SIMPLE SECRET TO GROWING YOUR BUSINESS

THE

It's what separates the top two percent of businesses from the rest!

INTRODUCTION

A great idea, an innovative product or loads of talent or enthusiasm is not enough to guarantee success in the digital age. The internet has changed the way we do business and most people now carry a smart phone in their pocket and can access the internet and their emails anywhere and at any time. Thanks to social media, the way we communicate with our customers and friends has changed while people now use Google to search for products and services online rather than open a Yellow Pages book or scan the local newspaper. Technology has also had a massive impact on marketing methods with traditional advertising media like television and newspapers in decline.

While the rate of change continues to accelerate, one thing remains constant, the importance of your website. It should be

your marketing hub and remains the most effective, least expensive way to attract new business and increase sales. Your website's primary purpose is to attract more leads and generate more revenue for your business. It is your silent sales person working 24/7 yet less than two percent of businesses have websites that really deliver.

The goal of this guide is to give you the information you need to turn your website into a marketing magnet. Lead generation is the lifeblood of any business and we will examine the features and functions your website needs to have to stand out from the crowd. Over the past few years we have worked with dozens of clients and website development teams to help create quality, affordable websites that generate leads and sales. In some cases these websites have given our clients a serious competitive edge in their industry. The truth is, if your website doesn't have these features then your business probably won't reach its full profit potential.

Here at Sheridans Accountants & Financial Planners, we are not your average firm of accountants who just keep the 'score'. We recognise your marketing can be the difference between a good business and a great business and our marketing expertise really distinguishes us from other accounting firms. If you need assistance with any aspect of your marketing we can help you - from branding to video production through to advice and assistance with the development of your responsive website and search engine optimization. Where required, we can also assist you with digital publishing and even harness the power of social media to help you win more website traffic and sales.

If you are looking to start a business or want to take your existing business to the next level, we invite you to contact us today. You can take advantage of our offer of a free, one hour consultation to discuss your business, financial, tax and marketing needs. If you're not ready to take that step simply browse our website and tap into our vault of marketing resources including various checklists, templates and guides.

Greg Sheridan

Wishing you every success in your business.

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BUILD YOUR BUSINESS & GROW YOUR WEALTH





WHY WEBSITES ARE



According to serial entrepreneur Creel Price, "You are either green and growing or you are ripe and rotting." This message is both great advice and a warning for business owners because as the rate of change continues to accelerate, you can't afford to stand still for a moment.

While businesses fail for a multitude of reasons, the most common ones cited are poor record keeping, inadequate cash flow and a lack of sales. Some of these reasons are really just symptoms and the real cause can be traced back to poor marketing. As you're about to read, your website should be your marketing hub and if it lacks strategy, content, a lead magnet and search engine optimization (SEO) then your business will probably never reach its full profit potential.

Marketing Has Changed

In the past decade there has been a fundamental shift in the way consumers make their purchasing decisions. The availability of free, high-quality information online has changed the way they buy and the internet has also changed the way businesses communicate with their customers.

Historically, we used 'outbound' marketing techniques to 'buy' the attention of customers. We interrupted consumers with cold-calls, persistent sales representatives, pamphlets, brochures, radio, TV advertisements, newspaper ads, billboards and telemarketing.



Thanks to the internet there has been a massive shift in marketing techniques. In the digital age, outbound marketing methods have been replaced by 'inbound' marketing methods. Inbound marketing activities are designed to bring visitors into your business as opposed to marketers having to go out to get the attention of potential customers. Your marketing now promotes your business through blogs, podcasts, videos, e-Books, e-newsletters, whitepapers, search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing and other forms of content marketing. These methods are designed to earn the attention of customers and draw customers to your website by producing relevant, interesting and targeted content.

In the online world, consumers hold the power. They can subscribe or unsubscribe from your newsletter, block a phone call and move on from your website with a simple click of a button. Today's consumers do extensive online research as part of the buying process. They read reviews, participate in forums, use social media channels to get feedback and download guides and product reports. In fact, a study from Fleishman-Hillard suggests that 89% of consumers use the internet to source information on products, services and businesses before making their purchasing decision. Buyers want to gather as much information as possible before they have to speak to a sales person or make a purchase.

The term 'inbound marketing' is also associated with the concept of 'permission marketing' and inbound marketing has five stages including:

- 1. Attract traffic to your website
- 2. Convert website visitors to leads
- 3. Convert leads to sales
- 4. Turn customers into repeat higher margin customers
- 5. Analyze for continuous improvement

A carefully constructed website will draw traffic from your various sources of content. If you can then engage with your site visitors

the objective is to convert the visitors into leads. The next step is to nurture these leads and turn them into customers. That's really just the beginning because a great website will then have automation processes in place to generate repeat business from those customers.

Your website is like the front door to your business and often the first touch point with a prospective client or customer. You only get one chance to make a good first impression and your prospects will pass judgment on your brand and business in seconds. It can make or break a business in the digital era and as such, your website remains the most relevant and important piece of marketing technology for business owners.

Your Website is Your Marketing Hub

The concept of your website being your marketing hub means that you can pull people back to your website no matter what content channel they are tuned into. They could be reading a blog, on a social media channel like Facebook or Twitter, watching a video or reading an email.

Your website should store all your content marketing and serve as 'home base'. You can cross-promote your content to maximize its reach and influence. For example, you can share your blog post on social media channels, use email to promote your latest case study and promote your e-Book on your blog. All of these strategies are designed to send prospects back to your website.



Driving traffic to your website and giving prospects the information they need is important but generating leads and converting those leads into customers is the ultimate objective.

Your Website is Your Silent Salesperson

Sales people generally work from 9am to 5pm but your website is open and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks of the year. It is your silent sales person, it never closes and can be accessed from anywhere in the world.

Your website needs to be more than just an electronic 'billboard' that lists the who, the what and where of your business. You need a website that resonates with your target market because you are competing with close to 1 billion other websites on the internet. In your industry you're probably competing with businesses with much bigger website budgets than you plus much larger resources. That might sound daunting but the web is virtually a level



playing field so you can compete with the major players in your industry and 'beat' them if you are strategic and follow the guidelines in this booklet.

When it comes to websites, bigger doesn't necessarily mean better. Quite often you'll find the big players in your industry are complacent about their market share and they don't measure and monitor the performance of their website. In some cases you'll find their websites are nothing more than a static billboard and they have a 'set and forget' attitude so their content is stale. These websites are 'ripe and rotting'. The good news is, you don't need a massive advertising budget to get people's attention today and your website can be your most powerful sales tool.

Website success doesn't come easy. While the internet offers a 'field of dreams' in terms of potential sales, if you have a 'build it and they will come' mentality you are going to be very disappointed. Websites fail if you set and forget. It needs to be a constant work in progress and requires regular fresh content including videos, a blog and e-books to spark the search engines and claw your way up the search engine rankings.

A great website is simple, informative and consistent. It turns heads and catches eyes, but it's also easy to navigate and understand.

Search Engine Rankings

Before we give you advice on what to include on your website it's important that you understand search engine rankings. Firstly, a lot of people get caught up in the aesthetics of their website. While the

appearance is important, business owners often let 'pretty' get in the way of progress when building their website. You can have the most beautiful website in the world but if you get no traffic it won't convert to sales.

The fact is, not all websites are created equal and every industry is littered with 'off the shelf' template type websites that are stuffed full of generic content. The vast majority are just a shell with very little content beyond the who, the what and the where of the business. Understand that these sites can look fantastic but Google and the other search engines are 'colour blind' and cannot see the layout. They can, however, read the content and will downgrade websites that are full of duplicate content and not updated on a regular basis.

Research from online ad network Chitika suggests that the top listing in Google's organic search results receives 32.5 percent of the traffic, compared to 17.6 percent for the second position and 11.4 percent for third position. What that means is 60 percent of visitors don't go beyond the third position on page one. These findings validate the importance of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and the importance of appearing on page one of a search.

The research also showed a significant drop in traffic from page one to page two results. On average, page one gets 91.5% of all traffic while page two manages less than 5% and page three just over 1%. When a search engine like Google lists its search results, it gives you two types - organic and paid. Organic search results or 'natural' results are free and are the web page listings that most closely match your search phrase. When people talk about search engine optimization or SEO they are talking about improving your ranking in the organic





results. To get traffic to your site you really need to be on the first page and ideally at the top of the organic search results.

The second type of search results are 'paid' results which are basically advertisements where you pay to have your web pages display for certain keywords. On a search results

page, you can distinguish between organic results and paid results because the paid results appear above or to the right of the organic results. They usually have a shaded background and a border around them or the word 'Ad' appears next to them.

Research out of the UK suggests ninety four percent of people click on the organic results on Google and Bing while only six percent click on paid search results. The statistics are very similar in Australia. Clearly everyone wants that prized top position in the search rankings and we recommend you steer clear of anyone who 'guarantees' you top spot on Google. If it was that easy then Google would be ineffective and their search ranking algorithms remain a closely-guarded secret. Incidentally, we keep referring to Google because research suggests 87.81 percent of Australians use it as their preferred search engine.

To win the coveted top spot in the rankings, Google offer some very simple advice. Forget about trying to beat the system and focus on building a great website full of relevant, interesting and original content. A good search ranking will follow naturally. Content marketing isn't about producing more content, it's about producing quality content that engages your target

audience. Teach customers, don't just sell to them. Offer content, like e-books, whitepapers, videos and infographics that answers their most frequently asked questions. Help solve their worst pains, problems and frustrations. The right content positions your business as a thought leader and problem solver.

Even though we don't know Google's precise ranking formulas, we do know they look at just about every aspect of your website including its age, domain name, freshness of content, HTML and page structure, accessibility, response time, social sharing and incoming links. The list goes on and there's certainly a lot of debate about which of these factors are the most important given the changes to Google's algorithms. The one thing we do know is, content is still king.

We could write another guide just on SEO and rankings but one thing you must do is create a Google+ account for your business. Simply go to

http://plus.google.com/pages/create

and set up a free account. This data feeds through to other services and you might just get a free listing on page one for your product or service. More useful tips on setting up your Google Plus page are available <u>here</u>





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Why Websites Fail

Unfortunately, most websites fail. Business owners get blurred vision about their ideal customer and the primary objective of their website. So let's get clear about the role of your website. The main reason your



website exists is to generate more traffic, convert traffic into customers and make more money. Ideally it should:

- Attract new clients
- Build relationships
- Educate and inform
- Encourage feedback
- Close the sale

Let's take a look at a couple of key reasons why websites fail to perform.

Mistake #1 Set and Forget

Most business owners think the website process stops when the website is built and gone live on the internet. After finding a website designer, buying the domain name and producing an attractive logo they think they can sit back and wait for the phone to ring.

Unfortunately, it is a more involved process. Your website is never finished and remains a constant work in progress. You need regular new content to engage the search engines like Google and a study by SiteKreator suggests that small business owners who update their website more than five times a month get more than 300% more website traffic than those businesses that don't.

Mistake #2 Fail to Focus on Ideal Customer

Most business owners build their website thinking it will attract anyone and everyone. They cast a wide net, when they really should have a laser like focus on their ideal type of customer. They use a direct marketing tool (their website) to deliver a mass marketing (general advertising) strategy. The content needs to be 'bait' for their ideal client and it's no surprise these sites are an epic fail.



Mistake #3 It's All About Me

Put yourself in your customer's shoes. At the start, they don't care about you or your building, your history, your staff or your services. They simply want to know, what's in it for me? In reality, your visitors want to know what benefits they will get from your products or services.

To really create the sort of strong connections that encourage conversion, you need to make your messaging about them, NOT ABOUT YOU. What are they going to get if they work with you? What are you going to do for them? How are they going to benefit? You need to think and write from the prospect's point of view so use 'you' in your copy and talk more about them and less about you.

THE WEBSITE ESSENTIALS

Now you understand a lot more about the importance of websites, search engine rankings and why websites fail, let's examine some of the essential elements of a website that can turn it into a list building, money making machine.



#1 YOUR CONTENT MUST ENGAGE

With the move to inbound marketing you no longer need to buy advertising or do face to face, one-on-one marketing. You don't have to pay thousands of dollars for expensive 'snail mail' campaigns to promote your business because the internet lets you reach your target audience in seconds at the click of a button. But that's also the problem, your competitors can reach your potential customers the same way.



Every day your marketing message is competing with dozens if not hundreds of other emails and messages from other businesses. Consumers are more selective and they are more cautious about clicking on a website or opting-in for a regular newsletter. They are taking longer to make buying decisions and to get your audience's attention your website must connect with them with clear content and contain a compelling offer.

People don't want to be sold to, they want to be guided to the right decision. Use painsolving content throughout the sales process to direct prospects. Answer their questions before they even have to ask them and you'll find the sale a lot easier to close.

Your visitors need to quickly understand what you do and how your products and services can help them. They should be able to find what they're looking for and know exactly what to do next, that is, what action you want them to take. Clear headlines scattered through each page of your website will achieve this and don't be afraid to ask your reader to do something in your headline. You could invite them to sign up for a free sample, make an appointment or download your e-book.

The headline on your website is the hook that catches their attention but avoid the temptation of littering your pages with too many headlines. The headlines draw attention to

the page but the key ingredient is content. Put yourself in the shoes of your ideal client and provide relevant and interesting content. Before you draft your message or create the words to describe your product or services, you need to establish who your ideal customers are so you can tailor the offering to their needs.



Content strategy is critical and it's a bit like fishing. If you know the species you are trying to catch then you set up your line with the right bait and tackle. If you don't know what you are fishing for then it's impossible to set the right bait. As mentioned earlier, websites fail because the content isn't targeting your ideal customer.

You don't have to give your very best content away. Make prospects exchange their email address or contact information for your more informative or valuable pieces of content.

#2 YOUR WEBSITE MUST EDUCATE



Marketing is giving customers and clients what they need. Most websites miss the mark and inbound marketing is all about engaging with your visitors. Give them what they're really looking for and tell them how they'll benefit from your products or services.

People are more sceptical today and they really don't want to click on your banner ad, visit your landing page, open your email, watch your video or read about your product or service in social media channels. Remember you are trying to convert an anonymous visitor to your website into a lead then hopefully a customer.

By educating your prospects you build trust and you need to offer your visitors a variety of educational content. Your prospects will be at different stages of the buying cycle (research, evaluation or ready to buy), so you have to provide content that matches their level of interest. Whitepapers, e-Books and videos for prospects just introduced to your business, webinars and demos for those wanting to go deeper and consultations for those about to make a buying decision.

People are landing on your website every day but unless they are ready to buy from you today, they are leaving and continuing their search with your competitors. They might return to your site or they might not. You don't know who they are, what they wanted or why they even stopped by your site in the first place. If they are one of your ideal customers you need to deliver what they want and get them to identify themselves before they leave. This gives you the opportunity to continue the conversation long after they've left your website and the mission is to capture their name and email address.

#3 YOUR WEBSITE MUST BUILD RELATIONSHIPS



Visitors to your website will pass judgement on your business in seconds. You only get one chance to make a first impression and your website is often the first touch point with a prospective new customer or client.

You want to impress the visitor and build a long term relationship so they keep coming back to buy from you. Relationships sell and most people are open to learning about what you do, as long as you can give them something of benefit in exchange. You build trust in the exchange and it could mean gifting them a free sample, a newsletter, a report, consultation or even a free DVD in the mail in exchange for their contact information.

Now it might seem over the top to give something away in exchange for a mailing address but you need to understand the lifetime value of a customer. If you continue to deliver quality to that client they could be a 30 year customer of your business. They might also refer other top shelf customers and it all starts with the exchange (like this e-booklet) and you have their permission to contact them again in the future. They trust you will respect their privacy and see real value in the giveaway.

Start thinking about what you could offer right now to people who visit your website for the first, second and third time. What can you give them that is of high value? These giveaways are often described as 'lead magnets' and we will discuss them shortly.

#4: YOUR WEBSITE MUST HAVE CALLS TO ACTION

Now that you are attracting more traffic and building relationships, trust and engagement with your website visitors, it's time to close the sale. This is done by asking your prospects to take the next step in the buying process and follow your 'call to action'.



In business, you must ask for the order. People generally feel uncomfortable selling, however, the call to action (COA) lets your website do the talking for you. In fact, if your website doesn't give people the opportunity to move from the prospect phase to the client phase, you're actually doing them a disservice. If they have engaged with your content then they really want to know what to do next. You simply need to be direct and tell them contact us today, call for a free consultation or click here to get a free sample.

People who are interested often need a prompt to make a decision. You'll see on our website we have this call to action on a number of pages because people who are ready to take the next step just need a gentle prompt. If you don't have a call to action you are leaving money on the table.



OOKING TO START OR GROW YOUR BUSINESS? Book a FREE consultation by entering your details in the box on the top right hand side of this page.

OR CALL US DIRECT ON (08) 8376 0455

Don't spam or abuse your growing email list. Only send them content-rich, thoughtprovoking lead nurturing emails that drive them back to your website. Since you don't know how your prospects like to receive their content, mix it up: videos in one email, PDFs in the next, website links in the third and so on.

#5: YOUR WEBSITE MUST BE RESPONSIVE TO MOBILE DEVICES

At the start of 2015 we noticed about 20% of our website traffic was on hand held mobile devices. By late 2015 this figure had jumped to about 35% but now we find the figure at around 45%. Desktop users tend to spend more time on your website but mobile traffic is now a bigger portion of your total traffic. As such, your website must be responsive and that means the view will alter depending on the device you are using.



THE WINNING WEBSITE FORMULA

So far we have talked a lot about content in the body of your website but what about a framework to put it all in? Your website 'skin' is really the outer layer of your website and the permanent part of each page on your site. Below we have put together what we describe as the 'website winning formula' including the 6 absolute 'must haves'. Include all six features and you are on your way to having a website that will convert traffic to sales. We have used our own website in the example to illustrate we 'walk the talk'.



1. THE HEADLINE

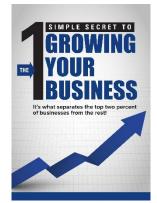
The headline is basically the advertisement for your website. It is the pitch to your target market and usually the first thing your visitors see when they come to your site. You need to spell out the end benefit and it could be more sales, more revenue or more customers. It might be quality advice, improved performance or time saving.

Of course, before you can script the right headline for your website you need to identify your ideal customer or client. Identify what they really want from you and tell them you can deliver! Your headline will tell them the problems you solve or the results they can expect from your products or services.

Make no mistake, your prospects aren't going to buy based on your headline. That's not the point but it hooks your ideal customers and lets them know they've found exactly what they're looking for. Convincing them to contact you or handover their contact information is the next challenge.

2. LEAD MAGNETS

A lead magnet like this e-book is a valuable item you offer your website visitors for free. In exchange, your visitors supply their contact details including their name and email address.



Lead magnets can be an e-Book, a video, a webinar, a free product sample, a free app or a case study. People won't join your email list unless you give them something of value that they really want.

It's all about attracting subscribers to your email list. The more valuable and relevant your lead magnet is, the more likely they will exchange their contact details. These people then enter your lead nurturing campaigns that could be a series of emails or offers.

In many cases you can have multiple lead magnets on your website. That way you cater for prospects at different stages of the buying process. We believe in creating a marquis piece of content and using it as a lead magnet. If it's high quality it can really explode your email subscription list and build trust. The content must be genuinely helpful, showcase your expertise and be made available on the web for free. It might be an e-book, a how-to guide, a template or business planning tool.

While chefs have their signature dish, you have your signature piece of content that you give away. As a guide, the content should be so valuable that prospects would pay for it. Like most things in life, quality is better than quantity. You have loads of online competition but this piece of work could be outstanding and irresistible to your target market.

The product images you use for your lead magnet are also important. The image can have an impact on your subscription rate so we encourage the use of a professional graphic designer. Professional images can add to the perceived value and look much more impressive than a standard design done in MS Word or Publisher. We recommend <u>www.fiverr.com</u> for one page jobs like the cover. Graphic designers who use Photoshop also have a plug in called Cover Action Pro that lets them convert a conventional flat image into a 3D image of a report, book, box case or video cover.

3. OPT IN BOX

Most first-time visitors to your website won't make a purchase. However, the fact that they have come to your website suggests you may have something they want.

To build a relationship with these prospects you should try to collect their e-mail address and encourage them to exchange their name and email for your lead magnet or newsletter subscription. This will give you the chance to nurture them through email offers, updates, free downloads and other information to build trust and develop your relationship. Again, quality is important as you work towards that first sale.

These offers may not convert to the first sale but they often pave the way and turn visitors into customers. Your opt-in offer should

be linked to most pages of your website and should appear above the fold. That way your visitors don't have to scroll down the page to find the opt-in form and your offer.

4. SOCIAL PROOF & TESTIMONIALS

The best way to establish credibility with visitors is to provide evidence that your product or service really works. The most effective form of social proof is testimonials from satisfied customers who explain how your product or service has solved their problems and delivered on your promise.

The testimonials can be written or video recordings and be sure to include the names of your satisfied customers and their location and business name if available. Make sure the client has also given you authority to use the testimonial. For written testimonials you should also post a small picture of the person(s) beside the testimonial to add more credibility. Satisfied customers can help convince reluctant prospects to take the next step.

Of course, positive social media comments are also excellent content.

5. BLOG

Your website needs a blog for a host of reasons. Firstly, the statistics tells us that businesses that blog attract 55% more website visitors. That's a compelling reason on its own.



Every time you write a blog post with some relevant keywords you're increasing your chances of prospects finding you via a search engine. It's another form of content marketing and Google definitely prefers websites that are regularly updated rather than static websites.

Blogs also position you as an industry expert and they can help attract an audience who can interact with you. User interaction signals can give your website a higher prominence score in the Google local algorithms.

Your blog can be integrated into your social media channels so you can feed content out onto Twitter, Facebook and Google+.



6 CALL TO ACTION

If you want people to buy your products or services, you have to tell them exactly what you want them to do and you have to make it easy for them to do it. If you want them to buy a product, present them with a call to action like this: are all busy, so you have to do your best to get visitors' attention when they visit your website. Graphically designed, visually appealing call-to-action (CTA) buttons (like the one below) do an amazing job of getting visitors to convert.



Provide your customers with clear, easy-to-understand instructions on how to make a purchase, and let them know what they can expect when they click on the link that leads them to the order page.

CONCLUSION

Websites work. A carefully constructed website can drive traffic and create leads. If your website doesn't have some of these features then you could be leaving significant profits on the table and your business probably won't reach its full potential.

This guide provides the information you need to turn your website into a marketing magnet. However, to have a website that stands out in a crowd you need to have a clear vision of your ideal client. You also need some other essential ingredients including the right headline and a signature lead magnet. These can make a massive difference to the performance of your website.

The right website can give your business a serious competitive edge. It takes time, planning and money but it could be the difference between boom and bust. Over the past few years we have helped dozens of clients to improve their website's performance. In some cases this has meant a makeover of an existing website but we have also helped clients build their website from scratch. Our clients span the entire business life cycle from start-up to sale and over the years we have earned a reputation as business start-up specialists. We love marketing because beyond compliance we believe you really want to grow your business, your profits and your wealth.

Here at Sheridans Accountants & Financial Planners we are very skilled at compliance work including tax returns and financial statements, however, it is our marketing expertise that really distinguishes us from other accounting firms. If you need assistance with your marketing contact us today and take advantage of our free one hour consultation.



MARKETING SERVICES

- Branding
- Responsive Website Planning & Development
- Website Content
- Digital Publishing
- Search Engine Optimization
- Video Recording and Production
- Social Media Strategies



BUILD YOUR BUSINESS & GROW YOUR WEALTH

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