

Marketing Your Website



A guide to getting qualified traffic to
your website and the black art of
Search Engine Optimisation

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If anyone tells you that their software or their skill will get your website to the top slot or even the first page of Google – walk away, because they can't – you should also avoid link farms and other dubious offerings.

Only 1 site can be in the number one slot and only 10 sites can be on the first page – the chances of your site being at these lofty heights is fairly remote – but there are things you can do to improve your organic ranking.

However, if you're in a hurry to get a return on your investment I will show you how you CAN get traffic to your site and maybe even appear at the top of page 1 of Google.

Open your favourite browser, probably Internet Explorer, go to Google and enter "Parish Council Website" into the search box and you'll almost certainly find our site www.parishcouncilwebsite.co.uk is at the top and it's there because we use Google Adwords – we use Pay Per Click (PPC) to promote our site.

But there are pitfalls with PPC. If you're paying to get visitors to your site it's essential that these visitors are qualified, in other words they have clicked on your site because they want to buy your goods and/or services.

We need to start by looking first at the black art of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO).

SEO is usually a complete waste of time and money beyond some very basic level which should be implemented by the site designer automatically; things like page titles, Alt Tags, image / table tags etc.

Google's success is based on its ability to deliver relevant results to search requests, how it does this is subject to continual adjustment of its algorithms, but in principle it's very simple: first, examine the textual content of the website and compare it against the search terms, then

second and more importantly, measure how many other sites covering the same or similar topics have links to that site.

A good example of this in action is "cricket".

If you search Google for "cricket" (during the cricket season), you'll find that top of the standard (organic) results list is the BBC News cricket coverage and appears higher than www.cricinfo.com, which has far more cricket-related content. The reason for this is that more sites link to the BBC than Cricinfo.

So the secret of marketing your website is to ensure that it's jam packed with relevant textual content and W3C compliant which will make it easy for the Googlebot to crawl and index. Then get lots on inbound links from other websites – so if you've built a cricket website you'll need more content than Cricinfo and more inbound links than the BBC!

A few years ago SEO was all about fooling the search engine robots who, in those days, were not very clever and tricks like embedding keywords into headers/footers and hiding keywords behind pictures/graphics fooled them into thinking that the site was more important than it really was in reality.

Today, if you try tricks like that, the bots will see what you're trying to do and will penalize your site and maybe even ignore it completely.

To get near the top of the rankings, you need to create a good site that's full of relevant content and develop relationships with other sites that relate to yours - then wait. This process can take months and still offers no guarantee of success.

Sometimes you can link exchange with other relevant sites, however, because most sites are business based, the relevant sites are likely to be your competitors; so you have to start thinking laterally.

Suppose you have a holiday hotel in Swansea, other holiday hotels in Swansea will be competitors but not those in other places like

Bournemouth, Blackpool and Bognor – so you could exchange links with those. You can also approach travel agents and other related organizations who are usually quite happy to exchange links.

Another problem area is that of suppliers. Your business probably shares the same supplier with your competitor so you'll probably find that if the supplier does link to their retailers, they're likely to link to all, which is better than no link at all.

Link quality is also important. If Google see's a link on a Links Page it just say's, "Oh look, there's a link" but if it sees a link to your site which in located in an editorial page surrounded by relevant content it will give that link greater importance.

This leads us on to Forums and Support Groups.

With a little research you should be able to find a forum, bulletin board or newsgroup that discusses your product, service, industry or location and these can provide valuable links and contacts.

Register yourself on the forum and create a signature with your name and your website address underneath; then contribute to the discussions. People will read your comments and almost always visit your website; you can never tell where these things might lead.

Whatever you do, DO NOT advertise or attempt to advertise. Most forums frown on this and you'll find your postings removed and you may even get banned.

Now let's get back to Google Adwords.

Paying for each click on your Google Advert may not appeal but it's the only method guaranteed to drive relative traffic to your site.

Once you've registered with Google you can then access their facilities.

The first thing you should do is to get Google to search your site and deliver to you a list of the keywords that it finds.

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

Check these keywords and make sure that they're all relevant. It's quite likely that Google will deliver keywords that are not relevant.

For example, if Google searches www.parishcouncilwebsite.co.uk it may well return Little Wapping Parish Council under the search term Parish Council, so we have to make the search term tighter by placing parish council inside " " or [] to prevent our advert from showing on searches where people are looking for a specific Parish Council.

Once you have your keyword list make sure Google hasn't missed any search terms that you think people will use. Remember Google reports search terms that are used most frequently and by adding a little used keyword to your list you can cover the fringe areas where the CPC (cost per click) is lower.

So you've got your keyword list now you need to make your advert using the appropriate keywords, set a CPC level and a Daily Spend Limit and away you go.

We're not going to dwell on how you setup your Google Adwords Account or your campaign as all this is explained in great detail on the Google website.

Monitor the position of your advert on a daily basis and tweak the content and CPC until you're getting the right number of relevant hits on your site and that these hits turn into leads or orders.

If you find that people are landing on your site from Adwords and staying for 0 seconds then they have misunderstood your advert and you need to find out why. The answer is usually obvious when you see what search term they used.

Adwords gives you the ability to run several versions of the same advert which enables you to see which is performing best.

Spend some time researching on Google and investigating Googles Webmaster Tools and Google Analytics – they can all provide you with valuable information to help you make your site work.

SUMMARY

1. Develop a good-quality HTML website with lots of textual content.
2. Pick your keywords carefully.
3. Make sure your keywords are relevant
4. Make sure you have a different advert (or group of adverts) for each group of keywords. Google decides how high up the sponsored listings you'll appear partly on how much you're prepared to pay and also on how closely your advert and the page that it links to, matches the search term.
5. Repeat the keywords in the body of your advert.
6. Test, test and test again.

Finally, one of the most valuable long-term marketing tools is a good referral strategy. Nothing is more powerful than a word-of-mouth recommendation and you'll often need do nothing more than ask people to recommend you.

Help someone solve a problem efficiently, (even if it's apparently unrelated and on a local forum), offer excellent value for money and your customers will refer their friends and colleagues to you.

It's also worth having a testimonials section since, although these are less powerful than direct referrals, a lot of potential clients need to see that others have used your service before they'll buy from you.

We do run Google Adwords Campaigns for some of our clients however the process can easily be handled by the site owner contacting us to add Google Analytics Code or make some minor changes to the content to reflect new or additional keywords.