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# Marketing and SEO Fundamentals



**Your Startup and Small Business Guide**

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## ~ INTRODUCTION ~

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- The Sloan Brothers, co-founders of StartupNation, discuss how small businesses can use mobile marketing solutions to remain competitive
- Ryan Robinson, an entrepreneur and writer, writes about online resources to use when creating a marketing plan
- Amy Morin, a licensed clinical social worker and author of “13 Things Mentally Strong People Don’t Do,” shares how to make Facebook Live an effective marketing tool
- Enjoy the articles compiled in StartupNation’s Marketing and SEO Fundamentals eBook, and look forward to additional volumes in our Business Builder eBook series



# PART 1: Marketing Basics

## **PART I : Marketing Basics**

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# 7 Online Resources to Tap When Creating a Marketing Plan

[Ryan Robinson](#)



Whether you're launching your first startup, preparing for the release of a new product line or getting ready to make the leap to self-employment, you're going to need a [bulletproof marketing plan](#) before hitting the accelerator.

Regardless of how great you believe your solution is, a strategic marketing plan will help you better formulate your value propositions, target the right customers and reach them as efficiently as possible.

Over the past few years, I've helped brands like LinkedIn, Zendesk and CreativeLive develop and execute high-return marketing plans. Through my research and practical experience, here are the top seven online resources for creating a marketing plan that in order to get real results for your bottom line:

## 1. [Google AdWords Keyword Planner](#)

Want to get a clear estimate of how much online demand there is for your type of product or service? Google's Keyword Planner will give you the most accurate idea of how many monthly searches there are on Google for the specific keyword phrases you enter.

For example, if you're planning to launch a new portable speaker targeted for use in the shower or at the beach, you'd want to check out the level of demand and competition while creating your marketing plan. With Keyword Planner, you can get a snapshot of how many people search each month using keyword phrases like, "waterproof speaker," "Bluetooth shower speaker" and "best portable speaker for the beach." You'll also get clear estimates for how much running an AdWords campaign will cost for your target keyword phrases.

## 2. [Buzzsumo](#)

This tactical research tool gives you the ability to track down the highest performing existing websites, content and influencers in the space you're operating in. Buzzsumo's content researcher gives you a targeted list of potential partners for your marketing campaigns, destinations to run sponsorships and relevant influencers who'd likely be interested in becoming brand advocates for your upcoming solution.

## 3. [HubSpot's Blog Topic Generator](#)

Like it or not, any marketing plan in today's digital age needs to incorporate content. Whether that's in the form of written blog posts, testimonials, product reviews, video content, animated films or otherwise, creating unique content is a must. After entering a few nouns that describe your upcoming product or service, the blog topic generator tool by HubSpot will automatically give you a list of five creative topics you can create content around.

#### 4. [Moz Open Site Explorer](#)

This free tool created by Moz has become the industry standard for researching competitor websites, finding link-building opportunities and identifying collaboration partners to work with on the launch of your solution. By looking up the websites of similar or related competitor companies in your industry on Open Site Explorer, you can quickly identify all of the top articles and sites that link to your competitor. With this knowledge, you can build a targeted outreach list to start drumming up press for your upcoming launch.

#### 5. [Google Trends](#)

Another extremely useful free resource from Google, the Trends tool is a great starting point for identifying trending stories and mapping out long-term trend projections for specific topic areas over time. By searching “Bluetooth speaker” on Google Trends, you can see clear spikes in search activity around the holiday season each year — which can help inform you on the best times of year to boost your paid marketing campaigns.

#### 6. [The Quicksprout Blog](#)

Quicksprout is the marketing blog that’s run by Neil Patel, one of the world’s foremost authorities on digital marketing and SEO. With almost 900 online marketing-related articles since Neil started blogging back in 2007, this is your destination for deep dives on how to execute specific strategies, tactics and campaigns that have helped him generate millions for his clients.

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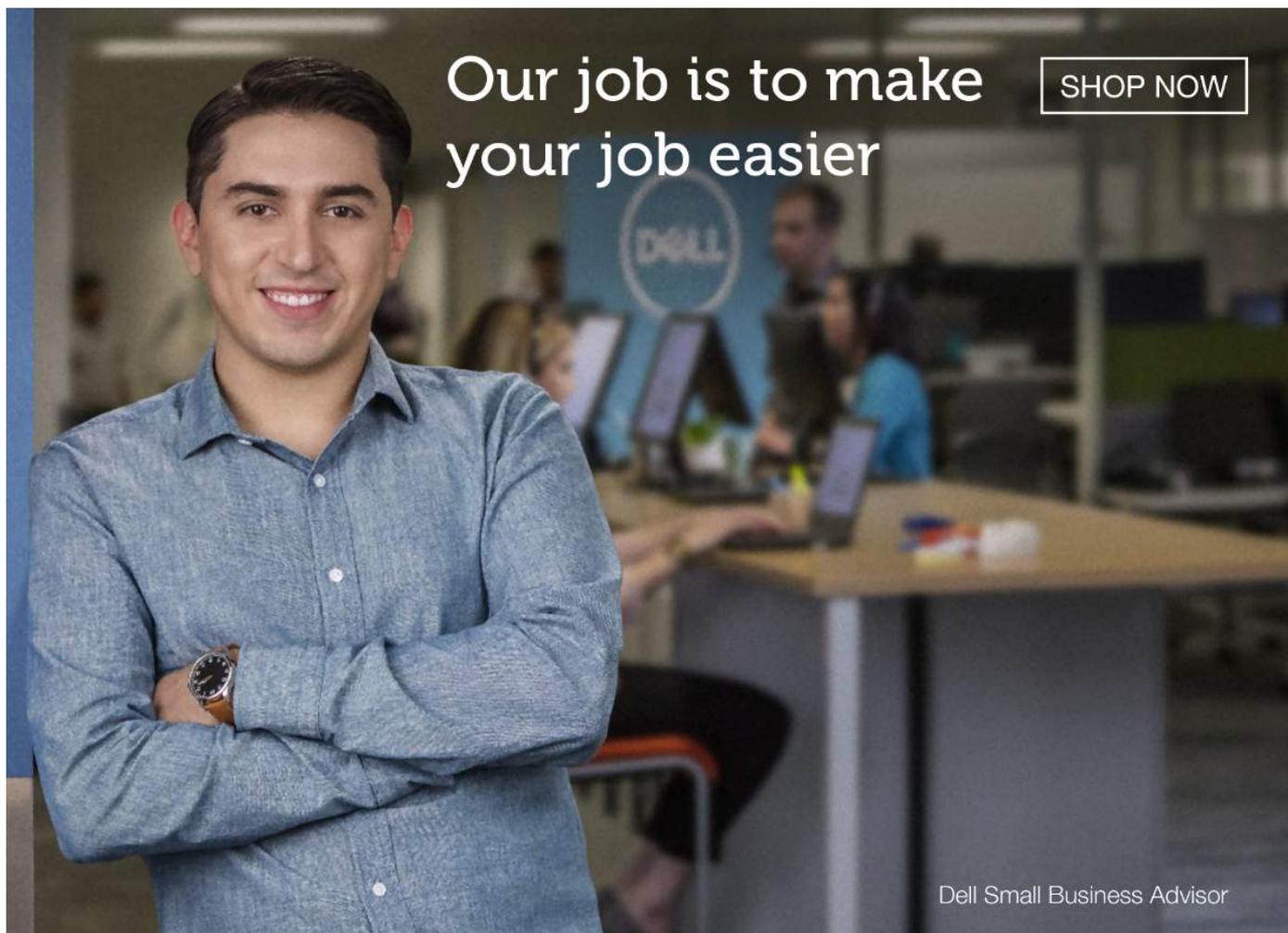
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## 7. Peek by User Testing

Want to get a preview of how visitors are going to react to your upcoming product or service before spending a ton of money driving in traffic? Peek by User Testing is a free service that gives you a five-minute video of a real person using your website or app. It's the perfect way to test landing page copy, get feedback on your sales funnel and identify potential shortcomings with your solution before launching to the rest of the world.

As you're creating your marketing plan, remember not to lose sight of who your customers really are. Take the time to have regular conversations with the people in your target market, ask them which sites they frequent and develop an understanding for their deepest needs when it comes to the topic area you're creating a solution for.



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# The Dummy-Proof Guide to Marketing

[Susan Guillory](#)



Many entrepreneurs get wrapped around the axle when it comes to marketing. They assume it's over their heads, and therefore simply leave it alone.

But take it from me: marketing isn't rocket science, and ignoring it will be to the detriment of your business. Below, you will find some super simple tips to instantly apply in order to get your marketing moving in the right direction.

## **Talk like a human**

Whether you're writing a blog post, updating your Twitter feed, or sending an email to your subscribers, it's important that you use natural language, like you were having a conversation with a friend. You might be more formal than you would be with a friend in order to be relatable. Many of us have a tendency to try to write over our own heads, in an attempt to sound more intelligent. Keep your audience in mind; most experts suggest [writing for the 6th or 7th grade level](#).

Need help being more conversational? Check out the [Hemingway app](#). Just paste in your writing and the app will identify roadblocks like overly complex sentences or passive voice, which you can then fix.

## **Choose your channels wisely**

I'm not sure why there has been a trend toward businesses trying to be on every single social media channel out there. You're better off putting your resources into two or three [social sites](#) (those being the ones where your audience spends the most time), rather than spreading yourself thin across a dozen sites and not getting traction on any of them. The fewer places you put your attention, the better you can monitor people talking about you there, or spot trends that you can leverage in your marketing.

## **Be a not-exactly copycat**

There's no law saying you can't take a peek at what your competitors are doing. It's good karma not to rip them off, but there's no reason you can't use their marketing strategies as inspiration for your own. Let's say a competitor is holding a giveaway on their blog. Who's to say you can't hold an Instagram contest?

Look for what the competition is missing in terms of reaching your audience and fill in the gaps so that you're the brand people turn to.

## **Automate your marketing smartly**

We've got some amazing marketing tools at our disposal these days, and many of them can [automate tasks](#) we were doing manually. Choose the things that make the most sense to automate, such as:

- Publish dates for your blog posts
- Social media updates
- Email blasts

Just don't lean too hard on automation; when you're automatically publishing new blog content to your social channels, you should also schedule manually-written updates so that you reach the maximum number of people with multiple promotions, and they all don't sound so robotic. Automated updates often just publish the title of your post, so the manual updates can include a quote, a good point, or a question about the post to get people engaged.

## **KYGS (or keep your goals simple)**

Having objectives for your marketing is essential. But they don't have to be overly complex. Maybe you'd like to grow your Twitter followers by 200 in the next month. Totally doable. Perhaps you'd like to see your blog send more traffic to your site. Keep your goals measurable (an increase in sales of how much? What percent growth in followers?) so you can, you know, measure them. Set a timeframe to achieve your goals, and if you don't quite hit the mark, don't cry about it. Just recalibrate those goals and move forward.

I told you marketing isn't rocket science. It's really intuitive and easy to understand when you remember that, at the core of marketing, you're simply trying to connect with other human beings.

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# How to Create Marketing Demand for Your Unknown Startup

[Jordan Kasteler](#)



You've developed an innovative product or service that you just *know* is a potential game changer in your industry. You've carefully tested it and worked out the bugs. Now you're ready to introduce it to the world! There's only one problem: nobody knows your startup (or your product) exists. Even if everyone knew your product existed, how would you convince your market that your product will make their life better?

Generating demand for your unknown product or service isn't always easy, but by following some smart strategies, it will happen! Here are six demand generation strategies you'll want to consider:

## **Create desirable content**

“Desirable” is the key word here. Mediocre content is a hallmark of the Internet, and consumers know dribble when they see it. Explain why your unknown product or service will solve a problem in people's lives, and do it in a way that entertains, informs, or provides humor.

If you don't believe there is any way to wrap your particular product's benefits into interesting or humorous content, take a look at some of the content produced by [Dollar Shave Club](#) or [SquattyPotty](#) for inspiration. Eye opening [infographics](#) can also generate demand for your products, along with insightful [blog posts](#). If it's sharable and buzz-worthy, the sky's the limit.

## **Entice consumers with deep discounts and offers**

How many times have you purchased new products from an unknown company the second you saw their marketing? Probably not many. Most people are resistant to new concepts or products, so offer an irresistible price cut or an attractive incentive to clinch the deal. Just remember to make it clear that this incredible low price, fee, or rate is temporary. You don't want your customers to be disappointed when the regular price comes back.

## **Take advantage of Facebook's advertising tools**

For effective demand generation, Facebook has some of the most robust [advertising capabilities](#) online. One valuable tool Facebook offers is "[lookalike audiences](#)." These customized audiences are behaviorally and demographically similar to consumers who have shown interest in your products.

The "lookalike-audiences" tool enables you to upload data you've generated from your real-life audiences, and build a similar audience to market to. This offering is an effective way to significantly expand the visibility of your Facebook advertising.

## **Engage**

Show the world your helpful side! If the first impression of your new company is that of a caring problem solver, customers will want to get to know you and your products. How do you show people you're here to help? By engaging with them, of course!!

Some brands have won over customers with a “white glove” approach. While most companies push everyone to email only, food tech startup [TruBrain](#) went the other direction and offered up its neuroscience PhDs on video calls to coach new customers on their sleep, stress and productivity. Most customers ended up buying their functional beverages as a result.

For example, the owner of a new exotic pets supply company might frequently conduct Twitter searches for the words “parrot” and “chinchilla.” When she sees someone tweet “I think my parrot is sick, but I’m not sure,” a perfect opportunity for engagement arises. Whether the business owner suggests a product or just gives valuable advice about parrot care, she’ll be viewed positively by anyone catching wind of such conversations. The more you engage with people and use your knowledge to help them, the more demand you’ll generate.

## **Focus on public relations**

Don’t neglect good public relations practices! An effective PR strategy could generate demand for your business in ways you wouldn’t necessarily have been able to do on social media alone. When generating demand for your unknown startup, solid relationships with the media will be of great benefit. Either seek a reputable PR firm, or talk to journalists about the solutions your business has to offer. Also, reach out to influential bloggers who have audiences in your industry.

## **Display product reviews**

As a general rule, consumers trust other consumers. If you’ve received rave reviews from those who have tried your products or services, display them for

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others to see as well! Make sure they are prominent on your website, but more importantly, find creative ways to spread these reviews on your social media channels, as well.



*(Marketing demand summary)*

## **Marketing demand conclusion**

You don't have to stop with these six tactics, but implementing them will get your new product poised for success. What's important is that you creatively communicate your product's benefits, reach as many potential customers as possible, and engage with people in ways that show you care. If your product is as good as you believe it to be, these techniques will boost your startup into superstardom!!

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# PART 2 : Maximize Your Marketing

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- Improve Your Marketing with Culture Clues - by Ann Logue

# Why the Future of Marketing is About Relationships

[Deborah Sweeney](#)



A couple of weeks ago, I participated in a Twitter chat hosted by Marketo about social selling. If you're not entirely familiar with the term, social selling is about utilizing social channels where your audience is — like Facebook and Instagram — to discover and build rapport with sales prospects.

When social selling is done right, it reaps the benefits of targeted media placement, brand awareness and qualified lead generation. It also allows you to make a real connection with sales prospects and build a relationship together. Now, more than ever before, marketing tactics are slowly moving their focus away from being 100 percent numbers-driven to placing a greater value on listening to and engaging with the other party to find out where they are and what matters to them.

The future of marketing depends on building lasting relationships. Here is a look at the long-term value they can provide a small business.

## The power of listening

Whether it's a customer, partner or sales prospect, how does anyone identify a potential lead for their business? It's a mix of giving as much as it is taking — listening as much as you're speaking, if not more.

Unfortunately, statistics have shown that less than 2 percent of people have had any formal education on [how to listen](#).

*And in a recent [TED Talk hosted by Julian Treasure](#), studies revealed that even though we spend 60 percent of our communication time listening, we only retain 25 percent of what we hear.*

Here are a few actionable tips that any entrepreneur can utilize to better listen and absorb information from new and existing connections alike.

- **Get curious.** There's no such thing as a stupid question, and when you first meet or discover someone for the first time, you're likely to have many questions. Ask!
- **Be authentic.** Your brand should come from a naturally transparent place, not one that feels fake or forced. If you're always selling, it's difficult to understand the needs of others.
- **Switch your listening position.** We don't mean physically moving around, either. In his TED Talk, Julian Treasure suggests moving your listening position to what's appropriate to what you're hearing. Play around with your inner filters to get conscious about them — for example, if you're listening from a critical place, switch to an empathetic one instead.

around, either. In his TED Talk, Julian Treasure suggests moving your listening position to what's appropriate to what you're hearing. Play around with your inner filters to get conscious about them — for example, if you're listening from a critical place, switch to an empathetic one instead.

## **Identifying needs now and into the future**

A good business knows what their customer wants now. A great business knows how to anticipate those needs into the future.

*“Deborah, how can I do this? I can't predict the future!”* While psychic abilities aren't necessary here, the key is to avoid clumping customers, partners or prospects into a one size fits all group with your marketing tactics. The best ways to build relationships are to identify the client's needs on an individualized basis. Meet them where they are now and explore where they're going by establishing a working rapport together and keeping the lines of communication open with incredible customer service.

## **Marketing strategy: creating a cheerleader effect**

At the end of the day, your marketing strategy should create a relationship where the customer experience has been a positive and fulfilling one. This experience plants the seeds for a brand advocate to bloom from within. Or, as we like to think of it, helping to establish the cheerleader effect.

Win or lose, cheerleaders root on their team with everything they've got and they encourage fans to show the love, too. When the team knows they've got their cheerleaders on their side, they play a little harder to make them proud. Your brand is the team and your cheerleaders are your fans or customers, spreading great word of mouth about you to everyone they encounter. So, remember to listen, ask questions in order to keep learning and help provide solutions, and you'll be on your way to building a relationship that lasts.

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stressed about making lunch, a fourth factor. Thus, if you are selling a product for kid's school lunches, you have four avenues to consider when appealing to the market.

Department-store magnate Marshall Field supposedly said the secret to merchandising was to “[give the lady what she wants](#).” That's easy enough, if you could tell what it was that the customer actually wanted. The good news? That information is all around us, if you know where to look. By pulling together the cultural threads that influence your customer, you can improve your marketing plan.

Two of the main techniques used by companies with large marketing budgets are personas and mood boards. They spend time and money on focus groups and market tests to come up with plans of action. However, you can do a low-cost version of the same work to improve your marketing right now.

## **Personas**

[Personas](#) are descriptions of target customers, made in such a way that you can readily identify who is and is not a customer. This includes information such as the buyer's demographics, the problem that has to be solved and how the purchase decision is made. These don't have to be complicated. In fact, if you make them too specific, you can overlook potential customers who almost – but not quite – fit the description. Instead, think about the factors that fit your customer based on what you sell. If you are selling temporary accounting services, you may only need to know that your target customer is an accounting manager at a manufacturing company who wants to make good decisions in order to get promoted. Her hobbies, family background and favorite beverages probably aren't relevant.

If you sell a service that delivers healthy pre-made school lunches to her house, then those factors do matter. To improve your marketing, look at what affects your product and let the rest go.

## Mood boards

Next, think about making a [mood board](#). Remember how in grade school, there was always one language arts teacher who had you make collages, and you figured that skill would never come in handy? Guess what? A mood board is a controlled collage that shows the images, colors, and even fonts that resonate with your target customer and can be used to showcase your brand. Ad agency employees spend hours preparing these for their clients because they are the basis of their future work. For a startup company, a simple attempt at a mood board can help improve your marketing.

*For startups that can't afford to do extensive work with focus groups and beta testing, "Social media is the way to go," says Tim Zuellig of [No Ink Inc.](#), a [digital design firm](#). He often helps clients use Instagram and Pinterest to get inspiration for their products.*

The accounting manager of your persona is likely to scroll Twitter first thing in the morning to get a read on the day's events. So, think about who an accounting manager would follow and what those people are talking about other than accounting issues. The mother making school lunches probably checks out Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook. Social media gives you a way to read the cultural factors that affect customers and, thus, their decisions.

As you get a read on the customer, you can also create the voice of your company and use that on social media. "Find a way to make the social brand personality open enough to have conversations with customers," says Lisa Leone, a [freelance creative director and content strategist in the Chicago area](#). "Facebook ad manager is so easy and inexpensive to use, and with it you can run smaller tests on both Facebook and Instagram to see what resonates culturally with your audience," she said, letting you do the small-company equivalent of a large focus group. Your customers may not tell you directly what they want, but they are telling you. And that's good news.

# PART 3 : Content Marketing

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# 5 Steps for Building a Simple Content Marketing Framework

[Tyler Hakes](#)



The year 2017 is now underway and many startups are looking for new ways to bolster growth and increase engagement within their communities. We've seen time and time again that content marketing is an approach that can create long-term value for a brand and serve the needs of a business.

But if you're new to content marketing (or want to rethink your approach), what are the first steps to getting started?

You should begin by building a framework for your efforts.

In this guide, we'll go through a five step process of building a simple content marketing framework to get your business off to the right start.

## **Step 1: Define your business goals**

Any content marketing strategy should begin with the end in mind. What is it that you want to accomplish through content marketing?

These goals should be specific to your business, and should be high-level objectives.

Avoid goals like “engagement” or even “traffic” and focus instead on the real business goals that matter to your bottom line.

Consider things like:

- Increasing sales
- Improving customer retention
- Lowering expenses (cheaper cost per acquisition)

Many people will encourage you to create very specific and actionable goals. For the sake of creating a framework, just having a target is enough to string together the remaining pieces.

## **Step 2: Create customer personas**

Once you’ve defined what it is you’re hoping to accomplish, the next step is to look at who you’ll reach with your content.

You should define clear personas for three to five target customers types.

These are archetypes. They should be as detailed as possible to give you a rich understanding of each persona’s particular circumstances, needs and goals.

Create a matrix that shows each of your personas along with some key components of each one:

- Name (make up a fictitious name for each persona, like “Marketing Mary”)
- Role (company type/size, responsibilities)
- Goals
- Worries

Persona	Role	Goals	Worries
<b>Marketing Mary</b>	SMB Marketing Director Leads small team (2 to 3)	Increase traffic Generate leads Measure ROI	Not meeting growth projections Day-to-day tactical operations
<b>CEO Sam</b>	Startup CEO Leads cross-functional team (5 to 10)	Achieve traction Impress investors	Growing the right team Hiring vs. outsourcing
<b>CMO Paul</b>	Corporate CMO Works for \$100M company Leads team of more than 50	Grow revenue Decrease costs	Revenue targets Expenses Keeping trained staff

Take the time to carefully consider each of these aspects about your customers. They provide important depth and insights into how you can create content that really speaks to your target audience.

### **Step 3: Understand customer goals**

Successful content marketing will serve to bridge the gap between your business goals and the needs or goals of your customer.

For example, when I speak to potential customers about content marketing, I don't sell the virtues of content marketing. I crouch it from the perspective of their business and how content marketing can help meet *their* goals.

This essential shift of perspective allows you to create content that connects with specific needs of your audience rather than serving as just promotional fodder on your blog.

Your specific content ideas will come from this intersection.

Let's look at this in practice:

- You own a window-washing business
- Your main goal is to increase sales leads
- One of your target personas is facilities director at a large company (“Facilities Phil”)
- Phil's goal is to reduce the number of complaints from staff about facilities

You should cover topics that speak to Phil's needs and offer potential solutions to their problems while also serving to meet the goals of your business.

So, you may decide to write a blog post called “13 Ways to Reduce Facilities Complaints.”

Of course, this is a natural opportunity to discuss how hiring a window washing company can help keep the windows clean so there are fewer complaints. It meets the needs of the customer *and* serves the goals of the business.

#### **Step 4: Develop metrics**

In step number one, you outlined the high-level goals that you want to accomplish through content marketing, which is a great place to start. However, you'll also need to define metrics that you'll use to measure your success.

These metrics are often lower-level, tactical data like traffic, shares or other numbers that point to the success of your content. They should come directly from the preceding information we've already determined.

So, if your window-washing business is trying to increase sales leads, then your metrics might be contact form submissions. You can further qualify this by looking at contact form submissions that first come to your website via the blog.

Create a list of one to three metrics for each high-level goal.

These metrics tell you how well your efforts are supporting your overarching business goals, and that's what really matters.

### **Step 5: Prescribe tactics**

Lastly, you'll need to determine specific tactics that you'll pursue.

If you begin with this step, then your approach is unhinged, merely a collection of activities.

However, because we have outlined the prior specifics of our framework, tactics now become an extension of these other components. You have clear direction about what you're trying to accomplish, who you're speaking to, what content they're interested in consuming and how you'll measure your success.

Each of these pieces informs the "how" and "what" of your strategy, including what content you'll create, how you should promote it and more.

Of course, this is just a framework.

It doesn't hold all of the answers, but it does give you the bones of a successful content marketing strategy full of the details you need to be successful.

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# How to Get More Bang for Your Buck with Content Marketing

[Susan Guillory](#)



Content marketing is a buzzword in the business world these days, and it can be challenging to get the results you could get a few years ago when there was less competition. Sure, you're writing blog content, but so is everyone else.

How can you get your content marketing efforts to take you further without dumping a ton of time and money into them? Follow these five steps:

## 1. **Go beyond the blog post**

[Blogging](#) is absolutely an effective way to create brand awareness and thought leadership, but content marketing really should include much more than that. You can attract more email subscribers if you have a report or e-book you can give away in exchange for an email address. Creating videos or infographics can attract people who may not want to sit and read a 1,500-word blog post.

Diversify the content you create, and you'll have more opportunity to attract people with different interests, as well as different preferred methods of consuming content.

## **2. Take one article and turn it into a content marketing machine**

It can be difficult to continually come up with new topic ideas (trust me: I've written literally thousands of articles on small business. Sometimes it feels like there's nothing new to say). You might find inspiration closer than you realize: your existing content is a great place to start in order to create new content.

Look at your analytics and identify a few blog posts that were really popular. From these topics, you could:

- Create additional posts that go more in-depth on different aspects of the original post
- Develop a longer e-book
- Source industry experts for their tips on the subject
- Create a second post with more insight on the same topic
- Set up a series of emails to provide subscribers more info on the subject

## **3. Automatically publish older content**

The frustrating thing about blog content is that a few weeks (or even days) after you publish a post, it becomes ancient history. All that hard work...for nothing.

Here's a secret tool I use that sends a lot of traffic back to my older posts: it's a WordPress plugin called [Revive Old Post](#), and it does just that. Once you set it up with the schedule of how frequently you want older content to be promoted on social media, you can forget about it. People will see shares of your older content, and you'll get traffic to your blog.

#### **4. Automate shares of new posts**

If you're sharing older content, you of course also want to share your newer content to increase reads, right? There are many tools for this, but I'm currently loving [dlvr.it](https://dlvr.it). Set up your blog feed, and every time a new post goes live, it's promoted to your various social media profiles. It's nice not to have to do it manually, though I do suggest scheduling a few manual shares in addition to that first share to maximize the number of people who view your content.

When you share content manually, change up the text of the share. You could:

- Cite an interesting statistic from the article
- Ask a thought-provoking question
- Pull highlights from the post

Your goal is to make people curious so they'll click on the link. Schedule each share for a different time each day, then look back to see which time got the most interest. Be sure to keep your audience in mind: are they likely using social media at work, where they'll click on your B2B blog post link? Or do you target consumers who browse social media in the evening?

#### **5. Boost your content**

One way to attract new readers is to boost a post on Facebook. For as little as \$5, you can get your blog post featured in the feeds of people who fit the demographics you're looking to reach. This is an easy and affordable way to increase blog traffic, which can result in a boost to your customer base, as well.

Select your more popular posts for the boost, and make your target audience as large as possible, while still making sure your content is relevant to that audience. You don't want to pay to promote your post to people who have no interest in it.

These strategies can give you an extra oomph when it comes to your content marketing. By implementing the above strategies with little additional effort, you can get better results in no time.

# 3 Key Elements of a Content Marketing Strategy That Builds Trust

[Amanda Abella](#)



A few weeks ago, I was hired as a content marketing consultant for a FinTech company that is creating an investment app for a very specific market with very specific needs.

A couple of days after that, I was in Austin for a speaking engagement where I was brought in to explain what credit card issuers could do to better connect with consumers online.

The main issue that came up constantly was that consumers, for the most part, have a lack of trust in the financial industry. Because there's a lack of trust, it's a lose-lose situation. Consumers lose out on tools that can help them with their finances, while companies lose out on customers.

The question then becomes: how can companies create trust with their

audience? How can they use content marketing in a way that potential buyers will begin to like, know and rely on them?

Here are the three key elements you need in your startup's content marketing strategy, based on my experience building a brand as a financial expert and helping other companies.

## **Start with the bigger issue at hand**

Since I usually get brought in to discuss how to market to millennials, I'm going to use that as an example of how having a "why" beyond making money is important in building trust.

Clearly, no entrepreneur is in the small business field for his or her health. We all need to make money to eat. And, some of us, want to build wealth. While there's nothing wrong with making money, that's not necessarily something your consumers may relate to.

Take millennials, as an example. We are a very socially conscious generation. We will not give our money to companies that we know are doing harm. We will, however, give our money to companies that stand behind certain causes or that are doing their part to fix a social issue.

## *So how does this work in a content marketing strategy?*

The FinTech app I was working with isn't just another investment app. They are marketing to Latinos, a community that, according to Prudential, has an access problem when it comes to retirement savings and investing.

Only 30 percent of Latinos have access to an employee-sponsored retirement plan where they can invest their money for their future, and part of this FinTech app's mission is to fix this issue in the community through the

educational resources they provide.

In other words, this app is starting with the bigger “why” behind the company. They aren’t just trying to make money, they’re trying to solve a big problem for a group of people. Every piece of content marketing they put out from this point forward is done through the lens of solving this issue.

## **Identify and address objections in your content marketing strategy**

One of the key factors to getting potential buyers to trust you is to address their concerns through your content marketing.

Let’s take the investment app as an example. When trying to get people to invest (and use an app to do it) several objections and concerns may arise, including:

- Do I need to buy individual stocks?
- Is my information safe and secure?
- Don’t I run the risk of losing all my money if the market crashes?
- Isn’t my money better off liquid?
- I’m scared. Investing seems complicated.
- I need liquid cash, not money that’s tied up.
- Don’t I need a ton of money? Where am I going to find that?

Most of these concerns can be traced to a lack of basic financial education. Therefore, the content marketing strategy of the company will now include educational pieces that explain how investing actually works and what the benefits are.

Essentially, by addressing their market's fears head on, they are priming the market to use the app correctly. This helps potential customers feel safer and like they are being provided with significant value. Over time, this helps build trust in the eyes of potential buyers.

## **Weave in real stories**

*People buy from those they like, know and trust. One of the quickest ways to build this relationship is by weaving real stories into your content marketing.*

In the previous example, the co-founders of the app are part of the very market they are catering to. Since they are also Latino, they have real-life stories they can share about common financial struggles the community faces.

In particular, they plan to share their stories of being a part of the sandwich generation that has to care for their parents and their children simultaneously and how that affects their finances.

They will share this in hopes of not just being relatable, but also to portray why it's important that people save for retirement; so that they break the cycle of future generations being caught in the middle and repeating history.

Solving a bigger societal problem? Check!

Addressing concerns through education? Check!

Using real stories to relate to the audience and get their point across? Check!

A single story helps this company accomplish all the major components of a marketing strategy that builds trust over time. By weaving these components into your own content marketing strategy, you'll also be able to build the strong bond you need to acquire and retain customers.

# Clean Up Your Copy: Tips for Better Content Marketing

[Emily Friedel](#)



Content is a powerful means of connecting with your customers. In fact, [Seth Godin](#) famously said content marketing is “[all the marketing that’s left.](#)” To produce effective written content, you must begin with a foundation of good writing, which isn’t as simple as it sounds. If writing doesn’t come naturally to you, don’t worry – you’re not alone. Luckily, there are a few simple things you can do to tidy up your copy and make sure it gets your message across.

In this post, expert copywriters share their wordsmithing wisdom to help you create clear, concise content that will engage your customers.

## 1. **Write for the right audience**

Before you put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard), you need to think about who you’re trying to reach.

*“Knowing your audience makes it much easier to convey your point with the proper tone, word choice, etc.,” Gwynne Monahan, a member of the copy team at [Clearlink](#), said. “Knowing your audience also makes it easier to focus the content sooner rather than later.”*

A helpful trick to better target your audience is to create an [ideal customer profile](#) and write with this person in mind.

## **2. Plan for success**

To streamline your copy and stay on track with your message, draft an outline of what you want to write.

*“By writing out key points in the form of bullets first, you can cut down on fluff and focus your messaging,” Mike Strayer, a copywriter at [Clearlink](#), said.*

Order your points in a logical progression so each idea smoothly leads to the next.

## **3. Start out strong**

Draw your reader in from the get-go with an exciting, punchy opening. Your first sentence needs to capture why readers should care and be honed to a fine point.

“Keep it short,” [Luke Trayser](#), senior copywriter at Ivor Andrew, an integrated marketing communications agency, said.

*“I’m talking a handful or two of words at most. But more than that, if you want your opening sentence to be read, you need a dynamite headline, subhead, and image. The greatest body copy opener doesn’t stand a chance if your audience tunes out before they get to it,” Trayser said.*

#### **4. Active versus passive voice**

Active voice is when the subject of your sentence performs the action. Passive voice is when the subject receives the action. Active voice is usually preferable because it generates lively, more engaging text, but there are times when passive voice is best.

“Active voice is obviously wonderful,” Trayser said. “We live in a world filled with widows, rags and orphans. Staying active leads to tighter, more concise copy. But I also believe passive voice gets a bad rap. Take this example:

‘The cat pooped in a box, then immediately fled the scene.’

This sentence emphasizes the cat, aka the thing performing the action in the sentence. But what if you wanted to emphasize the thing *receiving* the action?

‘The poop was taken by the cat. It smelled of Meow Mix and death.’

Is passive voice clunky and bad? Yes. Are there times when it’s necessary? Also yes.”

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## 5. Break it up

Readers tend to [scroll and scan](#) online, so you need to make it easy for them to pick up the valuable information in your writing. Breaking up text into manageable chunks makes it scan-friendly.

Generally, you want paragraphs to be brief and for each one to represent a single idea. Paragraphs of between one and three sentences tend to work well for web content (that's not a hard-and-fast rule, though).

Sub-headings, bullet points, and images are also useful for separating text into bite-sized, easily-digested pieces.

## 6. Steer clear of clichés

If you want your words to work for you, then treat them with respect. Flogging your copy with tired, banal words and phrases will make it tedious to read.

*“Avoid clichés,” Trayser said. [“I’ve written about this before.”](#) It’s so easy to use them if you’re on a deadline or feeling lazy, but writing something your audience has heard thousands of times before makes them bored. A bored audience is not good. So instead, be brave and be original.”*

Buzzwords and jargon weaken your writing because they’ve become meaningless through overuse, and Luke highlights how easily people fall into the trap of using a word just because everyone else does:

“Sometime in the past few years, ‘solutions’ skyrocketed to the top of my list

of most-hated words. It's a B2B marketing cliché that transcends industry. It cannot be killed. Every client adores it. I just want them to be specific. To be proud of this amazing thing they create and sell. To give it the unique and memorable pitch it deserves. Instead? 'Solutions.' It makes me so very sad."

## **7. Read aloud**

If your writing doesn't convert well to the spoken word, it's not going to resonate with readers. Reading aloud tells you a lot about the structure of your writing and will help you pick up unwieldy sentences or sections that are difficult to follow.

It's also the best way to catch errors and find out if your writing captures what you want to say, or mean to say, Monahan advised.

"The mind is deft and tricky, and can fill in words we forgot to type or thought we did type or whatever. It also helps get a sense of how it sounds, in terms of tone, flow and syllables," she said.

## **8. Be polished and professional**

Before you hit publish, it pays to go over your copy with a fine-tooth comb. There are plenty of free resources for checking spelling, grammar and readability, such as [Hemingway Editor](#), [Grammarly](#) and [Readability Score](#).

Always do a final check manually, because these apps aren't perfect and nothing compares to a thorough, human-powered proofread.

And if you're ever unsure, Strayer recommends to double check.

"Sometimes a quick Google search or an informal chat with a fellow writer can help you place a comma correctly, insert the appropriate hyphen, or use the correct homonym. Don't guess, ask!" he said.

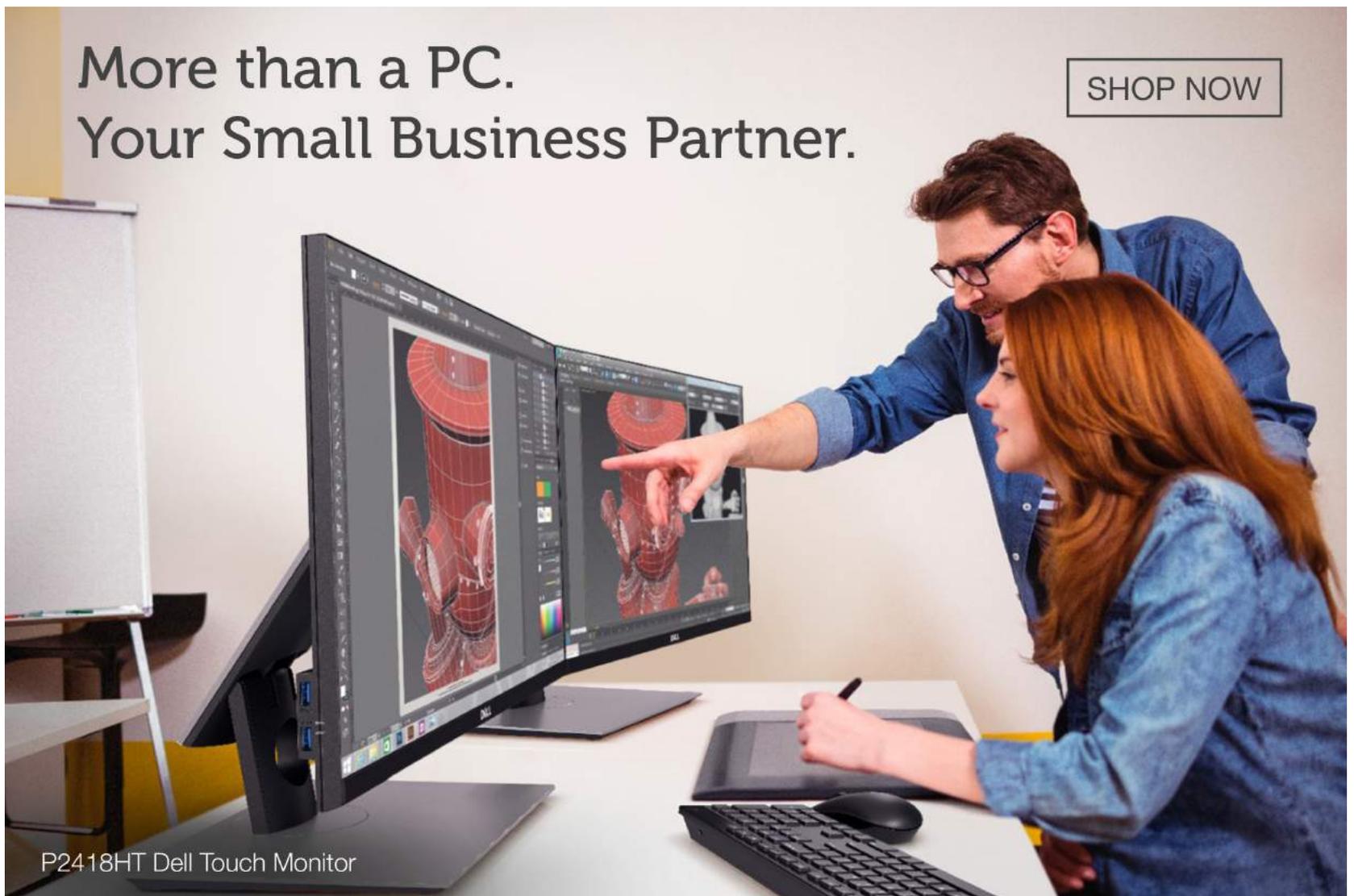
Enlisting fresh eyes is also a terrific way to assess the readability of your

content and make sure its message is solid.

“This is especially useful if you’ve spent a good chunk of time on a piece. Having someone else unfamiliar read my work is an excellent litmus test of whether or not it’s clear, concise and gets the point across,” Monahan said.

## **Go forth and create (great) content!**

With these expert writing tips, you can start crafting content that pulls its weight as part of your marketing strategy.



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# The 3 Marketing Trends Shaping Content Consumption in 2017

[Taboola](#)



Many 2017 content predictions revolve around content creation—marketers will produce more videos, email newsletters, rely less on social as algorithms change and keep on chugging toward that artificial intelligence and virtual reality-filled world we keep hearing is just around the corner.

The thing is, successful content isn't *just* about how you create it, it's about how it's consumed. That moment when your content creates a new connection with a customer or prospect is what counts—that relationship is what truly drives business growth.

These trends explore how marketers will define this relationship in 2017. They're shaping the experience readers have when discovering your content, and your future marketing strategies.

## Marketers are doubling down on video content—they're targeting readers by lifestyle

By now, I'm sure that you've seen that video has pretty much taken over the internet, which opens up a world of potential for content marketers.

*According to Contently's "The Future of Media and Marketing is Video" [report](#), in 2017, 69 percent of all internet traffic will be video. By 2020, it will be 82 percent.*

While video's popularity has grown exponentially over the past few years, video as a content marketing trend isn't groundbreaking news—but as live video streaming and video algorithms evolve, what is changing is how marketers are targeting their audience.

Trends in video campaign targeting show that when it comes to video, marketers are more interested in connecting with their audience on a behavioral level than anything else—because it's the most effective.

According to a recent survey by eMarketer, 63 percent of agency respondents and 51 percent of marketing respondents find behavioral targeting to be the most effective method for distributing their video content:

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## Digital Video Campaign Targeting Methods that Are Effective in Driving Business Results\* According to US Agency vs. Marketing Executives, Nov 2016

*% of respondents*

	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Marketing</b>	<b>Total</b>
Behavioral-based (e.g., lifestyles, preferences)	63%	51%	58%
Demo targeting, combined with other targeting	51%	39%	46%
Sales-based (e.g., purchase history)	45%	44%	45%
Contextual-based (e.g., sports, financial, etc.)	46%	43%	45%
Demo targeting (e.g., age/gender)	38%	42%	40%
Other	4%	1%	3%

*Note: \*e.g., online conversions, store visits, offline sales*

*Source: Videology survey conducted by Advertiser Perceptions, Dec 15, 2016*

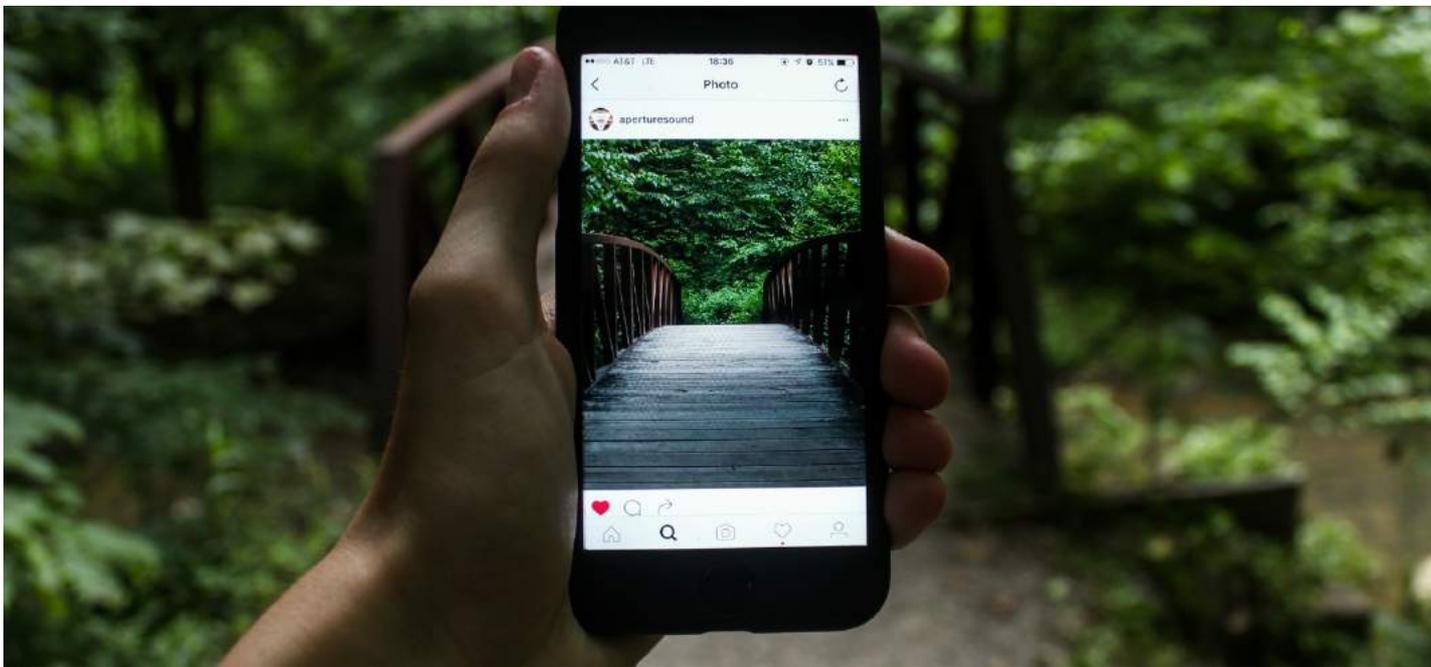
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www.eMarketer.com

When we say behavioral targeting, we're talking about things like reader lifestyles and preferences rather than geography, gender, purchase history or other potential segments.

To stay ahead in 2017, consider your reader's lifestyle as you distribute your video content. For example, restaurants generally target by location. In addition to location, they should consider things like the frequency with which one searches for recipes—a lower search count might correlate to the frequency they eat out, resulting in a higher likelihood they'll respond positively to your restaurant video.

### **You need visual user-generated content**



User-generated content (UGC) isn't a new phenomenon, but it is evolving as brands figure out new ways to work with their users to create content.

The fact is—things like PDF case studies and article interviews just aren't cutting it *alone*. The content your users want to consume and create is visual.

*According to a survey recently published in [Adweek](#), 85 percent of users surveyed find visual user-generated content more influential than brand photos or videos, while only 65 percent of businesses believe the same.*

Essentially, this means people are interested in pictures and videos that your customers have taken—and brands aren't quite on board with this yet. For example, potential Amazon customers find the photos of products left in reviews more trustworthy than the professional product shots at the top of the page.

The good news is that users are happy to help you create this content, but right now you're not giving them enough guidelines.

*That same survey in Adweek showed 50 percent of consumers want brands to tell them what to include in UGC. While this is often time-consuming, it's worth it—93 percent of consumers found UGC helpful when making purchasing decision.*

Once you've created your content, you're going to want it to reach more people than just the ones who are already looking for it, which bring us to the last trend for 2017—content discovery.

### **Content discovery is on the rise**



Marketers are constantly looking for new channels to use to market their content. After awhile, the old lead wells—programmatic ads, syndication channels, social media and SEO/SEM campaigns—start to run dry.

Content discovery fulfills the need for content marketers to not only reach their target audience, but to reach them at the right time. A recent survey from eMarketer shows that it's growing—and it's growing fast:

# Usage and Effectiveness\* of Paid Advertising Methods According to B2C Content Marketers in North America, 2014-2016

% of respondents

**1 Usage**      **2 Effectiveness\***

	2014		2015		2016	
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Social promotion	-	-	-	-	89%	66%
Search engine marketing (SEM)	63%	57%	76%	64%	76%	65%
Print or other offline promotion	71%	46%	69%	46%	68%	42%
Traditional online banner ads	59%	39%	65%	39%	60%	37%
Native advertising	38%	40%	46%	46%	50%	38%
Content discovery tools	19%	42%	21%	-	29%	34%
Promoted posts (e.g., Promoted Tweets)	59%	47%	76%	61%	-	-
Social ads (e.g., LinkedIn ads)	60%	49%	74%	59%	-	-
Do not use	-	-	-	-	7%	-

Note: \*responses of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale where 1=not at all effective and 5=very effective

Source: Content Marketing Institute (CMI) and MarketingProfs, "B2C Content Marketing: 2017 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America" sponsored by Hightail, Oct 19, 2016

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www.eMarketer.com

The above table demonstrates two things in regards to paid advertising method trends. One: the use of content discovery tools is growing faster than any other paid methods. As a matter of fact, most others are decreasing. Two: content discovery tools are the only paid methods where the effectiveness rating is currently higher than its usage, essentially ensuring that its use will only grow in 2017.

Content marketing in 2017 will be defined not by how we created our content, but how we distribute it to our audience, and how we target them to best fulfill their needs.



# PART 4 : Social Media Marketing

## **PART 4 : Social Media Marketing**

- 10 Ways to Make Facebook Live an Effective Marketing Tool - by Amy Morin
- Instagram Stories: The Marketing Tool Your Startup Needs - by Dorothy Cheng
- Revolutionizing Content Promotion with the Twitter Leapfrog Method - by Pat Ahern
- Q&A with Mark Kaye on Snapchat for Business - by Susan Johnston Taylor

# 10 Ways to Make Facebook Live an Effective Marketing Tool

[Amy Morin](#)



My publisher, HarperCollins, introduces its Facebook followers to one author every day through a Facebook Live event. For authors who are inclined to communicate solely through the written word, it's a great opportunity to engage with readers in a new way.

I've done several Facebook Live events in conjunction with HarperCollins over the past few months. Each one taught me more about how to use Facebook as an effective marketing tool.

Although the thought of creating a live video makes many people a little weak in the knees, Facebook Live can be a great way to attract new customers, gain more followers and get to know your audience better. A little pre-planning and creativity can help you make your event a success.

Here are 10 ways to make Facebook Live an effective marketing tool:

### 1. **Create an engaging topic**

Don't just turn on your camera and wait for people to ask questions. Create valuable and exclusive content to share with your audience so they'll know tuning in is worth their time.

Create a catchy title, like, "3 Money Lessons From Millionaires," or "5 Ways to Be More Productive," and craft your message. You don't need to memorize your message. You'll want it to come across as natural, so don't be afraid to use notes.

### 2. **Promote your live session ahead of time**

Pick your event time carefully. Is your audience most likely to tune in during work hours or on an evening or weekend?

Announce the date and time on social media and in your newsletter a few days before your event. Then, remind everyone right before your event starts.

### 3. **Invite your audience to submit questions**

Some people may not feel comfortable asking questions during the live event and not everyone will be able to attend. So it's important to give everyone an opportunity to submit questions to you prior to the event.

Then, kick off the Q&A portion of your event with those questions. As you're answering them, your live audience will likely start asking more questions. If there's a lull in the action between questions from your live audience, you can always return to answering a few more questions that were previously submitted.

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#### **4. Host a practice session**

Facebook gives you an option to customize who can access your posts. Choose “only me” and do a practice Facebook Live session.

You’ll want to see how you’re going to look from your audience’s perspective. It’s important to have good lighting and a background that is interesting, but not too distracting. Test the audio and play back your video to see how it looks.

#### **5. Learn how to ban trolls**

Facebook Live can be a magnet for trolls. They can be very distracting to both you and your audience. If you don’t handle it swiftly, everyone will pay more attention to the troll than your discussion.

Tap on the troll’s profile picture and hit block. That will prevent the person from being able to continue watching and commenting on your video.

#### **6. Provide a giveaway**

Encourage your audience to hit the share button by hosting a giveaway. Let everyone know that by sharing your video, they’ll be automatically entered into the contest.

Then, your video will appear in front of all of their friends, too. Whether you give away a product or you let people attend a seminar for free, getting a few dozen people to share your video could easily lead to hundreds of thousands of views.

#### **7. Create a good description**

Create a short description of your video that will capture people’s attention. Keep in mind, your video is likely to appear on people’s pages who have never heard of you or your business. So it’s important to create a description that will entice people to tune in.

## **8. Greet your live audience**

When your event starts, it will take people a little time to start tuning it. So you might feel like you're talking to yourself for a few minutes. That's OK because many more people will watch the recorded version later.

As people start to tune it, invite them to leave a comment that says where they're watching you from. Then, greet a few people by name and thank them for showing up. It'll make your session a little more personable and it can be a great way to break the ice.

## **9. Explain the agenda**

Briefly explain the agenda so your audience knows what to expect. Say, "I'm going to spend the first 10 minutes talking about how to be more persuasive. Then, I'm going to answer your questions."

Next, jump in and start sharing your message. You don't want to wait too long to get to the good part because people might get bored and move onto something else.

## **10. Share your content**

Your content may consist of a quick 10 minute talk or a live demonstration that shows how your product works. Whether your content is educational or simply entertaining, engage your audience.

Reserve a little time for questions and interact with your audience. Then, end your Facebook Live session by thanking people for attending. Encourage them to like your page if they haven't already.

When you're done, your video will be posted to your Facebook page. Continue to interact with your audience if you receive more questions and comments after you end your event.

## Learn and repeat

Live events don't always go as planned, but each time you host a Facebook Live session, you have an opportunity to learn more about your audience and how to engage with them.

Facebook will provide you with helpful analytics about your audience and their viewing habits. Review that information and think about what went well and what didn't. Then, it's time to start planning your next Facebook Live event with the information you learned.

Have you tried Facebook Live as a marketing tool for your startup?



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# Instagram Stories: The Marketing Tool Your Startup Needs

[Dorothy Cheng](#)



You've likely heard a lot about Instagram Stories, but what exactly is the fuss about it? Are you interested in learning how to use these Stories as a digital marketing tool for your startup?

In this article, we will cover the main features of Instagram Stories and how some brands have been using the feature in their marketing strategies.

As a powerhouse in the social media game, we've observed the growth and transformation of Instagram over the past few years. Lately, Instagram has been making some major changes, some of which are more controversial than others. It started with a [logo revamp](#) in March, followed by fundamental algorithm changes such as a [new non-chronological user feed](#) in June and [Instagram business tools](#) in July.

On top of these significant developments, Instagram's latest update has been a huge talking point for Instagram users and marketers.

## **Instagram versus Snapchat**

On Aug. 2, Instagram unveiled the [Stories feature](#) and caused a stir worldwide. Riding on the back of Snapchat's success, Instagram's newest feature is extremely similar to Snapchat's Story feature in many ways. With Instagram Stories, users can create a temporary slideshow of photos and videos. This slideshow appears at the top of user feeds and their profiles for 24 hours before disappearing.

Users can also add drawings, text, emojis or filters to their story content. Your audience will be notified that you have a story for them to view, and they can engage with each part of your story by sending a direct message. Users can also see who has specifically seen which parts of their story. Unlike Snapchat, Instagram users can also choose to hide their story from specific users.

While Instagram's Stories feature is still a rudimentary form of Snapchat's Story feature, there is no doubt that the developers at Instagram will catch up very soon. At the moment, Snapchat can hold on to the fact that Instagram is still lacking Snapchat's extremely popular face-altering filters and geofilters. However, the main advantage that Instagram has over Snapchat is its number of users. As of June 21, Instagram officially hit [500 million users worldwide](#), 300 million of those who use the app daily. In comparison, Snapchat, the younger platform, has only [150 million daily active users](#).

Brands have been experimenting with both platforms, and so far, Instagram is looking much more favorable. For example, one of [Nike's Instagram Stories](#) generated 800,000 views in 24 hours, while the brand's most popular story on Snapchat only generated 66,000 views. Through its search and discovery features, Instagram makes it easier for brands to grow organic followings. Meanwhile, the private nature of Snapchat makes it difficult for users to discover, follow and browse through a brand's content without a pre-established relationship.

*“Instagram is a follower platform, where Snapchat is more of a best friend platform,” Dan Grossman, vice president of platform partnerships at VaynerMedia, said.*

Furthermore, brands have had more time to establish followers on the older platform and are therefore much more comfortable with Instagram’s format.

## **Brands using Instagram Stories**

Previously, Instagram was a place for carefully curated posts with much thought going into the quality of content posted on one’s profile. The temporary nature of Instagram Stories is much more suited to quick, candid content for brands. Combining Instagram’s existing permanent gallery features with its new temporary one will allow for brands to establish a more intimate relationship with users.

For example, a brand that’s shooting a new line of products might post the final, polished photo to its Instagram gallery, while posting behind the scenes footage to its story. Kay Hsu, global lead for Instagram Creative Shop, said, “it’s fun to see business’ personalities shine through their stories — from behind the scenes to new product offers — in all industries from automotive to fashion.”

Fashion brand J.Crew used the temporary nature of Stories to promote a one-day pre-sale of its new sunglasses. The story showed various J.Crew staff modeling the sunglasses while also communicating the exclusive and limited-time conditions of the sale.

Even prestigious car brand Mercedes-Benz wasn't afraid to experiment with Instagram Stories, documenting behind-the-scenes footage of a photo shoot of its new model. The content consisted of location photos and an exclusive look at the vehicle's latest features.

Not sure where to start or what to do with the Instagram Stories feature when it comes to your brand? Don't be afraid to ask your audience! Fast food chain Taco Bell premiered its first Instagram story this very way. The brand asked its fans to direct message with what they'd like to see on the brand's story, from games, food or behind the scenes content. Taco Bell then adapted their Stories content based on their audience's responses.

If your business is already on Instagram, now is the time to dive into this feature! Although the prospect of a less-manicured and informal way of presenting your brand may be daunting at first, you will feel more comfortable as you familiarize yourself with Instagram's Stories. Remember, the content is only temporary, so have fun and don't take it too seriously! Still don't know where to start? Observe how your favorite brands or even your competitors are using Instagram Stories.

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# Revolutionizing Content Promotion with the Twitter Leapfrog Method

[Pat Ahern](#)



Blogging isn't as easy as it used to be. Five years ago, you could write a 500-word article about a topic that you were an expert in and expect hundreds, if not thousands, of people to find that article. Marketers saw how impactful blogging was, and began pushing out new, 500-word articles as frequently as possible. This approach worked for some time, but the game has changed.

Today, the “Field of Dreams” mentality of “if you build it, they will come” is a lie. I know this because I witnessed that lie month after month at one of my previous jobs. I would write weekly, 500-word articles for client after client, and watch those articles get a maximum of five readers.

Fortunately, there's an easy way to get hundreds of people to read your articles, and you don't need any of the following to do so:

- A massive social media following
- Relationships with the top influencers in your industry
- A large promotional budget

Today, I'm proud to share the Twitter Leapfrog Method, a proven framework that helps you deliver your newly published articles to hundreds of highly targeted readers, many of whom will reshare that article with their followers.

## **Twitter Leapfrog pre-work**

First, identify a topic that you can write extensively about. We won't get too deep into content ideation, but a few quick suggestions for finding a topic to write about are to:

- Review industry-leading blogs to see what topics influencers are frequently writing about
- Talk to your sales and customer service team to understand the most common questions or concerns that they are hearing from your customers
- Read through the most popular questions about your industry on Quora to see what topics people are asking about

Then, pick a theme or industry that this topic relates to. For example, blogging.

## **Create a Twitter account to promote the article with**

Start by coming up with a name for a Twitter handle that relates to your industry or theme. In the case of content promotion, I might create a Twitter handle called "Blogging Advice."

Next, upload a profile photo to this Twitter account to make it seem more

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legitimate (I recommend using [Unsplash](#) or [Stocksnap](#) to find a high-quality image). Do a Twitter search for this theme or industry and follow 50 Twitter accounts that appear in search results. Similarly, you can search for one popular publication in your industry like Inc. or Business Insider and follow 50 Twitter handles that follow this publication.

Create a [Buffer](#) account for this Twitter profile (the free version is fine) and set up two posting times per day (the exact times won't matter much, but I would suggest 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. each day).

Sign up for [Quuu](#) with your newly created Twitter account and select two to three topics that relate to your Twitter account theme or industry (ex. blogging tips, business strategy and content Marketing). Tell Quuu to schedule two posts per day.

You now have a Twitter account that will tweet two relevant articles every day on top of your content promotion efforts, thus making the account much more reputable, and decreasing the likelihood of being perceived as a spammer.

## **The Twitter Leapfrog process**

### **At a glance**

1. Write one solid article
2. Identify people who have shared similar content on social media
3. Share your article with these people

### **Write one solid article**

After identifying your topic, the next step is to write your solid article. A few things to keep in mind as you write:

- Aim for 1,500 to 2,000 words
- Use high-quality imagery
- Make your content insanely actionable

Want examples of actionable content? Check out any article written by [Brian Dean](#) or [Noah Kagan](#). Seriously, these guys are my heroes; everything that they write is pure gold.

## **Identify people who have shared similar content on social media**

You've published your article. The next step is to identify the people that will find your article most helpful.

Start by identifying two to three themes that describe the content of your article. For this post, my themes were “content promotion,” “blog promotion” and “social media promotion.”

After determining these themes, search for each on Google and open the top 10 search results for each term. Here, finding blog articles is much more important than finding website pages that rank for these terms, so use the search parameter “inurl:blog” to narrow your search results to only pages that have “blog” in the URL.

For the content promotion search, you would type ‘inurl: blog “content promotion”’ into Google.

After identifying the top 10 article results, sign up for an account on BuzzSumo, and plug each of these URLs into the BuzzSumo search bar. Next, click “View Sharers” for each of these 10 URLs. From here, export the entire list that appears on the following page.

You now have a list of every Twitter handle that shared the specific URL. In the event that some of these articles have a low share count, go to the BuzzSumo search bar and type in your content themes, then sort the results by the number of Twitter shares. You can then export the Twitter handles that shared any relevant articles.

## Share your article with these people

Many large publications create dozens of fake Twitter accounts that are simply intended to promote their newest articles, and we next want to eliminate any low-quality sharers. Compile all of the exported Excel docs into one sheet, and delete any Twitter handles that have a reply ratio of 0 or a retweet ratio of 100.

## The Twitter leapfrog outreach process

- Open up the exported Excel documents, and copy and paste the Twitter handles (without the “@” symbol) into column A of a new Excel sheet.
- Move to column B and type out a Tweet in the format of “, saw your tweet about [insert topic of the article] and thought you’d enjoy this too:[insert URL of your article]” – I would suggest using a URL shortening tool like [bit.ly](http://bit.ly) to shrink this URL. Otherwise, you may run into an issue with the Tweet length. On top of this, using a tool like bit.ly allows you to track how many clicks you receive on your article, so you can evaluate whether or not this method works for you.
- Copy and paste the contents of this cell into the remaining cells in column B
- Move to column C and type “=CONCATENATE(“@”,A1,B1)”
- Copy and paste the contents of this cell into the remaining cells in column C
- Select and copy every cell in column C and paste the contents into column D as “Values” (right click in column D, select “Paste Special...” and then click “Values”). You should now have a list of Tweets, customized for every Twitter account that you exported in step 5.
- And just like that, you’ve built a massive list of highly targeted social media accounts that you can share personalized messages with.

From here, we could manually send a Tweet out to all of these Twitter accounts, which might take an hour to send out 100 Tweets, or we could automate this process with a social media manager, such as Hootsuite. Once you try the Twitter Leapfrog Method, let me know whether or not it helped increase your engagement on Twitter in the comments section below.

# Q&A with Mark Kaye on Snapchat for Business

[Susan Johnston Taylor](#)



Earlier this year, mobile messaging app [Snapchat surpassed Twitter](#) in daily usage. Savvy brands and entrepreneurs now use Snapchat for business in order to connect with fans, but unlike other social media platforms where messages and photos live on, snaps (the images shared on Snapchat) can have a limited shelf life and self-destruct within a few seconds after the user views it.

We talked to [Mark Kaye](#), Snapchat expert and talk show host, about why entrepreneurs are using Snapchat to market themselves, how to build a following and what *not* to do. The following transcript has been edited for brevity and clarity.

**StartupNation: Are there certain types of businesses that lend themselves to marketing on Snapchat?**

**Mark Kaye:** Every business can benefit from Snapchat. I really find that solopreneurs—coaches and authors and people like that who have personality and who basically *are* their business—really do well on this platform because they’re selling themselves. One woman I worked with, her name is Anna Selby, and she’s a real estate agent in Phoenix, and she Snapchats every day. She Snapchats houses, she Snapchats her kids, she Snapchats herself at the pool, and it really boosts her business and her following because people become friends with her.

If you’re more of a startup with a product, or if you’re trying to launch a Kickstarter for something really cool, you can also benefit from Snapchat. Maybe not necessarily by opening an account for a product that people may not want to follow, or opening an account for your company that people haven’t heard of, but by getting those other personalities, those influencers, those people that have a following to snap for you, or on your account. That’s a very popular way of marketing and growing an audience quickly.



(Mark Kaye)

## How often should people snap?

**Kaye:** Frequency is different for everybody. Some people have to do it every day. Some people do it multiple times a day. Some people do it once a week. Whatever your consistent plan is, stick to it so that your audience knows what to expect.

There are some people that snap once a month, and only when they have something exciting or important going on, and that also builds excitement. When you see somebody that you haven't seen in a while on Snapchat, and you know that they're going to have a great story, you're more willing to watch that or jump on it.

## What should they be snapping?

**Kaye:** Snapchat makes it so tough because they add some new quirky update or tool or just crazy thing that you can do every single day. Don't get wrapped up in the little pictures and nuances. Snap your life, snap your product, snap your job, snap your art. Just look at it as another way to take whatever you're really great at, what people love about you already and get it out to a new and bigger audience.

## Should you snap the same things you share on Instagram or is there a different strategy on Snapchat?

**Kaye:** I use Instagram differently than Snapchat. Some people use Instagram very heavily, some people use it as a casual user. The way I use Instagram is as a way to capture an archived snap. You know, when you save your snap, I would repopulate them or republish them on Instagram, push my audience towards there because on Instagram it stays a lot longer and you can hashtag it. It's a great way to build your audience, but it depends on where your audience is.

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If you have a totally different audience on both platforms, then you can give them different pieces of content, but what a lot of folks do is they'll tease on Snapchat maybe a 15-second video and say, "Hey, you want to see the rest? Go to my Instagram." It's a great way to tease between the two, and get your audience active on both.

## **How can you build your following on Snapchat?**

**Kaye:** There are three simple ways to build your following. It's like an A, B, C method, and the first is to advertise your Snapchat. They give you a little code—it's a couple of little dots in a square—that's something that you need to put out wherever you can: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. People put it on business cards. I see it on TV commercials now even. Your Snapchat name, follow me on Snapchat.

Then blasting. If you have an email list or if you have an existing social media that's pretty strong, blast them out and tell them I'm on Snapchat. "I'm going to be doing this cool thing on Snapchat. I'm answering your questions one-on-one on Snapchat."

And then the C is collaborate because Snapchat doesn't make it easy for you to find and follow new people. There's no follow button, there's no search for similar accounts. You basically have to collaborate with other Snapchatters and have them promote you and you promote them and you guys come up with great stories together that live on both of your accounts, and that opens you up to a new audience.

When I started, I just started interviewing all the big Snapchatters, and once I posted an interview on my account, which had barely anyone watching, these big time Snapchatters would watch it and say this is really good, and they'd go on their accounts that had thousands and thousands of people and say go follow Mark Kaye.

## What mistakes do you see on Snapchat?

**Kaye:** I see people Snapchatting too much. They're not entertaining enough or they're not offering quality content. Another mistake I see people doing is, as we've talked about before, is snapping too little. Giving your audience time to forget about you.

The third thing is just advertising. You know, Snapchat is a story-telling platform. It's called your story for a reason. They want hear your story. People want to be entertained. If you're advertising, you better wrap it around a really compelling story.

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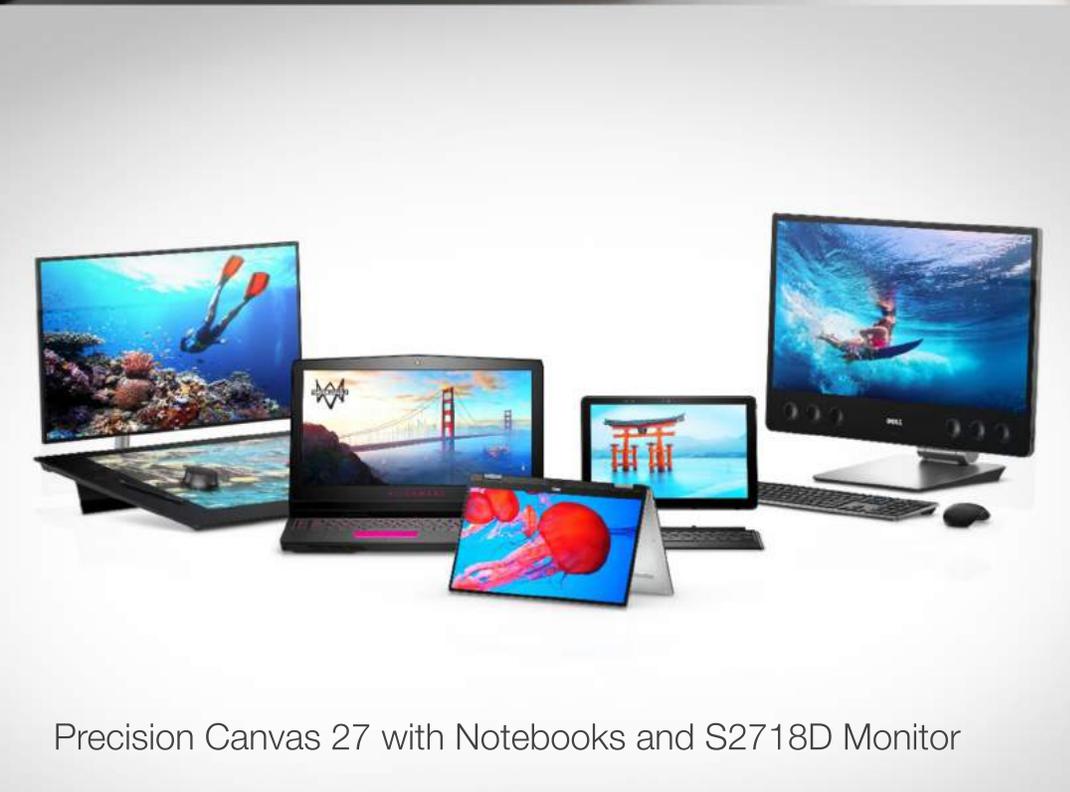
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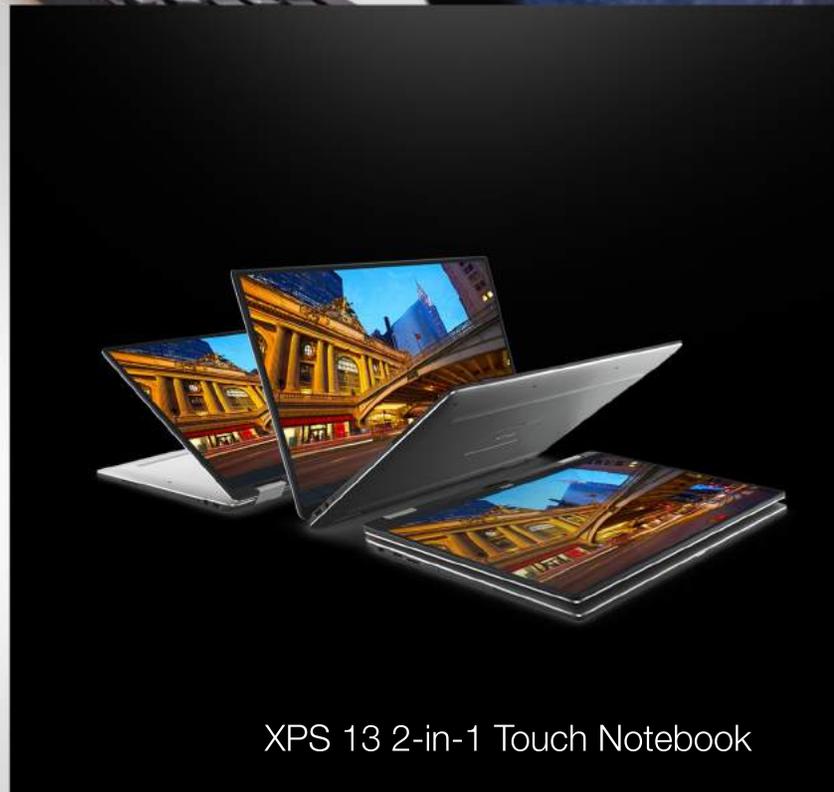
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# PART 5 : Video and Mobile Marketing

## **PART 5 : Video and Mobile Marketing**

- Q&A with Video Marketing Expert Lou Bortone - by Susan Johnston Taylor
- Video Marketing for Beginners in 5 Easy Steps - by Simon Slade
- Mobile Marketing: How Main Street Businesses are Leveraging the Trend  
- by The Sloan Brothers

# Q&A with Video Marketing Expert Lou Bortone

[Susan Johnston Taylor](#)



With Facebook Live, Meerkat and other platforms making it easier than ever to share videos, large and small businesses are using video marketing to connect with customers, demonstrate products and provide educational content.

To help you harness the power of video, we talked to video marketing expert [Lou Bortone](#) about how to get over stage fright, where to share your videos and more. The transcript below has been edited for clarity and brevity.

**StartupNation: If business owners are camera shy, should they be doing video marketing themselves or put someone else on camera?**

**Lou Bortone:** A lot of folks, myself included, are more introverted and not comfortable on camera. Public speaking can be tricky, but with video, you're really just looking at that funny little red button. If you are camera shy, the best thing to do is just practice and wade into it little by little. If you do a Facebook Live video from your account, you can share it to only yourself and do a practice run before you go public.

The other thing that I often suggest is that if you have a colleague or a partner or a friend who can work with you almost like you're having a conversation. It does become more conversational when you talk to the other person. And finally, if you're absolutely dead set against being on camera, you can use animation, PowerPoint or some other form of off camera video as well.

**There are a lot of different options for sharing videos: YouTube, Vimeo, Twitter, Facebook, etc. Do you need to be on all of them? Are there some platforms you recommend over others?**

**Bortone:** It's a little overwhelming because it seems like there's a new app or resource every day. I usually recommend that folks find the video sweet spot which is their best platform and more importantly where their community or tribe has the best chance of being. Even though I do a lot with Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn, I get to get the most feedback from Facebook. You can try several different platforms—maybe you love Instagram or Snapchat—and find the two or three platforms that you're most comfortable with. As long as your target market is there, you should be as well.



*(Lou Bortone)*

## **Is there an optimal length for videos?**

**Bortone:** People's attention spans seem to be getting shorter and shorter, so that's one of the attractions of Snapchat or Instagram. Typically you want to keep it as short as it can possibly be while still delivering the message you need to deliver. Most videos on YouTube are under three minutes. I tell people to shoot for one to three minutes.

The other thing is, a lot of it has to do with user expectations and viewer expectations. Somebody on a video webinar—those tend to be more like a teaching video—might be 45 minutes to an hour. With promotional videos or quick tips, get in and out as quickly as possible. Facebook itself suggests between 10 to 20 minutes for Facebook Live videos because the longer you're on, the more time people have to discover that you're live. It's what you're comfortable with and what your audience is comfortable with. I find that most folks are doing around five minutes on Facebook Live. If you have a more traditional show, like a program you're doing each week, it may be a half hour. But if you're going to be longer than five minutes, you want to have some kind of format so you're not rambling.

## **What are some mistakes you've seen in video marketing?**

**Bortone:** A lot of times, people will do what I call instead of “ready, aim, fire,” they do ready, fire, aim, they fire up the webcam and start to do their video before they've thought it through. What's the purpose of the video or what's the call to action that I want the viewer to take after it? They have rambling videos or maybe ideas that don't go anywhere. It's really important to have a goal for each video, even if it's just a one-minute video. You want to know exactly what you want going into it, what's the next step or call to action. “For more tips, visit my website or follow me on YouTube,” or whatever it may be.

Another mistake is waiting for perfection or thinking you need a lot of equipment or you need a lot of tech. A lot of people don't get started because they assume it's a really big deal.

*The truth is, with the iPhone and smartphones, it's really as simple as a couple clicks. You don't need a lot of preparation or a lot of lighting. You shouldn't wait until conditions are perfect or you'll never get it done.*

**Let's talk about video descriptions. How long should those be and what should they include?**

**Bortone:** The nice thing about video descriptions is they give you a ton of space. You can really make that as long as you want and (that's) what a lot of folks do. Jimmy Fallon on "The Tonight Show" does YouTube really well. The rest of the description is a generic cut and paste with links to their other properties. I do the same thing. I've got the first couple lines describing the video, and the rest of the description is really just a bio or promo for the rest of my stuff. There are even some people that suggest putting the video transcript in the video description, because you get in a lot of keywords.

**What else would you like readers to know?**

**Bortone:** There's a ton of opportunity right now and a lot of it is low-hanging fruit. Video marketing is so much easier than it used to be. Content is king and if you have a good message, there are a lot of different platforms to say it.

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# Video Marketing for Beginners in 5 Easy Steps

[Simon Slade](#)



Providing quality content means providing a variety of content. You need diversity in topics, styles, perspectives and, of course, media.

Excellent written content is great, but it's better when accompanied by stellar images. Even better than stellar images is an engaging video. When you add video to your marketing strategy, you access a new audience via multimedia search engines like YouTube and Vimeo. Some people go straight to these engines to seek out their content — and if you don't have videos, you're losing access to an entire demographic. According to [Alexa](#), YouTube is the second-most visited site on the Internet, after Google.

So it's obvious: video content is good for business. However, breaking into the video niche is a lot more intimidating than writing a blog post or sharing

pictures. Looking to tap into the video marketing realm, but not sure where to start? This guide is for you.

## **Start by finding a concept**

All good content has a good idea at its core. Look around for some inspiration for your video. Start by watching some video ads for your product, your niche and the industry. What are other people doing? What's working? What's not? This will give you ideas for the structure, topic and style of your video.

Also pay attention to the number of videos in your niche when you search a certain keyword and the general level of quality. This will help inform some later decisions about your video.

## **Decide the purpose of your video**

What do you want to achieve with this video? Do some backwards planning and identify what you want visitors to do after they've watched your video.

If you want more email subscribers, direct viewers to your opt-in page. If they enjoy your video, they can sign up for more excellent content this way.

A good option if you don't have a mailing list or just want more visits to your site is to direct viewers to another piece of content. Make sure that wherever you send them on your website, it's relevant to the video they just watched.

If you make multiple videos, the end game could be different each time. You can (and should) tailor the call to action to match your business' needs. Just be specific in each video about what you want the reader to do, by telling them, "Sign up for my emails on this squeeze page" or "Click the link below for more information about (topic)."

Once you've identified the concept and goal of your video, you can move on to recording it.

## Record your video

At the very least, you probably have a **cell phone camera** that you can use to record your video. There are other options, too, of varying degrees of quality and simplicity. If you don't have access to a reliable phone camera, you could use a **webcam** or a **digital point-and-shoot**. You can also use a screen capture tool such as [Camtasia](#) or [Screenflow](#) for Mac if you are filming a product review or want to demonstrate something done on your computer. If the competition is stiff and there are a lot of other high-quality videos in your niche (which you identified in step one), then you might want to spring for a **videographer**.

This part should be fun, not stressful. Enlist the help of some friends or colleagues and give yourself time to toy around with the video production. Don't expect to film the perfect video on the first try. Getting used to this new technique might take some time.

If you really don't want to film your own video, you can give stock footage a try. It's risky because stock footage is usually very low quality. It often works best with a humorous angle and narration. Here are some resources for stock footage:

- [Dissolve.com](#)
- [Getty Images](#)
- [Shutter Stock](#)
- [Stock Footage for Free](#)

You can record the overlaying audio yourself with any microphone (including phone or webcam), or you can hire a voice actor to do it. Another option is to pair subtitles with good, royalty-free music that you can find on the web.

## **Edit your video**

Video editing is all about the tools. This can be the most challenging part of video production for many people. If you want to go the do-it-yourself route instead of hiring a freelancer to do the editing for you, you have a few budget-dependent options. If you have some cash to spare and think that you'll be making videos often, invest in a professional service like [Adobe Premier Pro](#). The learning curve with this kind of software can be steep, but it's worth it if you think videos are going to be a regular part of your content strategy. Some cheaper options include [YouTube's Video Editor](#) and [WeVideo](#).

## **Upload and promote!**

Wherever you put your video (on your company's website, your personal blog, YouTube, Vimeo, or all of the above), you need to have a solid, clickable title. I recommend using CoSchedule's free [Headline Analyzer](#) to get a "grade" for your title and seeing what you can do to improve it.

Don't forget to link to your website in the description of the video. People want to know where their content is coming from!

Now that you've done all this work, you have to increase your video's chances of being successful and productive for you. Don't just make a great video and then hope it reaches your target audience. Be proactive about sharing and promoting your video via social media and online forums. You can also purchase traffic for your YouTube videos using AdWords — an excellent option if you're brand new to video marketing.

Videos present a whole new world of opportunity for marketing strategy. If done correctly, they can be extremely useful in spreading brand awareness and getting conversions. One of the best things about making videos is that with each video you create, post and promote, you get a little better at it. Follow this guide, try new things and play around with your production techniques, and you'll find making a video becomes easier every time.

# Mobile Marketing: How Main Street Businesses are Leveraging the Trend

[The Sloan Brothers](#)



Main Street businesses are in a pitched battle with e-commerce mega sites. To compete with the allure of online shopping, local merchants are exploiting every opportunity available to drive in-store purchases.

Here are several ways your fellow small businesses are using a rising tide of mobile marketing solutions to attract foot traffic, and how you can compete in this tech-driven world.

## **Showing up in local searches**

According to the Google report, “Understanding Consumers’ Local Search Behavior,” one in three searches on a smartphone happens just before consumers visit a store. That means that people are out and about, and looking for businesses like yours. And that means opportunity.

Kent Dagnall, principal consultant at [Kent Dagnall Consultants](#), based in Atlanta, Georgia, said that Google decides which businesses will show in local results by looking at three main factors: profile consistency, content quality and GPS location.

To get the full benefit of this free form of mobile marketing, ensure that your business name, address and phone number are updated and correct, and resist changing them, Dagnall said, to avoid getting demoted in Google's mobile search results.

Another key to ranking higher in local search results: continuously introduce fresh, high-quality content to your website.

*“Develop blog posts and articles around phrases you know customers are searching for, and make sure to use the names of your neighborhood or part of town more often than the city name,” Dagnall advised.*

## **Mobile ads: worth considering**

Build on your mobile search optimization efforts by adding paid mobile advertising to your marketing mix. Here are two specific options we're seeing work well:

### **Geo Fencing**

Brick-and-mortar Main Street businesses have started building fences — mobile geo fences, that is. Fencing allows you to create a marketing perimeter around your business (for example, a five-mile radius), where your mobile ads pop up only for prospects inside that “fence.” Just think how much more likely someone is to take action and come through your door if you hit them with a promotion when they're very close by.

“There is a convenience chain in Texas that markets through fencing, with offers that revolve around the time of day, i.e. morning is for coffee and breakfast items. The chain has a mobile ad click-thru rate of 0.18 as their goal, and they average 101 percent of that goal,” Rob Weisbord, chief operating officer of Sinclair Digital Group, which houses Compulse, specializing in digital ad solutions, said.

## **Paid Ads on Review Sites and Apps**

Bryan Clayton, CEO of [GreenPal](#) (described as Uber for lawn care), said that his company tried a variety of mobile ads, including on Facebook, Google, Twitter and Instagram, but found the best bang for their buck came from page sponsorship ads on the review site Yelp.

In fact, GreenPal’s Yelp ads converted 67 percent of the time into paying customers for GreenPal. No other paid channel could top that.

Clayton is a big fan of advertising on review sites partly because of the quality of the traffic.

*“A visitor from Yelp is not the same as a visitor from Google or Facebook, because when they come to you, they are at the very bottom of the purchasing decision funnel; they have read your reviews, they have read about your business, and they are qualified and ready to buy,” Clayton said.*

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## It's Okay to Be Trendy

While optimization for mobile search and mobile ads might be longer-term tactics, being opportunistic with trends may be worth testing, too. The PokémonGo phenomenon, for example, took an interesting turn as marketers saw potential opportunity. The mobile app, which attracted the under-12 set and millennials, sent a flood of youth into the streets (sometimes into traffic, reportedly) in search of digital Pokémon.

The unintended effect of this game was that these players were walking by businesses every day. Showing their entrepreneurial genius, restaurants and stores quickly began catering to those PokémonGo players by offering happy hour specials and discounts.

Max Robinson of UK-based [Ace Work Gear](#) is a great example:

“We noticed huge amounts of people of all ages hanging near our building and realized that it was related to PokémonGo.”

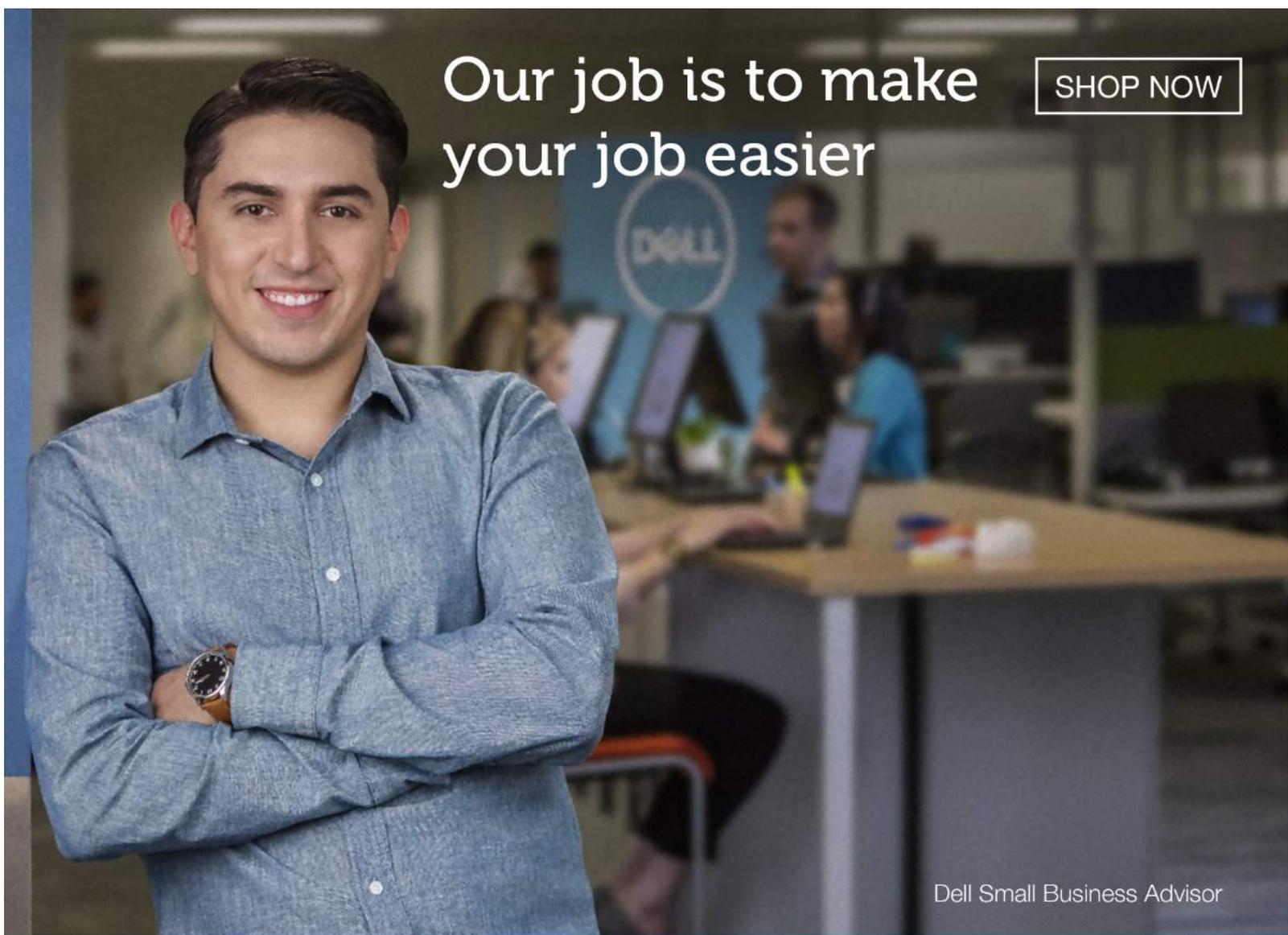
So Robinson decided to get active with his brand's barely-used Snapchat account. His team used Snapchat to not only keep followers updated on PokémonGo, but also to promote their own products. The brand's high visibility clothing, which had been gathering dust in the store, suddenly became a hot Pokémon commodity.

“We sold over 200 high visibility items (mainly vests) in the first two weeks of August. Better yet, many of these items were emblazoned with our logo,” Robinson said.

Yes, the PokémonGo craze has subsided, and the marketing opportunity along with it. Trends like this will always pop up. The key is to do what small businesses do best – be nimble and responsive. If you can blend in trendy opportunities while maintaining longer-term mobile marketing efforts, you'll be best positioned to master the power of mobile marketing.

Local mobile marketing opportunities are constantly morphing, and your Main Street tactics will have to continue to evolve to keep up. The good news: we're only just starting to see the ways that mobile marketing can translate into foot traffic and sales for brick-and-mortar businesses, leveling the playing field in this competitive marketplace.

**This article originally appeared in the April 2017 edition of [The Costco Connection](#).**



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# PART 6 : SEO

## **PART 6 : SEO**

- **SEO Basics: Getting Your Small Business Started** - by Constantina Kokenes
- **SEO Strategies: The Most Overlooked Ways to Propel Your Business Online**  
- by Al Gomez
- **The Startup's Guide to Performing an SEO Audit** - by Pat Ahern
- **Common SEO Misconceptions and Why They Hurt Your Business**  
- by William Craig

# SEO Basics: Getting Your Small Business Started

[Constantina Kokenes](#)



As a small business owner, there are many aspects you need to oversee in order for your business to succeed. However, one aspect you might be overlooking is search engine optimization (SEO). With SEO, you can better grow your organic presence in market. Organic presence means non-paid placement in search engine results. For example, if you own a retail shop, and Google “summer dresses,” the organic results are what are below paid ads.

SEO is a vital marketing aspect to expand your brand.

*In fact, only 19.2 percent of clicks go to the first two paid advertisements on Google’s search results page.*

Practicing good SEO tactics isn't always easy. If you're not familiar with marketing or SEO, here are some basics to help you begin.

## **Check your rankings**

Before you can begin an SEO strategy, you need to know where you stand amongst your competitors. Rankings are important for traffic going to your online store.

*The number one position in Google results gets [33 percent of traffic](#), and the percentage only declines from there.*

You want to make sure you're ranking on the first results page and at least in the top five positions.

There are [plenty of tools](#) out there that can help you see how you're ranking for terms in your industry. Using these rankings, you can see who is ahead of you and look at what they are producing to get them such high rankings. Of course, you shouldn't compare yourself too much with large chains. Look to these chains for inspiration and as a guide to your content, but focus on outranking any local competitors.

## **Content is king**

Having high quality content is a necessity for your rankings. Google wants to see that you're an authority figure in your industry. Blogs are a great way to publish high quality content for your site. With a blog, you'll have more opportunities to rank higher in your industry. For example, if you run an accounting business, your blog could offer accounting tips and resources for other small business owners and individuals who might not be great at personal financing. People will come to your site for your help and eventually might even purchase one of your services.

It's also important to post enough to keep up interest, but not so much to where people will unsubscribe from an email list. Posting high quality content two or three times a week is more valuable than posting decent content every single day. On social media channels, the number of times you should post varies, but the quality should always be high.

## **Optimize for keywords**

In your content, you'll want to include keywords you'd like to rank for that also pertain to the content's topic. Google will crawl your content and then index it in its search. You don't want to include too much of the same keyword, however, as Google could assume your website is spam and will penalize you for it.

For example, if you own a retail shop and run a blog about summer trends, you don't want a paragraph that has the term "summer trends" in every sentence. If this is something you struggle with, [Text Optimizer](#) is a great, free tool to help you see how well you're optimizing for keywords in your content.

## **Look for link building opportunities**

Once you have your site optimized for SEO, reach out to influencers who could link back to your site with a "follow" link. Link juice from a high domain ranked site will increase your site's domain rankings, which will then increase your rankings on Google.

Two popular ways to do this are guest blogging and reaching out to influencers. You can guest post for a popular blog, which will give your business a shout out in the author bio, or you can send an influencer your product or service to try out for free. If they like it, they can recommend it to their followers. Both will provide links back to your business's online site, increasing your domain rank.

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## SEO overview

As a small business owner, you have a lot on your plate, so you might be overlooking SEO in your marketing strategy. It's important to remember that SEO takes time to see results. While quick results and turnaround are good, they're not as permanent. Once you improve your domain authority, you'll see longer-lasting results than you would from paid ads. These results will increase traffic to your online store, which will in turn give you a higher chance of making a sale.

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CLICK ON THE IMAGE ABOVE

# SEO Strategies: The Most Overlooked Ways to Propel Your Business Online

[Al Gomez](#)



Just because your business is doing well on social media doesn't mean you should ignore your website's performance, or rely on likes and shares for revenue. According to [Gallup's 2014 State of the American Consumer study](#), consumers look to social media for personal connections and conversations, not sales pitches. Having your own website is still a top choice if you want to remain in control of your business and appear professional in your field.

Here's where search engine optimization (SEO) comes in. Contrary to what some may believe, SEO is not dead; however, it has changed with the times. Gone are tactics of keyword stuffing and link-building. Enter more sustainable techniques such as long-tail keywords and a focus on geographical location.

When done right, modern SEO strategies can help businesses tap into the **70 percent of U.S. households that are doing their shopping online.**

Not many people know how to correctly harness this power in their business websites. Even experts sometimes make the mistake of overlooking these small details. Need a boost for an upcoming sale or product introduction? Correct these often overlooked SEO strategies and see better visibility for your website. After all, more eyeballs mean more chances of getting leads.

## **Improving site speed**

Put yourself in your customers' shoes. You find the perfect product, and you're almost ready to buy. But the site takes forever to load. Whether you're on mobile or desktop, there's nothing more annoying than having to waste precious seconds, especially if another website is offering the same item. The customer jumps, and you just lost a sale.

Constantly monitoring and improving your website speed should be a priority. **For every second of delay, you're actually:**

- *Losing **seven percent** in conversions*
- *Down by about **11 percent** in page views (less eyeballs)*
- *Compromising on customer satisfaction by as much as **16 percent***

Even search engine giant Google recognizes the importance of speed. Use online tools like Google's Page Speed Test or Pingdom Website Speed Test to know how you compare to your competitors. The faster your site speed, the further your business could go.

## **Fixing broken links or redirects**

Broken links are bad for business, no matter how you look at it. This is in conjunction with my first point. If you have several 404 errors, not only will customers hate coming to your site, you will also experience slower page speeds. Links done right will add value for site visitors, ease site navigation and improve ranking of important pages.

Whether you're [linking internally](#) or to outside sources, make sure that they're working as intended. Experts suggest having the link open to a new window or tab. This helps online users who are not done scanning your content stay on that page, while exploring other offers.

## Ignoring no-follow links

Even if you're not a specialist, you probably know that no-follow links are not valued in SEO. That's because a no-follow tag (`rel="nofollow"`) is basically telling search engine crawlers to "ignore" a link. This means no-follow links don't carry the same link juice as do follow links.

Even though Google doesn't confirm this, there is evidence to suggest that no-follow links carry weight, but not in the way you think. Digital marketing strategist and entrepreneur, Pratik Dholakiya, explains [how no-follow links can still boost your rankings through](#):

- An **endorsement** from the website that contains your link (the author or webmaster wouldn't put it there unless they thought it was relevant)
- **Referral traffic** from people who will click on your link (a link is a link: and users who are curious will click on it regardless)
- **Link visibility**, which could lead to more websites linking to you (if they find your content useful)

Just because you've got a no-follow link doesn't mean you should be disheartened. Instead, use it as an opportunity to improve your SEO strategies, and build meaningful connections with your site visitors.

## Not using natural language in content

Are you still using jargon in your website copy? You might want to rethink that strategy. Although keywords are still important, search engines like Google are prioritizing natural language over business or industry-specific jargon. According to Oracle, these "natural language queries" are made up of "normal terms in the user's language, without any special syntax or format."

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### For example:

Instead of saying, “we offer value-based software that integrates all channels of communication to ensure your organization meets its desired goals promptly,” try “our special software was designed with your business goals in mind. Together, we can strengthen the flow of communication across every level in your company.” The latter sounds more natural, and can be easily understood by most users (which is exactly what Google loves).

When sprinkling keywords into your web content, be sure to add natural language queries by:

- Including answers to problems your target market are likely to ask
- Adding variety to your anchor texts using long-tail phrases
- Avoiding jargon altogether

You don’t need to impress people with showy words. Opt to be genuine, sincere and honest instead.

## Optimizing other onsite elements

SEO strategies need to extend to onsite elements such as images and other multimedia (including video, sounds, slideshows, etc.). This ensures

maximum visibility for your target consumers. If people are looking for relevant images or video, for example, they will be directed to your content, as long as those elements were optimized properly.

For photos, make sure that you provide unique, descriptive alt tags so both users and search engines can easily find your image. For videos, upload them to your own site instead of simply embedding. [Use an MP4 format](#) so it loads seamlessly on most multimedia players (even mobile!).

### **What if your business is on third party e-commerce websites?**

If your budget doesn't allow you to have your own website just yet, don't worry. Simply [check the e-commerce site that you want to invest in](#) at the moment to see if it would provide enough visibility for your brand.

Shopify, for example, is one of the best e-commerce sites for both budding and long-time business owners. Aside from providing customer support and great user experience, the platform has a whole host of features to choose from (including SEO).

However, don't forget that this is only temporary. In the long run, you're still going to need your own site with your own SEO strategies, especially if you want to truly [establish a strong, authoritative presence on the web](#).

### **Maximize the web today**

The great thing about these SEO strategies is that they're sustainable.

Unlike PPC ads outcome (which stops the minute you stop the campaign), SEO is meant to provide results long after the project is over. Just because these details are small doesn't mean you shouldn't correct them. After all, small things become big over time.

# The Startup's Guide to Performing an SEO Audit

[Pat Ahern](#)



With 93 percent of online experiences beginning with a [search engine](#), it's no secret that ranking well on search engines is crucial to the success of your business. While search engine rankings are determined by over 200 factors, the best place to start is by running an on-page SEO audit to see where your site currently stands.

I've compiled a list of the most essential items of any on-page SEO audit, as well as some insights as to why each factor matters.

## **Keyword research**

Keyword research lies at the heart of any SEO foundation, and identifying the target keyword theme of each page should be the first element of your on-page SEO audit.

Search engines use keywords to understand what a website is about, which

helps them start to understand which websites do the best job of providing the things that someone is looking for. For example, if you are a pizza shop that constantly talks about Hawaiian pizza on your website, and someone searches for “Hawaiian pizza,” your website is much more likely to come up as one of the top search results.

Keyword research consists of identifying a list of phrases that best describe your business, identifying which of these will receive the highest number of monthly searches with the lowest amount of competition, and using them throughout your website to help search engines understand that your website relates to those keywords. My favorite tools for keyword research are [SEMRush](#) and [Google’s Keyword Planner](#).

## **On page SEO site crawl**

After determining the keyword theme for each page of your site, the next step is to pull existing data on each of your pages. Download [Screaming Frog’s SEO Spider tool](#) to pull important information for every page of your site, such as:

1. **Title tags:** the title of each of your website pages when they appear in search results
2. **Header tags:** the title and subtitles of each page of your site that appears when someone visits your site
3. **Meta descriptions:** a short description of each page of your site that appears in search engines
4. **Inlinks:** the count of how many times you link to a particular page on your site
5. **Alt text:** a description of every image on your site that helps search engines to understand what the image is about

## **Site structure**

Setting up a proper site structure helps search engines better understand

what your website is about, making it easier for you to rank for the terms that will be most relevant to your site. The easiest way to make your site structure simple to understand is to use proper URL formatting, and set up your URLs in a way that help search engines to understand the [flow of your website](#).

Here are a few quick tips for making your URL structure easy to understand:

1. Include relevant keywords early in the URL
2. Don't use symbols or numbers when avoidable. When in doubt, try reading a page's URL out loud. If it's easy for you to say it, it will likely be easy for search engines to read it
3. Length (somewhat) matters. Try to keep it under 100 characters

## **Content quality**

SEO consists of writing really good content, and then jumping through a bunch of little hoops. While this probably tops the list for the most vague advice that you've ever heard, the biggest takeaway should be that SEO is all about writing content that will be helpful to your readers. Some of the best ways to start are to use sites like [Reddit](#) and [Quora](#) to understand what topics your target customers are interested in, and what questions they are asking about those topics. You can then write content that discusses those issues. I also recommend using Google Analytics to understand what pages are performing best on your site. Once you identify a series of pages, look for any common themes between those high-performing pages, and try to replicate those themes in future blog articles.

## **404 errors and 301 redirects**

Ever had the experience of driving somewhere, taking a wrong turn and finding yourself at a dead end? 404 errors are the online equivalent of a dead

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end, and are an issue that can hurt your search rankings. I almost always recommend fixing these errors by setting up a 301 redirect to the new URL of the page, or the next closest URL on your page that will provide the visitor with what he or she is looking for.

## **Duplicate content**

Duplicate content is often described as a penalty that search engines can throw at your site. However, a much better way of understanding duplicate content is to look at it as a filter that search engines use to only show the “original” version of the content. When search engines come across duplicate content, they try to understand which page is the original source of the content, and choose to only show that original version in search results. In order to help search engines, I recommend setting up canonical tags to point search engines to one of a series of duplicate pages, as well as using canonical tags to inform search engines if they should pay attention to the www or non-www version of your site.

## **Sitemaps**

Imagine trying to navigate through a new town without a map. You could probably find your way to the most important destinations, but it might take you some extra time to find them, and you certainly wouldn't be able to find everything that you were searching for. Without a map, search engines encounter the same issue: they can usually find the most important pages on your site, but they will probably miss a lot of other important pages. The best way to avoid this is to create a sitemap, the map for search engines to understand where to find the different pages on your site. After building your sitemap (a quick Google search will reveal countless free sitemap generators) and uploading it to your site, go into [Search Console](#) and submit your sitemap to Google.

## Site speed

Over the past year, site speed has become one of the most important on-page ranking factors both directly and indirectly. A faster website receives a direct boost in rankings, while also minimizing bounce rate, which tells search engines that the contents of your page are topically relevant and useful to the reader. Some of the easiest ways to reduce site speed are to:

1. Minimize image file sizes (images often take a long time to load)
2. Enable browser caching (allow browsers to “save” previous versions of the site for returning visitors so they need to load less information)

For WordPress sites, I recommend downloading [WP Smush](#) and [WP Super Cache](#) to take care of both of these issues.

## Mobile friendly

Earlier this year, Google announced that more than half of Google searches are now happening on mobile devices. If more than half of the people who visit your website do so from a phone, doesn't it make sense to make your website easy to use on phones?

You can test your mobile friendliness on [Google's Pagespeed Insights](#), but the best test is to visit your website from your phone and see how easy it is to use. If you have a hard time clicking buttons or reading text, talk to a developer about making your website mobile-friendly.

Implementing these audit suggestions will drastically improve your organic search rankings, but realize that these changes will take time. SEO is a long-term effort, so those looking to jump to the first page of Google overnight should explore other options. For those looking for short-term gains, [PPC services](#) may be much more closely aligned with what you are looking for.

# Common SEO Misconceptions and Why They Hurt Your Business

[William Craig](#)



Understanding search engine optimization can be a tricky business. Not because it's overly complicated (though sometimes it can feel that way) or because there isn't enough information (in truth, there's probably too much information).

It's tricky because there's no immediate feedback as to whether or not you're doing something efficiently. Parts of your SEO strategy could be lacking for years and you may firmly believe that you're doing everything right the entire time.

Below, find five of the most common SEO misconceptions out there, and why not fixing these pain points can hurt your overall SEO strategy.

## **Misconception #1: It's all about traffic**

One of the most perpetuated notions about SEO is that you can root most of your measures of success in traffic alone. I wish it were so easy!

**Why this hurts you:** Traffic, by itself, is a misleading metric. If you're getting millions of visitors to your website every day, those numbers look great, sure. But what percentage of that traffic clicks deeper into your site? How many goals does that amount of traffic reach? How many conversions can you expect from it?

Honestly, I think the traffic metric of Google Analytics gets weighed so heavily by SEO because it's easy to access. However, there are [many, many better analytic measures](#) you can look at to determine the value of a particular campaign, landing page or improvements made to your on-site SEO.

To discuss each of these alternatives in detail would be another blog post entirely, so suffice to say that if you delve into goal completions, event tracking and new versus returning visitor conversions, you'll be on a better track to understanding the effectiveness of your website than had you only considered traffic.

## **Misconception #2: The more pages, the better**

This point isn't so much untrue as it is simply incomplete. Sure, a website with 50 pages is likely to outrank a website with only 10 pages, but that's assuming that the quality of both websites is about the same.

**Why this hurts you:** If you only focus on the number of pages on your website, you risk putting your time and effort into building out your site in the wrong way. Rather than focusing on how often you add new posts to your site, focus on the quality of the pages you're adding.

[Content length plays a factor](#) in quality copy, too, with many search engines taking note that Google tends to favor longer content now. But you also need to make sure that you aren't simply posting 3,000-word articles for the sake of doing so. Too much fluff and lack of information will hurt your rapport with readers.

Find your balance between a regular posting schedule and longer, high-quality content in order to build out your site efficiently.

### **Misconception #3: Targeting multiple keywords per page**

What better way to rank in more search engine results pages (SERPs) than to target multiple keywords in a single page, right? Wrong.

**Why this hurts you:** If you target multiple keyword phrases in a single page, the focus of your page will likely come across as being too broad for you to actually rank well for any of those terms. Even if multiple terms are relevant to a page, it would be wiser to focus on just one head term and variations of that term. When done well (i.e. not keyword stuffing your entire page), this strategy can lead to solid, long-term results.

### **Misconception #4: Search is first**

Another misconception I often see in the industry is the belief that SEO is meant to serve search engines. But, perhaps the title “search engine optimization” is a misnomer. Your work speaks to search crawlers, yes. However, it's the humans using the search engines that need to benefit from your work.

**Why this hurts you:** If your focus is first and foremost on how search crawlers will benefit from your SEO, you're not thinking about the people who make your website all worth it: your customers. SEO is a means to an end, not the end goal itself.

If your work isn't being used as a tool to benefit your readers and allow them to find your information easier and more accurately, you're eventually going to lose your audience. At the very least, you'll be forced to watch from the sidelines as more customer-centric websites rightfully earn more subscribers, customers and social followers than you.

Don't let that happen. Keep the visitor in mind and use your SEO skills to improve their experience with your website.

### **Misconception #5: Using meta keywords**

We've [said it before](#) and we'll say it again, meta keywords just aren't worth your time. They don't actively improve anything about your website and, at best, are nothing more than a waste of your precious energy and mental resources.

**Why this hurts you:** In addition to not bringing about positive results, meta keywords can actually hurt your website. Depending what search engine is being used, meta keywords either do absolutely nothing or they flag your websites as potential spam.

Be sure to check the meta tags of your pages and, if any content keywords are listed in them, delete them. They simply aren't worth the risk.

At the end of the day, the only "wrong" way to do SEO is to engage in black hat practices. However, there are many, many inefficient ways to do SEO well, and knowing these misconceptions should help you avoid some of the big ones.

# BONUS CONTENT :

## Google Case Studies

### **PART 7 : Bonus Content**

- How Google Helps This Small Business Optimize its Online Presence  
- by StartupNation
- Bottle Breacher Uses Google to Hone Marketing Campaign - by StartupNation
- Arrow Limousine Worldwide Drives Marketing Strategy with Google Analytics - by StartupNation

# How **Google** Helps This Small Business Optimize its Online Presence

[StartupNation](#)



Founded in 1983, Kayak Adventures Worldwide provides educational and environmentally friendly sea kayaking tours of Resurrection Bay and the Kenai Fjords National Park in southern Alaska. Trent Gould took over from the previous owners in 2014, after working for them for two years as a guide and manager. With many competing kayaking companies in the Seward area, he wanted to do more than simply escort customers out onto the water. He also wanted to connect them to the environment. “We hold the key to something really special. I can make a difference in this world by getting people outside.”

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*“We get an amazing amount of guests from just online in general.”*

*Trent Gould, Owner*

Nearly all of Kayak Adventures’ customers find them through the internet, so Trent turns to Google products to optimize their online presence. Google Search Console helps him monitor the website in search results and Google Analytics gives him insight into how visitors are interacting with the site. When Google Analytics showed that he was losing one-third of potential visitors to his site because it wasn’t mobile-optimized, he created a mobile-friendly site and saw his bounce rate drop significantly. “With these tools I can really get a sense of how the business is doing and what’s going on,” Trent says. “I can make sure that our website is giving our clients the information that they need.” He also depends on his Google My Business listing to allow guests to easily read reviews, get directions and view photos. He uses YouTube videos to illustrate the beauty of their tours. And Gmail makes it easy for him to respond to an email from anywhere.

*Kayak Adventures Worldwide has four employees, plus 10 seasonal guides.*

“As a small business owner, time is really important to me,” he says. “There are so many things to do, it’s easy to lose track. Google makes it really easy.” Making it easier for Trent to run his business means he can spend more time making a positive impact and doing the things he loves. “We hope our guests go back home, wherever they’re from, and continue to play outside and build this relationship with our environment. We want to reclaim an active stewardship, and take really good care of the environment.””

**For more information on the Kayak Adventures Worldwide case study, visit <http://economicimpact.google.com>.**

**Content provided by Google**

# Bottle Breacher Uses Google to Hone Marketing Campaign

[StartupNation](#)



In 2011, U.S. Navy SEAL Eli Crane obtained a bottle opener made of inactive .50 caliber ammunition from his brother serving in the Marines overseas. Eli took it, painted it black, and added his unit's insignia. His platoon loved it. Realizing the potential business opportunity, the entrepreneur-at-heart and his wife, Jen, enlisted other military personnel to help get Bottle Breacher up and running. They handcrafted unique .50 caliber bottle openers out of their garage and later showcased their products on national television in 2014.

“From there, everything just blew up,” Jen describes. A flood of online interest crashed the company's website, but it wasn't anything that a trained Navy SEAL couldn't handle.

*“If it weren't for the web, we'd still be knocking on doors trying to sell our products.”*

*Jen Crane, Co-owner*

Eli left the Navy after 13 years and relocated his family to Tucson to focus on Bottle Breacher. The company moved into new quarters, expanded their product line to include other accessories and apparel, and quickly adopted AdWords, Google’s advertising program. “We knew that we were growing and that was the next step. Google is such a powerhouse, and it’s how we reach customers we normally wouldn’t,” Jen says. They also use Google Analytics to measure web traffic, hone marketing campaigns, and identify prime shopping times. “We run a really tight ship here, so we constantly check Analytics to see if we’re putting the right amount of time into the right places,” explains Jen. “You can’t be successful unless you understand the numbers.”

### *Bottle Breacher has 35 employees.*

Every month, Bottle Breacher sells their products to thousands of customers worldwide. And the broader community has benefitted from their success. “Growth for us isn’t just about increasing sales. It’s about being able to reinvest our earnings to help veterans and active duty military personnel,” explains Jen. “It’s also about bringing more of our manufacturing in-house.” Today, they’re doing both. Bottle Breacher manufactures almost all of their products in the U.S., most of which is done in their own Tucson facility. They hire as many veterans as they can because, as Jen describes, “veterans are the hardest working people we know.” They also support numerous non-profits—over 200 in 2016 alone, many of which are veteran or first responder organizations. The company has come a long way since their early days in the garage. But amidst all their growth, they’ve remained true to their mission and their roots. “If a Navy SEAL doesn’t like it, we don’t sell it,” Jen says.

**For more information on the Bottle Breacher case study, visit <http://economicimpact.google.com>.**

**Content provided by Google.**

# Arrow Limousine Worldwide Drives Marketing Strategy with **Google** Analytics

[StartupNation](#)



In 1960, Michelle McConville's father, Roger Somers, bought a taxicab and started his own business while still in high school. Then in 1976 he bought his first limousine and renamed the company Arrow Limousine. The business took off. Today Roger's son, Eddie Somers, is the president of this family-owned ground transportation service. They operate a fleet of 100 vehicles used to make 65,000 trips a year, transporting everyone from business and leisure travelers to wedding and prom goers. By the late 1990s they had developed their first website. Michelle, now their Director of Marketing, attributes their continued growth to their online presence and Google tools.

*"Google has definitely impacted our revenue growth."*

*Michelle McConville, Director of Marketing*

They use AdWords, Google's advertising program, to be found by people searching for transportation in their geographic area. "We're getting more calls from our website than ever before. Seventy percent of our new customers come from the Internet. And 97 percent of those are coming through Google," Michelle says. Their website is mobile-friendly, which is critical because 63 percent of their site traffic now comes from mobile devices. Their Google My Business listing shows contact information, photos, and customer reviews.

"Google reviews are huge for us," she adds. Google Analytics drives their online marketing strategy. "We couldn't make data-driven decisions without Analytics," says Michelle. They've also started using YouTube to tell their story and continue building their brand.

*Arrow Limousine Worldwide has 140 employees.*

The company has come a long way from its humble beginnings. They employ about 120 drivers and 20 office staff and have created an environment where everyone is treated like family. "Emily Damiano-Peck, our Director of Operations, has been here for 30 years. That's important to us; we're all part organizations. The company has come a long way since their early days in the garage. But amidst all their growth, they've remained true to their mission and their roots. "If a Navy SEAL doesn't like it, we don't sell it," Jen says.

**For more information on the Arrow Limousine case study, visit <http://economicimpact.google.com>.**

**Content provided by Google.**



## About Jeff Sloan

Founder at StartupNation



Jeff Sloan, co-author of “StartupNation: Open for Business,” published by Doubleday, is one of America’s leading entrepreneurial and small business experts. After starting his first business at the age of 18, he has been a serial entrepreneur ever since. Jeff has been involved in founding or starting more than 50 businesses, and has never taken a paycheck from an entity he didn’t have a hand in creating.

Jeff co-founded StartupNation in 2002 with his brother, Rich Sloan. Ever since, StartupNation has helped inspire, educate and inform millions of entrepreneurs and small business owners with the knowledge and insights they need to start, grow and manage a business. Jeff’s expertise as an entrepreneur is broad and deep, from inventing and commercializing his own inventions to developing, financing and selling his own tech ventures.

Today, Jeff is a leading evangelist for the virtues of entrepreneurship as a way to enhance and enrich lives, communities and nations. Jeff and his brother Rich have been featured in media such as The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Fortune Small Business, Entrepreneur Magazine, PBS, CNN, CNBC, MSNBC, FOX News and ABC News.

