

Issue Sixty Three

LAUNCHPAD

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Use Search Engine Optimisation to direct traffic to your website when potential clients are looking for specific products or services that your business could provide.

Search Engine Optimisation enhances the visibility of your website or web page in a search engine. Leading search engines use software called 'crawlers' that scour web pages to find information that matches their search results. The importance of SEOs is that people searching the web want prompt immediate answers and generally click on the first results they see. Being at the top of the results list will mean your business is the first port of call, not your competitors.

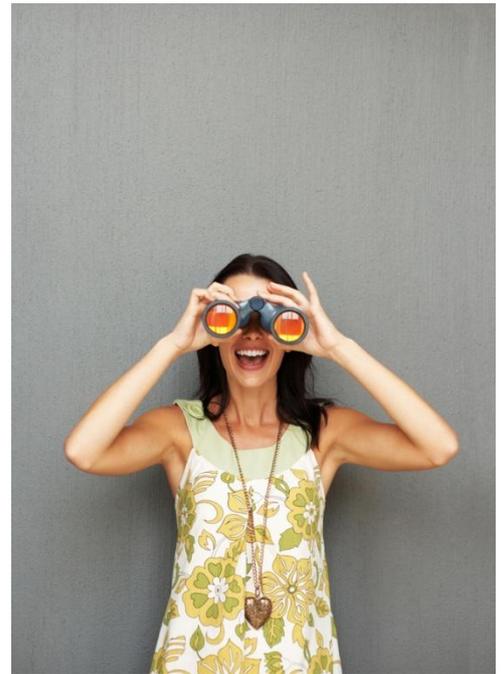
When you use search engines such as Google or Bing, the results listed at the top represent companies with good SEO skills, meaning they have been savvy in order to gain a higher search ranking.

There are some simple steps to help your website or company blog appear in a higher ranked position in web searches:

Keywords: Include key phrases that are relevant to your business and that will direct people to your site. If you want to find out what people have been searching for, Google provides a service where you can enter a particular word and they will give you statistics on how often it is researched on the web. These results are also put into context in terms of what the search refers to, so you can streamline your key phrases and target prospective clients accordingly. A key to remember is not to make your words too specific, or too broad. They must always be relevant to be picked up in a search.

Cross-link: Cross-linking is the process of linking two or more pages from your site together to increase visibility in search engines. You can also cross link to other related websites that have agreed to be linked to yours in some way. Do your research on cross-linking first. Some search engines will penalise you for overdoing the linking within your site.

Up to date content: When the search engines perform their regular crawl, they are always looking for new and updated content. If your content is out of date, it may be missed and you automatically have decreased chances in gaining a higher ranking. Remember to research, track and update keywords regularly. If you feel overwhelmed or that your time is limited, there are many marketing and web professionals available to assist with driving traffic to your site.



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Get smart: Your business depends on it

If you haven't already, it may be a good time to look at using smartphones within your business. Even if your employees don't require their own business mobiles, smartphone devices can prove invaluable when it comes to productivity within your company.

Smart devices have multimedia capabilities allowing you to access an enormous amount of information anytime, anywhere. This can be beneficial when it comes to educating and training staff, be it motivational video clips, informal webinars or resources relevant to their roles. It can be a huge benefit to your team to have this information on hand.

Smartphones eliminate 'downtime' and give your staff the ability to work and conduct research when they are away from the office, in between meetings or travelling abroad. Smart devices also allow for voice recordings, access to calendars, audio books and podcasts, meaning you and your team can stay connected and really utilise your time and resources wisely.

Here are some things to take into consideration when assessing whether smart devices are suitable for your team:

The plan - You need to do some research here. Who is the best provider? There are a number of competitors in the market with a variety of business plans available. Sit down with a sales representative from each of the leading telecommunication providers and tell them what your business does, how many staff you have and what your needs are. They will assess which is the best plan for you and let you know some pricing, data and call options that will best suit your firm. You'll want a provider who is available 24 hours a day should you run into any technical difficulties.

The rules - Establish the usage rules early on with employees so they don't take advantage or abuse their rights with smartphones. The last thing you want is wasted time on personal social media sites when your team should be productively using that time for work.

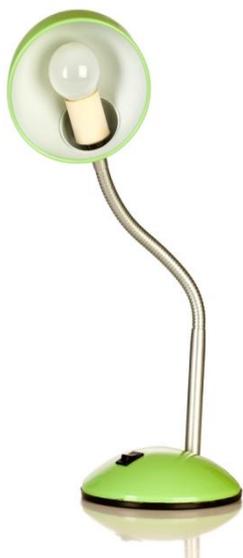


The phone - There are a few elements to consider when choosing the best device for your business.

1. **Battery life** - Smartphones have a lot going on inside their tiny little shells, so in turn, their battery life takes a hammering. If you're travelling a lot for business, you need a reliable battery life.
2. **Screen** - How big is the screen? It's easier to read information on a bigger screen and the bigger the phone, the more it tends to do. Remember to take into account the clarity of images and video playback.
3. **Camera** - Do you need a good camera? Are your employees taking and sharing this sort of information with clients? If so, ensure you check out the megapixel count. The higher the megapixel, the better the quality.

Take the time to consider whether smartphones are right for your business. They can aid the increase of productivity, minimise downtime and grow the knowledge base within your team.

Do the research and speak to the professionals to decide which plan and phone are right for you.



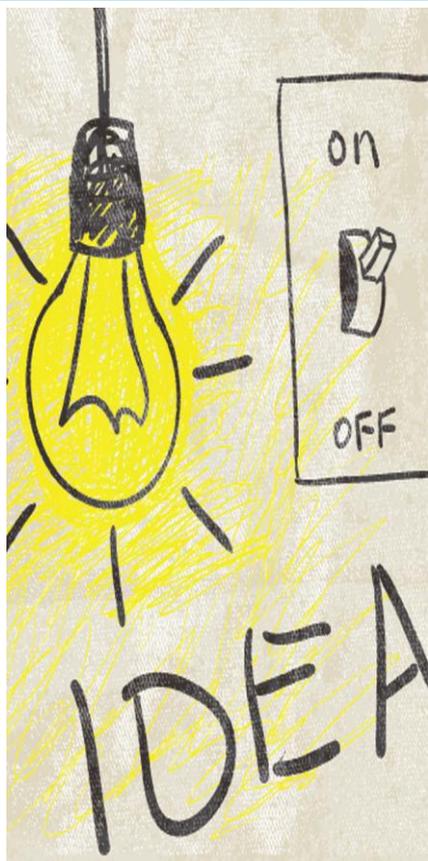
An education in ergonomics

Ergonomics is the relationship between comfort and efficiency. Effective ergonomics can lead to less injury in the office workplace and higher employee satisfaction. The way we sit, move and spend our day always needs to be assessed and developed to maximise productivity while enhancing health.

Here are some tips on ergonomics that employees should be made aware of:

- Have the computer monitor just below eye level and adjust the screen to eliminate glare from windows and lights
- The centre line of the keyboard should be level with the height of your elbow and tilted back slightly to that wrists remain flat
- Use an adjustable chair and get comfortable with the adjustment settings - it's also important to upgrade furniture regularly

Ensure staff are informed about effective ergonomics. It's best to prevent health and safety issues before they arise. If you want more information about workplace health and safety, visit www.acc.co.nz.



Promote creativity and innovation within your business

Whether you're planning a new product, a new business venture or simply brainstorming, here are some tips to help boost creativity and innovation within your business:

1. **Don't assume the current way is the right way.** Challenge long standing processes that are currently used within your business and promote evolution of new systems and ideas for your business. Be as innovative as you like.
 2. **Ask the questions - what are you doing and why?** Don't stray from your original mission unless it's clear the new route will be beneficial. Always align your tasks with your goals but make sure you assess these regularly so you know what you're doing and why. It's a form of tracking.
 3. **The first solution may not be the most effective.** Hurrah you found one! But don't stop there. Refine it to ensure it's the best solution, test it, put it to use and then adapt it as necessary.
 4. **Meet new people in new industries.** It's amazing what happens beyond your bubble. Open yourself for new viewpoints and creative avenues that could relate to your business. Find out about business networking evenings in your area and go along. Take team members that you think might be interested in what's being presented; you may be surprised at what you learn about other industries.
 5. **Inspire the team** with real business success stories. Encourage them to learn and relate. Invite guest speakers to team meetings or watch inspirational clips together on YouTube.
6. **You can't learn less.** Regularly research new ideas or possibilities. You never know what will trigger a fantastic idea. Most of this can be done online through social media, but encourage brainstorming and team input on project or product business possibilities.
 7. **Don't bury issues - celebrate them.** Make problem solving fun and have the team break from their daily tasks to brainstorm. You could learn a lot from their fresh perspectives, and they'll enjoy being a part of the decision making process.
 8. **Your employees are your first/most important customer.** Treat them with the necessary respect and value their opinions!

'They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself' - Andy Warhol

The importance of morale

When morale is higher, people are happier to come to work and put in the effort to achieve results. Having a motivated team can increase productivity. Performance and creativity tend to be boosted with good morale as it encourages the confidence for employees to put forward new and innovative ideas.

Often employers notice that there is a significant reduction in leave days when morale is improved. Staff will be passionate about the success of the business and are less likely to take sick leave or extended holidays.

Another important aspect to ensuring high morale within your team is employee retention. The benefit is that keeping staff is less expensive and you avoid the cost of recruitment and training. Reward your current employees adequately and they will most likely be there for the long haul.



How to boost team morale within your business

It's that time of year when team morale begins to drop. The colder months tend to lean toward less social interaction and more 'bunking down.' This in turn leads to a general lack of motivation amongst employees. What better time to launch a rocket ship so to speak, and organise some exciting boosters for your team?

Recognise special personal events - Acknowledge birthdays and the length of time spent with the company. Organise a coffee shout or buy a cake from the local bakery and get the whole team together to recognise the occasion.

Communicate - Encourage conversation and idea sharing amongst team members. Remember that most of our time is spent at work and it's a good way to learn more about each other.



Acknowledge and reward hard work - Order in pizza for lunch, have Friday after work drinks or simply send around a congratulatory email. As long as you ensure the right people are rewarded and your staff feel valued.

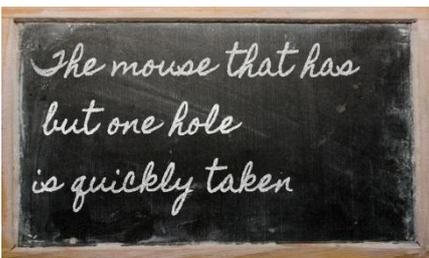
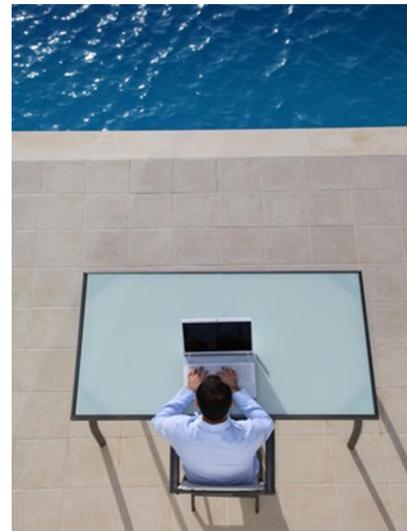
Encourage regular breaks - Remind employees to stop work for 10 or 15 minutes in the morning and afternoon. Suggest popping outside for fresh air or coffee. It actually improves productivity.

Smile and have fun - Organise team events away from the office, whether it be a team building exercise or a group lunch. Work can be stressful at times and can lead to burnout. It's important to add an element of light heartedness, as long as it's done in good taste. Employees will prosper from positive energy.

Netiquette - Focus on Out of Office Emails

If you're going away on holiday, it's important to let people know you're away. It can be frustrating for those trying to get in touch with you about an urgent matter, only to get no response to their emails or voicemail. Setting up an automatic reply is a good way to communicate with clients and prevent them from going elsewhere to solve their issue.

- Mention the date you'll be out of the office from and the date you'll return to work
- State whether you'll be clearing emails while you're away
- Ensure you've listed other colleagues who can be contacted in your absence
- Ensure the main company phone number is included in the email
- Remember to keep it brief. Your clients will be contacting you because they need something, so they require a quick answer or solution - make sure you point them in the right direction.



FYI

Word of mouse: The online version of word of mouth, word of mouse refers to the fast paced spreading of information in cyber space. This is information sharing that goes viral, usually through social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Because of the interactive nature of online markets, the information is spread much faster online than offline.

An Important Message

While every effort has been made to provide valuable, useful information in this publication, this firm and any related suppliers or associated companies accept no responsibility or any form of liability from reliance upon or use of its contents. Any suggestions should be considered carefully within your own particular circumstances, as they are intended as general information only.