

WEBSITE MUST-HAVES

FOR DRIVING

TRAFFIC, LEADS, & SALES



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INTRODUCTION.

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We all know how important a website is to a business' online strategy. Almost every business, whether B2B, B2C, non-profit, local, or global needs an online presence to reach buyers in the internet age.

The reason for this shift is largely due to changing buyer behavior. Today's buyer wishes to consume information when they want and how they want, and often-times without the involvement of a sales person. A company website can and should serve as an educational hub and virtual storefront, so operating with an ineffective one, or without one entirely, is just plain silly.



INTRODUCTION (CONTINUED).

Whether you're looking to build your first website, or if your existing site just isn't getting the traffic or leads you were hoping for, this guide will teach you what it really takes to for a website to perform — to attract visitors, educate them, and convince them to buy.

So, without further ado, let's dive into a comprehensive checklist of the 25 things your website must have or do so you can better generate traffic, leads and customers.



MUST-HAVES FOR GETTING FOUND ONLINE.

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A great website isn't so great if no one visits it.

This is why the first chapter is dedicated to getting found online, in which we'll cover various search engine optimization (SEO) must-haves that will help boost awareness of your site, and subsequently your products or services.



1) INBOUND LINKS.

Every website on the internet has the goal of reaching the #1 position in search engines, but because there is only one top spot per keyword phrase, not everyone can make it. So what gets a first place ranking? Off-page search engine optimization (SEO) is the most important factor to increasing your ranking results.

Off-page SEO is about building inbound links, or getting other quality websites to link back to you. The more inbound links from other credible sites you have, the more authoritative your site must be, thus the higher you'll rank.

Link building, when done right, isn't easy since adding links to other websites is sometimes out of your control. That's why inbound links have to be earned.

1) INBOUND LINKS (CONTINUED).

Here are some tips to building inbound links:

- Create high-quality, educational or entertaining content. If people like your content, they will naturally <u>want to link to it</u>.
- Submit your website to online directories (see this list).
- Write <u>guest posts</u> for other blogs. This is a win-win for both parties. People will want extra (quality) content from others, and in exchange, you <u>accumulate an inbound link</u>.
- Research <u>link building opportunities</u> with other websites, but always check the authority of the websites that you are trying to get links from. There are many tools online that allow you to check domain or page authority, including <u>HubSpot's Links Tool</u>.
- And don't borrow, beg, barter, bribe or buy links.

2) ON-PAGE SEO (KEYWORD OPTIMIZATION).

While off-page SEO is hugely important, we can't forget about onpage SEO. This consists of placing your most important keywords within the content elements of your actual pages. These on-page elements include headlines, sub-headlines, body content, image tags, and links.

It's very common that businesses will do too little on-page optimization or too much (keyword stuffing). While it's important to include your keyword as many times as necessary within a page, you don't want to go overboard with it either.



2) ON-PAGE SEO (KEYWORD OPTIMIZATION) (CONTINUED).

For <u>on-page SEO</u> done right:

- Pick a primary keyword for each page, and focus on optimizing that page for that word. If you oversaturate a page with too many keywords, the page will lose its importance and authority because search engines won't have a clear idea of what the page is about. This is very common on homepages in particular, where too many keywords are used.
- Place your primary keywords in your headline and subheadline. These areas of content have greater weight to search engines.
- Include the keywords in the body content, but don't use them out of context. Make sure they are relevant with the rest of your content.

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2) ON-PAGE SEO (KEYWORD OPTIMIZATION) (CONTINUED).

- Include keywords in the filename of images (e.g. mykeyword.jpg), or use them in the ALT tag.
- Include the keywords in the page URL and keep the URL clean.
- And lastly, write for humans first, search engines second. Always prepare your content for your audience, and then look to optimize it for search. Content written in the other order won't read naturally and your visitors will recognize it.



3) META TAGS FOR PAGE TITLES AND DESCRIPTIONS.

A meta tag is a line of code that is contained in the background of a web page that search engines read to learn more about what a page is about. Search engines also use meta tags (titles and descriptions) to populate their listings and communicate to searchers what your site is about.

Here's how the Title and Description tags are displayed in search engine results:

HubSpot | All-in-one Inbound Marketing Software

www.hubspot.com/ ▼ HubSpot, Inc. ▼

HubSpot is an inbound marketing software platform that helps companies attract visitors, convert leads, and close customers.

While meta tags aren't the sexiest components of SEO, and while they may not carry the same level of SEO importance as they used to, they're still beneficial to have on every webpage from a search engine and users perspective.

3) META TAGS FOR PAGE TITLES AND DESCRIPTIONS (CONTINUED).

Most website editors and <u>content management systems</u> enable you to easily edit meta tags without coding knowledge. Here is example of what meta tags look like in an HTML document:

 Title: The title of the page seen at the top of a web browser, and also the main headline displayed in search engine results.

```
<title>HubSpot | All-in-one Inbound Marketing Software</title>
```

Meta Description: A <u>concise description</u> of the page.

<meta name="description" content="HubSpot is an
inbound marketing software platform that helps
companies attract visitors, convert leads, and
close customers.">

4) XML SITEMAP(S).

An XML sitemap is simply an .xml file containing a listing of all your pages and when they were updated, and it helps search engine crawlers (or "spiders") find and index your webpages more efficiently.

Creating a sitemap is easy. You can find sitemap generators online that will create the .xml file for you. Once you get the .xml file, simply upload it to the root directory of your website (e.g. www.website.com/sitemap.xml).



4) XML SITEMAP(S) (CONTINUED).

If your website is updated regularly, make it a good practice to update your .xml file at least once a month so search engines have the freshest data.

Adding an XML sitemap is a component that is commonly overlooked, while it may not be the deciding factor in improving your search engine optimization, it will certainly help.



5) 301 REDIRECTS.

We've all encountered a "404" or "Page Not Found" message after clicking on a broken link. This often occurs when a page is moved to a new URL, and the old link hasn't been directed to the new page.

If you move a page on your website, use a permanent 301 redirect to help search engines locate your most upto-date pages, and to make sure you're sending traffic to the new URL. If you don't, you'll lose any SEO status the old page once had.



MUST-HAVES FOR DESIGN & USABILITY.

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Now that you know how to increase your online visibility to improve inbound traffic to your site, your next focus is getting that traffic to stay there. It depends on the industry, but most websites have a 30-60% bounce rate on average. This means a large majority of web traffic entering your website leaves without navigating to any other pages. And many times they may never come back. Yikes! Here are some tips you need to consider to improve user experience.



6) A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION.

Your website represents who you are and what you offer. When people see it for the first time they're thinking:

- Is this site credible?
- Is it trustworthy?
- Is this a professional company?
- Is this company stable?
- Does this site make me feel welcome?
- Am I in the right place?

You need to ask yourself all of these questions when designing your website. Now, design may not be the most important factor in a website overall, and often-times folks put too much emphasis on how a site looks instead of how it works, but it does play an important role in making a good first impression.

6) A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION (CONTINUED).

Tips for great website design:

- Proper use of colors: Use color to draw attention to select elements. Don't try to make everything jump out. The result will be just the opposite: Nothing will stand out. Pick two to four colors for your template and marketing materials.
- Animations, gadgets and media: Using Flash animations because they look cool is the wrong strategy. In most cases it's best not to use animated background or background music. Only use media and animations to help support content and information.
- Layout: Create a clear navigation structure (see the section on Navigation later on), and organize page elements in a grid fashion (as opposed to randomly scattered). Also, don't be afraid of white space!

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6) A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION (CONTINUED).

• **Typography**: Make sure your website is legible. <u>Use fonts</u>, <u>font sizes and font colors</u> that are easy to read. For easier page scanning, use bullet lists, section headers, and short paragraphs. If your site is English language-based, make sure information flows from left to right and top to bottom.

While design is important, don't forget that offering great content is what your visitors are ultimately after. A well-designed website might convince visitors to take a closer look but they won't look twice if the content isn't useful and well organized. After all, you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

7) CONSISTENT LAYOUT AND STRUCTURE.

It's best to keep elements on your site fairly consistent from page-to-page. Elements include <u>colors</u>, <u>sizes</u>, <u>layout</u>, and placement of those elements. This means colors are primarily the same as well as fonts and layout structure. Navigation should remain in the same location of your layout throughout your website.

For layout structure, typically three page layouts exist for most websites: one for the homepage, one for content pages, and one for form pages. For example, your homepage will have a different layout than a landing page for a PPC campaign. Keep the elements in these layouts constant to prevent your visitors from feeling lost.

8) COMPELLING IMAGES.

Images can be a powerful element to any website but you need to use them wisely. For example, consider stock photography. Stock images are seen everywhere because they are easily accessible and inexpensive. But are they good to use? Let's discuss on the next page.



8) COMPELLING IMAGES (CONTINUED).

Marketing Experiments performed a test <u>comparing the use of</u> <u>stock photography versus real imagery</u> on a website and each of their effects on lead generation. What they found was that photos of real people out-performed the stock photos by 95%. Why? Because stock images tend to be irrelevant. Resist the temptation to use photos of fake smiling business people!

As a result, take care to place meaningful images on your site. Every image is transmitting a subconscious message to your audience, and sometimes the result is different from what you might expect. I'd recommend looking into another study by Marketing Experiments "Images vs. Copy: How getting the right balance increased conversion by 29%."

9) CLEAR NAVIGATION.

Perhaps one of the biggest factors to keep visitors on your website is having a good, solid navigation system that supports all search preferences. If people can't find what they are looking for, they will give up and leave.

Important factors in a site's navigation include:

- Keep the structure of your primary navigation simple (and near the top of your page).
- Include navigation in the footer of your site.
- Use <u>breadcrumbs</u> on every page (except for the homepage) so people are aware of their navigation trail.
- Include a search box near the top of your site so visitors can search by keywords.

9) CLEAR NAVIGATION (CONTINUED).

- Don't offer too many navigation options on a page.
- Try to keep your navigation to no more than three levels deep.
- Include links to other pages
 on your site within your
 page copy, and optimize
 each link's anchor text.

The overall rule for navigation is simple: don't require visitors to have to think too much.



10) (A LACK OF OUTRAGEOUS) FLASH AND ANIMATION.

Flash animation can grab someone's attention, yes, but it can also distract people from staying on your site or prevent people from seeing your site content in the first place. Any mobile or web browser without an updated version of Adobe Flash Player can't run Flash content, and neither do Apple iPhones or tablets.

For subtle animation and interactivity that's viewable across devices, your best bet is to <u>develop in HTML5</u>. But keep the animation to a minimum and only use when necessary, as many people simply don't want to be bothered with unexpected noises and animations.

In order to gain significant traffic, your site needs to be <u>responsive</u>, meaning that it's compatible and <u>viewable on</u> <u>multiple browsers and devices</u>. People are surfing the ...

11) ACCESSIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS.

... internet from their phones and tablets more than ever before, so make sure to get some of those views by allowing everyone to view your site no matter what browser or device they are using.

A quick load time is another factor to consider. 40% of people will abandon a web page if it takes more than three seconds to load. Don't send visitors away before they've even had the chance to see what you offer!



WEBSITE CONTENT MUST-HAVES.

WEBSITE CONTENT MUST-HAVES.

Content is one of the most important aspects of any website. It is what search engines and people are looking for. It's what drives visitors to your site and turns prospects into leads.

Take a look at these next musthaves for <u>creating killer website</u> <u>content</u>.



12) CLEAR, CONCISE MESSAGING IN HEADERS AND BODY COPY.

There are four basic questions you need to ask yourself regarding the content of your website.

- Will people know what I do within seconds?
- Will they understand what page they're on and what it's about?
- Will they know what to do next?
- Why should they buy/subscribe/download from this site instead of from someone else?

Ideally, you want your visitors to know the answers to these questions. It should be readily apparent what your site is about, what they can do there and why they should take action. Consider the helpful tips on the next page for help delivering the right message.

12) CLEAR, CONCISE MESSAGING IN HEADERS AND BODY COPY (CONTINUED).

- Create a few headlines and sub-headline ideas for your most important pages. To combat question #4 (why should I buy from you?) use a <u>powerful value proposition</u> and steer clear from generic clichés, gobbledygook terms, and <u>corporate speak</u>.
- Make sure to include clear calls-to-action and next steps.
 Include links in your body copy, next step links at the end
 of the copy, and <u>calls-to-action</u> wherever appropriate.
 Include a little direction and you'll be glad you did.
- Test your copy. For the most accurate indication of a winning headline, use A/B testing to determine which variation drives the most conversions. You can use tools like <u>HubSpot's A/B Testing Tools</u>, <u>Google Analytics Content Experiments</u>, or services like <u>Five Second Test</u>.

13) PERCEIVABLE VALUE.

Not everyone is ready to buy when they first hit your site. And people don't come there just to get a virtual sales pitch. Remember, it's not all about you. What's in it for them?

- Offer more than just product content. Provide eBooks, whitepapers, videos, and <u>other forms of educational content</u>. This will nurture prospects through your marketing and sales funnel until they are ready to buy.
- In product-specific content, write as if you are speaking directly to your audience. Use words like "you," and "we." Be transparent. Make yourself sound human. Speak their language.
- Write your product content as if you are helping them solve their problems. Avoid "we are the best" speak and instead use "this is how we help you...."

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14) QUALITY CONTENT.

Everyone knows having a lot of content is a good thing, but in the days where search engines are getting smarter and buyers are becoming more selective, quality content is truly king. Quality content is a definite must-have for any website.

- Offer unique content. People love this and so do search engines.
- Write for humans, not search engines. People don't read like robots.
- Provide value through educational content that answers prospects' questions.
- Do your research when paying for content that is written by third-party services to ensure the content will be up to snuff.

14) QUALITY CONTENT (CONTINUED).

- **Keep content fresh**. Having news that's two years old still sitting on your homepage won't make a great impression. Search engines aren't fans of outdated content either.
- Know your audience. Providing content that is specific to your buyers will keep them coming to you rather than your competitors.
- Include evidence when needed. If stating facts, numbers, awards, testimonials and etc., try to back it up with a source and give credit where credit is due.
- Know your subject well. You probably don't want an auto mechanic writing about brain surgery. Accuracy contributes to quality.

15) (A LACK OF) CORPORATE JARGON.

A business website should be professional, but you still want to avoid much dreaded corporate gobbledygook. What is gobbledygook you ask? Great question.

It's business jargon that has been overused and abused, rendering it practically meaningless. It's meant to add more emphasis of a particular subject, but instead just makes your eyes roll. So what words should you avoid?



15) (A LACK OF) CORPORATE JARGON (CONTINUED).

Avoid these words on your website and in other materials whenever possible:

- Next generation
- Flexible
- Robust
- Scalable
- Easy to use
- Cutting-edge
- Ground-breaking
- Best of breed
- Mission critical
- And so on ... I think I've put you through enough torture.



16) (A LACK OF) TRICKERY.

For years, advertising has tricked us with catchy and creative headlines to capture our attention. Consumers have gotten smarter and grown tired of advertising trickery, clichés, and surreptitious methods of persuasion. Consumers know when they're being lied to, gimmicked, or fooled.

If you focus your content on being clear, not clever, you will find that more people will place their trust in you.



17) A BLOG.

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

Here are some reasons why you really need a blog:

- It creates more, fresh content on your site, which is great for SEO.
- It helps establish you as an industry authority and thought leader.
- It helps drive more traffic and leads back to your website.
- It's a great channel to converse and engage with your audience and customers.
- It's a great way to get valuable inbound links!

17) A BLOG (CONTINUED).

If you still need proof blogging works, HubSpot has lots of research on the subject, specifically:

- Companies that blog have 55% more visitors.
- Companies that blog generate 126% more leads than those that don't.

Blogging isn't as difficult as you think. There are plenty of blogging tools you can use to get started. I recommend checking out 100 Stats, Charts, and Graphs to Get Inbound Marketing Buy-In for more awesome blogging stats, getting your colleagues or boss on board using this downloadable training presentation, and getting started with these blog post templates.

18) SOCIAL SHARING BUTTONS OR WIDGETS.

If the option to "Like," tweet, or share a page, product, or blog post exists on your site, people are more likely to share that content to their friends and connections on their preferred social networks. The more your site content gets shared, the more traffic you're likely to get. Make it easy for people to share and socialize about your content and resources.

- Add a <u>sharing widget or plugin</u> to pages containing shareworthy content on your site. Tools like <u>AddThis</u> or <u>ShareThis</u> are easy to install and provide you with analytic tracking as well.
- If you're on a <u>blogging platform</u> like HubSpot or WordPress, use a plugin to enable people to share your articles and auto-publish content to your social networks like Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook.

19) MULTIPLE TYPES OF CONTENT.

Content is more than just the written word. Audiovisual content and images are other excellent forms of content that can turn a text-heavy site into something that pleases the viewing preferences of multiple audiences.

- Content takes place in the form of:
- Imagery (including infographics)
- Video
- Audio
- Online utility tools (e.g. HubSpot's <u>Marketing Grader</u> or <u>Blog</u> <u>Topic Generator</u>)
- Games
- You name it!

Try using many different forms of content. It will help create a content-rich experience.

20) CUSTOMER TESTIMONIALS, REVIEWS, OR CASE STUDIES.

No matter what you're selling, potential buyers like to see confirmation that you've made other customers happy. Testimonials, customer reviews, and case studies are powerful tools for moving prospects closer to the final buying stage.

- Provide authentic customer stories and don't hide these behind a form!
- Place real, short, and powerful testimonials on your site.
 Tips to maximize testimonials:
 - Include real names and titles and use pictures of the person along with their testimonial to add authenticity.
 - Instead of randomly placing testimonials on any page, place them on the most applicable pages. For example, if you have one for your convenient return policy, place that on a shopping cart or pricing page.

20) CUSTOMER TESTIMONIALS, REVIEWS, OR CASE STUDIES (CONTINUED).

- The more proof you have, the better. Make it part of your strategy to collect case studies and testimonials when possible.
- Leverage other online sites that provide reviews, such as Yelp (for local businesses), or industry specific directories like G2Crowd (for software providers).



MUST-HAVES FOR INCREASING CONVERSIONS.

MUST-HAVES FOR INCREASING CONVERSIONS.

Now that you know what it takes to drive traffic and engage visitors with great content, the next step is to get your visitors to convert from a prospect into a lead. You don't want them leaving without providing some information or you'll lose the opportunity to nurture them until they are ready to buy. Here are some must-haves for increasing your website conversions.



21) EFFECTIVE CALLS-TO-ACTION.

An <u>effective call-to-action</u> (CTA) drives a visitor to take a desired action. CTAs are typically kept above the fold or in clear sight on a page so visitors know where to take the next step. CTAs are the key to lead generation, but they need to be done right to convert traffic into leads.

- Make them bigger and bolder than most other elements on the page, but don't overdo it.
- Consider colors of the CTA, whether it is a link, button or image. Make them look so good people will want to click on them.
- Offer CTAs that provide value, like guides, whitepapers, estimates, etc. "Contact Us" is the worst form of a CTA. Don't rely on that as your only option for conversion.

21) EFFECTIVE CALLS-TO-ACTION (CONTINUED).

- Make the CTA look clickable. You can do this by making a button or adding a hover effect to an element.
- Be clear and use simple language about what is being offered. Less is more.
- Test when possible. Try testing different colors (e.g. red versus green buttons), language, and placement to see which CTAs get more clicks and drive more leads.

For good examples of calls-to-action, check out these <u>101</u> <u>examples</u>, grab these <u>CTA templates</u>, or check out <u>this guide</u> <u>on writing and designing effective CTAs</u>.

22) TESTED CTA POSITIONING.

So you have calls-to-action, but how will people find them? You want to think about where you will be placing your CTAs. You don't want to dump CTAs everywhere. That will confuse people by giving them too many options, likely at the wrong time.

Consider this:

• Segment your top-of-the-funnel and middle-of-the-funnel offers. Place top-of-funnel type offers (whitepapers, downloads) on top-level pages. Add middle-of-funnel offers (request a quote, trial, pricing) as the prospect is digging deeper and learning more about your offering.

22) TESTED CTA POSITIONING (CONTINUED).

- Place CTAs both above and below the fold. The area above the fold gets the most views. However, there are still other areas of a page to promote your CTAs, such as at the bottom of pages and within body content.
- Some studies suggest placing CTAs to the right of the page work better, but testing this will ultimately determine what's best for your website.
- Use <u>thank-you pages</u> for additional CTAs. Many times
 there is plenty of real estate to <u>offer more downloads and</u>
 <u>CTAs</u> without requiring them to complete another form.
- **Test, test**! Sometimes what you predict will work best isn't the case. Test different placements to know which one works best for your website.

23) LANDING PAGES.

Your CTAs should ideally link to <u>landing pages</u>. <u>Landing pages</u> are used to convert visitors into leads by completing a transaction or by collecting contact information from them. Landing pages direct your visitors to one particular offer without the distractions of everything else on your website, and they consist of:

- A headline and (optional) sub-headline
- A brief description of the offer/CTA
- At least one supporting image
- (Optional) supporting elements such as testimonials or security badges
- And most importantly, a form to capture contact information

Flip to the next page to find out best practices for <u>effective</u> <u>landing pages</u>.

23) LANDING PAGES (CONTINUED).

- Include only what is needed to minimize distractions.
- Remove main site navigation from the landing page so visitors can focus on completing the form and not continuing to search your site.
- Make it very clear what the offer is and make it irresistible.
- Makes sure that the content on your landing page matches your call-to-action. If there is a disconnect in your messaging visitors will hit the Back button.
- Reduce friction. Don't make visitors think too much or do too much work (i.e. reading).
- Use the right form and only collect the information you absolutely need (see the next section on Forms for more details).

24) FORMS.

Forms allow people to sign-up, subscribe, or download an offer. There is no magic answer to how many fields your form should contain, but a rule of thumb is to only collect the information you really need.

The fewer the form fields, the more likely visitors will convert since a longer form looks like more work. On the other hand, the more fields you require, the better contact information you'll get. The only way to know for sure is to test.



24) FORMS (CONTINUED).

A few recommendations for landing page forms:

- Only ask for the information you need for you or your sales team.
- Avoid asking for sensitive information that companies or consumers may not want to disclose.
- Consider the value of the offer. The more valuable an offer may be perceived, the more information you may be able to ask for in return. If it's a newsletter subscription, only ask for email address (and maybe first name, at most).
- Reduce anxiety. People are more resistant to give up their information these days, especially because of the increase in spam. Add a privacy message (or link to your privacy policy) that indicates their email will not be shared or sold.

24) FORMS (CONTINUED).

- Don't use the word "SUBMIT" on your form buttons! No one wants to submit anything. Instead, try "Download Whitepaper," "Get Your Free eBook," or "Join Our Newsletter."
- If you're advertising a downloadable offer as your CTA, fulfill the request instantly. For example, if your form is for a whitepaper download, include a link to download that whitepaper on the very next thank-you page. Another option is to send an auto-responder email containing a link to the offer, but it's recommended it's given right away upon form submission so people don't have to dig in their email for your content.

25) AN OPTION TO SUBSCRIBE VIA EMAIL.

Not all CTAs need to direct people to ebooks, sales, or other substantial offers. You can drive people to subscribe to your content as well.

Whether you have an <u>email</u> <u>newsletter</u> or blog, ensure your website encourages visitors to subscribe to it. <u>Newsletters</u> or mailing lists are the perfect way to collect email addresses so you can nurture prospects over time to become leads. Just make sure it's easy for people to find your subscription form.



CONCLUSION.

CONCLUSION.

Your website is where education, engagement, and conversion take place. You need to be there when potential buyers come looking. A business website may be the most important factor in your inbound marketing strategy, but it's more than just having a website -- it's the integration of <u>SEO</u>, <u>social media</u>, <u>blogging</u>, <u>content</u>, <u>CTAs</u>, and <u>landing pages</u> that will drive traffic, leads and sales.

Follow these guidelines and you will soon have a great website that generate sales and revenue for your business. But don't stop there. A website never truly stops growing. Keep learning, testing, and tweaking.

Thanks for reading.

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Analyze your web traffic
and see which sources
are generating the most
leads



SEARCH OPTIMIZATION

Improve your rank in search engines by finding and tracking your most effective keywords.



BLOGGING

Create blog content quickly while getting SEO tips and best practice pointers as you type.



EMAIL

Send personalized, segmented emails based on any information in your contact database



LEAD MANAGEMENT

Track leads with a complete timeline-view of their interactions with your company



SOCIAL MEDIA

Publish content to your social accounts, then nurture leads based on their social engagement.