



Introduction to

Website

Best Practices

Venture Accelerator Partners



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Introduction: Why Is a Company Website Important?

Your company website is one of the best marketing channels for businesses. 90% of B2B buyers research purchases online, thus a website is essential for the success of your business.

It's imperative that your website be found in relevant search results, keep visitor with engaged with content and user experience, and finally convert them into leads.

This guide on website best practices is divided into three sections:

1. **Website Design** – Basics on how to ensure a good user experience once a user is on your website.
2. **Website Structure** – How to organize and set up your website so that it's easy to navigate and search engine friendly.
3. **Designing for Conversion** – Features your website should have to ensure you can generate leads from your website visitors.

DID YOU KNOW?

90% of B2B buyers use search to research business purchases, and on average, B2B researchers do 12 searches prior to engaging on a specific brand's site.

Source: The Changing Face of B2B Marketing, Think With Google.

Whether you're launching a new website, or you're updating an existing website, you can use this guide as a starting point to ensure your website has the basics it needs to achieve your sales and marketing goals.

Website Design

Web design is the planning and creation of websites. This includes the site structure, navigation, layout, colours, fonts, and imagery. All of these are combined with the principles of design to create a website that meets the goals of the business.

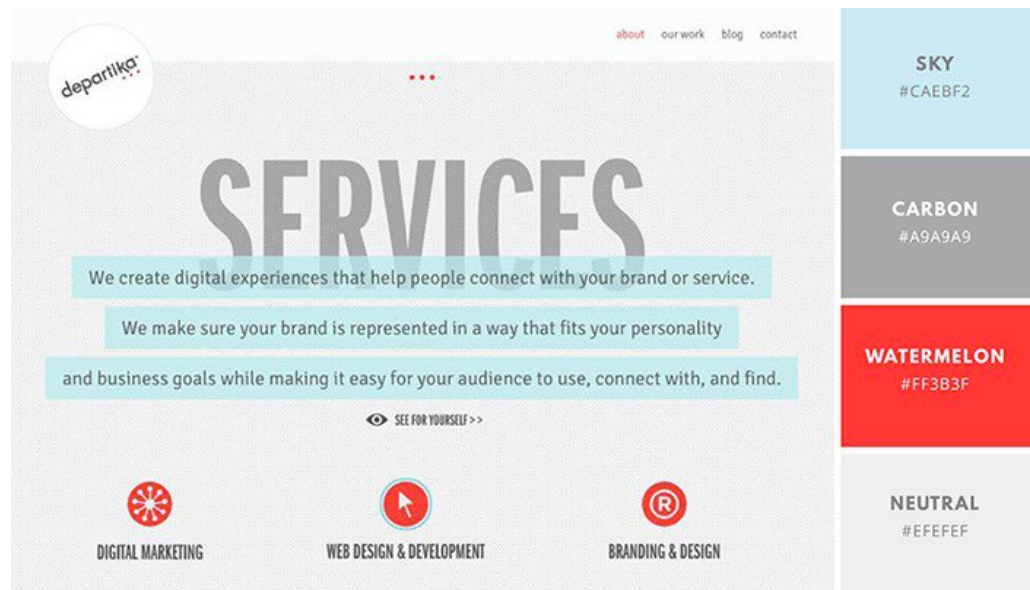
1. COLOUR

Colour Palettes

The more colours you use on your website, the harder it is to maintain a coherent design and a good user experience. One rule to follow when selecting colours for your website is the “60-30-10” rule which says that three colours should be used in different proportions to create harmony.

The main colour should be used about 60% of the time and creates the overall unifying theme of the design. The 30% should contrast with the 60% for visual interest. The 10% is an “accent colour”, which should complement your primary or secondary colour.

One way to select these three colours is by picking them from your logo. Another way to get inspiration is to use a colour palette generator like Coolors (coolors.co) or Adobe Colour (color.adobe.com/explore).



The website of this agency uses three colours for its colour scheme, plus a neutral colour for the background. Source: Website Color Schemes, Canva, 2016.

Background and Text Colours

When it comes to text longer than a paragraph, best practice is to use dark text on a light background. Studies have shown that people's reading is 26% more accurate when reading dark text on a light background, compared to reading light text on a dark background. In addition, "hazing" (blurring) around characters can happen with prolonged reading of light text on a dark background.

Although you can use darker backgrounds or images behind small sections of text or titles, it's best to use white or light backgrounds if you're displaying blocks of text.

This paragraph text color is black, which is easy to read because the light that hits each word and letter isn't reflected, but absorbed.

This paragraph text color is white, which is harder to read because the light that hits each word reflects and scatters into each other.

Using dark text on a light background will ensure better legibility for larger blocks of text.

Link and Button Colours

When selecting a colour for your website links and buttons, ensure that the colour is easy to read and stands out from the rest of the text in a way that makes it clear that it's a link or button that can be clicked.

The colour of links should be consistent throughout the website so it's clear to the visitor what they can and cannot click, no matter what page they are on. One way to decide what colour to use for links is to use a colour from your website colour palette (see section above).

2. TYPOGRAPHY

Typography is the technique of arranging and styling type (fonts). Using the right typography and maintaining consistency throughout your website can make the difference between good, bad and great design.

Selecting the right fonts, font size and colours will help your visitors read your content by making it easier to read without straining their eyes, and easier to digest by conveying structure.

Headings & Subheadings

Headings should generally be used for the title of the page or the title of the blog post. The font for the heading should be distinct from the text on the page and is generally larger as well. In HTML, headings should be a <h1> tag.

Subheadings are used to divide larger blocks of text into sections. Subheadings should look distinct from the heading and the body text; usually it's smaller than the heading but larger than the body text. In HTML, the first level subheading should be within a <h2> tag.

Body Text

The look of text in large blocks of text, such as in blog posts or FAQs, should be consistent throughout. Specifically, the same colour, font type and size. The text should be easy to read for long periods of time, which means it shouldn't be italicized or bold, and individual letters should not look jumbled together. The size should be smaller than the font used in headings and subheadings.

If in doubt, you can use fonts that are commonly used for website text and are known to be easy to read, such as Arial, Helvetica and Promixa Nova. For a larger list, see the article "The 50 Most Popular Fonts on the Web" (www.myfonts.com/topwebfonts).

QUICK TIPS

Better Interface Design: Logins, Menus, Toggles And Other Fancy Modules

By [Cosima Mielke](#)

Dialog & Modal Windows [↗](#)

FLAPPY DIALOG [↗](#)

Alex Wright's [Flappy Dialog](#) is based on a [Dribbble concept by Peter Main](#). The dialog window features two flaps. Once a user hovers over one of them, it starts moving, and as soon as he has clicked, the entire window flips to the front and disappears. An interesting and fun way to make a window and its content more prominent, especially for routine interactions like "Yes" and "No" which users usually don't pay a lot of attention to.

The typography from SmashingMagazine.com, an online design magazine, shows a clear hierarchy of headings, subheadings and text.

Text Links

Links are important on websites for helping visitors discover more content or pointing them to more resources. However, links are only effective if readers know to click, which means that links need to look different from the regular body of the website.

Standard ways to distinguish links from text is by using a different colour (usually one of the colours from your website colour palette) or by underlining the text. You may also change the look of the link text when someone hovers over the text to confirm that the text can be clicked.

2. LEGIBILITY

It goes without saying that the content and text on your website should be easy to read. Legible text is better for user experience and helps ensure that your message is communicated to the visitor.

Here are basic guidelines for making sure your website text is legible:

- Font-size: 16px for body text (see Google’s article on Legible Font for more information at developers.google.com/speed/docs/insights/UseLegibleFontSizes)
- Paragraph width: 45 to 75 characters (including spaces and punctuation) per line
- Paragraph size: 8 lines or less; if the paragraph is larger, split it into two
- Line height: approximately 150% of the font size

For more details, see the article on “For Size Matters: Balancing Line Length And Font Size In Responsive Web Design” (www.smashingmagazine.com/2014/09/balancing-line-length-font-size-responsive-web-design)

3. IMAGES

Purpose of Images

Images on your website help communicate your brand’s message, or the message on a particular webpage. Types of images on a website include logos, photographs and illustrations.

Types of Images

1. Logos

A logo identifies your company and should be displayed in the header of the website, across all pages of your website.

2. Pictures (Photographs)

Pictures of products should be large enough, and of high enough quality, to clearly display the features you're showing.

When used in a blog post, particularly a long blog post, images help maintain reader interest so that the reader isn't overwhelmed by large amounts of text. As such, images on blog posts don't necessarily have to be literally related. For example, if your article is about sales tips, your images don't all have to be of sales people or money; they can be of people in meetings, in a suit or people winning an award.

3. Illustrations

Other images can include illustrations, infographics or icons. These help quickly convey information, organize complex data or show steps in a process.

Copyright

When using images, whether it's logos, photographs or illustrations, make sure you have the right to use it first.

Do not download images from other businesses' or people's websites or from Google and use them on your site because these images may be copyrighted.

If an entity finds you're using their copyrighted images without permission, they can ask you to remove it, and if you do not, they may file a complaint with Google to get your page delisted from search results (support.google.com/legal/answer/31110420?hl=en&rd=2) or report the file to your website host.

Where to Find Images

Finding visually appealing and relevant images for your website at no cost, or low cost, is easier than you think.

You or your employees can:

- Create the images or take the photographs yourselves
- Download free stock images, such as from stocksnap.io or pixabay.com
- Purchase stock images, such as from depositphotos.com (images start at \$1/image) or www.istockphoto.com

File Formats for Images

There are images found throughout a website, from logos, photographs, to screenshots of products and more. When using images on a website, saving each file in the right file type will help optimize the quality of the image so that it looks better, and will minimize the size of the file so that your web pages don't load slower than necessarily.

Here are the three most common file formats and when to use which.

1. JPG, JPEG

JPEGs can display millions of colours and is also the file format of photographs taken by your camera and smartphone. The best use for JPEG's are for photographs, and pictures where there is a large range of colours, shades or tones.

2. GIF

GIFs display less colours than JPEGs, but allow for transparency and short animations. The best uses for GIFs are for images with very few colours, such as icons, basic animations, and other simple graphics.

FILE TYPE	BEST USES
JPEG	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Still Images• Photographs• Many colors• Shading of light and dark
GIF	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Animations
PNG	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Web Images (PNG-8) Logos which involve transparency and fading• Images in the editing process (PNG 24)• Complex Images like photographs if file size is not an issue (PNG-24)

Source: Know Your File Types, When to use JPEG, GIF & PNG, WholsHostingThis.com

3. PNG

There are two types of PNG formats. PNG-8 is similar to a GIF but can be smaller in file size even when the image looks the same. PNG-24 is similar to JPEGs in that it can display over 16 million colours, but the PNG files are not compressed so the file size can get much larger than a JPEG. The best uses for PNGs are logos or complex images where file size isn't an issue.

Image Size & Resolution

The right image size to use is the smallest one that's still large enough to achieve your goal. For example, if you need an image to accompany a blog post and the maximum size that will be displayed is 600px, then the ideal size of the image would be 600 pixels. If you are using the same image elsewhere on the website at a different size, such as in a slider that's 1200px wide, then you should create a separate file that's 1200px.

Although using smaller files means that the file will load faster, you still need to ensure that the size is large enough to look clear and sharp. Stretching images to larger than their original size will likely result in images looking pixelated or blurry, resulting in a poor experience for your website visitor.

There are many free tools for resizing images, including GIMP (www.gimp.org) or Microsoft Paint, or paid options such as Adobe Photoshop (www.adobe.com/products/photoshop.html).

Website Structure

1. CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

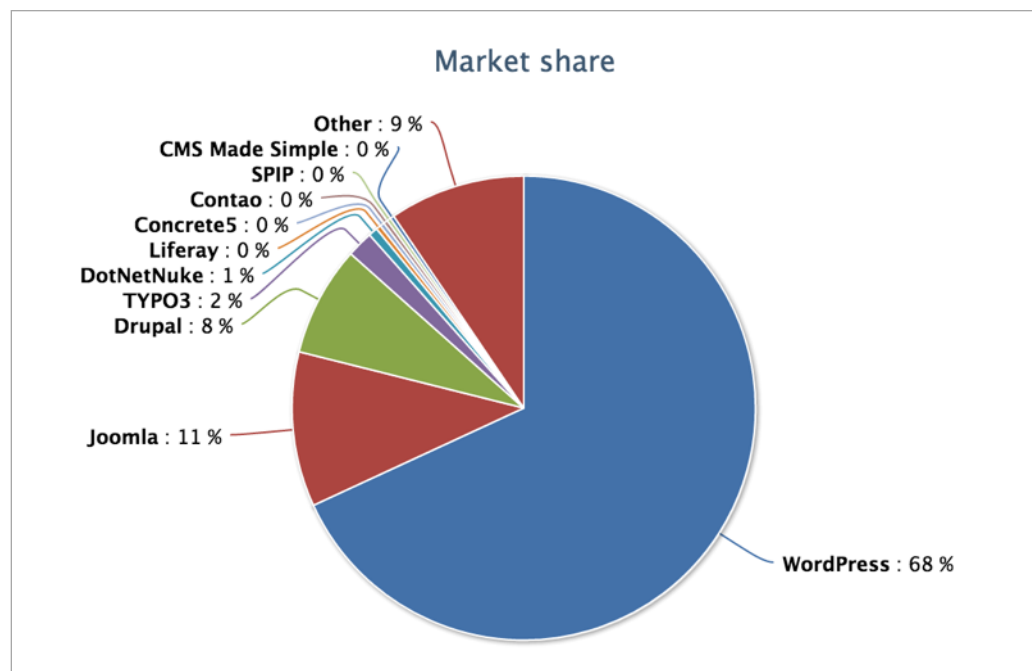
What is a Content Management System?

A content management system (CMS) is a web application designed to make it easy for non-technical users to add, edit and manage a website. Instead of having to code a website from scratch, a CMS lets you quickly create a website after you have purchased a domain name and web hosting.

Another benefit of a CMS is that the content of the website, such as the text and images, are separately managed from the look of the website, such as colours and the layout. This means that if you decide to change the look of the website, such as the colour scheme, you can do it independently without impacting the content on the website.

CMS Options

The most commonly used content management system is WordPress, which powers about 25% of all sites in the world and is the most used CMS (68% of all sites that use a CMS). However, there are other easy-to-use options as well.



Top content management systems, 2015, opensourcecms.com.

CMS options, that require you to purchase your own domain and web hosting include:

- WordPress (wordpress.org, free)
- Drupal (www.drupal.org, free)

CMS options that include hosting, but requires you to purchase your own domain, include:

- WordPress (wordpress.com, free)
- Squarespace (www.squarespace.com, \$8/month and up)

2. NAVIGATION

Standard Pages & Menu

There are generally a minimum number of sections, or pages, that your website should have to convey the basics of your company. This includes what you sell, why someone should choose you, and your company information. These pages should all be included in your website navigation menu.

1. Home

The home page is the first page visitors see when they arrive at your domain (e.g. companyname.com). This page should communicate what service/product you offer and benefits of the service/product. This page should also aim to inspire confidence in your company with content such as, short testimonials, or icons of associations or partners.

2. Services/Products

This page should provide more details on your service or product, including benefits, features, screenshots, how it works and more. If what you are selling is complex, has different use cases or is more technical in nature, you may need a number of sub-pages to explain the product or service.

3. About

This page should contain information about your company, such as the company story, philosophy and team. If you're including a larger number of people in the team information, you may wish to create a separate, dedicated page.

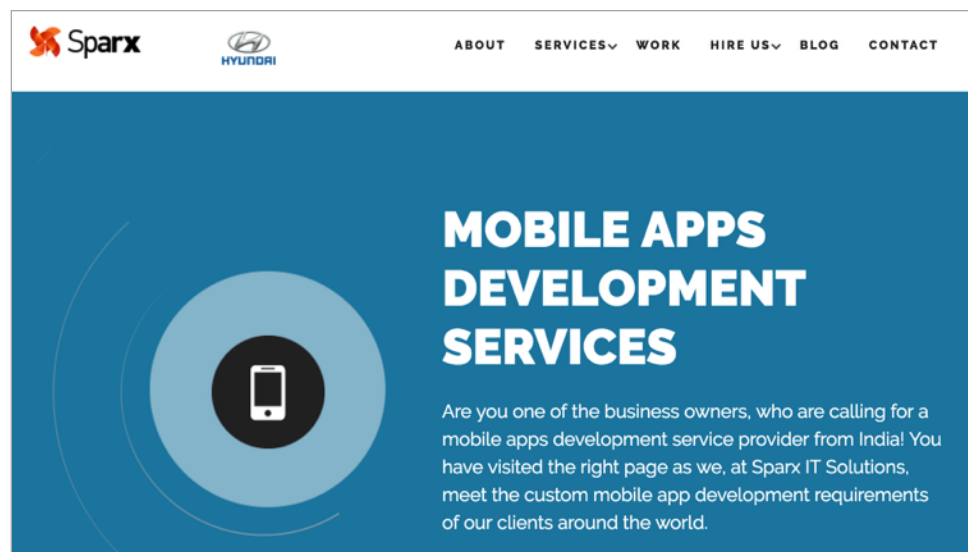
4. Contact

The contact page is an essential, but often overlooked, page on a website. Since a visitor can't get in touch with you to inquire about your service or product without your contact information, it's important to make it easy for people to reach you.

The contact page should include a contact phone number, email address, your office address and a contact form. You can also include links to, or buttons for, your social media profiles.

5. Blog

The main blog post displays an index of your recent blog posts. If you have a company blog, then include the link in your website menu so that visitors can easily find it.



This mobile development company has included the most important pages of their website on their navigation menu.

Footer

A website footer appears on every page of your website, which makes it a perfect place to link to your most important pages, social media profiles, and contact information such as phone number or email. If your company has an office, displaying your address here can improve the perception of legitimacy.



A sample website footer with links to essential company pages and contact information.

Sidebar

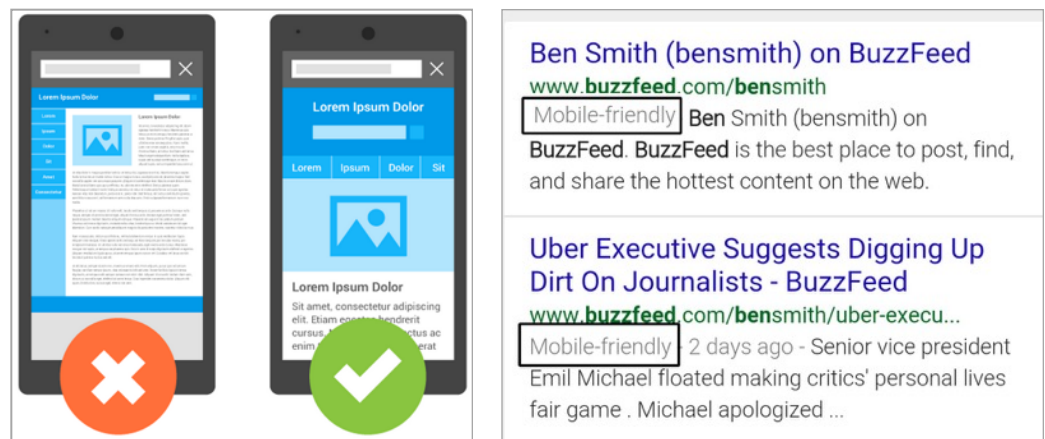
The sidebar on a blog or webpage is another area to place links for navigation, social media, signup forms or banners to landing pages. Common items listed on sidebars include:

- Newsletter signup
- Social media icons
- Banners linking to offers, such as e-books
- Recent or popular posts
- List of blog post categories

3. MOBILE-FRIENDLINESS

As an increasing proportion of web traffic comes from mobile, your website's mobile friendliness is becoming an essential part of the user experience and search engine rankings.

Mobile has become so important that in April 2015, Google formally announced that mobile-friendliness would become a ranking factor for searches from mobile devices (webmasters.googleblog.com/2015/04/rolling-out-mobile-friendly-update.html). In addition, search results on mobile are now labeled as "Mobile-friendly" if they are mobile-friendly.

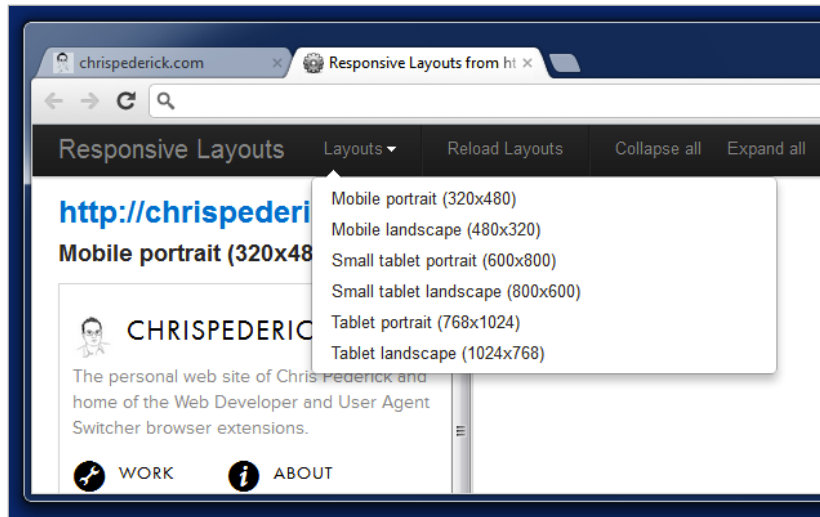


In April 2015, Google announced that mobile search results would factor in whether your website is mobile-friendly.

Mobile-Friendliness Tools

1. Web Developer Chrome Extension (bit.ly/1VS45DE)

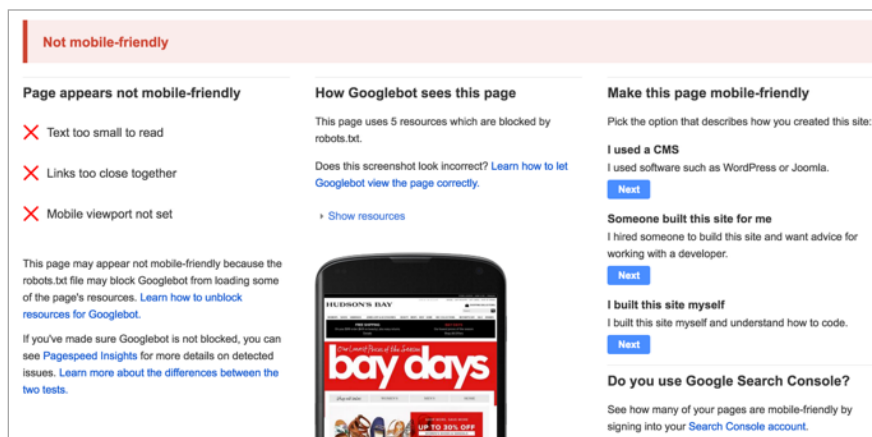
If you're evaluating website templates, such as WordPress themes, use this browser extension to resize your browser window to see how the theme would look in different screen sizes, such as on iPhones, iPads and desktops.



Resize your browser to the standard mobile or tablet resolutions to check if your site or Wordpress theme is mobile-friendly.

2. Google Mobile-Friendly Test (www.google.ca/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly)

Use this to check if your current website is mobile-friendly, and get suggestions or next steps to update your website.



Google Mobile-Friendly Test gives tips and next steps for making your website mobile-friendly.

4. LOADING SPEED

Why Website Speed Matters

Your website's loading speed impacts how long your visitors stay on your page. Today, 47% of users expect webpages to load within 2 seconds and 40% abandon a website that takes more than 3 seconds to load.



Webpage load speed impacts how long someone stays on the page.

Website Speed Tools

- Google PageSpeed Tools (developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights) - enter your website URL and the tool will provide a list of suggested improvements to speed up your website
- Pingdom (tools.pingdom.com/fpt) - enter your website URL and the tool provides a list of every single file and its file size that was loaded on the page, including images, videos and scripts; if your website is loading slowly, you can use these results to help diagnose the cause

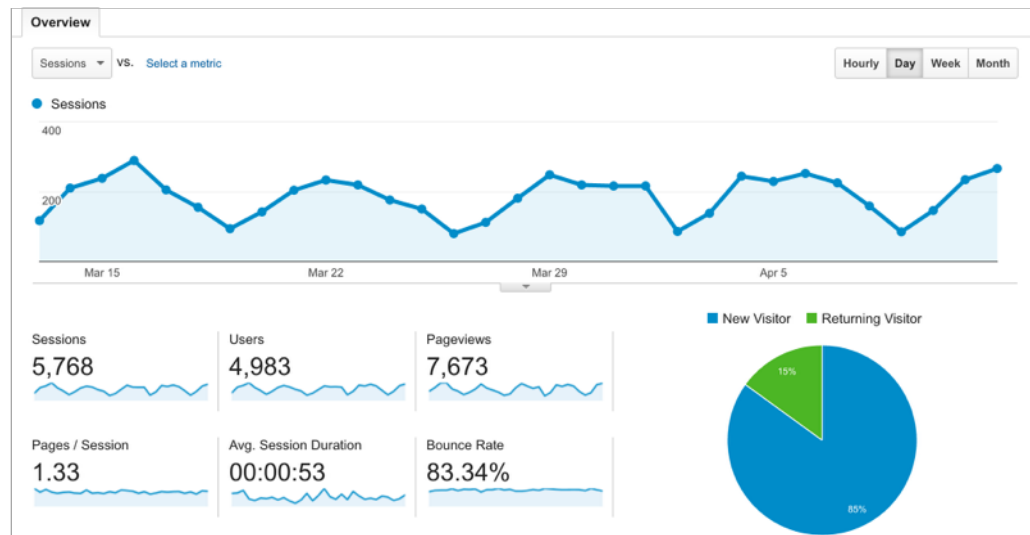
5. ANALYTICS

Your website should include an analytics tool that can track various metrics including the number of visits, page views and where the visits are coming from.

Having this type of data can help you decide what visitors are interested on your website, and allow you to measure the results of experiments you run such as the results of redesigning pages or changing the messaging.

Google Analytics

Google Analytics (www.google.ca/analytics) is free and a powerful website analytics tool that can easily be installed on your website via a code snippet; if your site is built on WordPress, you can download a plugin that lets you insert the Google Analytics tracking code.



The Google Analytics dashboard gives an overview of website traffic.

Other Website Analytic Tools

- Gauges - get.gaug.es (\$6/month and up)
- Mixpanel - mixpanel.com (free and up)
- Piwik - piwik.org (free and up)

6. SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

What is SEO?

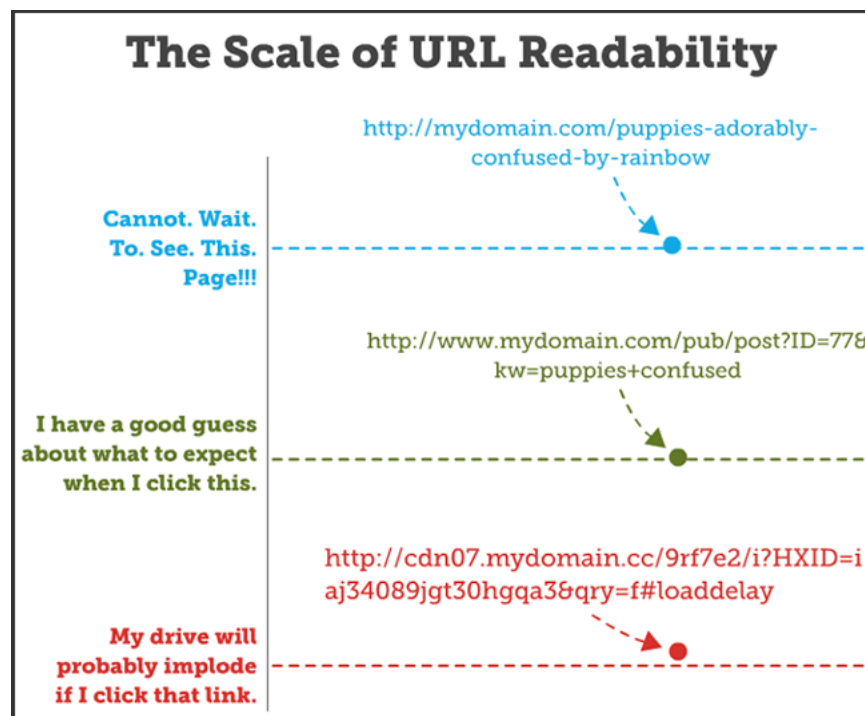
Search engine optimization (SEO) is the art of increasing the quantity and quality of the traffic from search engine results.

Although the algorithm that search engines use to determine which pages to display, and in which order, is proprietary, there are certain factors that are known to be correlated with a higher position in the search results.

URL Structure

The more readable your website page and blog post URLs are, the better. This means that if someone only looked at the URL of the page or blog post, they should know what to expect to see if they visited the URL. In addition, a short URL is generally better than a long one, and the topic of the page or blog post should also be included in the URL.

For example, `company.com/startup-sales-tips` is better than `company.com/folder/?pageid=112358`.



Comparison of URL structures for readability.

Designing for Conversion

One of the most important roles of your company website is to generate conversions and collect leads.

Your website should have ways to capture contact information of potential customers or partners, such as offering something that requires the visitor to give their email or contact information to get.

This means that your website should be able to facilitate the creation of landing pages, newsletter signups, and contact or quote request forms.

1. LANDING PAGES

What's a Landing Page?

A landing page is a web page that has been designed for a specific conversion goal, such as an e-book download, newsletter sign-up, trial sign-up, clicking through to an app download or another objective.

A sample landing page for an e-book offer from HubSpot.

Differences From “Regular” Website Pages

The main difference between a landing page and the rest of the pages on your website is the number of links on the page.

The ratio of links to the number of conversion goals on a webpage is known as the “attention ratio” and on a landing page, the ratio should be 1:1 because a landing page should just have one goal, i.e. one link or button to click.

This means that a landing page:

- Does not have navigation menu links nor sidebar links
- Only has one button/link, which will be to complete the action that the landing page is trying to drive you to complete

Setting Up Landing Pages

If your website is built on WordPress, your theme may include a template for a landing page, or you can create a custom page that excludes the main menu, sidebar and/or footer that are shown on regular pages.

You can also use WordPress plugins such as:

- WordPress Landing Pages (wordpress.org/plugins/landing-pages)

You can also use landing page apps such as:

- Unbounce (unbounce.com - \$49/month with 30-day trial)
- LeadPages (www.leadpages.net - \$25/month)

2. POPOVERS

Popovers are the boxes that pop up on top of the page, often to ask you to sign up for a newsletter or download an offer.

When these are used correctly and displayed in a non-intrusive manner, such as waiting until someone has been on the page for a minimum amount of time, these popovers can significantly increase the number of leads.

If you are using WordPress for your website, here are plugins you can use to create popovers:

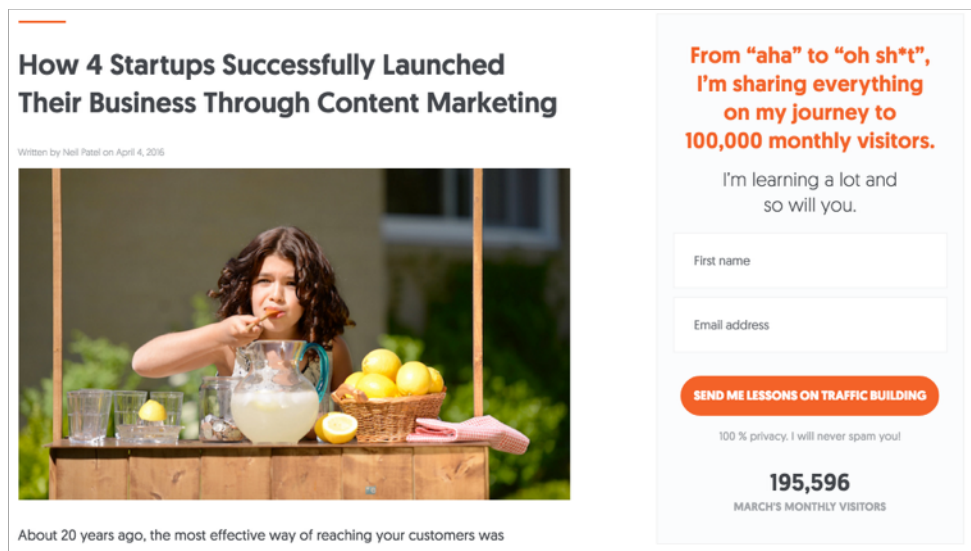
- LeadIn (leadin.hubspot.com - free)
- SumoMe (sumome.com - freemium)
- OptinMonster (optinmonster.com - \$9/month and up)

3. SIDEBARS

The sidebars on pages and blog posts are a great spot to put forms or banners linking to landing pages for:

- Newsletter signups
- Whitepaper downloads
- Event/webinar signups
- Consultation requests

You can also add links to your social media profiles or Follow/Like buttons.



The screenshot shows a sidebar layout. On the left, there is a blog post snippet with the title "How 4 Startups Successfully Launched Their Business Through Content Marketing" and a photo of a woman at a lemonade stand. On the right, there is a sign-up form with the headline "From 'aha' to 'oh sh*t', I'm sharing everything on my journey to 100,000 monthly visitors." and a call-to-action button "SEND ME LESSONS ON TRAFFIC BUILDING". Below the button is a privacy statement and a traffic counter showing "195,596 MARCH'S MONTHLY VISITORS".

Example of a signup form on a blog sidebar, on neilpatel.com.

4. SOCIAL MEDIA

Your website should let visitors easily share blog posts or articles to help grow your presence on social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Twitter. This means having social media buttons noticeably displayed near the top of your blog posts, or another area of the page.

Here are tools and plugins you can use to add social media sharing buttons to your website:

- Digg Digg (buffer.com/diggdigg)
- AddThis (www.addthis.com/get/sharing)
- ShareThis (www.sharethis.com/get-sharing-tools)



Social media buttons near the top of blog posts helps encourage social media sharing.

Social media follow buttons should also be displayed on your website footer or sidebar to let visitors follow your accounts with a single-click. Here are the links to generate the follow buttons for your accounts:

- Twitter (about.twitter.com/resources/buttons#follow)
- LinkedIn (developer.linkedin.com/plugins/follow-company)
- Facebook (developers.facebook.com/docs/plugins/follow-button)

Next Steps & Further Reading

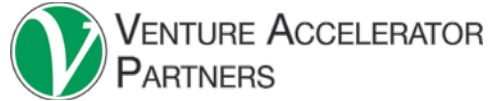
Whether you are creating a website from scratch or updating an existing website, ensuring your website is designed, setup and presented in a way that facilitates a good user experience and conversions is key to a successful website.

This white paper is a basic introduction to setting up a website and there are many more resources available online to help you design, create, launch and optimize your company website.

Further Reading

- Website Launch Checklist: 14 Things to Review Before Going Live
blog.hubspot.com/agency/website-launch-checklist
- Getting Started With WordPress
www.wpexplorer.com/get-started-wordpress-guide/
- SEO Made Simple: A Step-by-Step Guide
neilpatel.com/what-is-seo
- Using the Psychology of Color to Boost Your Website Conversions
premium.wpmudev.org/blog/color-psychology
- Useful Findings About How People View Websites
conversionxl.com/10-useful-findings-about-how-people-view-websites
- The Absolute Beginner's Guide to Google Analytics
moz.com/blog/absolute-beginners-guide-to-google-analytics

About Venture Accelerator Partners



Venture Accelerator Partners provides B2B sales, marketing and inbound lead generation services to startups and fast-growing organizations. Our clients range from mobile startups, large industrial companies, to major financial services companies.

Since 2006, VA Partners has helped drive millions of website visitors, hundreds of qualified meetings, and millions of dollars in revenue for clients.

Our team is passionately committed to growing revenue for growing companies. Some of our recent accomplishments include:

- Generated \$500,000 in new revenue for an oil and gas provider in the first year of the engagement
- Helped create a \$2 million annuity stream for a financial services company
- Closed \$300,000 in incremental revenue working six days per month for a client
- Boosted website traffic and inbound leads by 300% over 6 months for a growing enterprise sales training company
- Secured partnership meetings with Fortune 500 companies like RIM, Microsoft, ADP and more

Companies work with us to establish sales processes, revamp marketing, build and optimize websites for lead generation, leverage social media, build a sales funnel of qualified leads, close deals faster, and save money with experienced resources.

To learn more about our sales and marketing services for growing B2B businesses, contact us at info@vapartners.ca or (647) 401-7156.

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Twitter: twitter.com/vapartners

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/venture-accelerator-partners-inc-