

THE ESSENTIAL

SMALL
BUSINESS
GUIDE

TO WEBSITE SUCCESS



A checklist to increase your
subscribers, leads, sales & profits!



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MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A SIMPLE + SMART + STRATEGIZED FOUNDATION

A big mistake many small business owners make is to overcomplicate their design in an attempt to seem different or clever. While beautiful design matters, it is secondary to a simple and smart user experience that makes it *easy* for your visitors to *take action*!

- Decide upon the most important goal of your small business website. Examples include: to call you, to sell a product, to sign up for your email marketing, to fill out a consultation questionnaire, etc. When a person completes one of these goals, it's called a *conversion*.
- Make sure website visitors can achieve that goal from your homepage.
- Keep the navigation on your site very simple. It should take visitors no more than three clicks from any page on your site to convert.
- Define certain pages on your site as *goal pages*, where visitors can take a specific action to convert into a prospect, subscriber, or customer.
- Make sure every page on your site guides the visitor to the action you want them to take. A well-designed website never leaves visitors at a dead-end on a page. Make it clear and easy to follow a path to your primary and secondary goals.



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STEP UP IN STYLE

Looking dated, cluttered, or like you cobbled your logo together in MS Paint doesn't cut it. While visitors are evaluating your services, they have three other browser tabs open and are measuring you against your competitors. Just like at a job interview, first impressions count!

- Your logo should look professional, convey your values, appeal to your ideal customers, and be simple enough to understand in a variety of sizes.
- Make sure your website is clean, appealing, and simply organized.
- Color can evoke feelings. Use the right colors for your brand story and industry. Keep your color palette under control with 4 or 5 brand colors. A carnival of colors looks cheap and makes it nearly impossible to build brand awareness.
- Use great photography and graphics. Custom photography is preferable. If you must use stock photography, be sure to avoid cheesy, impersonal “woman wearing a business suite, holding a clipboard” type stock photos.
- Make sure your banner images contain visuals and messages that convey your values, tell your story, and support your website's business goals.



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CREATE THE RIGHT CONTENT

Your content is the cornerstone of your website. It's the key to getting found online. In fact, your SEO (search engine optimization) depends on it. Additionally, your content needs to instantly connect with and compel your visitors to take action.

- What is the purpose of your business? What problems do you solve? For whom? You need a clear message that is quickly understood by your visitors.
- Write about your customers. Put them in the spotlight, not yourself. When you convey that you deeply understand your customers you build trust and credibility.
- Use headers as search engine indexing tools. Get right to the point with simple language instead of industry-specific jargon, let your personality shine through and utilize phrases people might type into Google to find products or services like yours (these are called *keyword phrases*).
- Your copy needs to be *concise* because people are skimmers. At the same time, it must be inviting and informative. Your copy should answer questions and overcome objections or resistance people may have about purchasing your products or services.
- Because people aren't going to super-sleuth their way through mountains of words, be sure to use: short paragraphs, headers to break things up, and bulleted (or numbered) lists so your content is easy to absorb.
- Use content as a marketing tool. Blog posts are a great way to provide valuable information, display your expertise, and answer questions for your ideal customers. Regularly published content can also attract new website visitors and deepen connections with your existing audience. When it comes to content marketing, consistency is key so it's best to create an editorial calendar and stick with it.



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BE CREDIBLE AND BUILD TRUST

Without credibility you won't build trust. Without trust, you won't turn website visitors into subscribers, leads, or sales. Make sure your website is designed with built-in credibility elements.

- Showcase genuine, results-based customer testimonials.
- Display logos for your professional credentials, association memberships, awards, and places you've taught, spoken or been published.
- If appropriate to your business, highlight case studies with before and after images or an explanation of successful projects that created client results due to the quality of your work.
- Embed a powerful (and short...90 seconds) explainer video into your website. YouTube is the second largest search engine and you're more likely to rank with an optimized video than text. (Don't forget to use keywords in your video title, description, and tags).
- Do not make your ABOUT page a ramble-fest detailing your life's journey or a dry patch with a boring corporate-sounding mission statement. Your ideal customers want to *relate* to you. So let your personality and expertise shine through in ways that are all about *them*.
- Stick to your brand-specific fonts, colors, and overarching message. Use consistent capitalization site-wide. Make sure to use the same style of bullet points from page to page. Consistency conveys credibility.
- Double check your spelling and grammar. And verify that your email address and phone number are correctly displayed.



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INVITE, GATHER, AND NURTURE LEADS

Support your primary and secondary business goals with enticing and easy ways for people to take action and connect with you.

- Create useful freebie gifts to give away on your website in exchange for a visitor's email address. Your gifts don't need to be huge, but they do need to be *insanely helpful*. Because people are busy, make sure your email freebies can be appreciated quickly. Metaphorically, don't give a new subscriber the whole pizza. Just give a slice!
- Use an email subscription service to easily gather email addresses into a database. Your provider should also seamlessly deliver your opt-in freebie.
- When inviting someone to sign up for your freebie, be sure to tell them exactly what's in it for them. Make it irresistible!
- Don't rely solely on one opt-in. Use several opt-ins throughout your site (and in your blog posts) to guide people to your subscriber list.
- After someone has converted (become a subscriber, purchased something, signed up for a consultation, etc), don't leave them hanging. Use automation to send follow-up notes that help people feel comfortable about what's to happen next. People feel safe and secure when you step into the leader role of your budding new relationship.
- If appropriate to your business, make sure your phone number is displayed above the fold (typically in the upper right-hand corner of the site).
- Add an inquiry form (but don't go overboard with the questions because you'll scare people off).
- Make sure your contact information and social media logos are displayed on every page of your site.
- Add social media sharing buttons to your blog content.





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OPTIMIZE FOR BETTER SEARCH ENGINE INDEXING

While it takes time to organically climb to the top of page one on Google—especially if you are in a competitive industry—there are some definite optimizations that will significantly improve your efforts.

- Make sure each page contains at least one keyword and keyword phrase displayed above the fold.
- Give each page on your website a page description that is no more than 155 characters long. Keep in mind, your page descriptions are what display on Google's search engine results pages so word them in ways that invite people to click through to your website.
- Always use keywords in your H1 headings. And don't use the same keywords over and over as Google frowns upon this.
- Use keywords in links to other pages on your website.
- Optimize images on your site by incorporating keywords into image file names and image captions (you can hide your image captions on your Squarespace site by changing the display setting in the photo block. Even though your viewers won't see the image captions, Google still will...and this is important).
- Squarespace will automatically create an XML site map. You will submit this to all major search engines immediately after launching your website.



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QUALITY CHECK EVERYTHING

- Test that all your internal and external links work properly. Buttons too.
- Check that all your forms work. Make sure they are emailed to the right person on your team and there is a *next steps* note for the viewer after they've clicked *send*.
- Test your subscriber auto-reponders. Make sure everything flows logically. If you are using a subscriber *thank you* page on your website, make sure you've set up that redirect in your email service provider.
- View your site on mobile and make sure that image focal points and line breaks are set correctly.

POST LAUNCH SUCCESS TIPS

- Submit your XML site map to major search engines so they can start indexing your new website.
- Set up your Google Webmaster Tools account and verify your site right away.
- Create a Google Analytics account and add your UA number to your site settings.
- Set up a Google + Local account (if you do business locally).
- Create a stylish email signature with your new site url and make sure to update all your print materials so your website url is displayed. Your url needs to go on all your customer touch points.

READY TO IMPROVE YOUR WEBSITE?

How could your business grow if customers could find you online and determine right away that YOU are the best choice for them? How much easier would life feel if your website was easy to use and worked like a well-oiled machine—sending increased inquiries and sales into your inbox?

Print out this checklist and put it to good use.

With a few strategic enhancements, your website can quickly become the hardest working employee for your small business. It will easily pay for itself over and over.

OVERWHELMED OR SHORT ON TIME?

We understand and are here for you.

We've helped countless small businesses just like yours create amazing results by designing easy-to-use Squarespace websites that are expertly strategized around defined goals. Better yet? Our prices fit any small business budget. We have a proven system to help you connect with your customers online...simply and soulfully.

ACTUAL CLIENT RESULTS

"Since launching my website less than a year ago, my business has grown faster than I expected. Clients instantly connect with my message and have a seamless way to schedule a consultation, making the sales process (and my life) easier. Because my site is packed with credibility, I've been tapped as a contributor (and cover story) for local magazines and have landed a regular contributor segment with our local TV station's morning show! I'm simply thrilled with the results!"

- Lana Wickstrom, Separation Specialist

[click here to schedule a call](#)

