Marketing Your Website

Online Marketing

This section will start by covering search engine marketing (SEM) which includes search engine optimisation (SEO) and pay per click (PPC) advertising. It will then move on to affiliate marketing, directories, Email marketing, advertising networks and finally social media.

Search engine marketing (SEM)

Background - Having become the most visited online category ahead of the like of portals, social networks and Email, search engine marketing must be at the heart of your marketing efforts. The big three search engines by quite some margin are:

Search engine	Global market share
Google	58.44%
Baidu	26.7%
Bing	7.07%
Yahoo	6.47%
Other	0.89%

Source: https://www.netmarketshare.com/search-engine-market-share.aspx

Although Google claim 25% of searches each day have never been conducted before, there are three broad types of searches:

- Navigational e.g. typing in a brand name
- Informational e.g. "World Cup winner 1978"
- Transactional e.g. "iPod Nano"

A search engine results page (SERP) is made up of two distinct sections; organic results and sponsored results. A typical SERP looks like this:

Logo & search box
Sponsored results

Organic results	Sponsored results
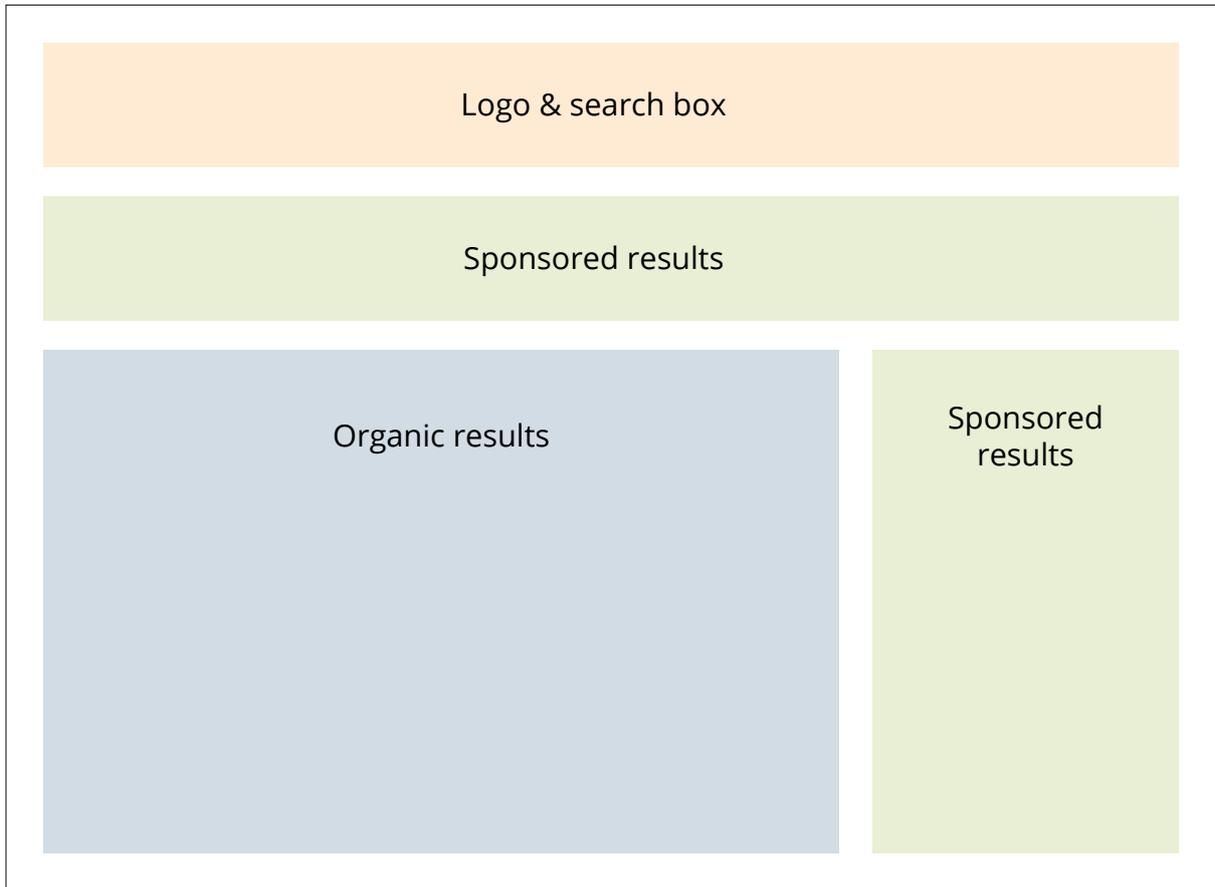
We will now look at those two sections in more detail:

Search engine optimisation (SEO)

Search engine optimisation is the process of increasing your website's organic position in a search engine's ranking. There are two methods to achieve this; 'On site' and 'Off site'.

On-site SEO

On-site deals with all the variables you can control as the site's webmaster. These are primarily based around your use of keywords:

- Page title tags `<title>`
- Header tags `<h1>`, `<h2>` etc
- Body of text
- Anchor text `<a href="http://www.example.com">`Anchor text`</a>`
- Domain name

> **Page rank**
>
> You will come across Google's PageRank (PR) a lot when you start to delve deeper in to SEO. You may have already seen it if you use Google's toolbar. PR is a score (out of 10) Google has given a site based on dozens of factors (some open, others kept hidden).
>
> A web site or page with a higher PR should in theory rank higher than one with a lower PR (although this is not always the case).

Researching keywords

Choosing the right keywords to focus on can be the difference between being ranked highly for the most popular terms and being buried on page 3 or below. There are numerous keyword research tools to choose from, some paid and some free. Unless you have a site running in to hundreds of pages or you have a product inventory the size of Amazon's, the free tools will be enough.

If we use the search term "trainers" we can choose which variation is most popular (e.g. "trainers" or "trainers shoes"), which associated product/service is most popular (e.g. "Nike trainers" or "Adidas trainers"), and compare completely different words (e.g. which is the most searched for "trainers" or "sport shoes"?)

One of the most popular is KeyWord Discovery's free search term suggestion tool http://www.keyworddiscovery.com/search.html.

> **Seo quick tip**
>
> If you serve a limited geographic location, optimise your website's SEO for the geographic locations you are targeting. For example instead of `<title>`Bouncy castle hire`</title>` be more specific and use `<title>`Bouncy castle hire Nottingham, Derby & Leicester`</title>`

Google also provide a keyword research tool found through your AdWords account or if you do not have one you can find it here https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal.

SEO and your meta keywords

In your HTML file, in between the `<head>` tags there are two meta tags you can use which were created to help inform search engines about your website:

```
<meta keywords="...">
<meta description="...">
```

Most SEO software still put a lot of emphasis on these as important ranking factors, unfortunately they are selling you a lemon. The meta keywords tag has not been used for ranking factors since the turn of the century due to misuse and spamming. A site can ignore this tag and see no negative impact whatsoever. The meta description again has no ranking influence, but it is used by the search engines for you site's description in the results page under the title (highlighted below). A strong page `<title>` (used for the SERP title) and meta description can greatly increase the number of clicks you get.

Note how the keyword is highlighted bold by the search engines. This helps your entry stand out.

Tips for writing your `<title>` and meta description:
- Use your brand name and the main two or three keywords in the `<title>`
- Do the same for the meta description
- Write the meta description with people and not the search engines in mind
- Don't just use a list of Keywords e.g. "Trainers, sport trainers, Nike trainers…"

Anchor text

When determining which keywords your site should be shown for and how high you should be ranked, one of the variables the search engines analyse are the keywords used in the anchor text. By using the anchor text in links coming to you from other sites AND the links connecting your site's pages (which means you have some control over this) the search engines are able to build up a picture of your site's subject and your 'authority' in that field.

Anchor text and SEO

When you link from one page to another in your own website or you link to someone else's website using non-descriptive terms such as 'click here' or 'find out more' as the anchor text you are not providing the search engine's spiders with information about what that page is about. As a result you miss out on taking advantage of one of the most important SEO ranking factors.

To see this in action search for "click here" on Google. You will see Adobe tops the rankings without a single mention of it anywhere on the page (the same goes for all the sites on the first page). This is 100% down to thousands of websites using something along the lines of "To download Adobe Acrobat Reader *click here*".

Anchor text and usability

Getting in to the good habit of naming your anchor text also improves your site's general usability. Research conducted in to how people read online content shows people don't, they scan. Visitors look for visual cues as to the page's topic and what they need to do next. Linked text stands out and draws the eyes, but non-descriptive links tell the user nothing and they will continue scanning elsewhere.

Getting the best of both worlds

When you link to another page use descriptive keywords for both the reader's benefit and for SEO purposes. For example...*"Widgets Inc the UK's leading provider of widgets is pleased to announce the launch of Widgets XL."*

When you are linking to a page make sure they are...

- Descriptive
- Short
- Written for the user and not the search engines
- Part of the sentence and not tacked on at the end

Off site SEO

Off-site SEO deals with how your site is ranked relating to tother sites. This includes:These include:

- Number of links to your site
- Relevancy of site linking to yours
- 'Authority' of sites linking to your site
- Anchor text used linking to your site
-

How do you get links to your site?

To get sites to link to you, you need to give them a reason to do so. It sounds simple but it can be a very hard nut to crack.

Good content: Your best bet for links from other sites associated with your industry such as blogs, forums and news sites is to provide content their own visitors will want to read. Blogs are a proven method of doing this with many successful sites even placing their blog at the centre of their business.

Creating link bait: Link bait describes content (be it an article, a widget, a download...) created especially to attract links from other sites. Some ideas include:

- Give away something free e.g. research, guides etc
- Being controversial
- Appealing to an opinion former's ego
- Being funny
- Running an interview
- Top xx lists are always popular

> **Link juice**
> This term describes the authority passed from one site to another through a link

Online press releases: These are a great way to gain links from your industry's news sites. If you launch a new service, re-design your site, start a special offer etc send out a press release to the relevant news sites and blogs. You will be amazed how many publish the press release, often word for word including a link.

Become active in your community: Put time aside to read other site's blogs and forum posts and start commenting on them and interacting with other people involved in your industry. Over time you and your site will start to become known. The more incisive and interesting your feedback the better your reputation will be. Simple one liners such as "Great post" will get you nowhere.

Ask for them! Who are your industry's heavy weights, who carry news, who are the popular blogs etc? You can either try to be subtle and leave a comment or be explicit and send them an email to draw their attention. If you decide to contact any one directly tailor the message specifically to them. They will be able to smell a generic mail shot a mile off.

Buying links: Taking a short cut and buying links directly from sites or through link farms/ brokers can be very tempting when you first start. It is important you understand Google takes a very dim few of this practice and will punish any sites found to be guilty of this. The punishment can vary from having the link juice removed through to your site being excluded from their search results altogether.

Search engine pay per click (SEPPC)
SEPPC is the favoured advertising model of most search engines (including Google, Yahoo and Microsoft). As the name suggests advertisers only pay when someone clicks on one of their adverts.

At its most basic level the model is essentially an auction based on keywords that trigger the adverts. Advertisers state how much they are willing to pay per click for an advert to be shown when someone types in a search phrase with that keyword. The more the advertiser is willing to pay the higher their advert is shown.

Organic & PPC

It is important to understand that organic and PPC have no impact on each other when it comes to being ranked. Spending more on PPC has zero impact on your organic rank and vice versa.

Advertiser	→	Keyword "Sport shoes"	→	SERP Ad shown on Sponsored results
	Bid £0.50		Search	

However, the bid amount is not the only factor when it comes to the adverts' rank. To make sure the adverts being displayed are relevant to the search terms the search engines have introduced a series of quality checks that also determine an adverts' position. Google calls theirs the 'quality score' (QS). The quality score is so important that advertisers with a high quality score can bid less and have their adverts shown higher than those with a low quality score.

The factors used include:

- The adverts' click through rate
- The landing page's relevance to the original search
- The advertiser's keyword performance history

You can read more here:

http://adwords.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=10215

Campaign structure

A well thought out Google AdWords account benefits from improved quality score (QS), lower bid prices, higher ad positions and more effective reporting/analysis.

A Google AdWords account has four levels:

1. Account   2. Campaign   3. Ad Group   4. Keyword

How you structure each level at the set up stage will impact on both your account performance and the ease at which you can analyse results. It will also remove the often tedious and lengthy process of having to restructure the account further down the line.

How to structure the account

Campaign: A product or service

Ad Group: Search themes surrounding the campaign

Keyword: The keywords associated with the ad group theme

For example, if we apply this to domain names...

Campaign: Domain names

Ad Group: Cheap domain name

Keyword: 'Cheap domain'; 'cheap domain names'; 'cheap domain UK'

We would then run an advert tailored to the ad group/ keyword. For example, if someone searched for "Cheap domain names", our advert would be like this...

> Cheap Domain Names
> Domain names only £2.59/year
> .com only £4.99. Register now
> Widgets.com/cheap-domain

Why structure the account that way?

1. Increased relevance of the keyword to the ads in its ad group (QS benefit)

2. Increased relevance of the keyword and the matched ad to the search query (QS benefit)

3. Adverts tailored to the keyword see a major increase in click through rate

4. Easier to adjust bids and distribute budgets to the keywords that are the strong performers

5. It is easy to run reports at each level without unrelated products or keywords skewing the numbers

6. Conversion tracking cost per acquisition statistics are clean at each level
   (e.g. if we had grouped 'cheap domain' keywords with 'bulk domain names' at the ad group level the conversion figure doesn't tell us which generated the most sales)

7. It informs your SEO efforts through the impressions metric
   (i.e. which keywords are the most popular?)

Display URL & destination

The display URL is what is shown on the advert and has to be less than 35 characters. However, this does not have to be the exact URL the user is sent to. Your destination URL is not shown on the advert and this is where the advert will take the visitor.

There are strict guidelines to prevent advertisers using this inappropriately which can be found in Google's help centre.

What makes a good SEPPC advert?

As you can see below a ppc advert does not give you a lot of space to grab attention, generate interest and convert that in to a click.

To grab as many clicks as possible:

- Use the keyword at the start of the title
- Use the keyword at the start of line 1
- Stand out from the crowd e.g. "Free delivery"
- Use a call to action e.g. "25% Sale ends soon"
- Use the keyword in the display URL

For the search term "Football boots" we would use the following...

PPC adverts' dimensions:
Title: 25 characters —————— Football Boots
Line 1: 35 characters —————— Football boots 25% off top brands
Line 2: 35 characters —————— Sale ends soon. Free delivery
Display URL: 35 characters —————— www.example.com/**football-boots**

How many should clicks should you expect?

Although this will vary massively from industry to industry and keyword to keyword, it is becoming accepted that PPC adverts claim far fewer of a page's clicks that the organic results. A split of 85% (organic) / 15% (PPC) is widely considered to be a fair assessment. Although your advert impression reports will show all the times your advert was shown, you are really only going to grab 15% of that total.

Affiliate marketing

Also known as pay per performance, setting up your own affiliate program in-house or using a 3rd party network can be an excellent way of generating sales with the added bonus you only pay out per lead or per sale.
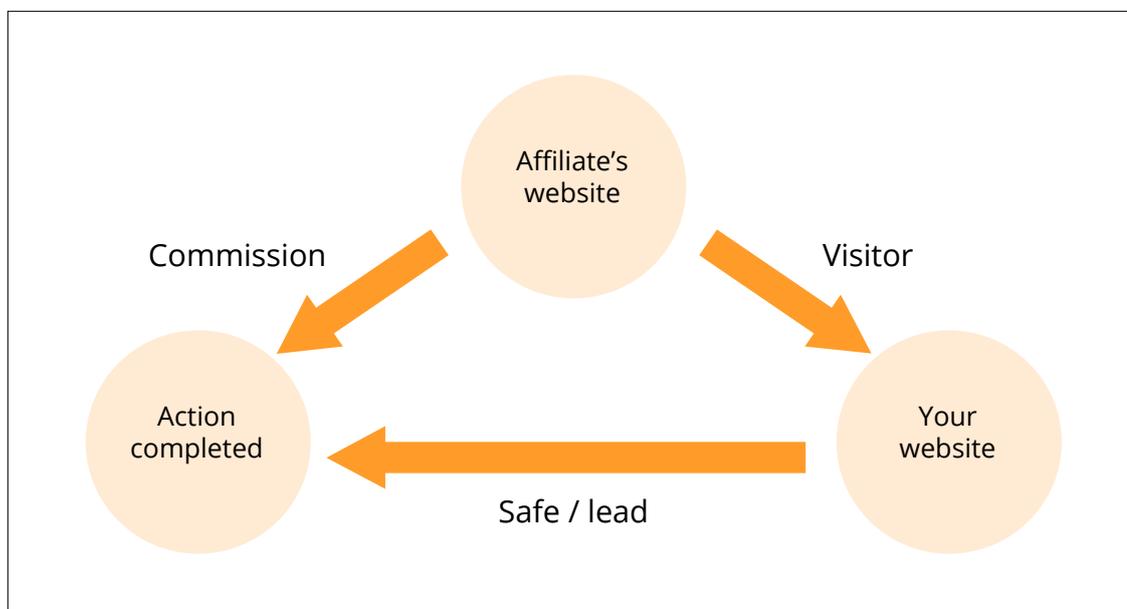
By making a series of banners and/ or text links available to other sites they are able to advertise your product and service to their visitors and drive traffic to your site. Tracking software monitors where your sales/ leads can from and you pay the referrer for per conversion. A common acronym used is CPA (Cost Per Action).

In-house or a network?

Setting up on a 3rd party network such as Commission Junction or TradeDoubler requires a significant financial commitment through network fees and a deposit to cover future commission. However, you do get access to a large base of affiliates and all the technical aspects (tracking and reporting etc) are dealt with for you.

If you decide to go for an in-hous e solution there are a lot of affiliate software solutions to pick from and they are a far cheaper option than the networks. However you will have to manage all technical tracking queries and the number of possible affiliates will be much lower.

Why should people advertise your site?

You should view your affiliate program as being in competition with all your direct and indirect competitors' affiliate programs for maximum exposure on affiliate's websites. With this in mind give affiliates a strong reason to first list your site and second to list it prominently. Affiliates like high commission rates, personal contact and competitions related to earning more money e.g. "March's top seller earns 50% more commission" etc.

Directories

Although their thunder has been stolen by the search engines, directories are still a great source of both traffic and incoming links for SEO.

DMOZ

THE online directory, one of your first acts should be to submit your site to http://www.dmoz.org/. This directory is used by search engines (including Google) for help with their own directory of sites. It has very strict submission guidelines so read them first before submitting your site (http://www.dmoz.org/add.html). Multiple submissions or submitting an incomplete site could get you excluded permanently.

Other generic directories

Spend some time researching and submitting your site to generic directories with a high page rank and that pass link juice. There are software solutions out there that will automatically fill in submission fields for you. Believe me, after about the eighth or ninth time of writing the same site description you'll wish you had bought it.

> **'No follow' links**
>
> Not all links pass 'link juice'. By using a 'no follow' tag sites can tell a search engine's spider not to follow that link. A lot of directories do this with their out-going links making them useless from an SEO perspective.

Industry directories

As discussed previously one of the factors search engines use to rank a site is the relevancy of the site linking to you. This means a site that is connected to your industry is worth more than one about a totally unrelated subject.

Geographic directories

Directories such as the 'ic' or 'touch' networks tend to be displayed prominently in localised search engine results. Research the most popular online directories for your area and niche and submit your site.

Email marketing

Building a list of email addresses is a relatively cheap method of getting your product/ service in front of your target audience.

Writing a marketing email

The subject line: Give the email's subject line as much consideration as the email itself. It is the first thing people will see and it can make the difference between the email being opened or deleted straight away.

Do:

- Use your company's name in the title
- Communicate a benefit/ promotion (e.g. "25% off football boots")
- Be descriptive so they know what is in the email

Don't:

- Shout using CAPITALS
- Pretend the email is about something else (e.g. "You are a winner")
- Use a false sense of urgency ("Important email!")
- Use punctuation such as ! or $, they are used by ISPs to identify spam

The body: The main point is Keep the content as short and to the point as possible, no one will read an essay. If you are using a one off promotional mail shot, use one promotion/ offer per Email with a clear call to action to avoid confusing the reader and making it clear what they need to do next. If you are sending out a newsletter, make sure it is also provides interesting/ useful content and not just dry company information. Competitions are a great way to encourage interaction.

Advertising networks

Banners have been around for years and many people have written the CPM model's obituary. Due to the increase in "banner blindness" amongst internet users the era of using them as a direct marketing tool is over, however they are still an effective method of branding.

With this in mind some networks have started to offer Cost Per Click or Cost Per Action options to encourage advertisers to move back from search engines with the promise of more granular and accountable tracking.

CPM model

CPM stands for Cost Per Thousand Impressions. Advertisers pay to have their banner shown a certain number of times rather than per click. E.g. If the CPM was £20 and the minimum number of impressions we could book was 100,000 we would pay £2,000

The most popular choice amongst small to medium sized websites starting out advertising using banners with relatively small budgets (a lot of networks ask for a commitment of £10,000 or more per month) is Google's content network.

Using a very similar bid model method as their search network, advertisers bid on either keywords or to be shown on specific sites. Unlike the search network, you can choose between CPM (cost per thousand impressions) and a CPC (cost per click) and you can run either text adverts or banners adverts. To get started simply set up a new campaign in your AdWords account and choose either 'placement targeting' or 'Image' ads' as you go through the campaign set up process.
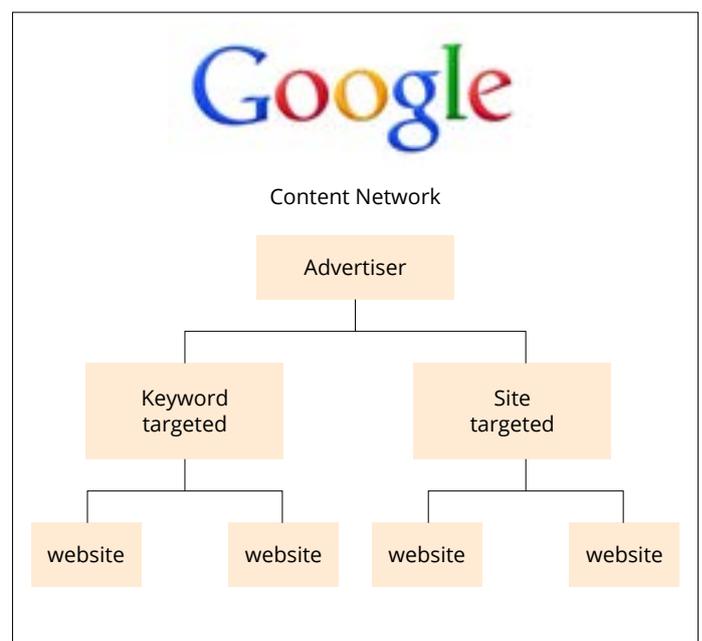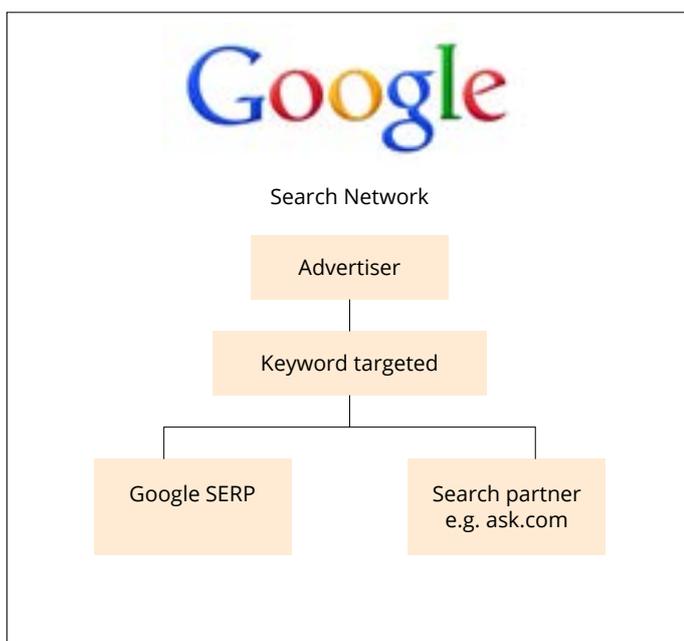
Writing a banner brief

If you choose to use some display advertising chances are you will need to use a designer to create one or more banners for you. To avoid along drawn out chain of emails going back and forth asking for changes follow these tips when writing a design brief:

- Be specific and don't presume any knowledge on the designer's part
- Be clear on the purpose of the banners (e.g. sales, branding, leads…)
- Inform them who the target audience is
- Specify which components are most important (e.g. headline, price, logo…)
- If you have seen a banner you like send them a screen grab for inspiration
- Be clear what you DON'T want

Social media

Social media has exploded on to the scene in the past couple of years with user generated content and instant interaction forcing site owners to re-think both their site's content and how they communicate with their audience.

Social news e.g. Digg

Getting a website ranked highly on sites such as Digg has been known to send so much traffic that sites have crashed under the weight. Their users submit links and stories to the site with other users voting and commenting on them. The more times your site is "Dugg" the higher you are ranked.

Social network e.g. Facebook

Profile pages on social networks can help to develop a dialogue with your audience and spread the word amongst the network's users, but before you commit yourself ask why would anyone want to be your website's 'friend' and how will you make sure the content is fresh and worth reading? If you have a good answer to both of these crack on, if not don't set one up just for the sake of it.

Become a social network

According to Hitwise, "Social networks now account for 1 in every 10 UK Internet visits and 1 in every 5 page views. Only search engines receive more UK Internet visits than social networks." This is only set to continue as the social networks targeting specific niches explode on to the scene catering for the personal tastes and interests of users in a way the large generic social networks can't.

The niches within the niches of topics such as music, cooking, travel, web design, sport, fashion, geographic locations, science... etc are all up for grabs. There is nothing stopping you grabbing a large part of that pie.

Micro blogging e.g. Twitter

The new kid on the block creating waves, Twitter's proposition is incredibly simple; in no more than 140 characters send your followers a message. The unique power Twitter has is the immediacy of a message's impact. Your 'tweet' is sent to all your followers instantly, making it very useful to communicate blog updates, special offers, start a conversation, run a poll... and see results within a matter of minutes or hours.

The danger the service runs is overuse or misuse from companies literally spamming users so much they become apathetic to message and even opt out of the service altogether. Tweets such as "It's another great Friday" from a business are a step towards being removed from people's lists.

Offline

Being online yourself, you can start to believe that this is the only way to market your site. We are going to go through the looking glass in to strange new world that doesn't involve the internet (much).

Press releases

Press releases do not have to go to major national newspapers or magazines. In fact unless you are very confident you have news of big enough for them to publish, focusing your efforts on smaller publications will pay more dividends.

Every industry has publications dedicated to reporting the latest news and events. Because they are so often focused on a niche with limited scope they will welcome news from any source. If you are a local supplier (town/ region) you will also be surrounded by small local newspapers hungry for local news of any kind. You can find a comprehensive list of local newspapers at http://www.mediauk.com/newspapers

Writing a press release

A press release should be able to let the editor literally copy and paste it. Keep any references to your site in the 3rd person and don't use any claims about your product or service outside of quotes. If you use any statistics put their source in the footer for the editor to verify. The headline should be attention grabbing and factual but not sensational.

> **Good:** Widgets.com announce launch of free design clinic
>
> **Bad:** Rubbish website? Widgets.com will sort it for you, free!!

The first paragraph should summarise the entire story to make sure the message is read and to prime the reader for what is to come. Aim to start with the specifics and become more general as the press release goes along. Quotes are a great way to insert claims about the quality of your service or add a little sales patter. For example…

John Smith, managing director of widgets.com said

> *"We know how hard it can be for small businesses to put aside time to re-design their website. Our free design clinic is a risk free way for business owners to discuss how they get generate even more revenue through their website."*

Distributing a press release

Finding the news editor's contact details is usually straight forward and you can quickly build your own database of contacts to send press releases. If you want to send a press release to a much larger list you can use a 'news wire'. How much they charge and the size of their distribution list will vary but you should be able to find a news wire that fits your budgetary requirements.

Press advertising

Despite falling sales there is still a large audience out there buying newspapers, magazines and trade papers. Many online businesses advertise heavily in specialist magazines, and that is the key to a successful print campaign, choosing the right publications for your target audience. If you sell washing machine tubing aimed at B2B customers you wouldn't advertise in the Radio Times. Narrow your target audience down by geography and/ or interest and pick which publications fit in with those.

One of the drawbacks to this type of advertising is the inability to track how much traffic and how many conversions it sends through to your site. If you want to track the effectiveness of your press advert you can:

- Use a special phone number
- Send them to a special landing page
- Give them a unique promotional code to use

They won't cover every single visitor but they will help to compare the different publications effectiveness.

Quick tips

These tips don't need their own section but they are still useful traffic drivers:

- Once an order has been fulfilled (even if it has all been done online) send a confirmation letter along with a few business cards for the customer to pass on.

- Your local British chamber of commerce and business link organisations are gold mines for both business resources and putting you in touch with potential customers. A good idea is to find out when they have their events to put local suppliers in touch with potential customers and go along. Also research whether they send out emails to local businesses you can advertise on.

- Offer to write guest articles on other people's blogs to position yourself as an expert in that field.

- There are literally hundreds of thousands of faceless websites out there offering services of every kind, some trustworthy and others not. Show the human side of your service to reduce the level of 'perceived risk' by using your name in communications (newsletters and customer service emails), add an 'about us' page with your picture(s) and if you run a blog use the author's picture next to the post.

Free resources/ links

Reading

- SEO resources and blog: http://moz.com/learn/seo
- PPC blog: http://www.ppchero.com
- Search engine news, articles, guides and opinion: http://searchenginewatch.com/
- Search engine news, articles, guides and opinion: http://searchengineland.com/
- Digital marketing articles, reports and blog: http://econsultancy.com/

Research

- More than we can mention, a gold mine of free research: http://www.useit.com/

Keyword research

- KeyWord discovery: http://www.keyworddiscovery.com/search.html
- Google's keyword tool: https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal

Banners

- Library of banners: http://www.bannerblog.com.au/
- Web banner size guide: http://www.designerstoolbox.com/designresources/banners/

Social media

- Create your own social network: http://www.ning.com/
- Create your own social network: http://www.elgg.org
- What are people saying about you on Twitter? http://backtweets.com

Press releases

- Press release writing and distribution: http://www.pressdispensary.co.uk/

Acronyms

B2B: Business to business

B2C: Business to consumer

CPA: Cost Per Action

CPC: Cost Per Click

CPL: Cost Per Lead

CPM: Cost Per thousand impressions

CPS: Cost Per Sale

CTR: Click Through Rate (typically shown as a %)

KPI: Key Performance Indicators

PV: Page View

ROAS: Return On Advertising Spend

ROI: Return On Investment

ROS: Run Of Site

SEM: Search Engine Marketing

SEO: Search Engine Optimisation

SEPPC: Search Engine Pay Per Click

SERP: Search Engine Results Page