

Seven Secrets to Successful Sites



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Overview

As we move into another new year, it's once again time to take a good look at our online presence and see if we are set to succeed in 2023. Many businesses have very old, outdated websites that not only don't serve their modern needs, but they actually convey a negative message to potential customers. Nothing speaks louder that you are not competitive in the modern business world, than an outdated or poorly constructed website.

We've put this guide together to help you review these key areas:

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Responsive Web Design

Is your website built on a responsive framework? A responsive website is a must-have for any business in today's digital age. Not only does it provide a better user experience for your audience, but it also improves your search engine rankings and can even increase your conversions.

In the early days of web design, web designers struggled with



getting web sites looking good on different devices. While sites were originally optimized for viewing in web browsers on desktop computers (and not all browsers

rendered the web pages the same way!), when mobile devices first came into play, most websites looked terrible and were hard to read and operate on the phone's screen.

Initially, most web designers opted to make two versions of a site – one for desktop and one for mobile, and the code serving the web page would detect what kind of device it was running on and redirect to the appropriate version of the web site.

While that worked for a while, it presented several problems. First, not all mobile devices correctly reported as such, and thus some got the desktop version inadvertently displaying. Secondly, with the advent of tablets and many additional screen sizes for phones, having just one mobile layout didn't hold up well either.

To solve this dilemma, web designers began coding sites based on “responsive layouts”, where blocks of text and images were given style hints about how to size and line up based on a grid system, but then an overall set of rules would manipulate and reflow the page based on the device it's on. For example, a web page that is designed to show three columns of text on a normal desktop computer, might appear as only a single column on the phone, where the blocks of text appear one after another rather than side by side.

The most popular framework for responsive web sites, is Bootstrap, originally developed in 2010 by developers at Twitter. Many if not most of the modern, visually appealing websites you interact with on a daily basis, that display well on your desktop, tablet, or phone,

are based on a responsive framework. Often times you aren't even aware of it, as it's coded in as part of a template.

“Many if not most of the modern, visually appealing websites... are based on a responsive framework”

The easiest way to tell if your website is built around a responsive design framework is to open up your site on a desktop computer, and drag the corner of the browser window to continually resize it from taking up most of the screen, to as thin a column as you can, the size of a mobile phone. If you see that your site's layout adjusts smoothly as you resize the window, elements flow in such a way that multiple columns restack into a single column, images resize etc., that's a good indication that your website is designed with a fluid grid layout.

On the other hand, if as you decrease the size of the browser, nothing on the page changes and the right side of the page gets cut

off, that indicates the site is not responsive, and could benefit from a design update.

In conclusion, responsive web design has come a long way since its inception in the early 2000s. It's now a crucial aspect of web design that allows websites to be accessible and user-friendly on any device. Its importance will only continue to grow as more people access the internet on mobile devices.

Video Content

Video is the single most important type on online content. 86% of marketers use video as the primary advertising tool. In 2023, online video is expected to account for 82.5% of all web traffic. With the widespread adoption of 4G and 5G cellular networks, public Wi-Fi, fast home internet, online streaming channels, unlimited data, and more - video is a practical and popular means of communicate your message across the full spectrum of online your entire online portfolio.

Video headers on websites, brand message videos, interviews and testimonials, explainer videos, product or service promos, training and educational content - these are just some of the ways video can enhance your website. Couple that with YouTube and Instagram channels, social media ads, webinars and video squeeze pages for marketing funnels, reels for organic reach - the possibilities are unlimited.



But it takes thoughtful and effective production and strategy to make the videos work for you. Simply going live with your cellphone and posting endless video selfies of you going about daily life can quickly turn a warm audience into a disinterested exodus.

Videos need to be well lit, well produced, high bitrate and high quality, and fast loading. If the user has to wait more than a couple seconds for a video to load, they'll quickly lose patience and move on before it even starts.

A well-written script can help you stay on track and ensure that your message is clear and concise. It's also a good idea to include a call-to-action in your script, such as asking viewers to visit your website or follow you on social media.

Delivery is very important, and post production equally important. Audio needs to be clean and normalized to optimal levels, skin complexion smooth (yes, it can be altered in post!), exposure and white balance correct, and many other technical details that make the difference between a professional video - which directly reflects the quality and value of your business.

And for advertising, you need to know not only how to effectively target your video, but how to effectively work it into part of a sales funnel, which includes tracking and redirecting traffic to other

content, your website or social media channels - and tie in with other ads you have on other platforms, so your message effectively follows the user around their entire online experience. Since a person typically needs to see or hear a message 6 times before it really sinks in, you can't expect a single viewing of a single video to lead to sales.

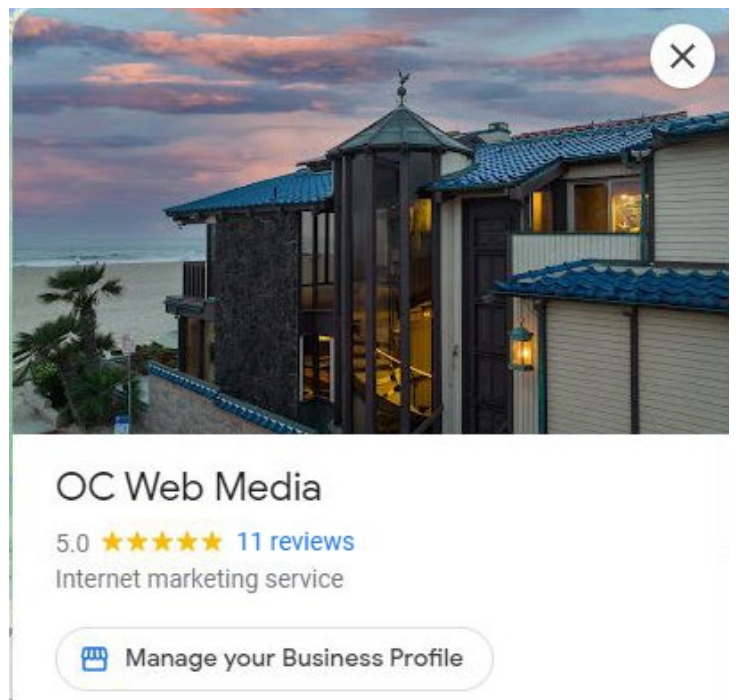
Google Business Listing

If your business serves the local community in your city or county, you can benefit from having a Google Business listing. Ensuring that your business is listed on Google Business can be a crucial step in increasing your online visibility and attracting new customers.

To check if you already have a listing, open Google Maps and search by business name, see if you appear in the search results. If it does not, open the menu and choose the "Add your business" link and follow the prompts.

If your business does show up in the search results, you will be told if you already manage it - in which case you can make changes right from that screen. Or if the business has not yet been claimed, you can simply claim your business by clicking the Claim this Business link.

If there is no link to claim the business, that means that someone else has already previously claimed it. Perhaps if you had previously had someone managing your website and social media,



and now are taking it over yourself, you may find yourself in this situation. In this case you will need to contact Google and fill out the appropriate form to attempt to verify ownership and have it transferred to you.

Once your business is listed on Google Business, you can use the platform to manage your online presence, including responding to customer reviews and updating your business information. This includes updating your business hours, adding photos of your business, and responding to customer reviews.

By following these steps, you can ensure that your business is listed on Google Business and that the information in your listing is accurate and up to date. This can help attract new customers and improve your online visibility.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of tailoring your website to perform well in organic search engine results, usually targeting collections of keywords or search phrases relevant to your business.

If you look at a typical Google search results, you'll find the paid ads that target your search results at the top - these will say "Ad" in bold next to the listing so you know what you are looking at. Below that are the local results that come from Google Business listings. Then following that are the organic search results, and this is the area that you can hope to optimize for. If you can appear high up in this list - preferably on the first page of search results, you have a chance of getting business without paying a lot for advertising.



There are many factors that can impact the SEO of a website, and it can be challenging to determine if a website is fully optimized. Here are some ways to tell if your website is SEO optimized:

Keyword research: Keywords are the phrases and terms that people use when searching for information online. By researching keyword search rankings, you can identify the best keywords to use when optimizing your site.

On-page optimization: On-page optimization refers to the process of optimizing individual web pages to rank higher in search results. This includes optimizing page titles and section headings, frequency and distribution of keywords within the body of the page, structure, metatags and so forth.

Content: High-quality, relevant and well written content is key for SEO.

Mobile-friendliness: As more and more people use their mobile devices to access the internet, it is essential that your website is mobile-friendly. This means that it should be easy to navigate and read on a mobile device.

Page load speed: Page load speed is an important factor in SEO, as search engines like Google use it as a ranking signal. A slow-loading website can lead to a poor user experience and a lower ranking in search results.

Internal linking: Internal linking is the process of linking to other pages on your website from within your website's content. This helps search engines understand the structure of your website and can improve the ranking of your pages. An xml site map can also help in SEO.

External linking: External linking refers to the process of linking to other websites from your own website. This can help improve the credibility and authority of your website in the eyes of search engines.

By considering these factors, you can determine if your website is SEO optimized. If you are unsure if your website is fully optimized, you may want to consider hiring an SEO expert or agency to help identify any areas for improvement.

There are also some great free resources out there as starting points to help you, such as:

<https://developers.google.com/search/docs/fundamentals/seo-starter-guide>

Marketing

How much do you know about your target audience? To effectively communicate to and sell to your customers, you need to have a deep understanding of your who you are trying to reach, and what



interests and motivates them. What problems do they have that you can solve better than anyone else? Be sure to conduct market research to understand the demographics, interests, and needs of your target audience.

Once you know what your audience looks for, compile a list of core keywords, phrases, and building blocks for your message that you will use everywhere, from SEO to paid ads, to site structure, page names and titles, and more.

Make use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube. These can be powerful marketing channels to connect with your target audience, share content, and engage with followers.

Email marketing can be effective, if you have a well cultivated list. Do you have one or more lead magnets running continuously around the clock, to collect new names and email addresses? Use your email list to nurture leads, share promotions and discounts, and keep customers informed about your business. If you plan on running crowd funding campaigns, launching a new course, or anything else that requires a good jump start, an email campaign is the best and cheapest way to get the ball rolling.

Do you have your content strategically delivered through sales funnels? Retargeting, also known as remarketing, is a form of online advertising that targets users who have previously visited a website or engaged with a brand. This is achieved through the use of tracking cookies - such as Facebook Pixels and Google Tags, which track the user's online activity and allow the brand to display relevant ads to the user as they browse other websites. The goal of retargeting is to bring users back to the brand's website or encourage them to take a desired action, such as making a purchase or signing up for a newsletter.

Analyze and track your results: It's important to track the success of your marketing efforts to see what's working and what's not. Use tools like Google Analytics to track website traffic and conversions, and regularly check your social media metrics to see how your content is performing.

Hosting

Is your website hosted on a fast, reliable and secure platform? Are you prepared to roll back to a previous version if an update fails, or a hacker compromises your site?

Here are some key factors that go into choosing a provider:



Uptime: Uptime refers to the percentage of time that a hosting server is available online. A reliable hosting solution should have an uptime of at least 99% (Hint: nobody will ever advertise

100%, statistically it's impossible to guarantee there will NEVER be interruptions).

Speed: The speed of a hosting solution is important because it determines how quickly your website will load for visitors. A faster

hosting solution will lead to a better user experience. Providers that utilize technologies like SSDs and CDNs, and whose data centers are closer to major internet hubs will offer the best experience for your site visitors.

Security: Security is an important consideration when choosing a hosting solution. Look for a hosting provider that offers secure servers, firewalls, and other security measures to protect your website and your customers' data. It is crucial that you host your site with an SSL certificate (all requests default to https://, and no certificate errors are reported, the browser correctly shows a lock icon indicating the connection is secure). Look for a hosting provider that issues and maintains SSL certificates for you as part of your hosting package.

Managed vs Self-Serve: A managed solution is like having an IT staff monitoring and handling the details of your website 24/7. If the server goes down, or there is a malicious attack on the network or anything else that might impact functionality, they will be on it even while you sleep. This can provide tremendous peace of mind, and save countless hours of your time that might otherwise be spent in disaster recovery.

Is your site based on a popular CMS such as WordPress? If so, some hosting providers are optimized for WordPress administration and maintenance.

Customer support: It's important to choose a hosting provider that offers 24/7 customer support in case you encounter any issues with your hosting account.

Pricing: Consider the price of the hosting solution, as well as any additional features or resources that are included in the package. Make sure to compare the pricing and features of different hosting providers before making a decision.

Scalability: If you anticipate your website will experience a lot of growth in the future, it's important to choose a hosting solution that is scalable and can accommodate your needs as they change.

Reputation: Research the reputation of the hosting provider. Look for reviews and testimonials from other customers to get a sense of the level of service and reliability you can expect.

Compliance

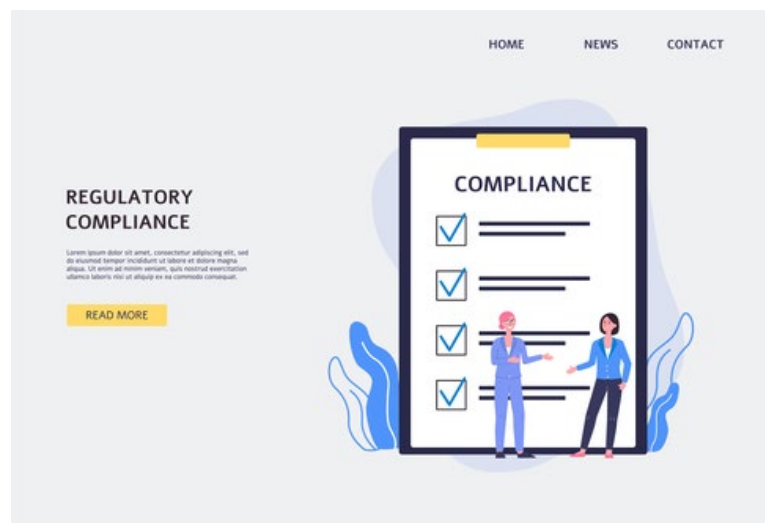
Website compliance refers to the process of ensuring that a website meets various legal and technical standards. These standards can vary depending on the industry, location, and specific requirements of the website. Ensuring compliance is important for both the website owner and its users, as it helps to protect against legal issues, improve accessibility, and increase user trust.

There are several key areas to consider when it comes to website compliance.

These include:

Accessibility: Title III of the American Disabilities Act requires business in general

to be ADA compliant. Although websites are not mentioned specifically in the legislation, predatory lawsuits abound, where businesses have been forced to settle and/or pay fines ranging anywhere from \$10k on up. For websites, accessibility can include ensuring that the user interface is not reliant on recognition of specific colors, as color blind people would not be able to navigate it; but also, blind people using screen readers should be able to navigate your site and extract whatever important text-based content that is there. There are many other guidelines as well for



accessibility on various devices, and there are automated tools available to help audit your site and ensure compliance.

Data privacy: Websites are required to protect the personal information of their users. This includes complying with laws such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) in the United States. Even if you do not do business in the EU, most sites will follow the modern-day practices of prompting to accept cookies via a sort of slide-up panel in the footer of the web page.

Personally Identifiable Information: The more information you collect from users of any web forms, the more you potentially open yourself up to liability in the case of data breaches, or lawsuits in the case of information that could be construed as discriminatory or leading to discriminatory practices.

Legal requirements: Websites may be subject to a range of legal requirements depending on their industry and location. For example, e-commerce websites may be required to display certain information about their products, such as warnings or disclaimers, and websites that collect user data may be required to obtain consent before doing so.

Summary

So, how are you doing? Does your website and online presence hold up to the guidelines you've read about in here? Is your site and content well designed, secure, fast reliable – video centric, strategically communicated and marketed, compliant, and more?

OC Web Media is an Orange County web design, video production, SEO and marketing agency that serves businesses that are struggling with adapting to the new rules of branding and online marketing through strategic video production

Visit us online at ocwebmedia.com, email us at info@ocwebmedia.com, or call (949) 427-1057 to schedule a free consultation. We'd love to learn what your business is all about, and see if there are ways we can support you in increased success for 2023 and beyond!