

Katharina Kokoska

3rd Edition
Expanded and updated

ON LINE MARKETING

FOR SMALL AND
MID-SIZED BUSINESSES



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nearly twenty years ago, Katharina Kokoska founded the advertising agency KOKO Marketing, which she continues to lead today with both success and passion. Early on, she specialized in online marketing and search engine optimization, making her agency one of the first to focus on helping small businesses build visibility online and acquire new customers through digital channels.

Katharina Kokoska not only became self employed at a young age, founding her first business at just 22, she also fulfilled a lifelong dream early in her career by emigrating with her husband. In 2005, the couple left Germany and relocated to the Canary Island of Gran Canaria, Spain. The agency's location continues to benefit its clients, enabling it to offer attractive pricing, particularly to its predominantly German, Swiss, and North American customer base.

Katharina Kokoska wrote this marketing guide in 2018. It was revised in 2026 and is now available in its third edition, still offered free of charge either through the [KOKO marketing Agency](#) or via the „[Apple Books store](#)“.

MARKETING STRATEGY



STRATEGY



VISITORS



LEADS



CUSTOMERS



PROMOTE

ABOUT THIS E-BOOK

If you want a website that not only looks professional but also attracts real customers, this guide is for you. If your goal is to use Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and other platforms to promote your products or services effectively, you will find practical advice here. You will also learn how to build strategies that generate new clients consistently.

This book provides clear, actionable insights into online marketing tailored for small and mid-sized businesses. Every concept is presented in a way that you can apply immediately to grow your presence and reach your customers online.





IF YOU DON'T ADVERTISE, YOU DIE

This was the famous dictum of auto-maker Henry Ford, and it remains as true today as it was then.

Every business owner should take it to heart. Companies operate in a relentless, competitive environment where winning the customer's attention is crucial. Whether you run a hair salon, a manufacturing business, a startup, or a billion-dollar enterprise, there is never a moment when a smart entrepreneur can afford to skip advertising.



WHY ADVERTISING MATTERS

Both start-ups and established businesses should never treat marketing as something occasional or optional. Long-term success comes from seeing marketing as a core, ongoing part of your company's operations.

The world is constantly changing, and businesses must change with it to stay relevant. This applies to even the smallest companies. Ignoring market shifts or neglecting marketing can quickly lead to trouble when loyal customers drift away or demand for your products or services declines. Who would have predicted that traditional taxi services worldwide would face such intense competition from a U.S. based ride sharing platform that operates entirely through a smartphone app? Or that so many independent bookstores would be fighting for survival as more consumers order their books online through Amazon? Markets evolve, and companies that fail to adapt or maintain a consistent marketing effort risk putting their very survival at stake.

Reacting only in moments of extreme need with short-term online ads or print campaigns will rarely produce meaningful results. Advertising works best when it is part of a carefully thought-out strategy, speaks to your audience on an emotional level, and follows a long-term plan. Lasting success comes to businesses that embrace innovation and have the courage to implement change and new ideas internally.

MARKETING FOR SMALL AND MID-SIZED BUSINESSES

Owners of small and mid-sized businesses often argue that limited time and financial resources mean they have to cut back on marketing. Yet a solid marketing strategy is just as critical for a smaller company as it is for a large corporation.

Choosing to forego advertising is a risky move. No business can thrive without marketing. Over time, without consistent marketing efforts, reaching enough customers becomes impossible, and that inevitably affects revenue. When business slows, cutting marketing budgets first is a mistake. A powerful campaign doesn't require a massive budget. Thanks to the internet, it's now entirely possible to attract attention, acquire new customers, and retain loyal clients efficiently and cost-effectively.

Businesses that advertise consistently, monitor the market closely, and respond to rapid changes with creativity and courage set themselves up for a successful future.

**ADVERTISING
IS EXPENSIVE. NOT
ADVERTISING IS EVEN
MORE EXPENSIVE.**

PAOLO BULGARI





WHO IS YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE?

In smaller businesses, target audience analysis is often overlooked. The hairdresser shrugs and says, "My audience? Women, of course." The owner of a wine shop raises an eyebrow and laughs, "Everyone is a potential customer!"

Taking such a casual approach costs both time and money. When you try to appeal to everyone, two things happen: no one feels personally addressed, and your paid advertising reaches far too many people who have no interest in what you offer.



WHY BUSINESS OWNERS SHOULD KNOW THEIR EXISTING AND POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS WELL

Your products and services exist to solve your customers' problems. When you succeed, you gain satisfied clients who remain loyal and pay their bills. To achieve this, however, you need a deep understanding of your customers, their challenges, desires, interests, and needs. The better you know your target audience, the more effectively you can tailor your product or service to them and the more precisely you can reach the right people with your advertising.

KNOW YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

A target audience that is too broad or general is usually more of a hindrance than a help. If you truly want to understand the people who will buy your product or service, you need more than a statement like, "Our audience is mainly women, aged 40 to 60, with a middle to high income." Such a description may sound good, but it does not give you the insights you really need.

LISTEN CAREFULLY

First and foremost, pay close attention to your existing customers. Ask how your product or service has made a difference in their lives. How useful is it? What problems does it solve? What emotions does it evoke? Where could it be improved?

Take a careful look at everything you know about your customers. From age to interpersonal habits, record all the information that helps you understand and characterize them.

TARGET AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION

Once you know more about your audience's age, gender, family status, income, challenges, and emotions, you should break it down into smaller segments.

Create groups based on criteria such as marital status, location, environmental awareness, fitness level, or life situation. Then develop offers and marketing messages tailored to each subgroup. For example, offer senior packages if one segment of your audience includes people over 65 in your area. Highlight the sustainability of your product if another segment is highly environmentally conscious. A hair salon might promote wedding hairstyles if engaged couples form a distinct segment.

Do not fear segmentation or worry that your groups might become small. The smaller and more specific the group, the more effectively you can reach potential customers. The better you understand each segment, the more precisely you can tailor your products and services to meet their needs.

**„MY BEST IDEAS
COME WHEN I
IMAGINE THAT I AM
MY OWN CUSTOMER.“**

**CHARLES LAZARUS,
GRÜNDER VON TOYS'R'US**

THE CONCRETE BENEFITS OF TARGET AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Conducting a thorough target audience analysis is always worth the effort. The insights you gain are particularly valuable when optimizing keywords for search engines and planning advertising campaigns. The results can also help you refine your products or services and address any gaps. In my work with clients, I often see entrepreneurs adjust their offerings after a detailed audience analysis, and sometimes they even discover entirely new business opportunities. Let's look at two examples.



First, a baker notices that Spanish customers frequently shop at his store. Through a target audience analysis, he discovers that several families with a Spanish background live nearby and that there is even a local gathering place for Spaniards in the area. He can tailor his product range to this segment, for example by adding traditional Spanish baked goods. He can also research which search terms these customers use online. For instance, around 320 people in the United States search each month for the Spanish holiday cake "Roscón de Reyes" using the keyword "buy roscon de Reyes." Creating a dedicated page on his website featuring Spanish specialties and optimizing it for search engines could attract a steady flow of new customers and open up a profitable additional revenue stream.

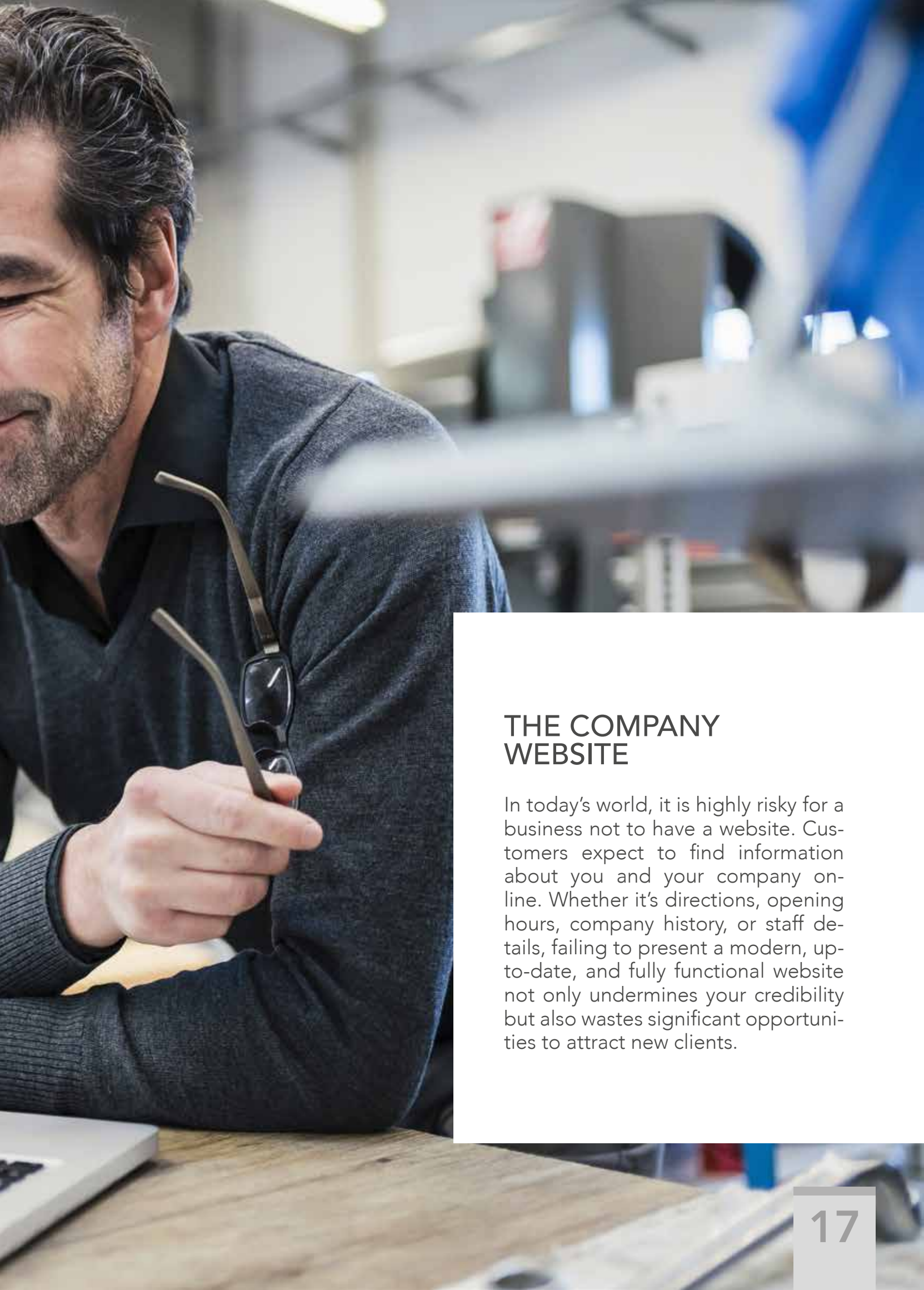
The second example involves a master gardener looking to take over a plant nursery. Through audience analysis, he realizes just how many distinct groups exist and how varied their needs are. There are plant wholesalers, architects and construction companies, garden centers, and public institutions. There are community garden associations, families, hotels, and restaurants. Older customers looking for grave decorations and maintenance form another group, along with many smaller segments. Each of these groups has unique needs, interests, and ways of being reached.

The gardener is also part of a large Facebook group for hobby gardeners, which allows him to engage this particular audience by sharing knowledge and tips. Occasionally mentioning his nursery there will not be intrusive. For customers seeking grave planting services, he prefers offline promotion, distributing flyers in a café near the cemetery. For engaged couples, in his region it is customary to plant a “wedding tree” after the ceremony, so he has connected with two wedding planners in the nearest larger city. He also plans tailored strategies for the other small segments identified through his audience analysis to ensure the nursery thrives.

These examples clearly show how crucial target audience analysis is, especially for smaller businesses. It is the only way to align your products and services with customer needs and to identify the most effective ways to reach and engage your diverse audiences.







THE COMPANY WEBSITE

In today's world, it is highly risky for a business not to have a website. Customers expect to find information about you and your company online. Whether it's directions, opening hours, company history, or staff details, failing to present a modern, up-to-date, and fully functional website not only undermines your credibility but also wastes significant opportunities to attract new clients.



AT THE CENTER: THE COMPANY WEBSITE

No small or mid-sized business can afford to be without a website. Today, even the smallest companies are expected to have an online presence. Without it, attracting new customers and maintaining relationships with existing ones becomes much more difficult, and the company's credibility and reputation suffer.

GETTING FOUND ONLINE

What good is the most beautiful website if no one can find it? One of the most important criteria for any company website is visibility in search engines like Google or Bing, as well as AI driven platforms such as ChatGPT. Optimizing your site for search should come before focusing on design or content. It is essential to ensure that customers, both new and existing, can find you online. How to do this and what to keep in mind will be covered in the next chapter.

TIME ON SITE AND BOUNCE RATE

Once you succeed in driving visitors to your website - whether through search engines, social media, or email marketing - it is crucial to keep them engaged. If visitors leave your site within seconds, you gain nothing. They won't read your content or become customers. That's why it's important to increase the time visitors spend on your site and keep your bounce rate below 50 percent whenever possible.

There are several reasons why visitors leave a website quickly. Often, it happens because people access the site on their mobile devices and find it difficult to read if it's not optimized for smaller screens. Another common reason is that visitors arrive via a Google search but leave because they don't immediately find the information or answers they were looking for. Poor design is another factor. If a site looks unprofessional, the company behind it is often perceived the same way, and people turn away from businesses that appear untrustworthy or amateurish.

**„LIFE IS
THREE-QUARTERS
ABOUT BEING SEEN.“**

**WOODY ALLEN,
REGISSEUR**



LAYOUT AND DESIGN

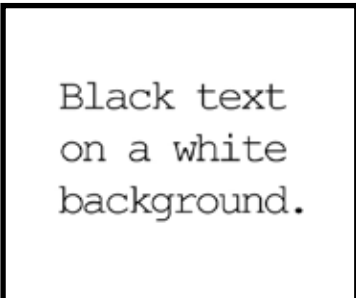
Tastes naturally vary, but there are certain principles that help keep visitors on your site and leave a positive impression. First, you need to convince every visitor within seconds that they have landed on an interesting and worthwhile page. The first impression counts.

An appealing logo, a striking image or video, and a short, memorable slogan should immediately convey what your site is about. Design the header of your website so that visitors quickly understand the focus of your page and feel compelled to stay.

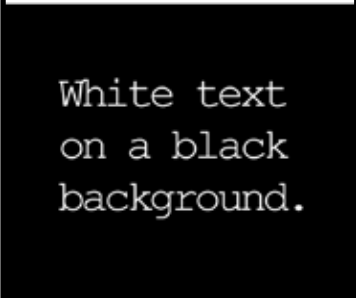
Your entire website should be logical and easy to navigate. Visitors looking for opening hours, company history, or staff details should be able to find that information quickly and effortlessly. Make sure your navigation is easy to locate, clearly structured, and simple to use.

Avoid overwhelming readers with long blocks of text. Keep your copy concise and to the point. Use short paragraphs, subheadings, and meaningful images that feel authentic and evoke emotions. Text size is also important. Consider the many users with reduced vision who may find small fonts frustrating. You don't want to lose potential customers simply because your text is too small.

I also recommend avoiding white text on a dark background for longer passages. White on black is particularly straining to read. Most of us work in bright rooms, where our eyes are adapted to a light environment. Dark text on a light background is easier to read because the eyes don't need to constantly adjust between a bright room and the screen. When the background is dark and the text light, the eyes have to adapt continuously, which leads to fatigue over time.



Black text
on a white
background.



White text
on a black
background.

REMOVING BARRIERS

Another key step in optimizing and designing your website is removing barriers. A barrier could be, for example, having to click through multiple links to reach an offer or a contact form. The longer and more complicated it is for a visitor to take action, whether buying a product, contacting your company, or signing up for a newsletter, the more potential customers you lose along the way. The fewer obstacles between your potential customers and your business, the more likely they are to complete the action you want them to take.

In practice, this means making it as easy as possible for website visitors to act. “Buy Now” buttons, contact forms, or newsletter sign-ups must be easily accessible without excessive scrolling or multiple clicks. Keep contact forms as short as possible and avoid asking for too many details. Visitors will abandon a form in frustration if it takes too long to complete.

THE WEBSITE AS A CENTRAL HUB

Your website is your central hub. All information, news, and offers should be accessible there. All social media profiles where you are active should also be linked. A website is always available, even to people who are not on Facebook, Instagram, or other platforms. This is where your customers should find all relevant information, posts, and social media links.

Additionally, all contact options, from email and WhatsApp chat to phone, should be clearly listed on your site. All your social media profiles should link back to your website. This way you guide people from various platforms to your website, where you have full control over the information and offers they see.





THE WORDPRESS LOGO

WORDPRESS

Today, websites are rarely coded by hand in HTML as they were in the early 2000s. Instead, content management systems, or CMS, are used. The most well-known CMS is WordPress, which is free to use and currently powers the majority of websites. Once WordPress is installed on a web server and customized for your site, even non-technical users can log in and make changes without any programming knowledge.

For business owners, regularly publishing new content and managing the website is essential, making WordPress the best choice for small and mid-sized businesses. Other CMS options exist, such as Joomla or Typo3, but for a company website that needs to be maintained by the owner and employees, WordPress is the most practical recommendation. Its ease of use, popularity, and the wide range of available extensions make it highly adaptable and scalable.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU LOGGED INTO YOUR WEBSITE?

WordPress is particularly suitable for small and mid-sized businesses because owners and staff can log in themselves, check traffic, and publish new content. It is important to do this regularly. Even if you have someone managing your website, your presence matters. The essence of your business should be felt online, and that only happens when you actively participate in managing and updating your site.



SECURITY AND UPDATES

No website can ever be completely protected against hackers or viruses. Absolute security is impossible. Still, it is crucial to secure your site as effectively as possible. Start with strong passwords. Never underestimate how easily a weak password - short, lacking uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, or special characters - can give someone access to your site. Your username should never be "Admin".

Equally important are regular updates. If your CMS is not kept current and your plugins are not updated, the security of your website is at risk. It is also worthwhile to use certain security plugins that scan for viruses, limit login attempts, provide CAPTCHA codes, and create automatic backups. Beyond that, plugins should be used sparingly, as each one carries the risk of creating a vulnerability that could allow unauthorized access to your website.

THE DOMAIN

THE 10 MOST EXPENSIVE DOMAINS

CARINSURANCE.COM 49 MIO \$

INSURANCE.COM 35 MIO \$

VACATIONRENTALS.COM

35 MIO \$

PRIVATEJET.COM 30 MIO \$

VOICE.COM 30 MIO \$

INTERNET.COM 18 MIO \$

360.COM 17 MIO \$

INSURE.COM 16 MIO \$

CHAT.COM 15 MIO \$

NFTS.COM 15 MIO \$

STATUS: JANUARY 2026

The domain of a website is more important than many business owners initially realize. It plays a key role in a marketing strategy, because a well-chosen domain name can make it easier to achieve many goals: higher search rankings, more visitors, increased revenue, and, ideally, greater brand recognition. It is therefore crucial that your company is listed as the domain owner of its own web address.

In practice, it is common for business owners not to think about domain ownership. Sometimes web designers, agencies, or former employees are listed as the domain owner. This means they have the right to cancel, sell, or use the domain for other purposes. The business owner then has no control and no legal rights over the domain that has been used for the company website.



Make sure that you or your company is officially listed as the owner of your website's domain. You can verify this much like you would check a company registration. For international domains such as those ending in .com or .net a simple WHOIS lookup available at sites like **who.is** will show the registered owner.

It's important to give careful thought to your domain name. First, make sure each word in the domain is clearly separated so search engines can read them as individual terms.

For example, www.greenwood-hair.com is better than www.greenwoodhair.com.

Consider using a domain that not only includes your business name but also describes what you do. This helps search engines categorize your business and display it in relevant searches.

For example, alongside www.greenwood-hair.com, you might also register www.hair-salon-dallas.com if your salon is located in Dallas.

**A WEBSITE CAN
HAVE MULTIPLE
DOMAINS THAT
ALL POINT TO THE
SAME SITE,
INCREASING
VISIBILITY AND
MAKING IT EASIER
FOR POTENTIAL
CUSTOMERS TO
FIND YOU.**

A top-down view of a person's hand writing in a spiral-bound notebook on a dark wooden desk. The notebook is open, and the hand is holding a black pen, writing the domain names 'www.greenwood-hair.com,' and 'www.hair-salon-dallas.com' in blue ink. To the left of the notebook is a small, brown, textured envelope with a black string and a circular fastener. In the background, there is a white mug and a pair of black-rimmed glasses. The overall scene is well-lit, suggesting a professional or creative workspace.

[www.greenwood-hair.com,](http://www.greenwood-hair.com)
www.hair-salon-dallas.com

Google

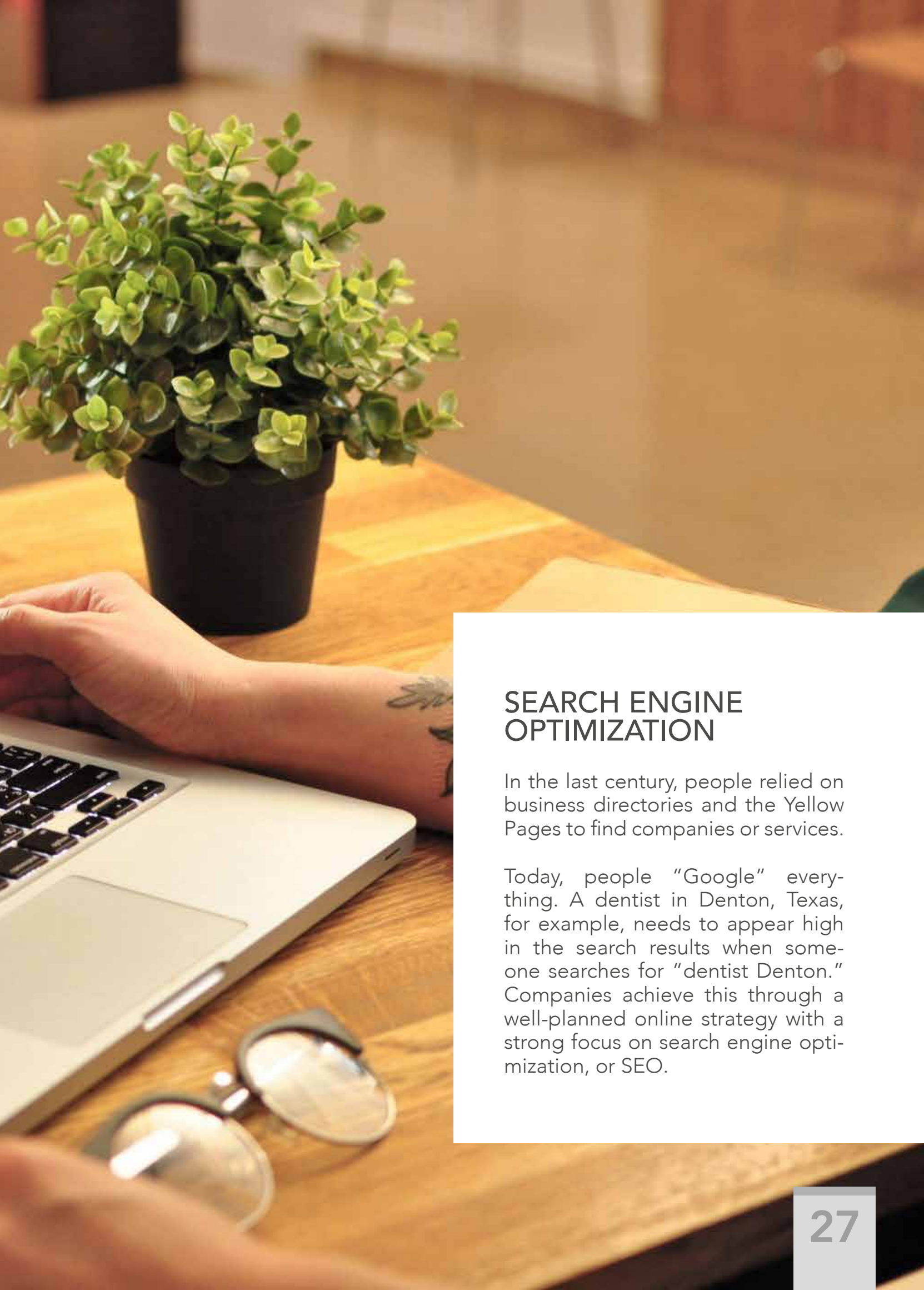
AI Mode

+ |

Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky

MacBook Pro



SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

In the last century, people relied on business directories and the Yellow Pages to find companies or services.

Today, people “Google” everything. A dentist in Denton, Texas, for example, needs to appear high in the search results when someone searches for “dentist Denton.” Companies achieve this through a well-planned online strategy with a strong focus on search engine optimization, or SEO.



ANYONE LOOKING FOR COMPANIES, PRODUCTS, OR SERVICES ASKS GOOGLE

If you ask small and mid-sized business owners whether their website is optimized for search engines, most will say yes, assuming they even have a website. In the United States, about 73 percent of small businesses had a website in 2023, leaving roughly 27 percent without one. This means more than one in four small businesses still do not have an online presence, even though most customers start their buying journey online.

**„ANYONE NOT FOUND ON THE
INTERNET RAISES SUSPICION THAT THEY
MAY NOT EVEN EXIST.“**

ERNST PROBST, PUBLISHER

In reality, many company websites are not truly optimized for search engines. Even for searches that matter most, like combining a service with a city name, most businesses do not appear high in Google results. Strong placement in search results for these types of queries is one of the most important prerequisites for attracting new customers.

Any business owner who does not invest in search engine optimization is acting with serious negligence. Today, most people use Google to find the companies, products, and services they need. If your business cannot be found on Google, you are cutting off the most important and effective path to potential customers.



WHAT IS SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)?

The goal of search engine optimization, or SEO, is to get a website to appear as high as possible in search engine results, such as on Google. A central element of SEO is the use of keywords.

Keywords are the search terms that users type into a search engine when looking for information, products, or services.

„DIGITAL HAS MOVED INTO THE CENTER OF CONSUMERS' LIVES TO A DEGREE THAT WAS UNIMAGINABLE JUST A FEW YEARS AGO.“

**MAURICE LÉVY,
FRENCH ENTREPRENEUR**

KEYWORDS

Before planning any SEO strategy, it is crucial to decide which keywords are most important for your website. For example, a hair salon in Denton, Texas, would benefit far more from ranking for the keyword "hair salon Denton" than for a unique name like "Greenwood Styles." Why? Someone searching for "Greenwood Styles" might rarely be looking for a hair salon. Most people using that term are likely searching for something else entirely. However, someone typing "hair salon Denton" into Google is almost certainly looking for a local hair salon and is therefore a potential customer.

So how do you find the right keywords for your business website? Start by asking yourself: "What search terms would people enter into Google when looking for the products or services I offer?" Don't forget to include your location. If your business depends on attracting local customers, be sure to incorporate city, neighborhood, and state into your keyword research to make your site easier to find.

**"CONTENT BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS.
RELATIONSHIPS BUILD TRUST.
TRUST DRIVES SALES."**

**TOM FISHBURNE
MARKETING EXPERT**

You should also keep an eye on the numbers. Keyword research tools allow you to see how often a keyword is searched each month and how strong the competition is, meaning how many other websites are also targeting that keyword. Using this data, you can decide which keywords are worth focusing on for SEO and which are not.

Once you have compiled a list of important keywords for your business, incorporate them into your website copy and social media content. But be careful. Overusing keywords can backfire. If a keyword appears too frequently in a text, search engines will notice and may penalize your site with a lower ranking. The key is to integrate keywords thoughtfully and in moderation, not excessively.

CONTENT IS KING

Keyword research is the foundation of any effective SEO strategy. But keywords alone will not carry a website to prominent visibility in Google's search results. Another decisive success factor is high quality content. In digital marketing, "content" refers to all forms of online material, including written articles, images, and videos. When a website consistently publishes relevant, high value content tied closely to its subject matter, it sends strong positive signals to search engines. Google and its algorithmic cousins favor websites that are regularly updated and enriched with fresh, useful information.

The phrase "Content is King" traces back to an essay written by Microsoft founder Bill Gates in 1996. Even in the early days of the web, Gates recognized a principle that has only grown more true over time: the long term success of a website depends largely on the quality and relevance of the content it provides.



THE CORPORATE BLOG

For publishing content on a regular basis, a company blog is one of the most effective tools. However, it should not be used as a platform for pure self promotion. No one is eager to read constant claims about how exceptional, large, or superior your business is. A more effective approach is to use your blog to deliver genuine value to customers and prospects. Share your expertise. Offer practical tips, insights, and guidance from your field that readers can actually apply. This positions your company as knowledgeable, helpful, and invested in the needs of its audience. Over time, this kind of content builds positive brand recall and trust. It strengthens your reputation. There is also a powerful side effect: your website traffic increases, your visibility in Google improves, and you reach a broader pool of potential customers.

SECURE, MOBILE OPTIMIZED WEBSITES

As discussed earlier, many factors influence how prominently a website appears in search engine results. One of these is SSL encryption. You can recognize an SSL secured website by its URL beginning with https:// instead of http://. HTTPS is not only a confirmed Google ranking factor, it also affects user trust. Many web browsers actively warn visitors about unsecured sites and label them as unsafe. Mozilla Firefox, for example, displays a crossed out padlock icon when a connection is not secure.

Another confirmed ranking factor is mobile optimization. Today, mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets are used more frequently for browsing the internet than desktop computers. To ensure websites display properly on smaller screens and remain easy to navigate and read, they must be optimized for mobile use. Mobile optimization has long since shifted from a competitive advantage to a baseline requirement for strong Google rankings. Any modern business website should meet this standard.

**IS YOUR
WEBSITE MOBILE
OPTIMIZED?**

TEST IT!

FOR EXAMPLE, HERE:

[HTTPS://RESPONSIVEDESIGN-CHECKER.COM](https://responsive-design-checker.com)

LINK BUILDING

Another key factor that influences how high your website ranks in Google search results is links. To improve their rankings, many companies invest in what is known as link building. The goal is to increase the number of external websites that link back to your site. These inbound links are called backlinks. Search engines interpret backlinks as endorsements. In simple terms, every quality link pointing to your website acts like a vote of confidence. The more credible votes you earn, the more authority your site builds in Google's eyes. That said, not all backlinks carry equal weight. Quality matters far more than quantity. Links from well-trafficked, reputable websites deliver significantly more SEO value than links from obscure or low-credibility sources. Ideally, backlinks should come from content-driven sites with genuine audiences, not purely commercial link farms. Links from spammy or disreputable environments can actually harm your rankings. In SEO circles, there is a long-standing shorthand for high-risk link neighborhoods: sites associated with pills, porn, and poker. In other words, adult content, gambling, or questionable pharmaceutical sales. Search engines treat backlinks from these ecosystems as toxic rather than trustworthy.

DUPLICATE CONTENT

One of the most common SEO mistakes website owners make is publishing duplicate content. Duplicate content refers to identical or substantially similar text appearing on multiple webpages. When search engines detect the same content published in more than one place, they struggle to determine which version deserves visibility. As a result, rankings for all duplicate versions can decline. For that reason, your website should always feature original, unique content. If duplication is unavoidable, there are technical solutions. You can properly attribute quoted material or implement canonical tags. Canonical links signal to search engines which version of a page should be treated as the primary source, preventing ranking dilution.

ADDITIONAL RANKING FACTORS

Google uses a wide range of criteria to decide which websites appear at the top of search results, and it does not reveal all of them. The most important factors have already been discussed: keyword optimization, high-quality content published regularly, mobile optimization, and backlinks.

But there are many other factors as well. These include the age and name of the domain, page load speed, the length of published content, and how keywords are distributed throughout the text. Grammar and spelling, relevance to the topic, image optimization, proper use of headings and subheadings, and activity on social networks all play a role too. Many additional technical and content-related elements also influence a website's ranking.



ADS

SEO is a long game. Results often take several months to fully show. As the saying goes, "Good things take time." That's why many savvy business owners turn to paid advertising, such as running a Google Ads campaign. The advantage is immediate visibility, with the potential to appear at the very top of the first page of Google results.

However, this visibility comes at a cost. Each click carries a price, and expenses can add up quickly. Paid campaigns are most effective when carefully planned, targeted, and budgeted, rather than used as a temporary fix or without a clear strategy.

Another drawback of keyword advertising is that, while these ads do appear at the top of search engine results pages, they are clearly labeled as advertisements. Search engine users tend to be skeptical of paid listings and often perceive them as less relevant than organic search results. As a result, these ads generally receive fewer clicks and lower engagement compared with genuine, organic listings.



Ask yourself: how often do you actually click on ads when you search on Google? And what expectations do you have when you do click on one?

Even though SEO for your website and social media requires effort and takes time to show results, in most cases it is the smarter choice. It costs far less than expensive paid ads, and internet users are more likely to click on organic, "real" search results. In addition, a strong, naturally built ranking is much more durable and less likely to drop quickly over time.





SOCIAL MEDIA

Internet users spend roughly 40 percent of their online time on social networks. That means a large portion of their digital attention is focused on platforms like Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and others.

The takeaway for businesses is very clear: if you want to reach potential and existing customers online, you need to be where they are. To effectively spread your message, your marketing efforts must meet your audience on the platforms they use most.



THE POTENTIAL OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

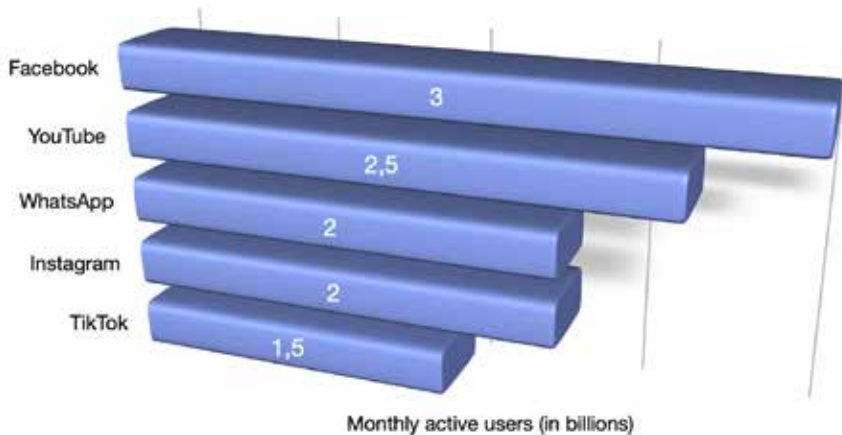
If you want to reach existing and potential customers online, you need to go where your audience spends the most time: on social networks.

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE STATISTICS

In 2025, Facebook remains one of the largest social networks worldwide with about 3 billion monthly active users, followed by YouTube with roughly 2.5 billion. Instagram and WhatsApp each have around 2 billion, and TikTok reaches more than 1.5 billion users. Social media is also extremely popular in North America. In the United States, around 84 percent of adults are active on at least one platform, and Canada shows similar engagement levels. Americans and Canadians spend an average of more than 100 minutes per day on social platforms, and users span all age groups.

These figures make one thing clear: any business that wants to be visible online cannot ignore Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or other major platforms. They are where audiences spend much of their time, and being present there is crucial for reaching both current and potential customers effectively.

However, simply having a business account on these social networks is no longer enough. To truly reach your audience, you need to consistently provide high-quality content that offers real value to your followers and viewers, while actively engaging and communicating with them through the platform.



A GIVE AND TAKE

Many small and midsize businesses fall into the same trap when using Facebook, Instagram or other channels for marketing. They treat social networks purely as advertising tools, posting infrequently and sharing repetitive, uninspiring updates that all say the same thing: "We are the biggest, the best, the most impressive!" Unsurprisingly, this approach rarely resonates, generating few likes, shares or meaningful engagement.

Social networks are about community, interaction and building relationships based on give and take. To capture attention for your brand, company or products, you need to contribute first. Share content that truly adds value, whether informative tips, unique insights, entertaining posts or creative contests. Do not just broadcast messages, engage with your audience. Respond promptly to comments and messages, interact with posts from other users and actively like and share content when appropriate. By giving first and participating authentically, you build trust, boost visibility and cultivate a loyal following. Give, and you will receive.

„IN SOCIAL NETWORKS, PEOPLE WANT TO COMMUNICATE, NOT BUY REFRIGERATORS.“

**ERIC SCHMIDT,
EX-GOOGLE-CHEF**



WHAT TO POST?

Avoid boring, purely promotional posts and instead focus on delivering real value to your audience. Demonstrate that you are a specialist in your field and provide practical tips, tricks, and insights that genuinely help your target audience. Show how your product or service solves real problems and makes life easier for your customers. Highlight interesting events, workshops, or industry gatherings that are relevant to your field. Share updates about new developments, explain complex terminology, and break down concepts in ways anyone can understand. Aim to craft posts that feel like informative, entertaining magazine articles rather than advertisements. This approach gives your audience a reason to follow your Instagram account, like your Facebook page, or subscribe to your company blog. Ask yourself continually: if I were my own customer, would I find this post interesting? Would it entertain me or provide useful guidance? Would I share it with friends or colleagues? If the answer is yes, you're creating content that truly resonates.

A helpful tip: whenever possible, publish your posts on your company blog first, then share the link across social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, or X. These networks will generate a clean, attractive preview of your article, making it easy for users to click through to your website. By guiding readers back to your site in this way, you increase website traffic, strengthen engagement, and give potential customers a reason to explore more of what your business has to offer.

BE PATIENT AND POST CONSISTENTLY

Success on social media does not happen overnight. No Facebook page, Instagram account, TikTok profile, or company blog will suddenly attract millions of views just by existing. Building a loyal audience takes time, patience, and consistency. High-quality content must be posted regularly, and it must offer value to the audience. Some business owners might be tempted to take a shortcut by purchasing fans or followers. There are countless services online that promise hundreds or even thousands of followers for a fee. It may seem like an easy way to boost visibility, but this approach can backfire and create long-term problems that many do not anticipate.

The number of followers is far less important than the level of engagement. Real fans interact with your content by liking, commenting, and sharing. Purchased followers rarely engage in a meaningful way. They are often from other countries, may not understand the language of your page, and are not genuinely interested in your products or services. Even if they understand the content, their interactions are superficial at best. Likes bought for a few cents do not translate into real interest or loyalty, and these accounts will not help you grow your brand authentically.

Social media platforms are also able to detect unnatural activity. If a page has ten thousand followers but each post only receives a few likes and almost no comments, it immediately raises red flags. Platforms such as Facebook use sophisticated algorithms to identify fake engagement. When purchased followers are detected, they are removed, and the page can be penalized with reduced visibility in the news feed. The short-term gain of buying followers is quickly outweighed by the long-term damage to credibility and reach. Consistent, authentic engagement is always more valuable than a large but inactive audience.

**„MANY REALIZE
TOO LATE
THAT ON THE
LADDER OF SUCCESS
YOU CAN SKIP
A FEW RUNGS.
BUT ONLY WHEN
CLIMBING DOWN.“**

**WILLIAM
SOMERSET MAUGHAM,
ENGL. DRAMATIKER**

Buying likes is never a shortcut to success. Likes from people who are not genuinely interested or from fake accounts are useless for both users and businesses and can even do more harm than good. Many company pages see little engagement or sales because their followers are not real.

The quality of your followers matters more than the quantity. A small, engaged audience is far more valuable than a large number of inactive accounts. Post regularly at least once a week with content that is useful, entertaining, or informative. Over time, real likes, comments, and shares will come naturally as your audience grows organically.

#socialmedia

#hashtag

#marketing

#SME

#advertising

#visibility

HASHTAGS

On every social media platform, using hashtags is essential when posting. Hashtags, the words marked with the pound sign, help categorize a post and make it more visible to the right audience.

A good way to illustrate their purpose is with the Super Bowl, one of the most watched events in the United States. During the game, millions of viewers take to X, formerly known as Twitter, to share their reactions in real time. They comment on plays, speculate about which team will win, debate the halftime show, or discuss the commercials. To make sure everyone following the conversation can see and join in, fans add the same hashtag, like #SuperBowl. By including #SuperBowl in their posts, people ensure their tweets are part of the larger conversation. Anyone interested in Super Bowl content can simply search #SuperBowl and see all the posts related to the event.

Using hashtags in your posts allows you to reach potential customers who are interested in your topic or content but are not yet following your page or account. For instance, if you run a hair salon in Los Angeles and post about trendy hairstyles for premieres or special events, using hashtags like #Hollywoodhairstyles or #oscarnight2026 can help your posts get noticed. People looking for celebrity looks or the latest LA hair trends will find your content among other posts on the same topic. Research shows that posts with at least one hashtag generate about twice as much engagement, including clicks, shares, likes, and comments, as posts without hashtags. For businesses, hashtags are an easy and effective way to boost visibility and attract new followers. Today, hashtags are used across all major social media platforms.

Tips for using hashtags effectively:

- Hashtags should not include spaces or special characters
- Hashtags should match the topic of your post
- Keep hashtags short and memorable *#shortandsweet*

TAGGING AND MENTIONING

One of the most powerful features on most social media platforms is the ability to tag or mention other people and profiles. This can be done either by tagging someone in a photo or by mentioning them in the text of your post. Did you take photos at your company summer party? Tag the people in the photos on Facebook, Instagram, and other platforms. When uploading the image, you will usually see an option to “tag people.” This gives you a double benefit. The people in the photo are notified and will appreciate being recognized, and at the same time, you reach their friends and followers, increasing views and engagement on your post.



Text mentions can be used in many ways. You can thank customers, employees, partners, and suppliers, reference someone else's post, or showcase collaborations while reaching the partner's followers as well. On platforms like Facebook, X, TikTok, and Instagram, you mention someone in a post using @USERNAME. You do need to know the exact username of the account you want to tag. Be careful not to overdo it, though. Using too many @mentions can come across as annoying. The rule here is simple: less is more.

PLATFORM ADVERTISING

Buying likes is never an effective strategy. Official advertising on social media works very differently and, when used correctly, can be extremely powerful. Campaigns on Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube allow companies to reach new customers quickly and generate measurable results, but they require planning and expertise. You need a solid concept, highly engaging content, and a carefully chosen audience to make a real impact. Without these elements, campaigns often fail to deliver results and money can easily be wasted.

The real advantage of advertising on social media is the precision with which you can define your target audience. You can, for example, choose to show a Facebook ad only to people living in Los Angeles who regularly exercise, follow Hollywood trends, and are likely interested in fashion or beauty products. Or you could target business owners over 30 in New York who have children, are vegetarian, and are interested in sustainable products. The targeting options are incredibly detailed, allowing advertisers to define their audience by location, age, interests, behaviors, and even lifestyle choices. This level of precision can be impressive but also a little unsettling, because it shows just how much social networks know about their users. At the same time, it gives companies the opportunity to reach their audience efficiently, with almost no wasted impressions, making social media advertising one of the most effective tools for customer acquisition today.

The more precisely you define your target audience and the better you tailor your advertising to them, the more successful your campaigns on Facebook, Instagram, and other platforms will be.

STAND OUT!

Whether on the radio, on TV, in the mailbox, on the street, or online, people are constantly bombarded with advertisements. If you want to get noticed in this jungle of marketing and motivate your audience to click, buy, or visit, you need to do something special.

That means carefully planning exactly how your online ad should look. Videos are among the most popular types of content online, so consider using a video instead of a boring static graphic. Today, creating high-quality and affordable videos does not require expensive equipment or complex production. With a good smartphone and a tripod, you can produce professional-looking clips that feel completely genuine. Focus on authenticity: speak openly and confidently to the camera and give viewers a real, behind-the-scenes look inside your everyday business. You will be genuinely surprised by the positive feedback you receive. On the other hand, avoid stock footage or purchased clips that feel impersonal and artificial, because these tend to discourage users rather than attract them. The more authentic your content, the more your audience will connect with your brand and respond positively to it.

**„THE SECRET
OF SUCCESS?
BE DIFFERENT
FROM THE REST.“**

**WOODY ALLEN,
US DIRECTOR, ACTOR,
AND WRITER**



Be creative in how you speak to your audience and make sure they genuinely feel addressed. Avoid tired clichés, long and tangled sentence constructions, empty buzzwords, sweeping generalizations, and dense industry jargon.

Another critical factor in successful advertising: it has to spark emotion. Research consistently shows that emotionally driven advertising is far more memorable. People should feel joy, comfort, love, freedom, empathy, or even concern when they see your message. Your advertising needs to move people and create a visceral response. That's how you truly reach them and stay top of mind.



CUSTOMER SERVICE

Social media can also serve as a highly effective customer service channel. Today's customers actively use social platforms to voice complaints or to contact companies in the first place, simply because it's easier than sitting on hold in a phone queue. Businesses that provide customer support on Facebook, Instagram, and similar platforms and respond to customer concerns quickly, competently, and with a human touch make a measurable impact on overall customer satisfaction.

RANKING FACTOR

Don't overlook this: search engines take social media activity into account as a ranking factor and tend to rate websites more favorably when they maintain an active presence there. From an SEO standpoint alone, staying active on social platforms is well worth the effort.



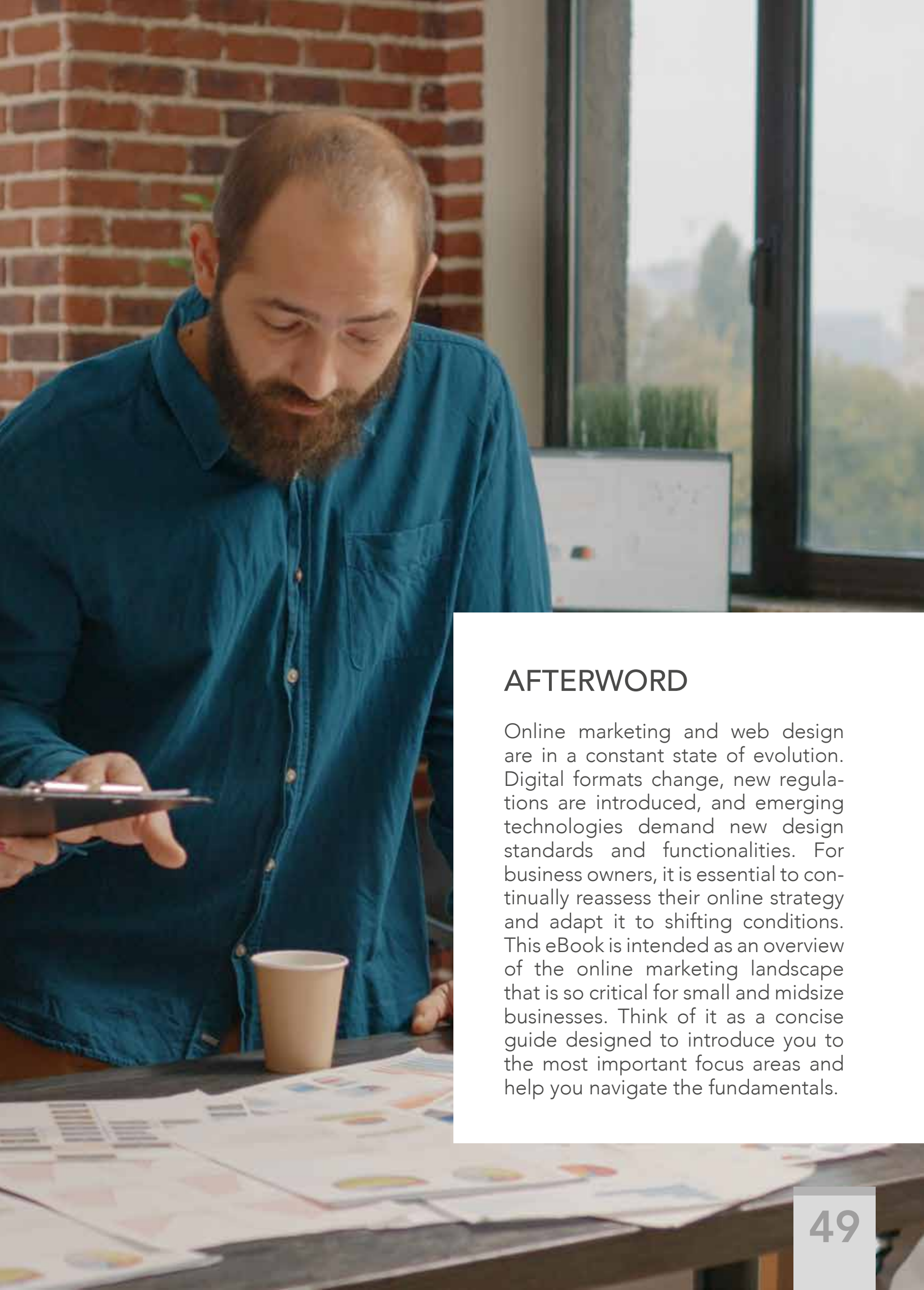
VIDEO IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT

Video has become the most effective way to capture attention online. Platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram Reels have demonstrated the power and performance of video content for years. Eighty percent of people prefer video over written text. It is no surprise, then, that video content consistently generates the highest reach and engagement across social media platforms.

This makes it essential to engage seriously with video as a format and to evaluate whether producing videos for your company's social media channels makes strategic sense. Many brands create highly successful social media videos using nothing more than a modern smartphone and a tripod. Expensive equipment and professional film production firms are not prerequisites for achieving meaningful results with online video.

Tips: Be sure to include subtitles in your videos. Many users watch social media content without sound and rely on captions. Also pay attention to video length, as optimal runtimes vary by platform.





AFTERWORD

Online marketing and web design are in a constant state of evolution. Digital formats change, new regulations are introduced, and emerging technologies demand new design standards and functionalities. For business owners, it is essential to continually reassess their online strategy and adapt it to shifting conditions. This eBook is intended as an overview of the online marketing landscape that is so critical for small and midsize businesses. Think of it as a concise guide designed to introduce you to the most important focus areas and help you navigate the fundamentals.



There will always be people who see certain topics covered in this book differently or hold opposing views. One agency representative may advise you to invest more heavily in Google Ads. A web designer might be firmly convinced that TYPO3 is a better choice for you than WordPress. Ultimately, those differences in opinion are secondary. What this eBook provides is a directional framework that leads to greater success online. If you apply the majority of the principles and recommendations outlined here, you will begin to see measurable improvements within a matter of months. This guide equips you with the foundational knowledge to develop an internet strategy that delivers real business value at the executive level. After all, both your company website and your business social media accounts should be working to increase revenue and brand visibility. Your digital presence should also ensure that existing customers feel well supported and that their loyalty to your business continues to strengthen. These objectives are entirely achievable with the knowledge you have gained from this eBook.

You are now also in a position to identify and select the right partners to help execute your strategy when needed. Finding true experts in online marketing who are both competent and affordable for small and midsize businesses is no simple task, especially without a baseline understanding of the field. The reality is that the market still contains far too many bad actors who label themselves as web designers, SEO specialists, or online marketing professionals but lack both the expertise and the professionalism they claim.

With your newly acquired foundational knowledge, you will be far better equipped to spot these shortcomings and to recognize the qualified partners who can effectively support your evolving web strategy.



GLOSSARY OF KEY ONLINE MARKETING TERMS

ADVERTISING

▶Advertising is the total effort to communicate information about a company and its products or services to a target audience. It is a tool of communication strategy and marketing.

BOUNCE RATE

▶The bounce rate is the percentage of visits to a single page, meaning sessions in which a visitor leaves your website from the entry page without interacting with it.

BACKLINKS

▶Backlinks are links from other websites that point to your own site. These links play an important role in search engine rankings.

BLOG

▶A blog is an online journal featuring regular entries. Blog posts are typically organized chronologically and often allow readers to leave comments.

CONTENT

▶Content refers to all material on a website, including text, graphics, images, illustrations, animations, and videos.

CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

▶A content management system (CMS) is software that allows users to create, edit, and manage website content. This content can include text, images, videos, and multimedia documents. The key advantage is that users do not need programming knowledge to maintain and populate the website with content.

DOMAIN

▶An internet address, for example www.wikipedia.org

DUPLICATE CONTENT

▶Duplicate content refers to identical or very similar content on the internet that can be accessed via different URLs. This can occur internally (within a website) or externally (across multiple websites).

GOOGLE ADS

▶Google Ads is Google's advertising platform. Advertisers use it for search engine marketing, allowing them to display small text ads in Google search results that link to a chosen website.

HASHTAG

▶A hashtag is a keyword preceded by the pound (#) symbol, used in social networks to mark content as searchable. Adding the hashtag links it to other content using the same tag.

HTTPS

▶Websites are normally transmitted over the HTTP protocol (Hypertext Transfer Protocol). HTTPS is a secure variant, with the "s" standing for "secure," meaning the data is transmitted safely.

INTERNET BROWSER

▶A program used to display content from the World Wide Web (WWW) visually, supporting HTTP and other services like FTP. Examples include Firefox, Chrome, Internet Explorer, Safari, and Opera.

CANONICAL LINKS

▶A canonical link points to the original source of content when it appears in multiple places (duplicate content). This information is important for search engines.

KEYWORD ADVERTISING

▶Keyword advertising is a form of online advertising where placement of an ad can be purchased within search engine results for a specific query.

GLOSSARY OF KEY ONLINE MARKETING TERMS

KEYWORDS

▶ Search terms people enter into search engines like Google to find specific information.

LIKES AND SHARES

▶ On social media, posts can be rewarded with likes (clicking the “like” button) and shares (re-posting the content). The more a post is liked or shared, the wider its reach.

LINK BUILDING

▶ Link building refers to the strategies used to generate backlinks. Backlinks are links from other websites that point to your own site. These links play an important role in search engine rankings.

MARKETING

▶ Marketing is the systematic alignment of a company with the needs of its market.

MARKET

▶ A market is the meeting of supply and demand where prices are established through exchange.

MOBILE OPTIMIZATION

▶ Actions taken to ensure that web content displays and functions optimally on mobile devices such as smartphones.

PPP

▶ The abbreviation PPP stands for “Porn,” “Poker,” and “Pills,” referring to websites dealing with topics such as Viagra, gambling, or adult content

RANKING FACTOR

▶ A ranking factor is a criterion that directly or indirectly influences a webpage’s position in search engine results, as determined by the search engine algorithm.

SME

▶ Companies classified as small and medium-sized businesses.

SOCIAL NETWORKS

▶ Social networks are online communities that allow people to connect, communicate, and interact on a shared platform. Examples include Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter).

SSL

▶ SSL (Secure Socket Layer) is an encryption protocol for transmitting data over the internet. It ensures that data is sent securely and protected from unauthorized access or tampering.

STOCK PHOTOS

▶ Stock photos are pre-produced images available without a specific client request. Unlike commissioned photography, stock photos are made in advance and offered through large image agencies such as Fotolia, iStock, Adobe Stock, or Shutterstock.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

▶ The collection of strategies aimed at ensuring a website ranks as highly as possible for specific keywords in search engine results.

TARGET AUDIENCE

▶ The group of potential customers a specific marketing activity is intended to reach.

TARGET SEGMENTATION

▶ The process of dividing a broad target audience into smaller groups with shared characteristics. The goal is to provide customers with more personalized and relevant information and offers.

TRAFFIC

▶ The number of visits or interactions on a website.

WASTE REACH

▶ Occurs when an advertising campaign reaches people outside the target audience, generating unnecessary costs.

GLOSSARY OF KEY ONLINE MARKETING TERMS

WORDPRESS

►WordPress is a content management system (CMS) for managing website content. It is based on the PHP scripting language and requires a MySQL database. It is open-source software. WordPress emphasizes web standards, elegance, user-friendliness, and ease of customization. Plugins allow WordPress to be extended with various functions. More than 50,000 free plugins are available through the official plugin directory and the integrated plugin browser. WordPress is continually developed and remains one of the most widely used platforms for blogs and websites.



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