

The Really Simple Guide To Business Websites

Introduction

Almost a quarter of the world's population has access to the Internet. That's over 1.6 billion people. In South Africa, there are 4.5 million people with Internet access, and this number is expected to double by 2015.

WORLD INTERNET USAGE AND POPULATION STATISTICS						
World Regions	Population (2009 Est.)	Internet Users Dec. 31, 2000	Internet Users Latest Data	Penetration (% Population)	Growth 2000-2009	Users % of Table
Africa	991,002,342	4,514,400	65,903,900	6.7 %	1,359.9 %	3.9 %
Asia	3,808,070,503	114,304,000	704,213,930	18.5 %	516.1 %	42.2 %
Europe	803,850,858	105,096,093	402,380,474	50.1 %	282.9 %	24.2 %
Middle East	202,687,005	3,284,800	47,964,146	23.7 %	1,360.2 %	2.9 %
North America	340,831,831	108,096,800	251,735,500	73.9 %	132.9 %	15.1 %
Latin America/Caribbean	586,862,468	18,068,919	175,834,439	30.0 %	873.1 %	10.5 %
Oceania / Australia	34,700,201	7,620,480	20,838,019	60.1 %	173.4 %	1.2 %
WORLD TOTAL	6,767,805,208	360,985,492	1,668,870,408	24.7 %	362.3 %	100.0 %

If you run a business and you don't already have a website, you're missing out.

The traditional ways of promoting your business - Yellow Pages ads, newspapers - are expensive and don't always work as well as they used to, because people are finding the products and services they need on the Internet. In the USA, over 80% of people start searching online before they make a purchase. The search engines are performing over 1 billion local searches (that is, searches including a city name or zip code) every month.

If you don't have a website, or your website can't easily be found with the search engines, you can bet that your competitors are ready to take up the slack.

Why Do You Need A Website?

There are a number of reasons to have a website for your business:

- To get more customers
- To teach your audience about what you do
- To establish your company as an authority in your industry
- To build a lasting relationship with your audience
- To empower your audience to buy more frequently and more consistently

You can set up different areas on your website to manage these different requirements.

Why You Shouldn't Advertise Your Home Page

The easy way to get new customers is by advertising, and on-line advertising, like Google's Adwords program, can be very effective. Adwords is a Pay-Per-Click program, so you pay Google every time someone clicks on an ad, and not for every impression.

When you're spending money (or time - after all, time is money!) to get people to your website, it's vitally important that you get a return on your investment. That means converting as many of your expensive new visitors into customers or subscribers as possible.

Converting new visitors into customers requires a carefully-engineered process. Sending these expensive visitors to your home page is hardly ever the right approach.

You want to make sure that the web page they land on is highly relevant to the reason they clicked on the ad - that it continues the conversation they are having in their head.

For example, you might have a special offer for new visitors - but you don't want existing customers to see it plastered all over the home page.

One approach to this is to set up a *landing page* for these visitors - a page which explains the

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offer, and encourages them to take a specific action, such as “*fill in your name and email address to learn more*”. This page could be on your existing site - for example, www.JoeThePlumber.com/specialoffer.

Or it could be on a new site, set up specifically for the campaign. Like this:

www.JoesOffer.com.

The Technical Stuff

Whether you set up your own website or get someone to do it for you, there are a couple of technical things you need to know about. I'll try to keep this quick and painless.

Domain names

Your domain name, or **web address**, is the address of your website on the Internet. Every website has a unique domain name. Computers prefer numbers, and translate domain names into **IP Addresses**. Anyone can register a domain name, usually through a **domain registrar**.

Domain registrations are usually valid for a year. If someone else registers your domain for you, it's important to make sure that the domain is registered in your name.

Some pointers for domain names:

1. The shorter the better.
2. Use keywords in your domain name. You can find out what keywords people are searching for with the free [Google Keyword Tool](#). For example, more people will be searching for “plumber in Cape Town” than for “Bob's plumbers”.
3. Make sure your domain name is easy to say, for example on the phone. Try to avoid hyphens and digits. Imagine trying to tell someone that your web address is “**sorry-4-u.com**” on the phone.

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Web Hosting

Web hosting is the physical location of a website. A web hosting company sets up multiple computers and sells disk space, or storage, and Internet bandwidth. Some web hosts will register a domain name for you as well. If they do, make sure that the domain name is registered in your name and not in the name of the hosting company. If you decide to switch hosting companies later, you need to have control of the domain name.

Some web hosts will try to get you to sign up for 6 months, a year or two years, and offer a discount if you pay in advance. This is hardly ever a good idea. If you decide that your hosting company is no good, you should be able to switch to another one with at the most 30 days notice.

Static vs Dynamic Websites

Static websites are built up from individual web pages, using a program like DreamWeaver. They are easy and quick for the web designer to create, but you will generally need to go back to the web designer if you want to make any changes.

Dynamic websites store all the information about the site in a database, and create the web pages “on-the-fly” when a visitor requests them. The process is managed by a publishing system or “content management system”. These systems are designed to allow the website content to be edited by non-technical people. With a good content management system, you can add pages, insert photographs and videos, make corrections and generally keep your website up to date without needing to contact your web designer for every small change.

WordPress

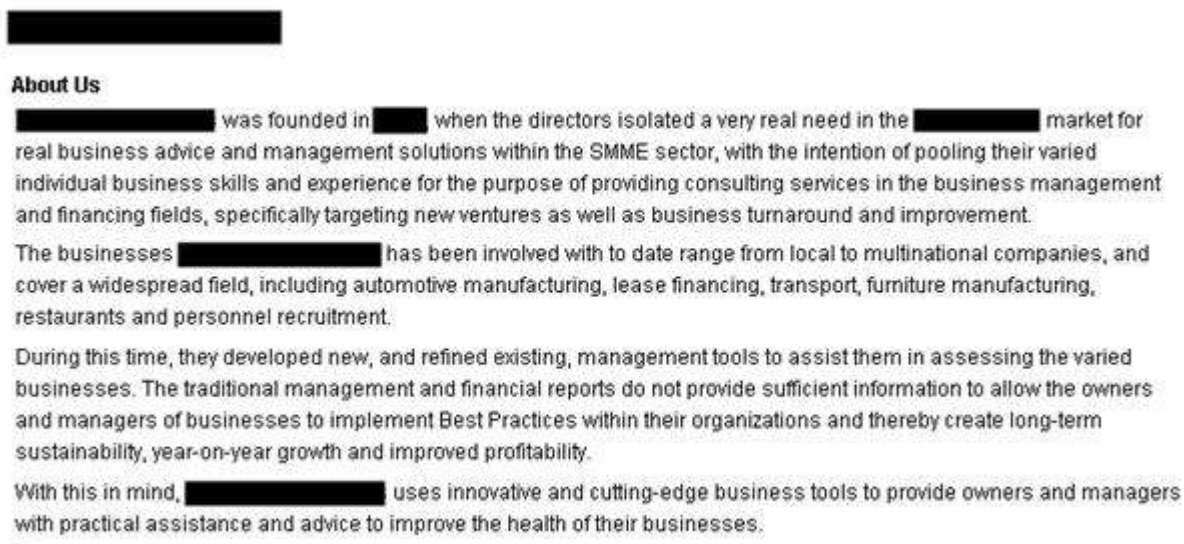
WordPress is a state-of-the-art publishing platform which is easy to use, highly flexible and extremely popular. That last point is important - it means that there are thousands of people around the world who can provide support if you need it. It also means that there are thousands of off-the-shelf themes and plug-ins available, which can extend a WordPress site to do practically anything you want.

The Top 3 Website Mistakes

Many business owners are disappointed with the results they are getting from their website. After spending a small fortune on getting their site built, they find that they're not getting the traffic they expected, that people are not buying or enquiring about their products or services and they may not even be able to find their website on Google. Here are the top 3 mistakes we see all the time:

1. *Your Website Is All About You*

If your website exists to meet the needs of your company, rather than the needs of your visitors, your visitors will go somewhere else.



The only reason your website exists is to solve your customers' problems.

It's unfortunate, but true. *Nobody cares about you or your website.*

What people care about is getting solutions to their problems.

These are the four problems that people are hoping your website will solve:

1. They need information.
2. They need to buy something.

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3. They want to be entertained.

4. They want to be part of a community.

If you believe that your website is about creating a new marketing channel, or building your brand, or increasing your sales, you're going to be disappointed. Your website is not your marketing plan.

2. Fancy Graphics and No Traffic

You can have the greatest-looking website in the world, but if you don't have traffic, it's just a waste of time.

Often web designers persuade their clients to pay through the nose for terrific graphics-based websites. The business owner is excited about their fantastic-looking website - but nobody comes to visit. The search engines stay away in droves, and the website languishes, gathering e-dust.

It's not that graphics are incompatible with high traffic volumes. But it is interesting that some of the most popular websites in the world are pretty plain to look at. Google, for example. Their main page is quite boring. But that hasn't had a dampening effect on their traffic.



In fact, if you look through the top 100 (or top 1000) sites on the web, according to Alexa (<http://alexa.com/topsites>) you'll find very few which use all the graphical 'bells and whistles'.

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Most of them are clean, simple and easy to navigate, with an emphasis on written content.

Your website is only as useful as the number of people who visit it. Once you have a website up, don't waste time on fancy graphics. Concentrate on getting traffic - you can always update the graphics later.

3. No Search Engine Optimization

Search engine optimization is widely misunderstood. It's not about 'tricking' the search engines to place your website high in the search engine results. It's about making your website 'search engine friendly' - telling the search engines what each page on your website is about, in a way that they understand.

It comes down to three main things:

Keyword research

The search engines return results based on the keywords or keyword phrases that their users type in.

If your website doesn't contain the keywords that people are typing in, there's no way your page will show up in the search results for those keywords.

You should have a list of at least 100 keywords for your website. But not just any keywords - you need keywords that real people are actually typing in, otherwise you're wasting your time. And you should ideally have a page which is optimized for every keyword or keyword phrase that you have identified.

Fresh Original Content

Content is what the search engines love. If you write a short (300-500 words) article about every keyword in your list, it's almost inevitable that the search engines will find and index your web pages. If you can create one or two new articles a week, that'll keep the search engine spiders happy - they'll come back over and over again to check your new content.

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The great thing about good content is that it keeps your visitors coming back as well. Write short, informative entries about your industry and about your products and people will come back time and again.

Blogging is a terrific way to create fresh, new pages on your website. And the best thing is that you don't need to pay your web designer every time you want to add a new page or make a small change. If you can create a Word document or set up a Facebook profile, you can add or edit a page on a blog.

Backlinks

Backlinks are the currency of the Internet. Every link you get from another website is like a 'vote' for your site. It's a referral and a recommendation, and like off-line referrals and recommendations, it's almost impossible to have too many. But just like offline recommendations, backlinks vary in quality. A link from your mom's website won't have as much impact as a link from the BBC's front page.

The search engines see backlinks as an important indicator of the authority or value of your website. Sites with large numbers of backlinks will inevitably rise to the top of the search engine rankings.

These days, it's easier than ever to get backlinks. News sites like Digg.com, article directories like EzineArticles.com and self-publishing sites like Squidoo.com rely on user-generated content. In exchange for your content, which brings in the visitors, they'll allow you to place a backlink on their high-traffic site. A win-win situation.

How To Get Ahead Of Your Competition

More than One Domain Name

There's no restriction on the number of domain names you can own. If you already have a domain name registered for your company, there are probably dozens of domain names available which describe what your company does. For instance, if your company is *Dan's Doggy Parlour* and you've registered *DansDoggyParlour.co.za*, you could register *DoggyParlourSandton.co.za*, *DogGroomingJohannesburg.co.za*, and so on. The [Google Keyword Tool](#) will help you find keyword phrases that people are actually looking for

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You can point multiple domain names to one website. What you should not do is create multiple websites with the same content - the search engines see this as an attempt to trick them into giving you a higher ranking.

More Than One Website

There's also no restriction on the number of websites you can own. And having a completely separate website, or even a network of websites can be a very smart move. Trying to do everything with your main business website can be a tough challenge. Creating a separate site just for lead generation, or just for customer service, could work for you.

Conclusion

There's nothing in this report that you can't do yourself. In fact, we hold regular workshops to teach you exactly how to do that. But if you find it all too technical, or too time-consuming, we'd be quite happy to do it all for you.

We can build you a real WordPress website of your own including your own domain name for less than the cost of a decent bottle of whiskey.

Check it out here:

[Simple Websites Turnkey Offer](#)

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