THE PERFECT recipe for creating awesome web content

YOUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
TO NAILING WHAT'S ON YOUR WEBSITE

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Dedicated to all those small businesses
who dream big.

CONTENTS

choosing

THE

recipe

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So, you want to create awesome content for your website? Great, you're in the right place.

You might be starting from scratch – no cake in sight – or you might be finessing what you already have. Either way, this guide will help you whip your content into shape, so it works for you and your customers, helping you grow your business.

The perfect recipe for creating awesome web content gives you a step-by-step approach to planning your content, creating it, making it look awesome, ensuring your website is searchable, and then letting everyone know about it.

PLANNING

Creating content is a lot like baking a cake – there's the planning up front, just like pulling a recipe together. You need all the right ingredients before you start, but they're no use on their own – you need to blend them together for the perfect consistency.

Once you're happy with the basics you can get the baking underway. This is the bit that takes time but has to be done just right so your content hits the mark. Once baked, your cake isn't finished until it's iced and then, of course, there's the party to eat it.

WHO'S IT FOR? DEFINING YOUR CUSTOMERS

When creating content, you need to put a lot of thought into it before you get started. Spending time planning will ensure that your content meets the needs of your customers and takes them on a journey to your objective – be that more sales, raising your profile or engaging your customers in a conversation or competition.

GATHERING AND CREATING THE CONTENT

Once you've finalised the plan, you can start bringing all the elements together to make your content sizzle. It's not just about the words – it's the images, the branding, the layout and the style. There's a lot to think about, but the end result should be an easy-to-navigate website that people want to spend time on and gives you the results you're looking for.

GETTING FOUND WITH GREAT SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION (SEO)

Once you have all your content and your website is up and running, you need to make sure you're easily found online. That's where your SEO does the legwork for you by giving you top rankings in search engines, so your website pops up first when someone starts looking for businesses like yours.

PROMOTION

But wait, there's more! This work on your website will also help you build and create all the content for the marketing and promoting of your business, because you'll know who you're talking to and what you want to say.

Like any recipe you'll want to modify, add a different flavour, switch things up or dial things back – whatever helps you meet the needs of your customers, or to coin a baking phrase, to suit their taste buds!

So take the time to work your way through this guide, use the worksheets and good luck. **For your free worksheet downloads email us at hello@collaborationstation.co.nz.**

Visit us at www.collaborationstation.co.nz to find out more about what we do and to let us know how you're getting on.

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who's THE cake for?

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Congratulations – you're taking action! You're building a website (or engaging someone to do it for you), but what is it going to say? It's all very well if it looks pretty, but is it easy to find your way around it? And what's going to make people want to stay and find out more? What will compel them into taking the action you want them to?

Get your content right and you'll capture your customers' interest – if you lose them, it's all over. You have one chance to make the perfect first impression. We've all been to a website that's not mobile optimised, is hard to understand or makes it difficult for you to find the things you want. There's nothing more frustrating!

Be clear about what you want your website to do for your business and for your customers, and make sure you deliver on that.

As you develop your content for the web, there are some basics to consider:

WHO ARE YOUR TARGET CUSTOMERS? WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?

Once you know your customers, you know how to engage with and speak to them. What do you know about your customers? If you've already done some market research into products and services, you might actually know quite a lot about them. Think about age, gender, ethnicity. What do they like to do? What type of language and imagery do they respond to?

This will help you develop a style that will appeal. Is it chatty and informal or professional and to the point? Look at websites that you like and note the style of the writing. Regardless of the style, it needs to be easy to understand and useful – no long, complicated sentences or difficult concepts.

Most people these days are time poor – you have a few seconds to capture their attention when they land on your site. You want to make sure they're going to stay and explore by providing relatable content.

It can be really useful to draw up some outlines of your ideal customer. These outlines are called personas or avatars and will help you create a picture of your ideal customers and personalise them. For example, you might be trying to attract mums with young children. One of your ideal customers might be Raewyn.

Raewyn

- 35 years old
- Three children aged one, four and six
- Large disposable income
- Into sustainability and saving the environment
- Likes to buy natural, locally made products

The things that appeal to Raewyn are going to be quite different from those that might appeal to Cheryl.

Cheryl

- 22 years old
- One child aged three
- Living payday to payday
- Always looking for a bargain
- Likes to make her child's clothes

The messages you use and the products or services you promote will depend on your ideal customers.

You can create your own customer personas or avatars with the worksheet at the end of this chapter.

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

> " *You never get a second chance to make a good first impression.* "
>
> WILL ROGERS

Your website is your shop window – it's your first impression and it's the online validation of what you do. If your cake has flopped, most people won't want to try it. You've just lost 90% of your potential customers.

Those who do give it a go might be pleasantly surprised by the taste, but by virtue of sheer numbers they're not going to make up for the business you've lost.

To make sure your site makes a great first impression there's a bit of groundwork to be done. First things first – what's the objective; what are you trying to achieve?

Is it:

- To raise your profile?

- To let people know what you're doing?

- To get people to take action (e.g. sign up for your offer, buy something)?

- To establish yourself as an expert in your field?

- To drive traffic to your website, so people can sign up to your newsletter or free giveaway?

Whatever it is, you want to make sure that you're clear about what you're trying to achieve so that your content supports this objective.

MEASURING WHAT YOU ACHIEVE

It's also a good idea to think about how you'll periodically measure what you're trying to achieve – what does success look like for you? If you know this, you can tell if your objectives have been met and, if not, you can change direction if you need to. You might need to rethink your approach, rework your products or services or pitch your marketing to a different type of customer.

FINDING THE RIGHT TONE

When it comes to communicating with your customers it's important to adopt the right tone and to be consistent. Think back to Raewyn and Cheryl – the two we identified as ideal customers. What's the style you want to adopt on your website?

It's a bit like choosing the right flavour for your cake. Some flavours are more appealing than others – some are universally liked (think vanilla) and others can be an acquired taste (think rhubarb).

Your style is all about the flavour you want to inject into your website to tempt the taste buds of your customers.

Back in the day, businesses were often formal in their tone to avoid being seen as frivolous. Formality got confused with professionalism. But here's the news flash: your customers want to deal with real people, they want to be able to relate to your product, your business and they want great customer service.

We've come a long way from those staid days and our online platforms mean we can connect in a more informal manner instantly and around the world. Depending on your business or product you need to strike the right note – one that's right for your customers.

So find a tone that fits for your customers and try it out. If it works, stick to it; if not, change it up or dial it down a notch and try again. It's worth taking time to hit the right note.

KEY MESSAGES – WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SAY?

Once you've decided on the flavour or style of your content, you need to craft your key messages. Getting your key messages right is an artform.

A key message is information or an idea that you want to highlight to your customers. It's so important to have a set of sentences, known as key messages, that reflect what you're doing and that your customers can relate to.

They are messages that can be used in everything you do – social media, blogs and on your website. Once you get them right, you'll love the consistency they give you across all your materials. It comes back to knowing your customers and then working out the right things to say to them.

The clue is in the title – key messages are 'key', which means they're the most important things people need to know. They should be limited to the top things people really need to know about your business, products and services. If you can't say it in three to five sentences you need to go back to the drawing board.

You'll want to weave your key messages through each of the sections on your website, wherever appropriate. If you don't already have key messages for your business, spend some time developing them – concentrate first on the ones you need for your web pages.

Golden rules for key messages:

- The most important information goes first
- Use the right tone and style and words; resonate with your customers
- Keep them to three to five sentences
- Run your messages past someone who is your target customer
- Use actual sentences, not three-word advertising slogans

Use our worksheet on making a plan to get you started.

customer PERSONAS avatars

2 WORSHEET 1:
CUSTOMER PERSONAS/AVATARS

WHO IS YOUR IDEAL CUSTOMER?

BUILDING POSITIVE PERSONAS/AVATARS

Build positive customer personas (or avatars) to help you identify with your ideal customers.

Depending on your business, some prompts will be more relevant to fill in than others.

For example, if an ideal customer is a general manager in a small product-manufacturing business, their marital status and whether or not they have children may be irrelevant.

However, if you sell hand-crafted, high-end babywear direct to mothers, then gender, age, number of children and income will be particularly relevant. Use the prompts that are relevant for you and build a picture of your ideal customers.

A persona for someone needing communication services is Eric:

- Eric is 45 and is a project manager in a big company

- He thinks communication is really important but doesn't know what to do

- He likes to call in the experts

- Eric takes advice and wants to build relationships with his customers

- Budget is not a problem and Eric always pays on time

- Eric is good fun and is just the kind of guy you want at your Christmas party

example

Name

Gender

Age

Ethnicity

Where do they work?

What's their professional role?

Characteristics (strong likes or dislikes)

Marital status

Children (how many?)

What do they like to do?

Income/Cash flow (whichever is most relevant)

Why do they need your product or service?

BUILDING NEGATIVE PERSONAS/AVATARS

It can also be useful to do some personas/avatars for your worst-nightmare customers – just to remind you why you don't want to work with them. It might be because they love what you do but have no money to actually pay for it, or it may be that they have unrealistic expectations and are so difficult to work with that they could never pay you enough to make it worth your while.

Use the same prompts to identify your negative personas/avatars.

NEGATIVE PERSONA/AVATAR – HAVE SOME FUN (AGAIN, YOU MIGHT WANT TO DO SEVERAL)!

Name

Gender

Age

Ethnicity

Where do they work?

What's their professional role?

Characteristics (strong likes or dislikes)

Marital status

Children (how many?)

What do they like to do?

Income/Cash flow (whichever is most relevant)

Why do they need your product or service?

making
a plan

Here's a worksheet to help you cover the basics in making sure your website content is going to appeal to the right people.

YOUR CUSTOMERS

You've already built up some specific personas/avatars and you feel you personally know your customers. However, you also need to think about anyone else who you may need to communicate with. For example, if you have a persona/avatar that's specific to women with young children, you also need to think about the umbrella groups or organisations she might be involved with. Those groups might also be part of your target market.

Using the example of women with young children, you may also want to target:

- Primary schools
- Preschools, kindergartens, day care centres, play centres
- Preschool health carers (e.g. Plunket)
- Parenting organisations
- Churches
- Children's activity/sports groups

Worksheet: Fill this out for your customers

Prompt	Audience
General descriptor *e.g. gender, age range*	*E.g. women 25-35 years, two children, on a budget*

Ethnicity *(cultural considerations may help you shape your imagery, messaging and content)*	
Geographic area *e.g. specific suburb, city, region, country, global*	
Connections *e.g. clubs, groups or organisations they may belong to or turn to for advice/information*	

Keeping these details in mind will help you to shape your key messages and the content for your website.

OBJECTIVES

What are you trying to achieve with your website, and how will you know if you've achieved it? Keep your objectives realistic and achievable.

For example, do you want to:

- *Grow your business?*

- *Attract more clients?*

- *Engage with your customers?*

- *Raise your profile nationally/internationally?*

- *Be seen as an industry leader – the go-to business for speaking at conferences, etc?*

- *Change the way you are perceived within your industry or sector?*

example

If you set yourself some objectives you'll be more likely to create the right kind of content for your website and much more likely to achieve your objectives.

? What are your objectives?

_____

_____

_____

_____

? How will you measure your objectives?

_____

_____

_____

_____

KEY MESSAGES

What are the top three to five messages you want people to remember? These messages will be woven through your website content to give you that consistent professional feel that you're after.

Key messages are sentences, not advertising straplines or slogans (like just do it, or finger lickin' good). If you have more than one type of customer, you might need some generic messages relevant to everyone and some specific targeted messages as well.

If you're feeling a bit stuck, think about the 'what?', 'why?' and 'when?' questions to get you started.

? What are your general messages?

_____

_____

_____

_____

? What are your secondary (or targeted) messages?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3 BRANDING
LOOKS GOOD, TASTES GREAT!

LOOKS **good,** *tastes* **great!**

3

> ❝ *Your brand is what other people say about you when you're not in the room.*
>
> JEFF BEZOS ❞

WHAT IS BRANDING?

Branding is not just a logo and it's not just about the things you can see – it's also about the feeling you get when you interact with a business. It's the 'X' factor that makes you want to deal with that business again.

If you find crumbs in your hotel room, you'll get the impression that the place is 'slapdash'. Everything else might be shiny and flash, but crumbs give a different impression and you might feel the hotel staff don't care and don't value your custom. It's not a good look and is certainly not good for repeat business.

Thinking back to our cake analogy, it's not just about looking lip-smacking good. It has to be the right consistency: moist, springy, melt in the mouth etc. Most of these elements are not what you see at first glance, but they enhance that first impression and leave you wanting more.

So when you're thinking about branding, it's the impression you want people to have about your business. It's being consistent at every point that your customers interact with you – not just in your printed or online materials and not just your logo, but everything you do.

DEVELOPING YOUR BRAND

Good branding helps customers recognise how you're different and that you offer something they want or need. Keeping your ideal customers in mind is important when you think about all the elements that make up your brand.

You might already have brand guidelines for your business. If you do, the look of your website will be based on these.

If you're just starting out, you probably won't have anything yet and working on your website will help make this clearer. Your website can be the catalyst for developing the logo, imagery, fonts and colours that make up your branding.

Branding for your website is all about 'looks good, tastes great'. All of the trappings to do with image, look and feel help to build your professional image. The look of your website reflects on your business. The images and the colours you use reflect on your business. The quality of your logo and the fonts you use reflect on your business.

CHOOSING A FONT

Yes – fonts are things. If you have a brand guideline, the fonts associated with your branding will be in there. If not, find a font/fonts that you'd like to use. You want something generic and readily available – maybe something from Google Fonts that's free to use.

Google says, "All fonts are released under open source licenses. You can use them in any non-commercial or commercial project." You can source these from the Google Fonts page.

Many Google Fonts are used in website templates. So when you're looking at website templates you can choose one that uses the same or a very similar font to your brand preference. Fonts can also be purchased if the free ones don't cut it for you.

BUILDING TRUST THROUGH YOUR BRAND

If all your branding elements are looking great, the perception will be that you have a great business, people will trust you, they'll want to work with you, they'll want to buy your products and they'll be looking forward to seeing what you have to say.

DOING YOUR OWN DESIGN

There are some exciting 'do it yourself' graphic design apps and websites available, many with free options.

Canva.com is a popular and easy-to-use, do-it-yourself graphic design website/app. Using an app like this is a great way to get started, but don't be tempted to get fancy and busy. And make sure you stick to your branding in terms of colours, images and logo placement.

Less is often more when it comes to design, and as your business develops, engaging a graphic designer will be an investment that pays off.

BRANDING BASICS

Here's a simple way to look at the branding basics.

BRAND
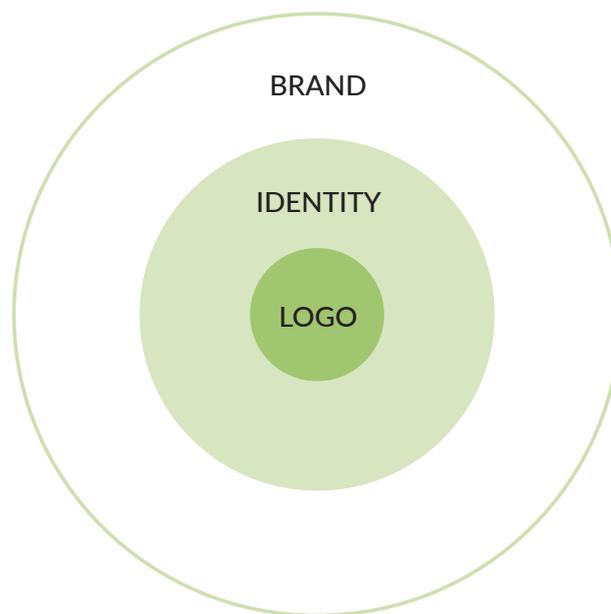
IDENTITY

LOGO

LOGO

- Unique signature of the company brand.
- Clear recognisable symbol that represents a company in its simpliest form.
- A trademark.

IDENTITY

- The look and feel (name, logo, colour, typeface and images).
- Complete package of elements the customer comes into contact with.
- Includes the logo, business cards and stationery, website, ads, uniforms, retail design, packaging and jingles etc.

BRAND

- Overall impression of a company as a whole (both physical and emotional).
- The thoughts, feelings and gut reaction of someone experiencing a company (or person/celebrity).

**Keen to have a look at your brand consistency?
Work through our worksheet to get started.**

When you're developing your brand there are some key elements to consider:

Personality

What's the personality of your brand?
(Are you fun, professional, conservative, etc?)

Circle the traits that most reflect your brand

CASUAL/FRIENDLY ⟷	PROFFESSIONAL/CORPORATE
MODERN/CONTEMPORARY ⟷	TRADITIONAL/CLASSIC
UPBEAT/ENTHUSIASTIC ⟷	CALM/CONSIDERED
HI TECH/CUTTING EDGE ⟷	CRAFTED/ESTABLISHED
FUN/QUIRKY ⟷	SENSIBLE/SOBER
ACCESSIBLE ⟷	EXCLUSIVE

Voice/Tone

What's your 'voice'? (Is it formal, informal, fun, sensible, etc?)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Values

What are your values – the things that are important to you?
(These values can influence how you want things to look.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Photos, images, illustrations and graphics

What style of images are you using?
(They could be black and white, retro, energetic, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do these images appeal to your customers?

( ) yes   ( ) no

Do they look as if they belong to the same family?

( ) yes   ( ) no

Are you going to use free stock photos? (If you are, there are plenty of websites offering this service. Make sure you check out the licensing restrictions so you can use them for your purposes. You can create collections in these sites, where you pull together the images you'd like to use in future.)

( ) yes   ( ) no

_____

_____

_____

_____

Are you commissioning some photos? (Think about what you want to show and the most cost-effective way of running your photo shoot.)

( ) yes   ( ) no

_____

_____

_____

_____

Typography – remember to keep it simple with not too many fonts

What's your preferred font?

_____

_____

_____

Do you need to buy it or is it free?

_____

_____

_____

If you're unable to use a particular font, find something that looks and feels similar. Try searching Google Fonts.

_____

_____

_____

Colours – try to stick to a basic palette of a couple of colours with one or two accent colours (the ones that make it 'pop')

What is your basic colour palette?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is your accent colour?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Logo

Do you have a logo?

◯ yes   ◯ no

_____

_____

_____

_____

If yes – do you have it in all the formats you need? (This could be on a transparent background, on a white background, and reversed out on a black background. It could also be colour, and black and white.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

If you don't have a logo think about:

- Commissioning a graphic designer to create one for you
- Using a logo development company like fiverr.com to create one for you

Don't forget – white space is your friend. When you're designing something yourself, be it your web page or a flyer, white space helps readability and it helps make things look professional.

getting *the* INGREDIENTS together

4

It's much easier to design the navigation and structure of your webpages if you've spent time thinking about your customers, objectives, key messages, tone and branding. What do your ideal customers need to know and what's the most sensible structure for them to get what they want quickly?

It's also really important to spend time thinking about your customer journey.

When they come to your site:

- Where do you want them to land?

- What do you want them to do?

- How do you want them to travel it?

Your website needs to take your site visitors on a journey to taking action e.g. contact, call, book, buy.

This is where you need to start getting all the ingredients together and plotting the order of mixing to make this happen. Just like preparing to bake your cake, we start with core ingredients.

HOME PAGE

Your most important ingredient! It all starts here. You don't have a cake worth eating if you get this part wrong.

ABOUT PAGE

This is what makes this awesome content cake yours and different from everyone else's. Are you a 'chef' we want to work with? Tell us why your cake will be the best!

CONTACT PAGE

If people can't get hold of you, don't bother baking – no-one's coming around so it's all for nothing! Back to your purpose: you want people to get in touch with you, right?

These three ingredients alone can create a simple and awesome website for you. As with any great recipe, it's the quality of your ingredients that's important. We go into more detail on that in our next chapter.

Sometimes it's just about taking 'imperfect action' and then refining as you go. A website is dynamic and easy to edit, so you don't have to have a heart attack if something's not quite right. A website is a validation that your business exists, is professional and is open for business, so sometimes it's more important to get the basics up quickly than wait for months to have the perfect website before going live.

If you want to take your cake to the next level, you could add the ingredients of:

- A services/product page
- A blog
- A shop
- An online course

Depending on the platform you're building your website on, you can usually add pages and then subpages as your business grows.

It helps to put this thinking into a structure diagram for your website. That structure is a bit like choosing the right tin for your cake creation.

If you're old school, you might sketch it out or plot it on the computer using PowerPoint or Microsoft Word. If you want to get fancy about it, there are lots of tools about such as:

- **templatelab.com/site-map-templates**

Below is a basic template for simple websites. You can use it for your website and add or subtract subpages as needed. It's a starting point and will, of course, evolve as you work through your content in more detail.
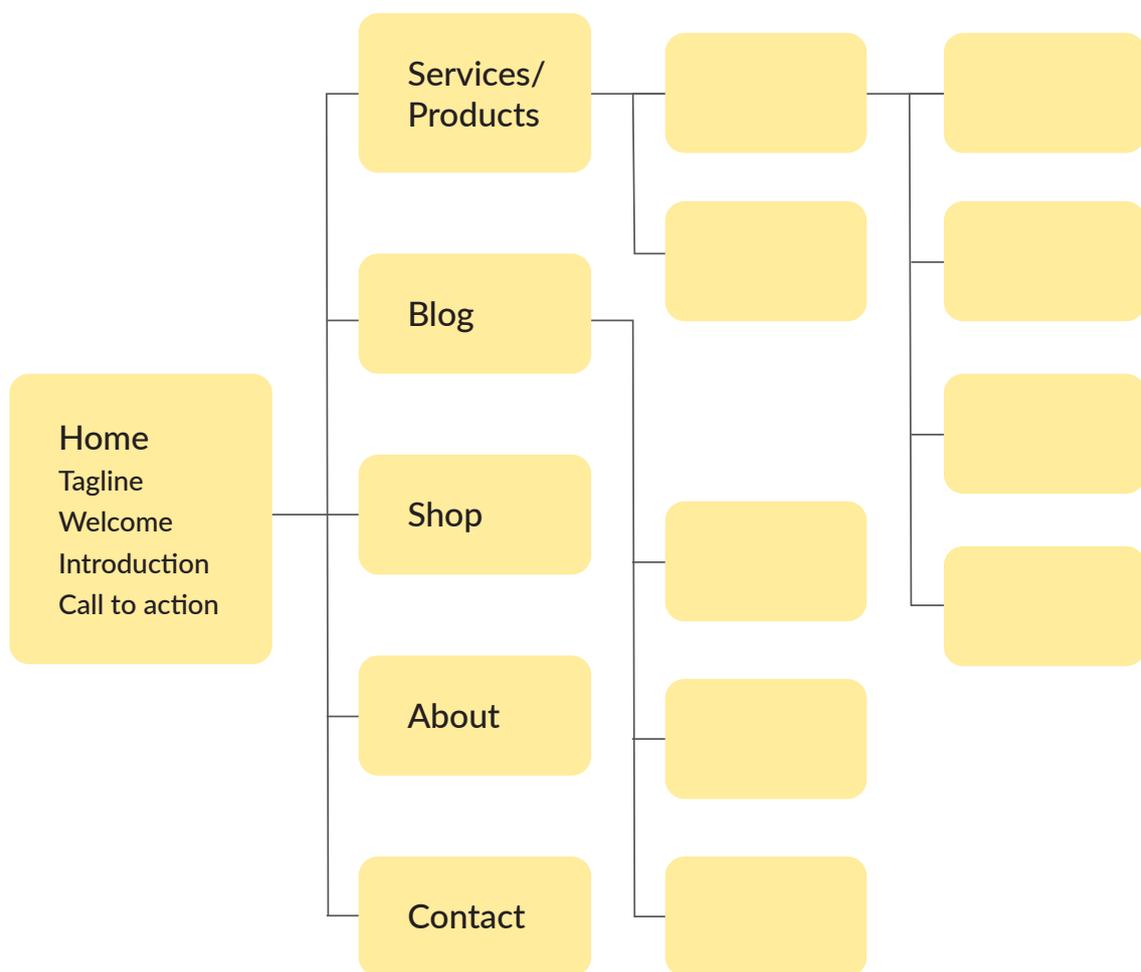
mixing

THE

cake

5

> ## Content is 90% of the reason for a website NOT converting
>
> IONA ELWOOD-SMITH

Brainstorming to order your thoughts can be a good step at this stage of the game. Even if it's a brainstorm for one! It's gathering all your thoughts and mixing them together so that when you start to write your content it's all there and you can just cut and paste.

Use a whiteboard, a big sheet of paper or a piece of cardboard – even window chalk – to jot down your thoughts and ideas. You'll use these for inspiration when you get to the writing phase.

Writing about yourself and your business can be the most difficult thing to do – it's another reason for a brainstorm with those who know you and your products and services.

This is the time to set up some folders and pull all the elements together into one place that will help you create awesome content.

As well as your written content, make sure you have your visual content easily at hand.

IMAGES

Have you had photos taken? If you have, make sure they're all high quality, well composed shots and pop them into a folder. If you haven't had photos taken but know what you like you're lucky; there are lots of great stock photo sites around.

There are royalty-free sites like pixabay.com, pexels.com and unsplash.com (to name a few) where quality images can be downloaded and used commercially for free. Make sure you check out the licenses and what you can and can't use the photos for. Often attribution to the photographers is appreciated but not compulsory.

These sites do have limitations, so if you're looking for specific shots you might like to subscribe and pay for stock imagery from sites like istockphoto. com and shutterstock.com.

There are plenty of choices around, so take a look and see what suits you best. Again, put the images into a folder ready for use on your new site. If you want to take things to the next level, look to commission your own photography. Having images that are unique will give authenticity to your business.

LOGOS, COLOURS AND FONTS

Do you have your logos and brand elements in a folder? You might need a different version of your logo from the one you normally use – for example, you might need a transparent background.

If you have brand guidelines, follow these as closely as you can, trying to use the same fonts, colours and styles across your website. That way your digital footprint will be consistent with all your other branding.

GETTING STUCK IN TO YOUR CONTENT – PAGE BY PAGE

We commonly see people with either way too much content or just not enough! They often haven't thought about who they're talking to. Here's a page-by-page guide to the type of content you should be gathering, and the dos and don'ts!

HOME PAGE

Your home page is where 90% of your site visitors will arrive. As mentioned earlier, it's your shop window and you have four seconds here to:

1. Make sure your visitors feel they're in the right place

This is where we use the work you've done to define and understand your customers. You use text, tone of voice and images that your customers relate to. This makes them feel at home, so they want to stay awhile and see what you have on offer because CLEARLY you're talking to them directly.

2. Provide a clear pathway for them

Your visitor is here and they've decided to look around – yay! Now what? Move them forward through a pathway you want them to take. Keep the information bite-sized, easy to read, distraction-free and interesting. Your job here is to capture their interest ready for the next step.

3. Get them to take action

Provide clear opportunities for them to take the next step. It might be to get in touch with you (contact buttons), clicking through to another page for more information (find out more buttons or menu navigation) or filling out a signup form such as for a newsletter or lead magnet. These are all positive actions towards your website objectives.

Do:

- Make it interesting, inviting and easy to read
- Have clear messages
- Have clear calls to action
- Take your visitors on a journey

Don't:

- Overwhelm
- Be too clever
- Clutter
- Add what you like, not what your customers will respond to
- Even think about a slider...

Must-haves:

- Clear navigation
- Calls to action

TOP TIP

- Don't think everything has to be on the home page – use it as the pathway for the start of a customer journey.

ABOUT PAGE

We often get asked if people really need an About page. Short answer, YES. People buy from people. They want to know about you and who's behind the business. The About page builds trust and goes a long way in a decision to work with you. After the Home page, it's the second most viewed page on a website.

When people come to your website, read the Home page and go to your About page, they have one question in mind – why you? Why should they choose to work with you, give you their money and, more importantly, trust you?

The About page is about connection. Gone are the days when we simply listed our qualifications. These days it's about you, your skills and the unique combo of life experiences you use to serve your customers. This is your unique selling point and you're going to put that story front and centre.

It helps to break the About page into two sections.

The business About

This section is to give an overview of the results/impacts/benefits someone could expect from working with you and to communicate your understanding of the challenges your customers have.

Give a clear, concise description of what your business does that addresses the key points of your customers' needs, addresses any concerns they might have, and highlights the benefits of working with you.

example

Hi, I'm Angela Bensemann and I set up Halo Communications in 2005 to provide quality strategic communications planning, support, and advice to businesses and organisations concerned about getting it right.

Based in the Wellington region, Halo Communications supports clients from across the spectrum: private, local government and central government.

In this section you'd also add how you're qualified to offer this experience i.e. qualifications, endorsements and years of experience.

The personal About

This is the place for your story relevant to your customers and where we connect. Picture your ideal customers and tell them why you got into this business, what's your passion, what drives you. Tie this into your business to help them see you as a real person they want to work with or buy from. Remember, no-one wants to hear about your hamster unless you own a pet store.

Do:

- Keep it professional
- Keep your information relevant to your customers
- Write to a real person
- Blow your own trumpet
- Have others blow your trumpet too
- Have links to any affiliations

Don't:

- Write your CV
- Make it lengthy and laborious to read
- Overshare (keep your family life private unless it's totally relevant and your family is happy to be paraded in public)

Must-haves:

- Professional photo of you
- Testimonials
- Social media links

TOP TIPS

- Your qualifications are less important than your being able to communicate your ability to actually solve the problems your customers have and understand their needs.

- Your tone of voice on this page depends on the service you're offering e.g. highly technical services vs products for new mums.

SERVICES/PRODUCTS PAGE

Strangely, the services and products pages are often the most overlooked pages by those creating content for a website.

It's a common misconception that this content will be easy. After all, you know your own products and services inside out, right? Yeah, not necessarily.

We know you have a product we want; that's why we're on your website. What we want to know is what it will do for us, how it will change our lives or save us money, time or sanity. What makes your product/service better than anyone else's? Why buying it from you is better than it would be from another, similar business.

The purpose of these pages is to get sales, not just to plonk down information. Yes, your customers want to know the product/service features BUT they BUY/ENGAGE because of the benefits.

Do:
- Describe the benefits
- Use bullet points
- Keep information clear and to the point
- Use emotive language
- Keep your customers in mind when writing

Don't:
- Just list features
- Forget the purpose of this page!

Must-haves:
- Professional photos
- Testimonials for services/products

- Take your time here. These pages are like products on a shop shelf. What will make me pick one up and buy it rather than walk next door and buy one of theirs?

- Separate out your services, rather than doing a one size fits all.

BLOG PAGE

The purpose of a blog is to generate site traffic and position you as an expert in your industry. Blogs are awesome to share through social media to keep you in your customers' minds when they need more products or services, and to showcase your expertise to potential new customers.

Blogs can be time-consuming to write, so think about your overall marketing strategy and post with purpose to grow your customer base – rather than randomly produce a blog because you think you should.

Think about how a blog would work for you and your business.

Do:

- Write to your customers
- Keep it relevant to your business/industry
- Provide value

Don't:

- Write about your cat
- Write because you think you have to (it shows)

Must-haves:

- A clear strategy i.e. what do you want to achieve?
- Top-quality, copyright-free images

As a graphic designer, Jane (our fabulous designer) didn't know what she could write about in a blog. Graphic design isn't a typical industry for blogging. Fast forward a couple of years and Jane has turned her blog into a valuable resource for her existing and developing customers who include organisations and business owners. She continues to showcase her expertise in not just graphic design but branding strategy and visual identity.

CONTACT PAGE

Your contact page should be kept very simple so there are no distractions to get in the way of people contacting you.

Include

- Phone number
- Contact form
- Email address
- Map (if relevant)

TOP TIP

- Check your contact form from time to time. Website updates can sometimes compromise the form.

Want to start working on your content? Use our worksheet to help you with this.

A brainstorm for one is like drinking a glass of wine on your own – it's fine, but better with company!

This brainstorm worksheet is designed to help you start gathering your content. If you can get a couple of people together to bounce ideas off – great. If not, fire away on your own and maybe flick your thoughts past someone later. They may have some great ideas that you forgot to include.

It's always hard to think up your own content, so pick the brains of those around you.

Work your way through these conversation starters to begin developing your content.

1 **Why did you start the business?**

_____

_____

_____

2 **What's unique about you or what you do?**

_____

_____

_____

3 **Why should people use your services or buy your products?**

_____

_____

_____

4 **Have you received any awards, accolades or endorsements?**

If so, what are they and how do they relate to your business?

_____

_____

_____

5 **What are you proud of?**

_____

_____

_____

6 **Products**

What are you selling?

_____

How are they made?

_____

What's special about them?

_____

Are there any product groupings or themes?

_____

_____

How can people order them?

_____

_____

Are there any 'frequently asked questions' (FAQs) you need to include to help people make their buying decisions?

_____

_____

7 Services

What do you offer?

_____

_____

_____

What is your experience in offering this service, or what credentials do you have?

_____

_____

_____

Are there services that group together? Themes?

_____

_____

_____

Is there a process you use to deliver the service?

_____

_____

_____

How do you work together with your customers?

_____

_____

_____

What can people expect when they work with you?

_____

_____

_____

How can someone engage your services?

_____

_____

_____

8 **Blog – think up some blog topics to get you started**

What are the problems your customers have and how can you solve them?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Think about titles like:

- Top tips for...

- 10 ways to...

- Three quick steps to...

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Ask your customers what they need help with or want to know, then write an answering blog.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9 **Imagery**

What type of imagery is relevant to your business?

_____

_____

What resonates with your customers?
(Think colour, energy, corporate, nature, etc.)

_____

_____

Are you adopting a theme? (E.g. black and white, retro, nature.)

_____

_____

Do you already have some photos that have been taken for you?
(Do you own the copyright?)

_____

_____

If you want to use stock photos, check out some of the free sites and see what suits. (Make sure you check the licenses so that you can use the images on your website and promotional materials.) **Some of our favourite free sites are:**
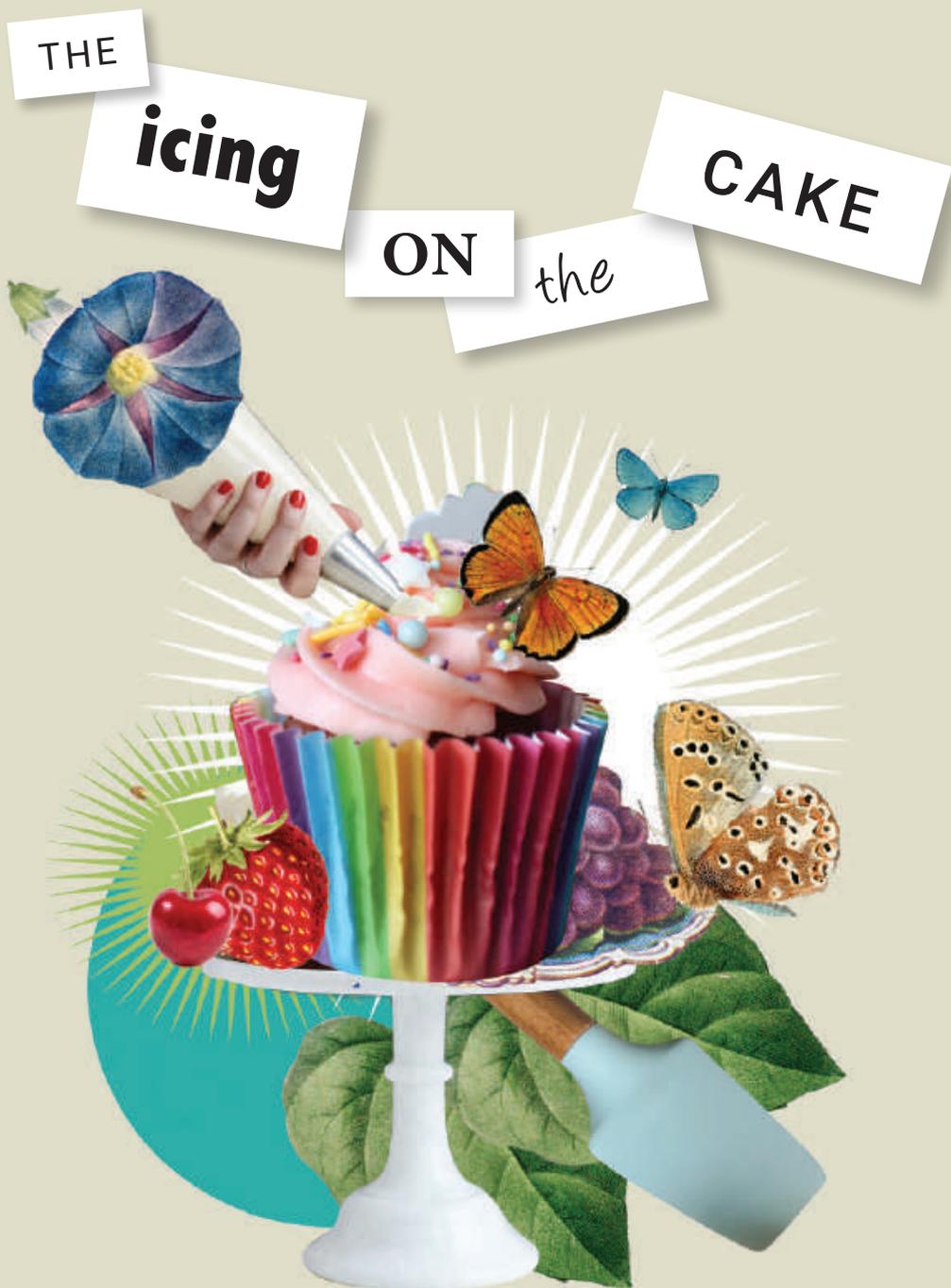
- unsplash.com
- pexels.com
- pixabay.com
- morguefile.com

If you can't find what you want on the free sites, there are plenty of 'pay for use' stock photo sites around (again, make sure you check out the licenses and what you can and can't use the photos for)**:**

- istockphoto.com
- shutterstock.com
- dreamstime.com

THE *icing* ON *the* CAKE

6

BUT WAIT... THERE'S MORE! HOW WILL ANYONE FIND YOU?
Creating content is only part of the picture.

What we're talking about now is the icing on the cake. It's your online searchability – what pops up when someone searches on Google or any other search engine for the types of products and services you provide.

We're also talking about your online promotion. How are you inviting everyone to your party, or put more simply, how are you cutting through all the noise to drive traffic to your website?

You've probably heard the terms SEO and Search Engine Optimisation, but what do they actually mean? And frankly, why should you care?

Well, anything with 'optimisation' in it is a clue that you might want to pay attention to.

Simply put, SEO is what helps your website get found online in a search result. So if I searched for businesses that do what you do, where would you show up in the search results?

For small businesses this can be a challenge – but not an insurmountable one. SEO is actually a step-by-step process that many businesses get too overwhelmed or too busy to do. Yay – that creates an awesome opportunity for you!

OK – how can I beat my competitors, you ask? Step by step and it all happens in the back end of your website.

If you're getting someone else to build your website for you, make sure they're also doing the SEO.

If you're doing it yourself, these are the three key steps to follow to make sure you have everything covered. They are nailing your keywords and keyphrases, on-page optimisation and getting your metadata right. It sounds complicated we know, but it's not really, just follow the steps below.

KEYWORDS AND KEYPHRASES: IT ALL STARTS HERE!

To decide what your keywords are, you need to consider what your customers would be searching for to find your business. What would they be looking for?

example

If you're a hairdresser your potential customers will be searching with words such as: haircut, hair stylist, hairdresser, women's haircut, haircuts. If they want local hairdressers they will add a location to the search e.g. hairdresser Wellington, haircuts Wellington, hair colourist Wellington.

Other keywords would come from: What is it you offer? What is it you do? What services do you offer? What products do you offer? What are the categories? Where are you based?

There are quite a few keyword searching tools that you can use including:

• neilpatel.com/ubersuggest

• moz.com/explorer

• ahrefs.com/keyword-generator

TOP TIPS

• The number one thing search engines look for is relevance. Keep it relevant. If you don't talk about it in your content, don't make it a keyword.

• Niche it down e.g. real estate agent is very competitive, but you could use location + real estate agent, or location + sell home, or location + buy home, or help sell home + location.

• Use one keyword per page – then you can optimise that page for that keyword.

• Use location.

As well as 'keywords' you can use 'keyphrases', the terms are interchangeable. We used to search with just one word, but with the volumes of search results these days we want to refine that search to make sure the results we get are as relevant as possible. So we use more defined phrases rather than just words.

If we get this right, then our business will rank more highly and be easier for people to find online.

ON-PAGE OPTIMISATION

Now you have your keywords, on-page optimisation is where you put those keywords.

- Headers
- Content
- Images
- Internal links

1. Headers

The headers on a web page have an internal hierarchy – Header 1 (H1) through to Header 6 (H6). The hierarchy flows down through the page. Most people use up to H3 or H4 and that's OK to start with.

H1 is the MOST important and should include or be your primary keyword/keyphrase for the page.

Title keyphrase: *Wellington Picture Framers*   *example*

Keyphrase included: *Welcome to Halo Communications, your Wellington communications company*   *example*

2. Content

Google reads top to bottom, left to right, so your primary keywords need to be more towards the top. Add your primary keywords to your first paragraph and then sprinkle them throughout the page content too.

On-page content from a search engine perspective is NOT just about the keywords. The supporting words add relevance to the keywords as you have defined them. So if 'Wellington Picture Framers' is your page's keyphrase, then

talking about picture framing, framing photos, framing images and pictures as memories is all content that adds relevance to your subject.

3. Images

Search engines can't see images, they only read text, so you need to tell them what a picture is about. You do this by adding alternative text or alt tags. Whatever platform your website is built on, there'll be the ability to add alt tags on images (just search how). This is where we put those keywords in. For example the first image on the Wellington Picture Framers site has been loaded with an – alt tag description saying 'Wellington Picture Framers'. For the other images throughout the page, add variations of your keywords.

- Do not repeat alt tags
- Do keep relevant to the content on that page

4. Internal links

All your pages have descending degrees of authority, with your homepage being top of the pile. We want to spread that authority throughout your site. We do this with links. These can be links within the text or added as separate buttons that link to another page within the website (e.g. Contact Us).

Rather than putting 'click here' it is great SEO to use your keywords for the page you want to send your customer to. For example, you could list your services with links from the text to the relevant pages, such as picture framing, image restoration and photo framing.

METADATA

This is the most important part of your SEO.

The metadata is what shows up in the search results. As well as being the prime spot for your keywords, this is what is publicly displayed about your business. You're writing for search engines to rank your business AND you're writing to compel your customers to click through to your website.

This seems quite a lot of pressure to put on your metadata, but it goes to emphasise the importance of thinking it through and getting it right.

Each page has a meta title and a meta description.

Meta title:

A title telling your customers who you are and what this page is about, including your keywords, and in only 60 characters. Example: Halo Communications | Wellington Communications Company or Pogo Design| Graphic Design Wellington | Graphic Designer.

Meta description:

The meta description is where you write compelling text to get your customers to click through to your website, and get search engines to rank you for your keyword. Here you have 160 characters.

example

A Wellington based communications company offering a full range of communication strategies and services for getting your messages across to the right people.

One of Google's top-ranking factors is still the click-through rate, so it can be a good idea to add a call to action here too.

Search engine optimisation services in Wellington. Get your website optimised for more website traffic + lead generation to grow your business. Let's talk today.

example

Backlinks:

These are links from external websites that bring Google authority to your site. All websites have a domain authority between 1 and 100. You need links from other sites with higher rankings than yours. Only link to reputable sites relevant to your industry and never buy links. The best way to get great backlinks is to:

- List on industry- or customer-relevant directories
- Create content that people want to share and put on their websites
- Write articles for larger organisations or industry-relevant sites

SEO really is just a process, but it can be time consuming and is a long-term game. It does pay off, however, when you start seeing your business ranking on page 1 in search results and get more calls and emails as a consequence.

If it all seems just too hard, it is the sort of thing you can pay to have done for you – good luck!

If you're keen to give it a go yourself, we've added a worksheet so you can work through your SEO step by step.

6 WORKSHEET 5:
SORTING OUT YOUR SEO

sorting
OUT
your **SEO**

Follow these six steps to make sure your website is fully search engine optimised.

1 **Look at each page of content and list key words for:**

Home

_____

About

_____

Products

_____

Services

_____

Content

_____

Each blog

_____

2 **Have you included key words in your:**
- Headers?
- Content?

3 **Images**

Have you used key words in your 'alt' text for each image?

_____

4 **Internal links**

Check the wording on any hyperlinks e.g. change 'click here for more info' to a sentence that includes key words.

5 **Metadata**

Review each page to add in:

- Meta title

- Meta description

6 **Backlinks**

What directories can you list your website on?

Who could you submit your blogs to?

Make sure that every time you post on social media you provide a link back to your website.

Are there any industry organisations or publications you can advertise or provide editorial to – with links back to your website?

inviting everyone to the party

7

Once your website is up and running you'll want to invite everyone to the party! You might have great services and products, and they might be showcased on a beautiful new website, but if no-one knows what you do they're not going to be looking for you. You need to be found!

This is more than just focusing on promoting your website as such – that's just one of the vehicles you use to deliver your products and services. You're promoting your business, and you're making it impossible for your potential customers to ignore you.

You'll want to pull together a marketing or promotion plan to get yourself in front of your ideal customers. In actual fact you've already started on your promotion plan if you're this far into the book!

The work on your objectives, your ideal customers and your key messages can be extended to relate not just to your website but to your whole business. Take a moment to review and reflect on them – tweak them if you need to.

PROMOTION PLAN

What's your cunning plan for getting your message out? Will you break your customer groups into segments so you can target different messages or use different channels to suit?

Do you want key existing customers to hear about things first? Or do you want to offer a special deal to new customers?

These are all reasons for segmenting your customers and tailoring your communications to them. Use a phased approach targeting the most important people first, then filtering out from there.

HOW TO GET YOUR MESSAGE OUT

Once you've developed your strategy there's a raft of tools (or channels as we say in marketing speak!) to choose from, that will appeal to different customer segments. The trick is choosing the ones that work for your customers, the ones you can afford and the ones that give you the best return on your investment – be that money or time! These can be things like:

Social media

Are your customers on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn or Tik Tok? Or the latest new platform, whatever that may be?

Do you throw some money at paid advertising or rely on an organic approach? There are so many options.

If you're thinking about Facebook you'll want to set up your own business page, but remember to also post on other relevant pages – helping with advice and answering questions. Think local community groups, interest groups, sports groups, etc.

Set out a strategy for your social media presence that includes a mix of free posting and paid advertising (if, and only if, this is where your ideal customers hang out).

Paid advertising

Online advertising: Do your customers get their news online, can you advertise on industry sites or online media, or use Google Adwords? Again the options are endless, but you need to make sure you're investing wisely in the channels your customers go to for news or hang out at with their interest groups.

Hard copy advertising: Do they read certain newspapers or magazines?

Radio: What are the demographics of the stations? Do they meet your needs?

Beware of cheap deals: Stick to your plan. Just because someone contacts you saying they're doing a feature and they'd love to profile your business, that doesn't mean you should go for it. Does their publication reach your customers? Does this fit within your promotion strategy? Can you afford it?

Other options

- Market stalls are great places to go if you have a product to sell – but again, think about your customers and the types of market they go to
- Letterbox drops work well if you're targeting a particular geographical area. Certain industries swear by them, think real estate agents
- Direct mail marketing – online or hardcopy. This works well if you can obtain a relevant list and want to promote your business directly to your customers
- Posters/Signs are great as supporting materials, but they need to be put up in the right places

- Networking meetings are awesome for making contact with like-minded people and those who might benefit from your product or service

- Church, sports club and supermarket noticeboards – again these are only relevant if your customers hang out in these places. If so, these can be effective places to spread your message, especially if you have a personal connection

- Phone calls are a good, old-fashioned way to make contact with decision-makers

- Face-to-face meetings and drop-in sessions are great to use when you want to talk to a particular group or community

- Car livery or signage is a great way to advertise your business, as long as the car you're using reflects the professionalism of your business

TOP TIPS

For the best impact:

- You'll want to mix and match the channels to suit your customers and your wallet. There are lots of low-cost options available, but nothing is free. Low- or no-cost options are often the most effective but they do take up a lot of time, and because you're in business there's a cost to that.

- Ideally you'll want to combine both free and paid options, remembering to build in repetition, such as by posting or advertising multiple times.

- Buying one big advert once in a newspaper won't cut it. For a much cheaper investment you can do a concerted online advertising or social media campaign that runs for several weeks and is targeted to your ideal customers. Newspaper advertising is perfect for a certain demographic (think older people who prefer to consume their news over a cuppa) and in particular locations, and most newspapers have online versions as well so depending on your customers, this can be a good option. If what you're doing is particularly newsworthy, you might be able to interest a journalist in writing a story about it.

TRIAL AND ERROR

Be prepared for a bit of trial and error – the thing that works might be totally unexpected. A flyer dropped in a letterbox in the area you want to do window cleaning might have a much higher strike rate than that small advert you paid for in the local paper. And guess what? It's probably cheaper.

HOW WELL DID YOUR PROMOTION WORK?

Keep track of where you're promoting and what the results are. How are you going to measure what's been the most successful? Is it more sales? More enquiries? Name recognition? This should tie back to those objectives you set earlier.

RESOURCES

Time and money! You may need to prioritise both. There are some important things to remember here. If you're getting something produced, like a leaflet or a brochure, you need to budget for design and print. You might also want to factor in proofreading or, at the very least, time for a peer review. And you need to think about distribution – are you doing it yourself, engaging a student or going through a distribution company?

Social media can be a very cost-effective medium but it can also be a big time sucker. Get smart with it – create a social media strategy. Have a theme for the month and work out your organic and paid mix.

Be realistic about the budgets you set and be clear in your own mind about the results you need to be able to justify a particular approach. Be prepared to drop something if it's not working and to adapt your message and approach.

And remember, when you're starting out you can't do everything at once. Make a start, assess what's working and add to it.

ACTION PLAN

Sad as it might sound, we love a good action plan! The simpler the better. We can guarantee that if you follow a plan, things will get done.

You do need to put a timeframe on your plan, and you need to be clear about the activities required and allocate each item to someone to do. Yes, while you're starting out that might mostly be you, but you'll also likely be working with some others (even if they're family and friends) on your tech or strategy development.

Make sure everyone buys in to the timeframe and be prepared to check in to keep things moving.

Our promotion plan worksheet will help get you started.

Congratulations – you've created your awesome web content and now's the time to work on promotion.

There's some crossover from Worksheet 2: Making a plan so you can build on what you did there. The key to your promotion plan is that you're promoting your business, your products and your services – not the website itself. Set yourself a plan of attack using the following headings to prompt you.

1 **Background**

This is a brief overview of your business and services offered. It's probably a mix of your web content on the About and Services/Products pages. You might be tempted to skip this section because, after all, you know what your business is all about, right? This is still useful to have at the front of your plan because if you want to brief a designer or write a media release or get an assistant to help you with direct marketing emails, etc, it's useful context:

What do you do?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How long have you been going?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do you promote it?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Where do you see the business in three years' time?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Have you had any customer feedback?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2 Objectives

What are you trying to achieve? This is similar to the exercise of setting your objectives for your website, which might actually be the same objectives for your promotion. As a reminder, think about whether or not you want to:

- Grow your business, attract more customers or engage with your customers

- Attract a different type of customer

- Get the message out about who you are and what you offer

- Raise your profile nationally/internationally

- Promote new initiatives or milestones coming up

- Be seen as an industry leader – the go-to organisation for speaking at conferences, etc

- Reposition your business

3 **Key customers (who is the focus?)**

Again, these might be the same as those you identified as the customers for your website. If so, great – copy and paste. If not, think through:

Who's your target market?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Who do you want to communicate with? (Is this different from who you're actually communicating with now?)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What are the relevant industry/sector bodies?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Are there any collaboration or partnership possibilities you can identify?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4 Risks and issues

Are there any risks or issues you need to consider? How will these be managed? For example:

If you raise your profile and actively attract more customers, can you meet the demand?

_____

_____

Do you have the resources (time and money) to invest in this new direction?

_____

_____

Do you need to prioritise and have a phased approach to roll out your activities?

_____

_____

_____

5 Strategy

What's your strategy? Will it be split into phases or segmented for different customers? You'll have different plans of attack for your different customers.

_____

example

Promoting your organic soap range

Phase 1: Retail marketing
Research appropriate retailers and approach them to sell the soap. Produce a quality information sheet, invest in packaging, use consistent messaging, arrange appointments, visit, provide test samples etc.

Phase 2: Market days
Perfect for direct selling to customers who love the atmosphere and fun of markets. Choose the right type of market that will appeal to your customers.

Phase 3: Launch website
Promote your website directly to individual customers – those that love the convenience of finding what they want online.

6 **Tools and tactics for reaching your customers**

What do you currently use? What would you like to use?
(Of those you do use, what works well and what doesn't?)

- Website
- Video
- Google My Business
- Online courses
- Advertising
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- Photos
- Regular case studies
- Testimonials
- Newsletters
- Blogs/Articles
- Are there any other industry organisations or publications you should target?
- Other?

---

7 **Resources**

Again, these might be the same as those you identified as the customers for your website. If so, great – copy and paste. If not, think through:

What are the priorities?

8 **Key messages**

Given what we've talked about, what are the key messages you want to get across?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What are the top three to five generic messages?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you need additional sector messaging?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Who, what, why, when?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9 **Action plan**

What's the sequencing of actions/activities you need to undertake to make things happen?

If you put a date and who is responsible for making it happen you're more likely to get things done.

Date	Action	Responsibility

8 CONGRATULATIONS
YOU GET TO HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT TOO!

you get to HAVE your cake AND eat it too!

8

We hope you've enjoyed our book and that you're well on the way to having your website content written in a way that makes you proud of your business.

You've not only created something awesome; once your website is up and running you'll get to see the results in more sales, greater recognition and better brand awareness. You rock!

Far from being the end of the journey, it's just the beginning. The fabulous thing about websites is they can continue to evolve. You can keep editing, adding pages, changing images and writing blogs; you can even add a shop. All these things will keep your website current and help keep your customers coming back for more.

Gone are the days when you built a website and left it static, just sitting there as validation of your existence.

Today a website needs to be dynamic, it needs to adapt to new technology and it needs to look modern. This means it needs to be constantly reviewed and refreshed.

One of the easiest ways to do this is to change out the photos, add any new services or products and surprise and delight your customers with free advice through your blog or newsletter.

Good luck and enjoy your website – it's unique to you and you should be proud of it!

9

What happens when a brand strategist, a website strategist and a communications strategist get together? Magic, that's what! They make cake, they drink wine and they write a book.

Iona Elwood-Smith
Grow My Business

Iona is a mother of three who loves dragon boating, travelling, books, movies and chocolate. Her background is in business strategy, working with start-ups as well as global businesses.

Iona has built hundreds of websites, and her favourite part is seeing the differences they make to people's businesses.

> *I believe getting it right for your website helps you get it right throughout your business.*

Iona's technical knowledge and first-hand experience of how people struggle to create website content have kept this book on track and relevant!

Jane Comben
Pogo Design

Jane is a mover and a shaker... literally. She loves to dance and can often be seen parading through the streets with her Batucada dance troupe. She is a mother, a talented artist and has a degree in graphic design.

Jane prides herself on providing diva-free design, working on ideas and concepts for clients from all walks of life.

" *I love ideas and working out how to create an impact through innovative design.* "

Jane has produced the beautiful cover for this book and chapter illustrations, and has infused the book with her knowledge of branding and design.

Angela Bensemann
Halo Communications

Angela is the wordsmith of the trio, with a passion for writing (and reading) going back to her childhood. She wrote her first newspaper at age 11! No surprises, she became a journalist before setting up her communications company.

Angela has been busting to write a book forever, so this book is a dream come true for her.

In her spare time she can be found wrangling her very energetic dog, tricking it into training, and hanging out with her husband and son (when he's home!). And yes – it is in that order.

> " *The hardest thing about writing is starting, honest. We hope this book helps you do just that – start!* "

Angela has used her way with words to help create the content for this book.