



THE WEBSITE WAKE-UP CALL

10 THINGS YOUR WEBSITE NEEDS TO GET YOU MORE BUSINESS



THOMA

(LIVE YOUR BRAND)



DOES YOUR WEBSITE NEED A WAKE-UP CALL?

Your company's website is its virtual storefront. It's the face, the first impression, the initial "handshake" that introduces your company to a prospective customer. So it needs to impress. But a website needs to do more than exist, it needs to perform. It needs to attract visitors, educate them and convince them to buy from you. It needs to be a marketing machine.

Today, the web is social and interactive. As such, a website cannot sustain itself as a static "brochure." You need to integrate search engine optimization, social media, content marketing, blogging, and more with your website. Today's buyers want to consume information when they want and how they want, and oftentimes without the involvement of a sales person.

Here are 10 things your website needs to actively engage users and nurture them into interested leads you can one day call loyal customers.

1



DEFINE THE PURPOSE

Why do you have a website? Answer this question and you're halfway to a successful website already. Deciding the purpose of your website is like deciding what makes your site successful. Do you want to sell a product? Inform your visitors about a specific topic? After you define the purpose of your site, focus your energy on promoting the purpose of the site and choose measurable goals that indicate if your site is successful at its purpose — whether that's getting more loyal customers among twenty-somethings or establishing your company as the number one business in your industry's region.

Along with defining your purpose, you should set customer personas. These are the audiences you want to target. To build a fully successful website, you need to clearly define what kind of people you want interacting with it. So ask: "who do we want to reach? Business owners? Newly graduated twenty-somethings? Mothers with young children?" Once you have your personas set (you can have more than one), build your website with their likes, dislikes, demographics and buying habits in mind.

Your website shouldn't be lazy, it should be an active tool for your business.

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CLEAN DESIGN, CLEAN COPY

When it comes to looking at your site, make sure it isn't an eyesore. And go easy on the text. Your site does not need to be crammed with images and long paragraphs of small text. The most important information should be at the top of the page. And as far as stock images go, resist the temptation of using fake smiling business people. Users can spot a cheesy stock photo a mile away. Instead, use images of your real staff, your real offices and your real customers.

Your site should also be fairly consistent from page to page. Color schemes, font and image sizes, and the general layouts of all pages should be consistent across the entire website. For layout structures, there are typically three different layouts that exist for a website: one for the homepage, one for content pages and one for form pages. A consistent look and feel will help keep your visitors from feeling lost.

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MAKE SURE IT WORKS

We've all experienced the moment when we click on a website link that took us to a "404 message" or "Page Not Found." This is often caused by a page moving to a new URL while the old link isn't updated to direct to the new page. Think about the lost opportunity when your customers or potential buyers want information that they can't locate.

If you choose to move a page on your website, make certain you use a 301 redirect, a method used to change an old URL to a new one. This makes sure your visitors don't find any 404 messages and keeps the site updated. In addition to keeping visitors happy when navigating your website, 301 redirects are also important for search engine optimization. When users and search engines can't find a new page location, you'll lose any SEO status the old page once had. To keep the SEO for new page locations, set up 301 redirects for pages that have been moved so search engines know where to find them.

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SMOOTH NAVIGATION

One of the biggest factors in keeping visitors on your site is having a good, solid navigation system that supports all search preferences. If people can't find what they're looking for, they'll give up and leave. Important factors in a site's navigation include:

- A simple structure of your primary navigation near the top of your page
- Navigation in the footer of your site
- Minimal navigation options on a page
- Helpful links included within your page copy
- No complicated JavaScript or Flash effects for your navigation

The overall rule for proper navigation structure is simple: don't require visitors to have to think hard about where they need to go and how to get there.

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ACCESSIBLE ON ANY DEVICE

Make your website easy to see and use, no matter the browser or the device being used. With the growth in smartphone and tablet use, people are accessing the Internet in a variety of different ways. But if your mobile site is just a shrunken version of your main website, the users will have to zoom in constantly just to read it and will be frustrated rather than impressed.

But we don't suggest building an entirely separate website for mobile, unless the mobile site serves a single purpose. We do suggest making your website responsive. A responsive layout means your website resizes itself based on the screen size of the device a visitor is using, whether it's a desktop, tablet or smartphone. This way, you only have one website to update but it's easily accessible on all platforms.

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BETTER BE BLOGGING

Blogging is without a doubt one of the most important assets to any online marketing strategy and it's a perfect complement to your website. Here's why:

- Blogging creates fresh content and more pages of content, which is great for SEO
- Blogging helps establish you as an industry authority and thought leader
- Blogging drives more traffic and leads back to your website
- Blogging enables conversation and engagement with your audience and customers
- Blogging increases chances of developing valuable inbound links

Blogging isn't as difficult as you think and there are plenty of blogging tools you can use to get started. And you don't have to only write, write, write. Consider using multiple forms of content. There are several more forms of content that can turn a text-heavy blog into something that pleases the viewing preferences of multiple audiences. Here are a few ideas:

- Images (including infographics)
- Video (especially webinars)
- Audio
- SlideShares
- Polls
- Quizzes
- Surveys

A content-rich experience allows users to engage with a website beyond simply reading it. It also generates a far more diverse selection of information for users to share on social media.



GET FOUND ON SEARCH ENGINES

Every website on the Internet has the goal of reaching the number one position in search engine results, but only one website can have it. So what gets a first place ranking? Search engine optimization (SEO). It comes in two forms: off-page and on-page.

Off-page SEO is about building inbound links and getting other high-quality websites to link back to you. The more inbound links you have, the higher you'll rank. Here are some tips to building inbound links:

- Create high-quality content. If people like your content, they'll want to link to it
- Submit your website to online directories such as Yelp, YellowPages, Google Pages and Yahoo! Business
- Write guest posts for other blogs and link back to your site

On-page SEO consists of placing your most important keywords within the content of your webpages. These on-page elements include headlines, title tags, image (alt) tags, meta descriptions and links. For on-page SEO done right:

- Pick a primary keyword for each page and focus on optimizing that page for that word
- Include keywords in body content
- Include the keywords in the page URL
- Write for humans first and search engines second

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CONNECT WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media websites have seen an exponential growth in the past decade and continue to grow larger every day. People “Like” posts, products, or blog entries, and all of their friends see what they like and are given links to learn more.

Consider what this could do for your site traffic and brand awareness. Make it easy for people to share your content and resources. Providing people with excellent content that can be shared with their peers will increase your flow of traffic. Here’s what you should do first:

- Add a sharing widget or plugin to every page on your site. This will enable visitors to share your pages via all the major social networks.
- If you’re blogging, there are plugins available that enable sharing of your articles and auto-publishing of content to your social networks.

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IMPLEMENT LANDING PAGES

Here's where the website really starts working for you. As you begin providing more and more content, such as webinars, ebooks, infographics and offers your company has branded and provided to visitors online, start asking for information. Ask for their information by adding forms and landing pages on your website that require visitors to complete the fields before they receive the offer. Typically, users get to landing pages through calls-to-action (CTAs), which are links that direct users to specific pages.

Landing pages, sometimes called “lead-capture pages,” are used to convert visitors into leads by completing a transaction or by collecting contact information from them. Visitors are on a landing page for only one purpose: to complete the lead-capture form. A landing page consists of:

- A clear and large headline
- A brief description of the offer
- At least one supporting image
- (Optional) Supporting elements such as testimonials or security badges
- And most importantly, a form to capture information (at least name and email)

As you gather information, you can use it to provide more offers, better understand who is interacting with your site, and nurture leads into customers.

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ANALYTICS

If you're not tracking your visitor activity, then there's no point in spending time on a website. Tracking a website is all about following through on your purpose. You should be able to track which pages are performing well and which aren't, what your users are doing, where they're coming from and how they're interacting with your site.

You can find all of this information by installing tracking software on your site. We ensure every website we build has Google Analytics, which is free and provides in-depth answers on just about every question you might have about your website's performance. When you track your website consistently (we suggest reviewing at least monthly), you can learn what to change, what to keep and what your next steps for attracting customers should be.



REACH OUT TO US

**Interested in learning more about how
your website can work better for you?**

Find out what we can do for you by contacting Martin Thoma.

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