategically chosen as this can make or break your sales. Good quality images are more likely to capture the interest of potential consumers and sales for you.

Even though content is king, it's your images that instantly jump off the page. They make your website easy on the eye, they show the world what your business is all about, and they form a big part of your site's overall first impression.

Because images are so integral, you need to choose the right images. Great, high-resolution images are the order of the day and, unless you're a photographer using your own images, nothing beats the quality and range of stock images.

Displaying beautiful stock photography is a tried-and-tested way to create that golden first impression you're looking for. By displaying a professional-grade photograph, you instantly look the part – credible, professional, and authoritative.

# How Google works

Google, as the largest search engine in the world, acts as a librarian. It scours the internet and indexes all the websites and pages it finds across the internet.

It then makes a best-judgement selection of keywords depending on a variety of factors. The more obvious it is that your website, business and content talk about a specific subject, the more likely you'll appear for those search terms.

## What Google wants and how it ranks your site

In the recent past, you could easily score top positions on Google SERPs (Search Engine Result Pages) by literally pumping keywords into your content. That's how SEO experts were doing it left, right and centre.

But, over the past few years search engines, especially Google, have been improving their search algorithms to become better and better at spotting empty content that has no value beyond being chock full of search keywords. That era of SEO is over and we're better off for it.

While the days of manual link-building schemes and keyword stuffing are over, your search engine rankings can be boosted by utilising several tools that will optimise your WordPress website for search engines, without abusing the system.

One of the main ways that Google works these days is that it looks at your website and reads the 'real' text within your pages. Updates to the algorithm have enabled Google to start serving up content that better matched searchers' intent – not just their keywords.

If you want your website to be found when people enter 'high heeled shoes hurt my feet' into the search field you need to ensure that you include text that includes information about how high heeled shoes hurt feet. Strings of words are important.

There's no magic solution to get you to the top of Google search results, and I would recommend avoiding anyone who says there is. I can't guarantee that your website will appear in the number one position (apart from when your unique company name is entered)... nobody can.

Consistent, high-quality content published to your website can increase your rankings in Google, and thus, the traffic to your site which can result in leads for your business.

Once upon a time people spent huge amounts of time and money generating as many links as possible containing the keywords they wanted to rank for.

It became possible for even poor-quality sites, with little or no relevant content, to rank quite well using almost nothing but this strategy. If this had been left unchecked, eventually the quality of Google's search results would have been compromised and its ability to deliver relevant results would have been harmed.

So Google updated its algorithm, and as a result websites where the owners created artificial links moved down in the search engine results, and websites that were popular because they had great content moved up in the search engine results.

The bottom line is that Google wants its search engine results to be full of sites that are popular for having great content – not businesses that have figured out how to game the system.

This isn't an overnight accomplishment, and Google wants to know if your business is trustworthy before you're rewarded with better rankings. Google's SEO rules are bound to change, but rich, valuable content seems to be the one thing that they'll never shut out.

## My website's full of useful content... what now?

The next step is telling people about your product, and making sure they know about your website.

The thing to remember is that you cannot build a site and just wait for traffic to come.

Just having a website accomplishes next to nothing in a world with a billion+ websites online. You'll be waiting forever because the internet is completely filled with website upon website all waiting for visitors.

You need to have some sort of marketing plan to bring traffic into your website. Be it Pay Per Click, Search Engine Optimisation or social media – a plan is needed.

For SEO to work, the search engines must see off-site website activity. This means other websites need to mention you and/or link to you. This can be derived from a variety of activities, but someone other than your mum needs to know your website or blog exists.

The best way to get the ball rolling is to tell everyone you know. This includes friends, family and anyone else you might bump into. They always say that the best sort of advertising is word-of-mouth, so be sure to give people something to talk about. Think about how many times you have heard about a business because a friend told you about it.

Online business directories are generally a good place to list your products and services, and it also provides external links to your website.

Getting other websites to link back to your new website can be helpful. Consider asking other local online businesses to link back to your new site. Over time, search engines will give your website more authority in search results if high quality websites are linking back to it.

In addition, by joining a network of similar sites that link to each other, you will increase traffic and improve your reputation in your industry.

If your website is about a local business be sure to sign up for [Google Business](#). This will increase your search presence and help people to find you via Google maps. Google also wants to see your full address and contact details (the same one as in Google Business) displayed on your website.

A mailing list is a fantastic tool for keeping in touch with your site's target audience and encouraging them to come back on a regular basis. Creating a monthly newsletter with updates about new products, sales or events is sure to kick up sales and engagement. If you don't have enough dynamic content for a regular newsletter, you can simply send them out on specific occasions (like a Christmas Sale).

Creating a Facebook page in conjunction with a website is another great way of building traffic. You can promote your website by linking it to social media pages on Facebook, Twitter, etc. from within your pages.

Combine your website and its content with social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, Google+, and you've created a machine that can yield huge results.

# Your website can be so much more than just a website

It's possible to leverage the power of the internet and make your website a useful tool that adds value to your business. You can turn your site into a portal for your customers, suppliers, staff, sales team and distributors. Doing this can transform the way your business operates day-to-day.

Your website could be used to reduce your operating costs and increase productivity (thereby increasing profits). It can be used for far more than just marketing your product. A great website not only portrays quality, trustworthiness and efficiency - but also includes tools and functionalities that make it more than just an online brochure.

Most business owners have realised that today's websites need to be more than just a few pretty pages. With such a large part of today's B2B buying process completed online, many websites are now used as marketing and sales tools.

To your buyers, your website is your virtual store front. Even if you don't sell products and services online, it's a place for them to research you and find answers to their questions or solutions to their problems.

The key is to produce content that's helpful to them when they have a problem or a goal they are looking to solve or achieve. Ask yourself what the triggers are that lead your potential buyers to your company or products and services.

Speak in their language and provide optimised content that Google and your customers will find in the form of blog posts, documents, catalogues, calculators, videos and plenty of helpful information.

Some potential customers will not consider working with you without the right certifications, so promote the fact that you have met the criteria for the various certifications and qualifications you hold. Be sure to display these prominently on the website and provide the ability to download or request the documentation.

Everyone wants to know who they're doing business with... the real people behind the product. Display members of your company's staff, team or workforce.

Show off who you do business with and how happy they are with your service. Incorporating logos on your website is one of the easiest, most effective ways to establish brand credibility and customer trust.

Speaking of happy customers, showcasing a featured client or customer is a good way to freshen up your content, not to mention giving both yourself and your client a bit of a marketing boost. It's a win-win situation. A video interview is the perfect way to do it, but a write-up with accompanying photos will work too.

Display a realistic interactive online catalogue or information booklet for customers and clients to view and download.

These are just a few ideas. The possibilities are endless.

## Feed your website to keep it alive

Now that your website is live, you need to regularly update it for it to thrive. Don't let this intimidate you – there's no need to change everything on your site every week.

Continue building on what you have, keep all information up to date, and offer more interactive features over time. These actions will ensure that your site stays current, useful and interesting.

A great website has the right combination of both static and dynamic content. Static items, like the logo, 'About' and 'Contact' pages, remain the same for the most part.

Dynamic content should be continuously updated. This includes items such as new products or services, recent photos, seasonal events, give-aways or important announcements.

If you want your website to keep attracting visitors, you must work to keep it fresh. Tend to it regularly and weed out the stale content, and you can be sure your website will maintain its appeal to both new and returning visitors alike.

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