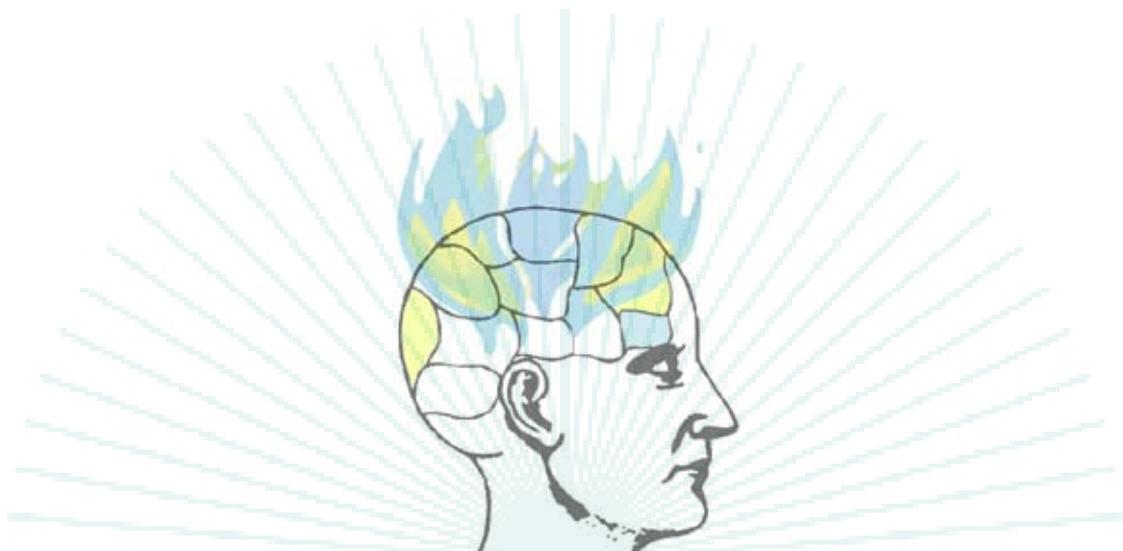


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How to Boost and monetise your website



letter from the publisher



The internet is the business owner's best friend, proving to be a very cost effective way to bring people to your company. The bad news is it is getting harder to get noticed. Initial online strategies of SEO and pay-per-click advertising will be less effective as more companies use them to drive traffic to their site.

As the internet chokes up, it is time to revisit your online marketing strategy. Smart companies are drawing more people with new search tools and converting them to leads to their site by providing deeper content, links, tools, partnerships and new search tools.

The good news is many of the tools being used by online marketers can easily be adapted by web savvy businesses. SmartCompany has pulled together four recent stories that will help you take your website to the next level, give you some ideas to monetise your website and sell more online.

Remember; the web is still your best friend. You just need to ensure you pay it the attention it deserves so that people can find you.

Cheers, Amanda Gome



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Wagging the long tail

Think your website is too small or niche to generate advertising revenue? Think again. Here are 10 tips to monetise your online platform.

By DENISE SHRIVELL

Planning a site's revenue strategy is reliant on several factors, including establishing and building traffic and ongoing support from a web developer. Structuring a well thought-out site, which meets the

needs of an audience, and then presenting this to marketers in a highly professional and knowledgeable manner can give them the confidence to invest their advertising spend with you.

Here are some initial tips for web site owners to consider in order to monetise their online platform:

Revenue streams. There are various ways to monetise web sites – make early decisions on what suits your site and audience and spread your risk by implementing more than one of these streams

Ad sizes and placement of ads on the page. Have your ads been seen, and therefore interacted with, by your audience and do your ad sizes fit market standards? While some tailored sizes and placements can be incorporated, advertisers prefer market standard formats and sizes.

Campaign measurement and reporting. Advertising is an “investment”, so businesses spending money to reach your audience will expect a measurable “return” on this investment. How are you helping to optimise this return and what processes have you implemented to ensure your advertisers can readily access their campaign results?

Site audience measurement. By what method are you gathering your site's statistical information and are you communicating this to advertisers using the correct terminology and key benchmarks? Many sites are using incorrect terminology and are not presenting the strengths of their sites in the best way.

Rate structure. Structure your rate card so you can maximise sales from each client and present advertising options that are achievable for each “budget segment” of your potential client base.

Site usability. Are you ensuring the areas, sections or pages that are attracting the most potential revenue are easily navigated, subscribed or registered to?

Understand your market. What information are you gathering from your user base on an ongoing basis and how are you utilising this information?

Sales collateral. Communicate your sales proposition to your potential market in a professional and effective manner, remembering advertisers are time poor and respond to clear, concise and relevant information that is tailored to their needs.

Site processes and procedures. Managing online advertising can be highly manual and labour intensive – having strong processes in place can save you both time and money and ensure that a consistent, professional service is being delivered to your potential client base.

Continually innovate and plan. Keep an eye on future opportunities and trends and have the structure and support to adapt and meet the needs of an ever changing market.

Advanced web traffic secrets

It's getting tougher to get people to your website.

By FRED SCHEBESTA



So you need to get boost your traffic? Here are advanced tactics online marketers use to attract higher levels of traffic.

Tactic 1 – CREATE FLAGSHIP CONTENT

Most companies have a flagship product, service or “majority revenue driver”. Sanitarium – Weetbix; Telstra – landlines; Qantas – Sydney to Los Angeles route; Nestle – Nescafe; Macquarie Bank – equities and investment banking.

These flagship elements power these businesses and sometimes 80% of their profit comes from them. Now, start to imagine what flagship content would look like on your website – something which powered in huge volumes of traffic for you.

What form can flagship content take?

Definitive resources – these are definitive guides for specific niche topics in your market that are entirely comprehensive and complete for a first-time user. Your guide is the first thing someone reads when they want to start in your market. Usually you will request an email address in return for the resource.

Examples:

Pay per click: Perry Marshall's Definitive guide to adwords

Search engine optimization: Aaron Walls' SEO Book

Copywriting: John Caples' Testing Advertising Methods

There are many other definitive guides that people in a market refer to. What are they in yours? Is there an opportunity to create one?

Software – this is software that everyone in your market comes to your website to get and use. The software fulfils a specific purpose and is head and shoulders above any other software attempting to solve the same problem. For example, I have used Firefox plugins for SEO from specific websites. I always return back to those sites when I have a new computer to install the plugins.

An amazing video – television trumped radio and magazines because it had sound, visuals and movement in one. Videos can haul in traffic, but remember you are going to be competing with all the other video out there (there are 100,000,000 videos on YouTube). What you make has got to be amazing. Practice will be required and I would advise you to [read this guide first](#).

Super useful tools – some little tools on the net are just so handy that people keep going back forever, and they recommend them to other people, which brings you more traffic. There are billions of tools out there, but think about your target audience and do the research in the search engines as to what they are looking for. Always go back to these tools: [Babelfish](#) for my language translations, [keyword discovery](#) tools, and I use [Yahoo Finance](#) all the time to get stock trends and comparisons, because I think its stock tool is the best.

Thousands of other ideas – games, flash animations, website designs, spoofs... the list goes on. But the one thing is that it has to be great – good just won't cut it with all the content on the internet choking up your visitors' attention.

That's good content, but you can do better

Once you have a little short list of ideas and you tell other people and they like it, think how you can make it better. If you have never done one of these flagship pieces of content you won't know where the bar is that determines where success is, and you will probably shoot too low.

Search Google, search the forums, search IRC and check that no one has done what you have done before. Planning increases your chance of luck. You are also going to need to do the hard ground work and promote it like any other thing you have promoted.

Expect your plan to change along the way. As soon as you commence your plan and get it out there, you will learn things, get feedback and the original plan will have to be slightly adapted.

The better you plan the more likely you will be to create flagship content.

Get a feedback loop and listen to it

You need critics, because they care and actually take the time to improve your marketing. If you have no critics, people have stopped caring. You need the honest truth here and you need to listen to it, don't fight it. The tough words that you need to hear will earn you serious money. Do you know who this person is? If not, here are some places to look:

Your customers/visitors – they choose your product with their wallet or their time.

Your family and friends – sometimes they can be too nice. You need the ones that don't hold back.

Mentors – People who guide you by giving you raw honest feedback.

Think of creating your flagship content as if you were a TV company. You get ideas for a show, you promote the hell out of the pilot to get people to watch, you get feedback, and then determine if you are going to continue with the show. Do the same with your flagship content.

Tactic 2 – CLONE YOUR TRAFFIC BY CONTINUING THE INTERACTION

Once you have developed your traffic magnet, it's time to give it some longevity and keep it bringing in traffic. Bringing people back to your website needs to be for a reason. Here are some suggestions:

1. A follow on. The perfect way to follow a great "how to" article is an email series with follow-up insightful articles. For example, you could dissect your other high-quality content and put it into an email series. Or bundle together all of your most popular into a single follow-up guide.

2. Software updates. You can drive people back to your site to tell them what the updates were and deliver a marketing message there. Ensure people are redirected to your site as soon as they update it.

3. RSS and bookmarks. Encourage bookmarking your site. An oldie but still a goodie, even if it's a reminder to bookmark the page as opposed to a button.

4. Add to the webpage. Continue the traffic gold on the page that had the original flagship content. Most people return to it to show other people and you will find that you can easily promote the next stage of the content or an accompanying course/product along with it. Think broadly about this; it only needs to be polite and small for the person who is returning to notice something new. If visitors learn that the site is going to keep refreshing then direct traffic is going to be a big friend of yours – people will just memorise the domain and go from there.

Most great content drivers are one-hit wonders because continuation is not thought of at the start. Assume success with your flagship content and assume that you are going to want to get these people back to your site. While you need to be realistic and realise most of the traffic you will get will never return, the real gold is to get the potential prospects back.

Prepare follow-on content before the big rush. Think of this like a theatre play; you need to prepare for scene two while you are doing scene one.

Tactic 3 – PARTNERSHIPS

Have you ever had your mother tell you a restaurant near your place was great, even though you've never heard of it? The holy grail of getting more traffic is to get it from other companies who endorse you to their customers. By enlisting the other company to endorse you, your competitors will struggle to target customers as effectively as you.

Big corporations have been doing this for years. For example, the alliance partnerships between Qantas and QBE for insurance fits like a glove because both win from the partnership. Qantas gets a commission and QBE sells new policies to committed buyers without having to market their product to them. Partnering up with other companies is a textbook advanced tactic to drive targeted traffic to your website.

How to form a successful partnership that drives you traffic

The success of approaching a partner is usually determined in the planning you do. The key to success is to bring something of value to the partner and know specifically what you want in return.

A casual offer asking for a partnership is not going to work. You need to know specifically how you can help them (a website banner on your homepage promoting their top-selling product, or an email to your database endorsing their website and promoting a free eBook they are offering, or inbound links from high traffic pages on your site) and what you specifically want in return (two email-outs with them endorsing your hottest selling product, new flagship content, free eBook or a discount on your store).

Flagship content rental

Sometimes other websites in your market have developed tools and resources that would be of significant value. It isn't always possible for you to develop your own, and doing so would just be a repeat of what is already out there.

Instead it can be a good idea to just borrow the flagship content and rent it. This way you will at least not be at a disadvantage in getting visitors to your website and keeping them coming back.

Good examples of this are: Renting comparison tools, review tools, online calculators and video content. The best situation is when you rent the content from another site and you market it better than the original owner – hopefully your website becomes the destination that people think to return to. Usually this will be tough unless you slightly modify it and improve it beyond its original design.

For example:

Add a guide to use it – this will help users engage better.

Translate it into other languages.

Improve the quality of the video, graphics or sound.

Change the language and messaging to make it easier for someone to comprehend and understand.

Virgin has done this for years with its credit cards, home loans, mobile phones and broadband. Virgin just rebadged an existing provider in the market, created a killer offer, made it simpler than the original provider and marketed it heavily.

Virgin essentially acts as a big affiliate to the original provider and tends to exit from the business after it has gained enough market share by selling it back to the original provider. Virgin companies run at very thin margins although they never have the large overheads and can quickly get into new markets. This to me is the ultimate in partnerships as Virgin are taking a company's product but just marketing it better for a portion of the revenue.

Database swaps

Big email marketers who have lists over one million deep never have all the actual email records in a database, they establish partnerships to do it. Deals need to be made with companies that have large lists in order to grow their list.

Usually there is some sort of incentive given to the partner list or an exclusive special offer given to their list that makes them feel special. For example, credit card companies do alliance partnerships with telcos in order to sell their card holders mobile phone contracts. Normally the telco doesn't have to pay the credit card company if they provide a special offer (big discount) that no one can refuse, take credit card payments for the bills and provide all of the creative.

The credit card company benefits because it is giving something special to its card holders and it also gets its card holders to spend more money on their card to pay for the mobile phone bill.

These kinds of high level mutually beneficial database swaps are advanced traffic tactics that will require you to brainstorm potential partners that you can work with. Remember to think first what you can bring to them and then know exactly what you want in return before you make your approach to the company.

Traffic swap

It's tough at first to think of why other websites would ever want to send traffic from their website to yours. But while basic online marketers would not be happy to do this, more advanced marketers would be inclined to definitely do this because they realize they can get traffic that normally they wouldn't be able to tap into.

If you were to do a straight traffic swap with another website, what would happen? Visitors who are happy with the website would engage with that site whereas visitors who are not will go to the other site and hopefully this will provide them with what they want.

This is quite similar to McDonald's setting up a store right next to KFC. Sure, they will lose some customers to the other store, but the total number of visitors to both stores will increase. You can see this tactic in advanced markets like pornography, where sites will link to and from each other in order to keep the traffic in the network of sites that have partnered together. This deal will generally only work when the websites are on a similar level to each other – if one site has drastically more traffic than another, then it would not be likely to work.





SEO and website design

When you commission a designer to build you a new website, it's really up to you to make sure they design your new website with SEO in mind. Here's four tips.

By [CHRIS THOMAS](#)

As they say, a great looking website is no guarantee of success. If potential customers can't find your website because you've compromised its chances of a good search engine rank, you'll need to resort to expensive Pay Per Click and affiliate marketing campaigns for the life of the design.

When you commission a designer to build you a new website, it's really up to you to make sure they design your new website with SEO in mind. Obviously design and usability is the designer's job; they want to make your new site look as beautiful as possible for humans. But sometimes designers (and I should also mention developers) overlook how a search engine might respond.

You can have your cake and eat it too, so let's look at the elements involved in website design that really matter to search engines.

1. Textual content

I often see designers create quite 'image heavy' designs, particularly on home pages.

Remember, search engines can't 'see' or 'read' images, so we need to give a search engine some text to hang their hat on. While you can use image 'alt tags' to populate text onto an image heavy site, search engines place less weight on them, so it's not a genuine workaround.

Search Engines typically need a minimum of 350 words per page to get a clear 'relevance picture' of the theme for each and every page in your website. Search engines like key phrases in headings, body text and links (in the form of anchor text).

2. Technology - flash

Just as search engines struggle with images, they also struggle with flash.

At the moment, search engine robots can't access and index content from flash files. I would be very wary of a home page (or indeed an entire website) presented solely by a flash file, if you want to rank well.

3. Technology - javascript

If you don't have a sitemap, search engine robots need to follow links within your site (and from other websites) in order to index all your website pages.

Search engine robots are unable to follow javascript links (which are often a feature of drop down animated menu systems for example). If your designer recommends using javascript based navigation, ask if it's possible to use a CSS driven navigation system instead.

4. Site Structure

When you're developing your sitemap, dedicate some thought to keyword research for each directory name and file name. Designers often build your sitemap with quite uninspiring directory names like <http://www.autobarn.com.au/products/17/159/>

I often use the example of Seek Learning as one of Australia's best overall websites in terms of design, usability and search engine optimisation. Seek Learning's site structure is something to behold, it's obvious they had significant input from a SEO specialist during the sitemap creation phase of the project. Given that Google does place importance on keywords in directory and file names, it's vital you do too.

6 steps to optimising your e-commerce product detail pages



Selling heaps of products online? Make sure search engines 'see' your offerings.

By [CHRIS THOMAS](#)

The most daunting prospect for any shopping cart owner is SEOing every single product in their shopping cart. If you've got thousands of products in your site, you can be forgiven for not even attempting to optimise your product pages. Sometimes when a job seems too big and too daunting it can paralyze all initiative!

So these tips to improve your online sales will be short, easily digestible, and (hopefully) actionable.

1. Break the job down into small, easy bits. Start by targeting and optimising the top 10 best selling products in your cart. Then do the next best 20 and so on.
2. Make sure you include the name of the product or service in your page title tag. You need to format it so you keep the name of the product or service first, the name of your company second.
3. The next important page element for SEO is your heading tag. Include your product or service name in your H1 tag.
4. Obviously every product or service needs a description. I'm often shocked by how little effort online retailers take to describe their products. Given that Google needs at least 250 to 300 words per page to create a complete "relevance" picture, it's in your interests to make sure your description is fully optimised and that the benefits of the product or service are blindingly obvious. My 10 cents? Hire a copy-writer.
5. Product images should also be optimised, so name your image with the product's actual name, like "blue-widget.jpg". Make sure that when you include the picture on the page that you use an image "alt" tag that also uses the product's name.
6. If you're reselling products that are not your own, don't copy the exact same content from the original manufacturer. Substantially rewrite your copy to avoid having your page penalised by Google's duplicate content filter. If you have substantially similar content as the original content creator, Google will stop your result from appearing in the search results.

Honestly, if you get into the habit of ensuring your detailed product descriptions are fully optimised with engaging copy which encourages conversions (purchases), you'll be a long way ahead of most your competitors!

