

WomensNet Guide to Jumpstarting Your Marketing

Proven Ways You Can Find and Attract Customers Fast

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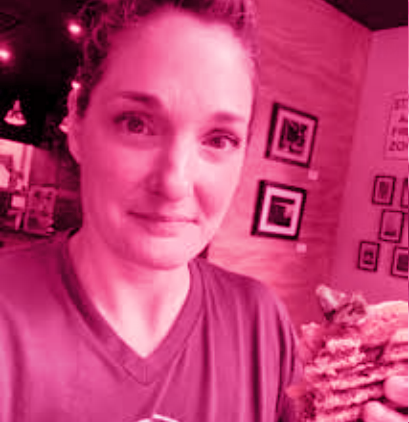
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Introduction

There are many reasons businesses are successful. Some have superior or innovative products and services. Others have top talent on their payroll. Some develop an efficient infrastructure that keeps costs lower than the competitions', while others are more concerned about delighting every single customer.

No matter what your competitive advantage, the one thing every company needs is a solid base of customers willing to pay their stated prices.

And the only way to find and sell to those customers is through marketing.

The good news is that, no matter what other people may have told you, marketing doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. Our WomensNet team knows this through more than 100 years of combined marketing experience.

The trick is determining which marketing methods are the most effective at attracting those paying customers on a regular basis. Some may be effective initially but then quickly taper off, while others are slow and steady. Typically, you won't know right away which are going to work best for you—you may need to try a few different approaches and compare results before you decide which to should invest in heavily.

At WomensNet, we're here to help you build a successful business. We want to

offer you advice, ideas, and encouragement, hence the genesis of this marketing guide. We wanted to create something to help women business owners generate more business, make more money, and be more profitable.

The marketing ideas on the follow pages are offered as proven tools you can use to connect with your target market—your potential customers. We're not experts in your industry, but we've seen these tactics work well in a number of different markets. So, we're providing them as ideas for you to try, tweak, and make your own.

Some will fit better than others, depending on your industry, customer base, location, and budget. But, we hope that you'll find some new ideas you can use to bring in more business.



Photo: Congratulations to our monthly and annual Amber Grant winners from 2018 and 2019.



Grassroots Marketing

Marketing doesn't have to cost a lot of money and, in fact, some of the most effective approaches are the least expensive. That's especially true of grassroots marketing methods.

Sometimes referred to as "guerrilla marketing," a phrase coined by Jay Conrad Levinson years ago, grassroots marketing involves using low-cost or no-cost approaches to connect with people and introduce your business. This type of marketing works especially well for locally focused brick-and-mortar businesses, like retail stores, beauty salons, florists, daycare centers, fitness facilities, and restaurants, for example.

Any kind of business can use grassroots techniques, but local companies typically see the best results, mainly because their target market is so well-defined by their geography. It's very easy to identify how many households there are within a 2-mile radius of your business, for example, and to track down the name and address of the homeowners. That's helpful information when you're trying to invite everyone to a special event.

Grassroots marketing is highly targeted and therefore can generate great results.

Creating Awareness

For many local businesses, the path to success starts in making sure everyone in your area knows what you sell and to whom. Awareness is the first challenge to overcome. Fortunately, there are a number of low-cost ways to increase awareness:

- **Introductions.** Walk in and introduce yourself to the other business owners on your block or in your neighborhood. Tell them what you sell and invite them to stop by to check your operation out.
- **Business cards.** Post your business card on bulletin boards in area restaurants, community centers, and businesses that have such a spot (**Panera**, for example, seems to have them in most locations).
- **Door hangers.** If your company provides an in-home service, such as cleaning, window treatments, or organizing, printing up your information on a rectangular tag that can be **hung on a front door knob** can be very effective.
- **Signage.** Putting up signage that clearly identifies your business on the building and along the road, for example, will invite customers to find you. Don't skimp here, this really matters if you have a customer-based business. Think "clear and classy" over "loud and clever."

➤ Photo: July 2019 Amber Grant winner **Love Again Local** café offers dining, catering, and plant-based cooking classes.

Grassroots Marketing

- **Sponsorships.** Depending on your marketing budget, this might not be a tactic you can afford right out of the gate, but getting your company name on a banner at an event or on local sports team jerseys is a nice way to elicit positive feelings and raise awareness. As far as ROI goes, it's pretty low, however. So, don't invest in sponsorships expecting to net lots of business.
- **Classes.** Most libraries offer free and paid classes to the community. Consider developing a 60 or 90-minute presentation that introduces people to your product or service in a way that teaches them something. A home builder could teach a class on designing your dream home, a laundromat could offer the best technique and products for cleaning your clothes, or a garden center could teach a wreath-making course. Be educational and creative.
- **Leverage friends and family.** This is the harsh reality: if you're starting your own business, you probably have more marketing sense than the intern most agencies will put on your account. Talk to your friends and family about ways they can help get the word out. There usually isn't a magic bullet, just good decisions and elbow grease.

Look for local opportunities where you can talk about your business, demonstrate your expertise, and/or invite people in to experience what your company offers. That's the first step in gaining awareness.

Networking

Once your market is familiar with your business, another great grassroots marketing technique is networking with colleagues, suppliers, industry leaders, and fellow business owners. The more people who know you and like you, the more business you're likely to see come your way. Some of the easiest ways to network include:

- **Civic organizations.** Join local organizations, like Rotary, Kiwanis, or the Elks, to connect with other civic-minded leaders in your community.
- **Business groups.** There are also local organizations that bring together members of the business community, such as the Chamber of Commerce or an association for your particular industry.
- **Your school's alumni association.** If your business is located in the city where you went to high school or college, make sure to become active in these groups. You'll reconnect with people who knew you years ago and may want to support you as a local business owner.
- **Tip clubs.** Look into joining tip clubs, or leads groups, which meet regularly for the sole purpose of exchanging business news and leads. **BNI** was the pioneer in this area, though there are likely other groups in your town.
- **Partnering.** A great way to connect with prospects who are highly likely to need your products or services is to partner with complementary businesses. Pool your resources and agree to market to each of your mailing lists. For example,

a wedding photographer might partner with a wedding cake bakery, or a graphic designer could partner with a commercial printer.

The truth is, you come across networking opportunities on a daily basis. Anyone standing near you at a meeting or sitting next to you on a plane is a potential customer, so strike up a conversation and introduce yourself.

Outreach

In addition to raising your company's visibility and making a habit of networking with everyone in earshot, there are also some inexpensive things you can do to entice a prospect to consider doing business with you. These include, but aren't limited to:

- **Newsletters and email marketing.** Sending out regular information about your company and tips related to your products or services is a great way to continue to raise awareness and educate your market. Although electronic newsletters, such as through [Constant Contact](#) or [Mailchimp](#), are the most common, a printed newsletter might have a better chance of getting read if it lands in your prospects' mailbox at home. (Trader Joe's has stuck with its [paper flyer](#) with product information despite everyone else's seeming migration to digital.)

Customer Service is Crucial to Word-of-Mouth Marketing

It's hard to overstate the importance of stellar customer service.

Consider these survey revelations: American Express found that **90%** of Americans use customer service as a factor in deciding whether or not to purchase from a company.

According to Temkin Group, **77%** of customers would recommend a brand to a friend after having one positive experience.

And per Nielsen, **92%** of consumers believe suggestions from friends and family over other advertising.

The consequence of not prioritizing great customer service—across all support platforms—is clear. All it takes is one negative review to hurt ROI, so take customer questions, feedback, and complaints seriously. Once you're established, consider surveying customers to make sure you're not missing growth opportunities.

Now, we understand—customer service probably isn't the first thing you think about each morning. But it's critical to your business' bottom line. If you've built a company with the customers' needs at heart, excellent customer service really isn't very difficult. It merely takes a concerted effort.

- **Sampling.** One way to overcome a prospect's reluctance to commit to a new product or service is to offer a free sample. This works just as well for professional services as it does for the food products you see set out at little tables inside grocery stores on the weekend. Beauty manufacturer **Clinique** pioneered the free-gift-with-purchase, which is yet another way to entice customers to try new products they may not purchase otherwise.
- **Special event.** Any business can have a party, but if you can create an event that demonstrates your products, so much the better. Clothing retailers sometimes schedule trunk shows and invite their best customers to a mini fashion show. Gift shops invite their artisans in for technique demonstrations, and bookstores often schedule book signings. Think about what your customers would like to experience or learn and invite them in to do just that.
- **Contest.** Everyone loves the chance to get something for free. It's important, though, to be clear on what you want to achieve before getting started. If you want to build your mailing list, you'll want to collect contact information as part of the entry. If you want people to come to your business, you could require an in-person entry. And if you want to collect testimonials, you'll want to ask for customer success stories to be entered. The more your prize package is full of desirable products and services, the more successful you'll be.
- **Social media.** In terms of cost-effectiveness, social media platforms have the potential to be excellent tools for sharing information and building a community. By setting up free accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, LinkedIn, or Reddit you can share news and photos related to your business and announce upcoming events and promotions. You can create members-only groups and share inside tips and information with interested individuals.

Whole books have been written about marketing with social media, but the most important thing to remember is that you don't own any of the information on the platforms. If your account gets deactivated or your group shut down, you have no recourse. So, make sure you drive people from Pinterest or Facebook to your website so that you can continue to build that relationship with them.

Before investing time here, really sit back and think about the right platform for your product. Pick one platform and do it well; don't try to do all of them at once. As always, use common sense over pie-in-the-sky strategies. Ask yourself, is my target audience really on this platform, and if so, how can I be of value to them to build credibility?

Investing time and resources in outreach is an important step in connecting with your prospects and customers and persuading them to give your business a try, either by stopping in to shop, trying a sample, or directly buying from you.

Advice to Aspiring Female Entrepreneurs from Past Amber Grants Winners



Kelly Twichel
Co-Founder of [Access Trax](#)

I would tell anyone who wants to start their own business that it will seem overwhelming, but it is achievable. Staying organized and finding the right mentors will help you immensely. I think I've used the SCORE resource (Service Corps of Retired Entrepreneurs) 20 times in the last year for things like my business model, taxes, partnership questions, and sales and distribution. Also, don't forget to set aside time for yourself! Finally, have fun sharing and celebrating your little (and big) victories with friends and family.

Chantal Emmanuel
Co-Founder of [LimeLoop](#)



Rebecca Scott
Founder of [Sustainable Snacks](#)

A really wise entrepreneur once told me that, in business, the first "no" means, "nice to meet you, now we're having a conversation." This piece of wisdom could not be more true. It is extremely important to be tenacious and nimble as an entrepreneur. As a start-up founder, and particularly as a female, you will be underestimated and told "no" the first time you approach new customers. However, by creatively following-up and finding other ways to get in touch, you will find it is possible to turn a "no" into a "yes." Many of the milestones I have achieved for Sustainable Snacks have come after multiple attempts to open a conversation. In business, persistence pays off!

The quicker you can shed any fear or nervousness you have around seeking guidance, gathering advice, and asking for help from those both in and out of your network, the better you and your company will be. Just remember to pay it forward when the time comes.



Your Website

Most businesses today are critically dependent on their websites for marketing.

This is true whether you run a locally focused venture or a global corporation. Because consumer habits are now so reliant on the internet for information, much of the purchase decision is made through information-gathering conducted online.

Before anyone calls to schedule an appointment for a consultation, decides on a product to purchase, or stops in to buy something, it's very likely they did a Google search. If you have a website with useful information on it, Google may have suggested that your potential customer take a look at it—depending on where it falls in Google's ranking of websites in your space.

Your website is your business' front door. It provides the first impression of your company and of the goods or services you sell, which is why it's so important that 1) you have a website and 2) the appearance matches the image you're going for. It's almost impossible to be successful without a website.

If you don't have a brick-and-mortar store, your website is much more than a brochure or catalog—it's your business' lifeline. You have to get potential buyers to your site (with [SEO](#)), create a great user experience, and convert people into paying customers (with [CRO](#)).

Choosing Your Online Address

Ideally, the online address customers use to find your company features words related to your business name. That is, your business URL matches the company name, or something close to it.

For example, if your company name is Duncan Transcription Services, the best URL you could buy would be [duncantranscriptionservices.com](#) or [duncantranscription.com](#). Or an even more powerful URL might include your city or town like [chicagotranscription.com](#). That way, anyone searching for "Chicago transcription services" would match your URL. Trying to be clever with phrases like "recordingsintotype.com" or "we-hearyou.com" will only backfire and make it harder for Google to connect your URL with what you do.

Most people search for a service or a question first, so keep that in mind as you settle on a URL.

If your company name isn't available with a .com suffix, you have a few options, including:

- Using a hyphen to separate the words, such as [Duncan-transcription-services.com](#). Other separators, such as + signs

 Photo: 2018 year-end Amber Grant winner Kristen Moffatt, owner of [Wasatch Nectar](#).

Your Website

or _ (underscoring), are unrecognizable and don't serve their intended purpose. Stick with a hyphen to create phrases within URLs.

- Opting for a suffix that is not .com, such as .net. Don't get too clever with the suffix or people will get confused.
- Adding another word, such as duncan-medicaltranscription.
- Adding your location, as in duncantranscriptionfl.com, if you were in Florida. Online buyers are likely to search for a business like yours in their local area. So make it clear where you're located by adding your town, city, or neighborhood name on a page or two on your site.
- Abbreviating some of the words, such as duncants.com, where the ts stands for transcription services.
- Breaking up your business name using a lesser-known suffix, such as Delicious did with del.icio.us. Google doesn't recommend this approach, but it is a possible solution nonetheless.
- Using a domain broker to try to buy it ([GoDaddy](#) has a fairly user-friendly one). This can get very expensive very quickly and may not be worth a big outlay of cash.

Design Basics

There are many schools of thought regarding effective website design, but unless you're a graphic designer, your best approach is to hire a professional designer

(expensive!) or to use a design template that another skilled designer has already developed (smart!).

Trying to put together even a simple website takes training; you'll shoot yourself in the foot and make a bad impression if you decide to cobble something together on your own. You want to look professional, not handmade. As you evaluate different design approaches, consider:

- Your target market and how computer savvy they are
- What image you want to present (ex: whimsical, conservative, innovative)
- Your brand colors and the colors that will complement them
- The different things you want visitors to be able to do (learn more about you, the company, your process, contact you, take a quiz)
- What you want site visitors to do after arriving—typically you should have some CTA or call to action (download a free report, schedule a consultation, buy a product, read an article)

Those decisions will then inform the visuals of your site, including:

- The overall look and feel
- Colors and type style
- Essential navigation buttons
- Need for e-commerce capabilities

Color

can increase brand recognition by

80 percent



Image: The logo color choices of top companies.
Source - [Canva.com](https://www.canva.com)

Content Management System (CMS)

Based on our experience, for DIY, we generally recommend Wix or Weebly for basic websites and Shopify for e-commerce platforms.

If you are hiring a freelancer or agency, Wordpress is usually best.

A few popular but pitfall-filled CMSs to avoid include: Joomla, Magento, and DNN. Drupal and Expression Engine are usually overkill and will cost you more money than you'd pay for the same site in Wordpress.

Avoid any proprietary agency content management systems.

Functionality

Different websites have different purposes and, therefore, different functionality.

Many websites built using Wordpress themes or templates are basically blogs with additional information. There isn't much functionality beyond being able to fill out a Contact Us form. That may work fine for your business, especially if your site's purpose is to share product or service information as a step toward getting an in-person appointment.

Other companies may need more capabilities, such as:

- Newsletter sign-up form

Your Website

- Calendar for appointment scheduling
- Links to social media accounts
- E-commerce for product sales
- An FAQ page to answer commonly asked questions
- A mobile-ready version of the website

Think about all the information you want your visitors to see and rank it from most important to least. Then make sure the design of your site reflects those priorities.

Offering a Freebie

One of the best ways to attract potential customers to your newly launched website is to create something that you can offer for free, which some people call an “ethical bribe.”

The idea is that you offer site visitors a piece of information or content that will be valuable to them. You don’t charge them for it, but you do ask for their name and email address so you can keep in touch with them. That’s the trade-off: you give them information they want and they give you permission to follow up.

Every business is different and every customer segment has different wants and needs, even within similar businesses. So, you need to think about what one piece of information every one of your customers would want. Then design content they won’t be able to resist.

Some ideas of content formats for your freebie include:

- A checklist
- A coupon
- A planner
- A list of resources
- An industry report
- A list of potential clients
- A recipe, or series of recipes
- Step-by-step instructions for how to accomplish something
- Sample dialogue for how to have a tense conversation

Your freebie doesn’t have to be lengthy at all. It just needs to give your prospect exactly what they’re looking for—and what you’ve promised to provide.

Many freebies are between one and three pages. And as long as yours helps the visitor do something faster, better, for less money, or with better results, they won’t care if it’s beautifully designed and 30 pages long, or simple and a single page.

The Importance of Color in Site Design

Always make sure that your website conveys the right message. That's done not only by the words and images you choose—it's also found in your color scheme.

Warm colors like red, yellow, and orange can convey a range of emotions from comfort and warmth to anger and hostility. Cool colors—like blue, purple, and green—spark feelings of calmness and tranquility, as well as sadness and solitude.

Consider this: research from the Institute for Color Research shows that people make a subconscious assessment of an environment, person, or product within 90 seconds of initial viewing. Between 62% and 90% of their assessment is based on color alone.

Furthermore, according to a study by the University of Loyola, color can increase brand recognition by up to 80%.

Beyond your big picture color scheme, prioritize creating appropriate call-to-action (CTA) buttons. On many sites we've reviewed, poor contrast between text and background color makes reading difficult. That's a surefire way to reduce conversions (and thus, your revenue).

While orange and green are popular CTA button choices, there's no "best" color for your CTA. Instead, prioritize high contrast combinations to make your CTA stand out.

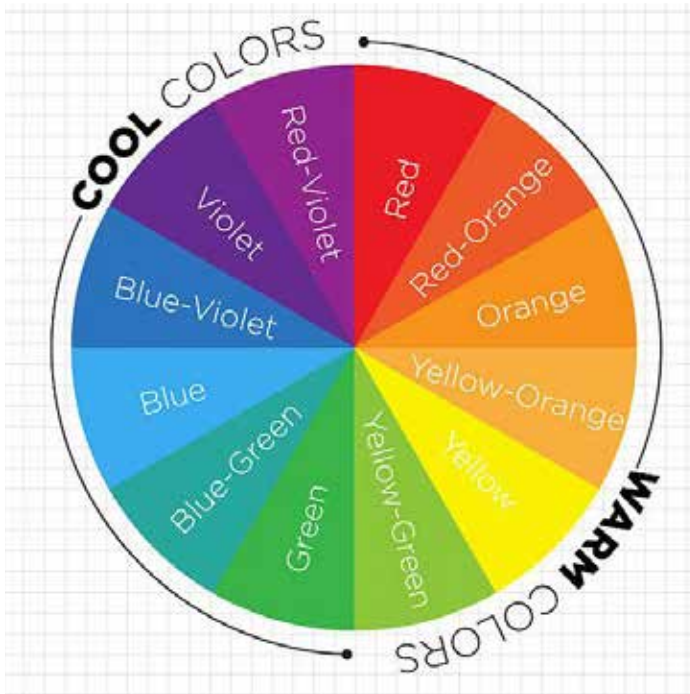


Image: Warm and cool colors on a color wheel.
Source - [Decoart.com](https://www.decoart.com)



Image: [Adobe Color](https://color.adobe.com) offers free color themes based on current trends and search keywords.

DOs of Website Design



Do think about what your prospective customers actually want. They don't care about your mission or vision, honestly. They want to know how you can help them, how you are different from your competition, and how to get in touch with you.

With that in mind, make sure you have friends and potential customers use your site to offer suggestions and comments on how to improve the user experience (known as "UX" in the site design industry). This is a big deal. The most competent agencies and web designers take UX very seriously and spend significant time ensuring it's as good as it can be, both before and after launch.



Do organize your website by how your customers shop for what you're selling, not by how you see your company. Think about what your customer may want to do at your site. Make it easy for them to find the product, service, or information they're after. Here's a big deal: If you're a brick and mortar operation, make sure your phone number, address and business hours are prominent on your home page. Many potential customers will "bounce" if they have to scroll and click around to find basic information.



Do look at the competition, see what mistakes they have made so you can avoid them, and find inspiration in what others have done really well. Look at national competitors, too. Just because they are much bigger than you are doesn't mean you can't learn from them.

DON'Ts of Website Design



Don't try to do too much. You are better off with a one-page website that's clean and clear than a multi-page website that has broken links and is difficult to navigate. Find the balance of what you can afford to do well.



Don't include a blog unless you are truly going to write valuable articles for an audience who will actually read them. Sure, you can spend an hour writing about the latest trends in your industry, but there are bigger players who can do the same and are already established in the market. Use your time more wisely and perhaps invest in cleaning up your sales funnel or refreshing your website's language to better suit your customers instead.



Don't use stock photography or homepage sliders. No one reads sliders, and visitors want to see real people and products. This might seem trivial, but seeing real pictures of you or your customers and employees goes a long way toward building trust and credibility.

Help your customer or prospect find what they're looking for when they come to your website. If they can do it easily, your website is effective. In the long run, that means more revenue.



Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Now that you have a functioning website, it's time to attract visitors.

One of the most important ways to do that is through search engine optimization (SEO). You've probably heard of SEO, which is, essentially, helping your website appear higher on the search engine results page (SERP), which is delivered in response to a user query. Because the first few listings on any Google search result page are much more likely to get click-throughs than the listings that are on later pages, you want to be at the top of the first page of any relevant search to your business. Only **25%** of people look beyond the first page of Google results.

In fact, **Hubspot** reports that 57% of B2B marketers say that SEO generates more leads than any other marketing tool.

That statistic makes a lot of sense, since SEO tactics are designed to bring people who are looking for what you're selling to your website. If you do a good job of helping Google understand what your website is about and who might be interested in what you're selling, the quality of the leads you receive is going to skyrocket. When that happens, you can safely assume that sales are going to follow more often than not.

SEO Basics

To understand SEO, you need to first understand what Google's role is. As a search engine, its sole purpose is delivering results to searchers that give them exactly the information they're looking for. It wants to answer the questions that people are asking.

For example, if you're looking to find out where to buy a saltwater fish tank, Google wants to tell you everything you could possibly need to know about buying a fish tank and where to get it. It decides which websites do the best job of answering that question for you based on the information on all the websites that are on the internet. It regularly scans (or "crawls") websites to figure out what they're about. And then when someone asks for information on a topic, Google delivers results in descending order from "best to worst," or most relevant to least relevant.

Only 25 percent
of people look beyond the
first page of Google results

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search engines rank websites based on a number of factors. Although there are an estimated 200 or more, some of the most important factors include:

- **Keywords.** Keywords are the words and phrases people use when trying to find specific information online. The search engines look to see if your site has those same keywords and phrases. Based on that, it determines how relevant your content is to the query posed by the searcher.
- **Bounce rate.** The bounce rate is basically how quickly people leave your site, and it's another key metric Google considers. Generally, the longer someone stays on a site, the more likely it is that they've found what they were looking for. Conversely, the faster they leave, the greater the odds they did not find what they were after. Sites with lower bounce rates are considered to be more relevant.
- **Backlinks.** These are links back to your site from other websites. This demonstrates to the search engine that your content is good and relevant to the search. The more backlinks, especially from high quality sites, the more Google trusts that *yours* is a quality site as well.
- **Quality content.** Is the information on your site useful and keyword rich? Does the material pertain to the keywords you've used? Does it answer the questions people are asking?
- **Fresh content.** Google also looks at how often you're adding new, quality content to the site. Websites that reg-

ularly add new content are generally ranked higher than those that rarely or never add fresh content. They are viewed as less up-to-date, and therefore, less relevant.

Top 5 Factors for SEO

- Keywords
- Bounce Rate
- Backlinks
- Quality Content
- Fresh Content

Keywords

So keywords are important. However, **websites** don't rank for keywords; **website pages** do. So don't aim to associate your whole website with one particular word or phrase. Instead, choose several words and phrases that your target market is using and use different ones on different pages.

For example, if you own a business that ships desserts nationally, you might work to rank one page of your website for the phrase "shipped desserts." But another page on your website might focus on "shipped cookies." Other pages could be optimized for other specialty desserts that you sell. The key is that each page can rank for a different keyword or phrase.

Short Tail versus Long Tail

Generally, the higher the search volume reported for a particular word or phrase,

the more interest there is in it and the more competitive it is. That means it will be more difficult to achieve a high rank. High search volume could be because the term itself is broad, such as “movies,” or because there is great interest in, say, the latest movie releases, or local movie times.

It takes more time and effort to achieve a high search rank for such a popular keyword. It could take years to rank alongside major brand names.

Of course, trying to rank for such a broad keyword might not be the best strategy anyway, because the searcher’s intent is unclear. If someone types in the term “movies,” do they want to go to the movies, stream movies, make their own movies? You really have no idea. And you risk attracting a lot of visitors who have no interest in your business.

On the other hand, “long tail keywords,” or the longer, more specific phrases, often represent searches by people who know exactly what they’re looking for. They typically have lower search volume and are usually less competitive. But they’re hyper-targeted, and if you can supply what the searcher is looking for, odds are good that you’ll get the sale.

That’s often the case when people search for products using particular models or style numbers, for example. It’s the difference between searching for a “North Face down coat” and a “North Face women’s black Gotham parka II size medium.” Which searcher is clear about what they want? The one with the string of keywords and size. Which searcher is more likely closer to mak-

ing a purchase? Yup, the one with the long tail key phrase.

What Are They Looking For?

Although you may not be exactly sure what someone is looking for based on the string of keywords they type into a search bar, you may be able to get a general sense of their intent. Google has defined five different search intents, according to MOZ:

- **Informational.** An informational search is based on a need for facts. That could be the average size of a home in 1950 in square feet or the lyrics to Journey’s “Don’t Stop Believin’,” for example.
- **Navigational.** Some searchers use Google to track down a particular URL or website. They may know the name of a business but not know its website address, for example, so they turn to Google to help them locate the online address.
- **Transactional.** Searchers who are looking to buy something are conducting a transactional search. Maybe they want to find and pay for new soccer cleats, a new laser printer, or tickets to a concert next month.
- **Commercial.** Sometimes searchers have a general idea of what they need product-wise, but they want to see and consider all their options. Maybe their child wants a video game console and they’re not sure which one will do all that they want it to. Or maybe they’re comparing different models of ear buds. The purpose of the search is comparison before purchase.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

- **Local.** Some searches are very narrow in scope, such as the closest yoga studio or the best Thai food within a 10-mile radius. Google can give you several options based on your geographic location.

Understanding *what* your audience is looking for as well as *why* they're looking for it will help you determine where they are in the buyer's journey. And with that knowledge, you'll be able to give them what they need to move them along to the next stage of the journey—all the way through to the final sale.

Improving Your Ranking

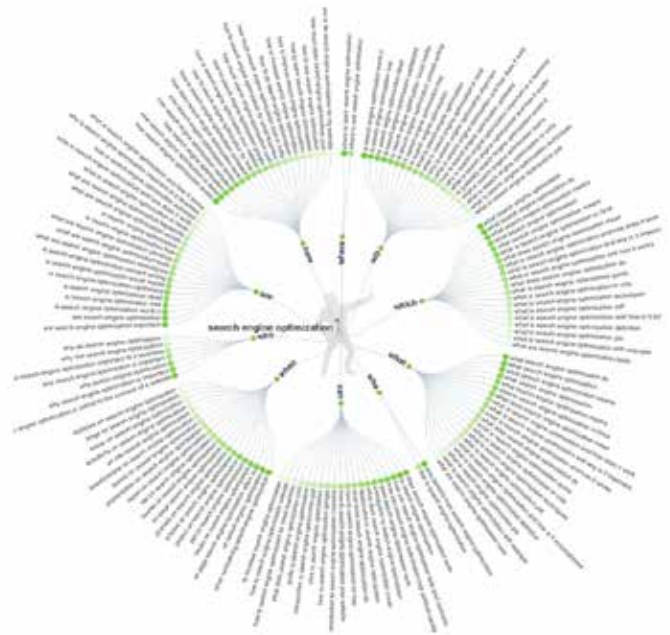
The first step in moving your website up in results is to improve its rank. There are a couple of useful tools that can tell you what your site's strengths and weaknesses are and offer recommendations for revisions you can make:

- **MOZ.** A tool that can help you monitor keywords that are working for your site, and which aren't, is **MOZ**. MOZ is all you really need to stay on top of your SEO and to figure out what changes you can make that will result in more and better qualified traffic to your site.
- **SEMrush.** **SEMrush** offers up to 10 free searches daily to help you determine what keywords are driving traffic to your site and which you should be using.
- **Google AdWords Keyword Planner.** This **free search tool** is the granddaddy of keyword research tools, but it does have some downsides—like skewing

search volume data by combining large volume keywords.

- **AnswerThePublic.** If you're not sure **what question your target market is trying to answer** with its searches, this free tool can be very helpful.
- **SpyFu Keyword Tool.** If competitive keyword data is what you're after, **SpyFu** is the tool you'll want to use.

Although SEO may sound complex at first, you'll get the hang of it. There is really no need to pay someone else to check on keywords for you. You can do that with the free tools above.



➤ Image: An example of search results from visual keyword research and content ideas tool **AnswerThePublic**

DOs of SEO



Do follow through on the holy trinity of SEO. Pick one key phrase per page and get that key phrase in: (1) the title tag (2) the URL (3) the page headline (H1).



Do find quality backlinks that are relevant to your product or service. SEMrush has a great tool for this.

DON'Ts of SEO



Don't try to "cheat the system." Pick the keywords your customers are looking for and write quality (and long) content around those keywords.



Don't use keyword stuffing. This out-of-date tactic involves simply repeating a keyword multiple times on a page to suggest that it is the best fit for anyone searching for that term. Google recognizes that repetition doesn't equal great content, so it can actually hurt your SEO.

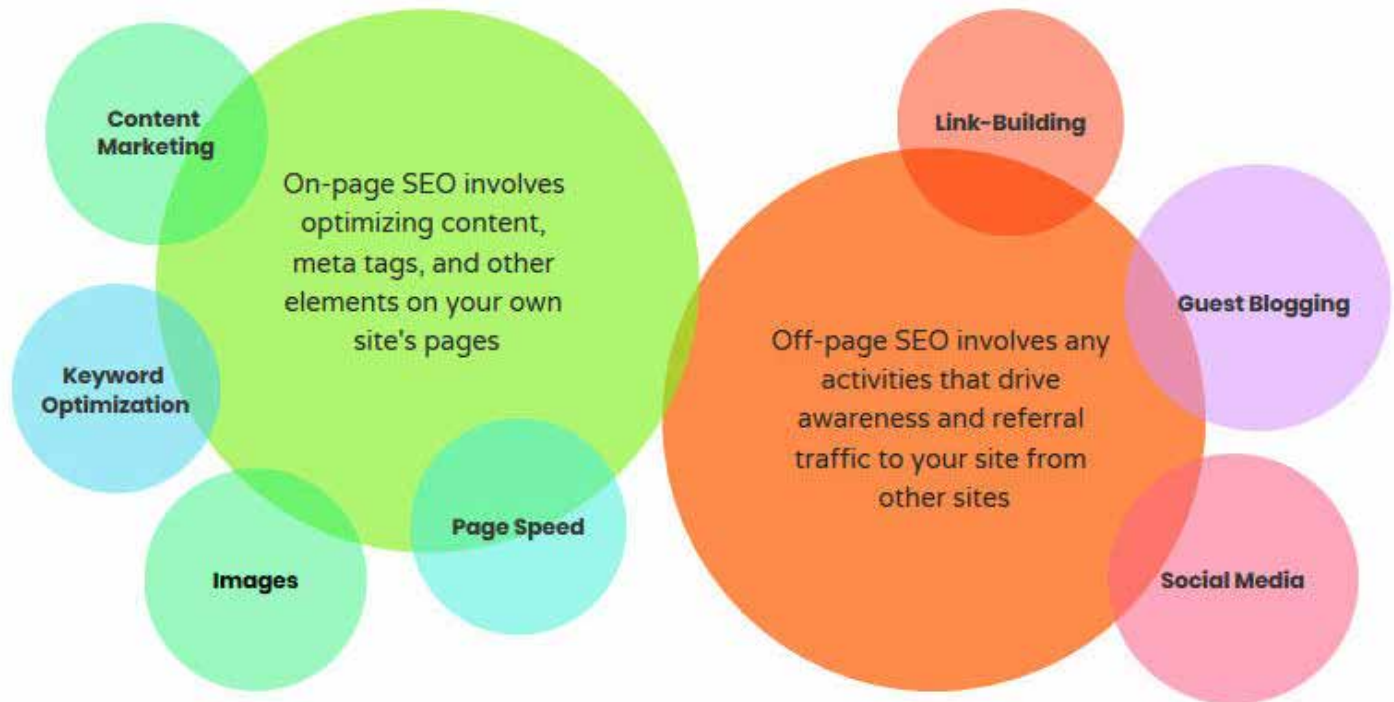


Don't buy backlinks or use backlink farms.



Don't sign a monthly retainer for SEO services. Understand what tasks are to be performed and pay for those tasks—not a nebulous, "we'll improve SEO" promise. The truth is—you might want to spend a couple hundred dollars making sure your tags and internal links are correct. But getting quality back links, plus creating great and relevant content, are going to be the factors that drive your SEO on an ongoing basis. And you can probably do those things more effectively—and cheaper—than a professional SEO company.

ON-PAGE SEO *VS.* OFF-PAGE SEO



On-Page SEO

On-page SEO is all about optimizing the actual content on a web page for both users and search engines. There are lots of elements on your page, and it's important that all of them work together to create a unified experience so you can increase your web presence.

Header Tags

Just as they sound, header tags are tools used to identify which elements on your page serve different purposes. Picture an outline and at the very top, on the far left, is a main header, which is identified by a header tag. On your website, that tag is called an H1. In your outline, as on your page, the more specific each piece of information gets, the higher the number. H2s are subheads, H3s are sub-subheads, etc., all the way down to H6s, which are the least important.

Once you've identified your target keywords or phrases, you need to include them in your header tags.

➤ Image: Comparison of on-page SEO versus off-page SEO. Source: [Wordstream.com](https://www.wordstream.com)

The H1 is a must since search engines look at H1s as being indicative of the entire content of the page. For the same reason, each page should have only one H1. If you have multiple H1s, both visitors and search engines will be unclear what the main purpose is, causing users to bounce and making search engines less likely to show it in results.

Similarly, you should use synonyms, variations and/or long tail versions of your keyword in subheadings (H2s and H3s) throughout the page as well. This signals to search engines that yes, the page is truly about that subject, and it helps visitors find the specific information about that subject that they're looking for.

Title Tags

Creating title tags that explain the topic covered on a particular page of your website is important to Google. This descriptive data helps differentiate the various pages on your site. Tagging them all the same, with your URL, isn't helpful in figuring out what exactly you're talking about on each page.

Each page on your website should have a unique title tag that describes the information visitors can find there. That information will also show up in search results, so it's important to get it right.

You can find some tips for writing title tags to attract clicks in this [MOZ video](#).

To summarize, MOZ suggests you use the following in your title tags:

- **Numbers.** Use quantifiable digits, as in "9 Ways to Improve Your Credit Score."
- **Dates.** Identifying the year is the most common date included, such as, "The Top 10 Toys of 2020."
- **Clarity.** Use keywords in your title tags and be brief. Don't go over 50-60 characters.
- **Synonyms.** To be sure you're hitting on words your target audience uses, search keyword tools to make sure you're using the most common keywords in your title tags.
- **Action words.** Incorporating verbs that echo a call-to-action can prepare the visitor to do something, rather than just read information. Words like, "download," "read," or "get" give the visitor a heads up that they will want to be prepared to take action to get the most out of the information you're providing.
- **Use multiple keywords.** Using the target keywords you found in your research, try and include as many as you can in your title tags, without sounding ridiculous.
- **Ask a question.** Turn your material into the answer to your visitor's question. And put the question in your title tag for emphasis.
- **Include a brand name.** Featuring a brand name increases click-throughs from buyers who know what they're looking for and are ready to buy.

Meta Descriptions

Meta descriptions are a lot like title tags in that they are HTML tools that describe the content on a webpage. The meta description is the short snippet of text that appears in search results after the page title. Although it's not a direct ranking factor like the title tag, it can still have an impact. The more enticing and descriptive the text, the more likely the user is to click through to your site.

Crafting an effective meta description involves two major factors:

- **Relevance.** It's important that meta descriptions summarize or reflect the content on your page, suggesting to the visitor that they are likely to find what they were looking for on your page.
- **Length.** The best meta descriptions are between 150 and 300 characters, keeping in mind that most descriptions over 155 characters will be truncated.

Internal Links

It might sound counterintuitive, but linking pages on your website to each other—called internal links—is an important way to help Google find all of your site's pages. These internal links also help visitors navigate your site more easily, which Google likes to see.

Keep in mind that search engine crawlers can't usually see links that require a click to get to. So, if you use links that require a drop-down menu to get to, they won't help your website's visibility.

Anchor Text

Anchor text is the word or phrase that you use on your website page to which you attach a link. It's the highlighted word or phrase that takes you to another page when you click on it. For internal links, where you're sending people to a different section or page of your site, the recommended anchor text approach is to use a keyword or phrase you're trying to rank for.

Google uses your anchor text to understand where the link is taking the user. If your anchor text reads "photo tips," Google understands that the page to which you're being taken likely has to do with photo tips. While that's a good thing, don't use the same anchor text repeatedly on the same page—a version of keyword stuffing—or Google will be on to you and your rank won't improve.

It's considered best practice to use different variations of your keyword in your anchor text. Don't repeat the same phrase or word over and over again in conjunction with a particular link. That's akin to keyword stuffing. Don't do it.

Limit Your Links

Filling your web pages with too many internal links can be confusing and overwhelming for your visitors. Too many referrals to other pages on your site is distracting, for one, and Google doesn't appreciate it. It dilutes the value of each link.

The situation is kind of like serving up pie. There are only so many pieces to go around and still satisfy your guests. Don't go overboard with internal links.

MOZ says it another way: "The more links on a page, the less equity each link can pass to its destination page. A page only has so much equity to go around."

With internal links, it's also important to make sure you redirect links if and when you move a page on your website. If you relocate it without updating the internal link address, your visitors will get an error message when they click through. Try and avoid that by remembering to redirect pages whenever you move them or change the address.

Image Alt Text

In addition to showing images on your website, you'll want to use alt text, short for "alternative text," which are descriptions of the images being shown. Alt text helps visually impaired users understand what images are being displayed on the webpage.

As importantly as clarifying what an image shows, you'll also want to use alt text because search engines crawl them.

Formatting 101

While using keywords, links, and images are all important for improving search results and your page rank, there are some formatting rules you'll want to follow to be sure that search engines and users can find what you've shared.

Some of the basic formatting guidelines include:

- **Headings.** Don't make a visitor have to scroll through paragraph after paragraph of content without a hint as to what the subject-matter is. Use headers to break up long blocks of text and to give a user a heads up regarding what the topic is.
- **Text size.** When in doubt, go larger, not smaller, with your text typeface. It's hard to read anything on a desktop screen under 16 points, not to mention the difficulty faced when trying to read text on a phone. Google recommends using at least a 16-point typeface for readability.
- **Text color.** Most people know that black text on a white background provides the best readability because the contrast is greatest. But what color should you use if your website background is blue or yellow or green? The World Wide Web Consortium offers some advice in its [website accessibility guidelines](#).
- **Bullet points.** We love them, you love them, Google loves them. Use bullet points whenever possible, to improve the ability to scan content.
- **Paragraph breaks.** Break up big blocks of text or long paragraphs using paragraph breaks. They help make chunks of copy less overwhelming to the eye.
- **Visual elements.** Photos, illustrations, charts, graphs, and videos are all useful additions that can both enhance the reader's understanding of material on your site and increase engagement. As

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long as you don't go overboard with an image after every paragraph, visual elements can increase satisfaction with your webpages.

- **Text formatting.** Don't use too many variations of bold or italicized text. However, when used sparingly, bold and italics formatting can help set off words that deserve special attention.

Off-Page SEO

While on-page SEO is all about the content of the web page itself, off-page SEO focuses on, well, all the things that happen off of it. All of these factors impact your rankings on SERPs, so it's important to get it right.

Establishing Authority

You might think that creating and supplying top quality content that provides the exact information people are looking for would mean that you'd land the top spot in Google search results. And while delivering excellent content is key to ranking near the top in Google, it's only part of the equation.

The other part is establishing authority as a reputable site. In order to convince Google that yours is a trustworthy site, you'll need to focus on becoming EAT, which is an acronym for expert, authoritative, and trustworthy. [Google's search quality rater guidelines](#) lays out the importance of EAT.

Big picture: Sites that are higher in EAT are

seen as better quality and will therefore generally rank higher.

If you make positioning your website as an expert, authoritative, trustworthy source of information one of your guiding tenets, you'll build a site that can rank highly today and in the future. You can never go wrong aspiring to provide high quality content.

Sites that consistently deliver what the user is after rate highly in EAT. For that reason, they also likely have many links from other sites. For example, media sites like Inc. and Forbes are high in EAT because they have countless links referencing their many articles. Other sites point their visitors to Inc. and Forbes because they trust that the content available there is of high quality and trustworthy.

Link Building

Links from other websites pointed to yours are called backlinks or external links. They're one measure of your company's reputation. The more external links you have from other reputable websites, the higher your company's website will rank.

The process of finding and earning these backlinks is called link building. In some ways, link building is like a popularity contest. The more quality websites that refer visitors to your website, the better your rank. Each link is like a little vote of confidence that you're going to give the visitor useful information. The more votes of confidence, the better your reputation appears to be.

DOs of Link Building

Along the way, you're likely to learn some underhanded tricks designed to improve your rank in search. Don't be tempted to play along or your site could be in jeopardy of being pushed much lower in search results. Here are some smart guidelines to follow as you start to add and attract links to your site:



Do earn links, rather than trying to gather them quickly or build them yourself by setting up other websites.



Do reach out to colleagues and partners to suggest linking to each other. Connections between complementary businesses makes sense and can be helpful.

DON'Ts of Link Building



Don't buy links. Although it's not always immediately obvious to Google when you've bought a link, it's very likely that you will eventually be found out and your website will drop in search rankings. Don't buy or sell links to other sites.



Don't pay for directory links. Years ago, directory sites were created solely for the purpose of linking to other sites for a fee. Newer sites were frequently willing to spend a few bucks to get some backlinks in place. Today it's not worth the investment.



Don't exchange links. It may sound harmless enough—"I'll link to you if you link to me"—and it's a good idea if the company reaching out is in your niche and is one you respect. Those kinds of referrals make sense and are a good idea within your industry. However, don't jump into linking en masse, meaning large scale link exchanges. Google can spot those a mile away and your rank will be seriously damaged.

To summarize, don't try and take shortcuts, such as by paying for links or getting involved in groups that try and manipulate Google rankings. It's not worth the risk of getting caught.

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Follow versus No Follow Links

We've established that a link to a site is a lot like a vote for that site, at least in terms of popularity and authority. That's a follow link, because you are confident that anyone who clicks through is going to find useful information.

However, you can also use "no follow" links. You use those when you want to show a user a particular site or page but you don't want to suggest to Google that it's a good site.

For example, if you had written an article on how to take great photos and wanted to include an example of what not to do, you might link to that example but use a "no follow" type of link so that Google doesn't think you recommend it.

Some Links are Better than Others

While links from other websites to your own are useful, links from organizations or companies that are in your industry are generally better than those from unrelated sites.

For example, a link from the American Society of Journalists and Authors to a freelance writer's website is typically more valuable than a link from Speedhunters, a car enthusiast website. The assumption there is that if a writers' organization is linking to a fellow writer, they must be reputable. An exception would be if the freelance writer regularly covered the automotive industry. Then, the Speedhunter link might be worth more brand equity.

General Link Guidelines

What you do want to do is amass links that:

- Are from authoritative pages.
- Originate from sites that are related to your topic.
- Are the result of editorial coverage, such as an article in the *New York Times* or a blog post on StartupNation.
- Increase gradually over time, rather than suddenly.
- Attract traffic from your target audience, who are more likely to then stay on your site for extended periods of time.
- Are a mix of follow and no follow.

Fortunately, there is a process for building quality links.

Building Quality Backlinks

There are steps you can take that will naturally attract links from related websites. Some of those steps include:

Setting up a blog. Granted, creating a blog and then publishing posts regularly is a big commitment. But if you have a website, you need to give your target market a reason to come back to it regularly. Writing blog posts on topics of interest to your prospects and customers is a very effective way of bringing traffic to your site, as well as building links from other sites. You can also invite guest blog posts as long as they're of high quality.

- **Creating a resource page.** Another page you'll want to consider adding to your website, in addition to a blog, is a resource page. This page is a place where you can list resources your firm uses or relies on. Then, keep adding to it. These types of pages may also lead to ideas for blog posts, which can then link back to the resources on this page.
- **Crafting unique content.** The information you share on your website should be material that visitors can't easily find elsewhere or that is better than what they can find on other sites. Make your content different, too, such as by taking a different approach to covering a topic—an approach no one else has taken. This might be counterintuitive, for example, or maybe you play Devil's advocate. For example, instead of reviewing the top three instant pots/pressure cookers, you might write a piece on how you can use the pots and pans you already own to get better results than an Instant Pot. Including an eye-catching image alongside it can also elevate the perceived value of the content you've shared.
- **Sharing links with vendors, customers, and business partners.** If you buy regularly from other businesses or if you have clients who are raving fans, they are perfect candidates for linking to your website—after all, you're doing business together. In return, you should link to their sites, as long as you're not driving customers somewhere else to make a purchase.
- **Forge local connections.** If yours is a locally-focused business, invest some time in networking with other local business owners and supporting your local community. That might mean joining a local civic organization, sponsoring local events, hosting a conference, or creating a contest. All of those types of activities create reasons for area organizations to link to your website, on top of giving you the chance to better your community.

After you create quality content, regularly evaluate it to see where most of your traffic is coming from. Which posts and which topics are attracting the most attention?

What is Page Rank?

First launched in 1997, PageRank (or PR) is an algorithm used by Google to rank webpages in their search engine results. The algorithm looks at how many quality links a particular site has in order to come up with a 0-10 ranking, with the higher number indicating a better, more authoritative website.

You shouldn't obsess over your Page Rank—especially if your website just launched. But you can set yourself up for success by simply following good SEO etiquette, like building quality backlinks and using proper anchor text. If you want to check your site's Page Rank, google the term "check my site's page rank" and you'll discover several free sites. As strange as it might sound—if your site ranks anything above a 0, that really is good news for you!

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Once you know that, you can update older pieces or repurpose them for other platforms, such as by recording a video to post on YouTube or a PowerPoint presentation to get uploaded to SlideShare. All of these are then opportunities to give your site backlinks as well as better serve your audience.

Monitoring Your Links

It's hard to know exactly how much time you should be spending on link-building, because until you start monitoring your results, you won't know what the possible payoff is. In order to improve the quality and number of links you're earning, you have to at least know your starting point. Improvement starts with measurement.

Monitoring when links are added is useful so that you can recognize which article topics garner the most attention from your audience and which websites drive the most traffic. The truth is, one link from a high ranking, authoritative site is much more valuable to your site's rank than 100 links from lower quality sites.

Here are several free tools to use to track link additions:

- Ahrefs: [Backlink Checker](#)
- Neil Patel: [Backlinks](#)
- SEO Review Tools: [Backlinks Tool and Links Checker](#)
- Serpstat: [Backlinks Analytics Tool](#)
- Small SEO Tools: [Backlink Checker](#)

Also keep in mind that social shares are not the same thing as backlinks. If a client shares your website in a post they wrote, that can generate traffic to your website, but a Twitter reference or link shared on Facebook isn't a true backlink. It's still valuable, however.

New Search Result Opportunities

Although claiming the #1 spot on the list of Google's search results was the sole goal for some time, Google has decided to provide answers to the question it thinks the user is posing, beyond just a list of relevant links based on keywords. It has enhanced its results page to include several other opportunities to attract eyeballs, or attention. These include:

- **Featured snippets.** At the top of the results page, Google now provides a brief definition within a box, called a snippet. If your explanation of a term is judged to be superior to current content, Google might give you the snippet spot.
- **Ads.** Sponsored results are paid advertisements, denoted by the actual word "Ad" that appears alongside them.
- **"People Also Ask" box.** On the first page, Google also includes a box with related questions people often pose related to the search term.
- **Local map.** Google also provides a close-up map of the local area with related locations pinned on it for easy reference.

- **Sitelinks.** Links to subpages on relevant pages are also listed under some results, for easier navigation to the desired information.
- **Knowledge panel.** On the right side of the SERP, there's a box that shows up when you search for people, places, organizations, and/or things in Google's Knowledge Graph. The Knowledge panel links out to other articles that offer more explanation and often include "People also search for" related content.
- **Carousel.** On the first page, usually under the first few results, Google will show a visual carousel of images (that are usually links) showing extended results. These are typically shown if the words "best," "top," or "great" are used.
- **Distance.** If Google presumes you are looking for a local place, it will prioritize those closest to you, based on your physical location. It assumes you would logically want to travel the least distance.
- **Prominence.** Organizations that are better known get better rankings. Google takes into account the number of Google reviews that are posted, a local address or business listing, and its organic ranking. In general, the more references Google finds online to a particular business, the more prominent it assumes it is.

Social Presence

As mentioned, search engines run on relevance, and in today's world, social media is often a great measure of this. If real people believe in a product, business, or service enough to validate it personally on social media, search engines will notice. By actively participating in and on various social channels, you increase the relevance of your brand in the search engine's eyes.

It's important to own the social space your company operates in—meaning it's not enough to just throw up the profile and walk away. Talk about yourself and what you do, what you like, and what you know. All of this consistent engagement helps position you as a subject matter expert on the topic at hand and will help increase your prominence in the field.

Those additional features can be provided with respect to local, national, or international results.

Local Results

For local search queries, Google uses different factors to determine which listings get the top spot. They are:

- **Relevance.** In an effort to deliver the exact results the person searching is looking for, Google places a high value on content that they believe appears to most closely match the searcher's intent.

Technical SEO

Technical SEO is an important part of the entire SEO process that focuses on optimizing your website in a way that helps search engines access, crawl, and in general “read” your website in order to serve it up to active users in search results. While there are many important factors to consider, there is a base set of best practices to follow. These include:

- **Crawlability.** In order for your website to be found, first a bot has to crawl and read it. Robots.txt is a text file that lives in your website’s directory that gives instructions to search engines about which pages of your website they can crawl and add to their index. Most of the time you don’t need to do anything with this file, but it’s important to check to make sure there is nothing creating a block that could shut out or misdirect search engine crawlers.
- **Security.** It is incredibly important to make sure that your website is accessed from https:// rather than http://. The “s” indicates “secure” and shows that any information transferred between your website and the server is private and encrypted. This privacy is established through use of SSL; if you don’t have SSL enabled already, contact your hosting provider, ask them to enable it, and then follow a migration process to activate it on your website (without losing hard-won rankings).
- **Schema/structured data.** Website structure is an important SEO factor be-

cause users are more likely to stay on a website longer if it’s intuitive to find out what they need. This in turn also helps search engines understand your website easier. While search results are provided at a page level, SERPS like to have a sense of what role a page plays in the bigger picture of the site, and a good schema helps with this.

- **Browser compatibility and mobile accessibility.** If you’re like the vast majority of businesses and websites that exist, you probably have a large number of users accessing your website via mobile devices. If you don’t have a fast, mobile-friendly website your search rankings will suffer. The easiest way to ensure browser and mobile compatibility is to use a responsive theme properly configured to handle this so that your content looks the same across devices.

Site Performance

The overall technical performance of your website is also an important part of search engine optimization. Studies have confirmed that faster websites rank better than slower websites. While there are many factors that impact your site’s performance, two of the most critical are page speed and image optimization.

Page Speed

Google has indicated a set of best practices for improving and optimization page load speed.

- **Enabling file compressing** is a great way to speed up your pages, because you're reducing the size of the source files. Using a software like [Gzip](#), you can reduce the size of any CSS, HTML, and/or JavaScript files that are larger than 150 bytes. However, do not use Gzip on images. Instead, see some of the tips outlined in the following Optimizing Images section.
- **Reducing page redirects** can also help give you a speedier site. Each time a page redirects to another page, your visitor faces more time waiting for the request-response cycle to complete. So, by signaling fewer requests, users are able to get where they want to be quicker.
- Additionally, you could consider **using a content distribution network (CDN)**. CDNs are basically networks of servers used to divide and distribute the load of requested content. By using a CDN, you're allowing copies of your site to be stored at multiple, geographically diverse data centers so users have faster and more reliable access to your website. Some of the more popular CDNs to consider are [Cloudflare](#) and [Fastly](#).

Optimizing Images

Until now, we've been primarily talking about the words, or text, on your website. But, images can also have a big impact on how well your site performs.

In fact, images are the prime reason many websites are slow to load. Big images can slow websites down to a crawl, making it

more likely that a user will click away before all of the elements of your site are presented.

The best way to address this slower speed is by compressing your images. Some of the most popular tools include [ImageOptim \(for Mac\)](#) or [Optimizilla](#).

One of the best sources of information about optimizing images is Google, in its [image optimization guide](#). There, you can learn which image formats are the best.

Analyzing Your Performance

One way to gauge whether your content is meeting the needs of your audience is to track key search and engagement metrics. You'll want to [set up Google Analytics](#) on your website to be able to analyze results from the traffic you get.

On your site, some of the metrics you'll want to measure include:

- **CTR (Click-through rate).** Your CTR is the percentage of people who click on a page from the search results they were given. So if, for example, someone searched for "interior designers in Houston" and then clicked on your website from all the pages listed, you earned a click-through.
- **Authority metrics.** Looking at your [domain authority](#) and [page authority](#) are also smart, because these figures can help you benchmark your results to your competitors.

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- **Total number of backlinks.** Track both the number and quality of backlinks you're getting.
- **Number of visitors.** By itself this may not be an important number, but it will be useful in making other calculations.
- **Page speed.** How quickly your site loads. Large images can drive this number way up, which discourages users from sticking around.
- **Time on page.** That is, how long, in seconds, are visitors staying on a page. Although a "Contact Us" page may typically only have a second, blog post articles should, ideally, have a minute or more, depending on the length.
- **Pages per visit.** If you're trying to establish a relationship with site visitors, you'll want them to check out several pages on your website. The greater the number of pages visited, the more visitors are getting to know you.
- **Bounce rate.** People who come to your site and immediately leave, presumably because your site didn't have what they were looking for, are said to have bounced.
- **Conversion rate.** This is the percent of people who came to your site and took an action you wanted them to take. This might be signing up for a newsletter, taking a quiz, or making a purchase. Your conversion rate is the number of people who took that desired action divided by the total number of people who came to the site.

These numbers can give you a sense of how well your website is meeting the needs of its visitors. To a large degree, this will depend on user intent, or what information they wanted in the first place.

Conducting a Website Audit

While these metrics can help you track your site's progress in ranking for specific keywords or attracting backlinks, you should also consider conducting your own website audit. This analysis can help you see where it ranks in search, the quality of your content relative to other sites, its structure, and how it's performing overall.

To do this, you're going to want to use:

- **[Google Search Console](#).** This free account can help you identify opportunities for improvement as well as potential glitches.
- **Mobile-friendly test.** Given the rising use of mobile devices to access the internet, it's useful to know how your mobile site performs. This tool within the Google Search Console can tell you.

SEO is an opportunity to develop and continuously improve your website, so that it attracts traffic and then fosters a relationship that leads to a sale down the line.

Advice to Aspiring Female Entrepreneurs from Past Amber Grants Winners



Katarina Samardzija
Founder of [Locker Lifestyle](#)

First, my passion stems from the motivation to inspire others. I am not only driven by the hurdles I've overcome, but to encourage and mentor others to seek their goals, as my mentors have done for me.

My passion as an individual and a CEO collide because I am working to inspire other young women in business. At a few local pitch competitions I've attended, there was a serious lack of female founders. So, I recently created the Locker Lifestyle Ambassador Program. I have 30 incredible women who love to live actively, like me, and even aspire to run their own businesses one day. I am working to provide them the tools to stay fit and learn what it takes to build something out of nothing.

The best piece of advice I would give someone looking to start their own business is to leverage the people and resources you have around you. I would not be where I am with the constant support from my family and mentors. Don't be afraid to ask for help or feedback because an entrepreneur is continuously improving!



Rhonda Smith
Owner of [The Skirted Soldier](#)

I continue to live by the Air Force Core Values: Integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all you do!

Along with my core values, I feel that in order to be successful, you have to do your homework. You must know the rules and regulations of the industry. You must know how to make smart business decisions, marketing plans, strategic plans, a solid business model, and stick to it. Reflect back monthly on your accomplishments and if something isn't working, fix it. Try another strategy. Don't give up—work hard/play hard. Starting your own business is hard work and it's totally worth it. Don't be afraid to ask questions, reach out for help and find any/all resources to learn from.

***Throughout my day, I say "we" a lot. I can't fulfill my dream of operating The Skirted Soldier without the support and help of my family. I would be remiss to not include that. They have been amazing (and my husband is retired Air Force).



Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)

Success in online marketing comes down to two things: (1) driving traffic to your website and (2) convincing that traffic to take a desired action—in other words, converting them. That conversion action will be different for different people and different kinds of businesses. Whatever it is, whether it's making a purchase, asking for a price quote, requesting a product demo, or scheduling a consultation, it's critical to the success of your site—and your business.

Therefore, conversion rate (the percentage of total visitors who take the desired action) is perhaps the most important website metric for you to track. Calculating it is fairly simple: if 100 people came to your website yesterday and 2 of them took the desired next step, your conversion rate would be 2%.

Many companies focus only on driving traffic. But in reality, it is easier and usually cheaper to convert existing traffic at a higher rate than it is to drive more traffic. So, focus as much energy on converting your site visitors into customers as you do on driving more people to your site.

Fortunately, there are some relatively easy additions and changes you can make that can have an almost-immediate positive impact.

Earn Trust

Testimonials, reviews, certifications, and other proof elements establish credibility, and credible sources are trusted sources. Visitors are more likely to believe what other customers or independent, third-party reviewers say about you than what you say about yourself, so feature this content prominently. Some ideas include:

- Customer reviews and testimonials
- Awards and certifications
- Industry memberships and affiliations

Be Clear and Concise

It's important that the writing on your website is clear and straightforward so page visitors quickly understand what they can do and why they should do it. Don't make them have to "discover" this information by wading through industry jargon or overly clever writing. Some clarity-building copy techniques include:

- Use bullet to summarize benefits
- Be specific: say "today" instead of "soon"
- Highlight key points with bold, italicized or colored text

Photo: October 2017 winner, Jaqui McCarthy, founder/CEO of [WiGo Trips](#), pictured with her team during the filming of an explainer video for the app.

Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)

Get and Keep Attention

Attention spans vary from person to person, but the quicker your site grabs someone's attention, the more likely you are to see the action you want. There are many ways to do this, including:

- **Skimmable copy.** People don't read every word on your website, so it's important to make your copy easy to skim. Use consistent headers to create a hierarchy of information, bold the first sentence of each paragraph, or state your most important points somewhere in the F-pattern.
- **CTA buttons that pop.** People need to see your call-to-action before they can click it. Pick the color across the color wheel from the page's predominant color for maximum contrast, and try out different sizes, positions, and shapes for the button itself.
- **Limited navigation options.** One you get people to the page where they can convert, try to funnel them through the process without distraction. Unless it's warranted by the complexity of your sale, don't offer them alternate "action" options (for example, "or email us at," or "read our reviews on Yelp").

Reduce Friction

There can be many uncertainties that arise throughout the conversion process and it's important to try to minimize them as much as possible. Some ways to do this include:

- **Only asking for the information you need.** Research consistently shows that, the fewer the number of form fields, the greater the number of form submissions. If you absolutely need to know someone's physical location, ask just for ZIP and figure out city and state from there.
- **Offering free shipping.** Unexpected shipping cost is one of the most common reasons for cart abandonment. Free shipping will smooth the way for the conversion—even if it means increasing your price point slightly.
- **Explaining why you're asking for the information and how you'll use it.** For example, if you ask for a phone number, include a message that says, "For shipping related questions only" to reassure people that you'll only use it if needed.

Focus on Usability

The basics of usability are critical in conversion optimization. All the things that make your site easy and enjoyable to use will also help guide users to take the ultimate desired action. We discuss usability in greater detail elsewhere in this guide, but to summarize: For maximum conversions, your site should be:

- **Fast**
- **Secure**
- **Intuitive**
- **Informative**

TEST TEST TEST

We cannot stress this enough. Test everything and every change you want to make. While we can offer best practices and helpful suggestions all day long, the only way to know if they actually work for you, your website, and your services is by testing them.

Basically, this means creating two versions of a page or section of your site, and then splitting your audience so half sees one version and half sees the other. By measuring total conversions on each version you'll understand which variant is more effective.

A word of caution: You should only test one element at a time. For example, if you create two versions of a form, one with a red CTA button and one with a green button, you'll know based on the results which color converts better. If, however, you also change the text on the button you won't know if it was the color or the text that made the difference.

You really can test just about anything on your website, but some of the elements that tend to yield the greatest results include:

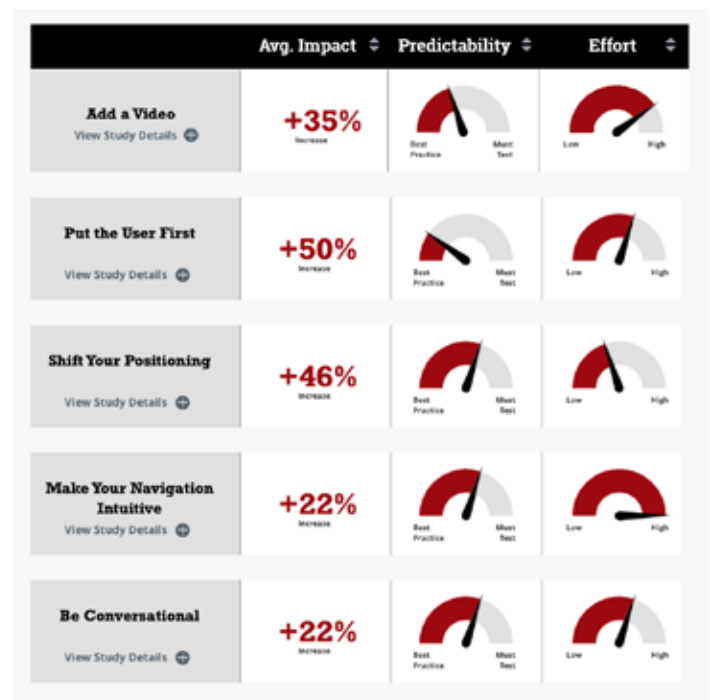
- **Headline copy**
- **Form fields and labels**
- **Form placement on page**
- **CTA button color**
- **CTA wording**

There are a lot of online guides to A/B testing, and there are several tools and services to help you conduct your own testing.

Check out the “Further Reading” section at the end of this guide for a list of some of the best.

Optimizing your conversion rate isn't something you do once and call it a day. It should be an ongoing activity, with constant iteration, testing and assessing. It takes some work, but it can have a dramatic impact on your sales, your customer satisfaction, and your bottom line—so it's certainly worth the effort.

Our partners at [Accelerate Media](#) are SEO and CRO experts. They've even developed a comprehensive [CRO library](#) that provides more detail about a lot of the techniques we've shared here, as well as other tips and tricks they've perfected over the years. Check it out and get started today!



➤ Image: [Accelerate Media's](#) sortable library of CRO practices ranked by average impact, predictability, and amount of effort to implement.



Publicity

Of all the marketing methods you have to choose from, publicity will likely get you the biggest bang for your buck.

So that there's no confusion about what we mean when we use that term, let's clarify: Publicity is the process of persuading the media to produce a story about you. That story, or coverage, can be in the form of a written article in a newspaper, magazine, or on a website; an interview on TV, radio, or podcast; or a captioned photo. In a nutshell, publicity is free media attention.

Publicity is valuable for a couple of reasons: 1) it costs you nothing out of pocket, so the return on your investment can be astronomical and 2) it provides a third-party endorsement of your company or its products or services, which gives you credibility. Credibility, in turn, builds trust. Prospects are more likely to consider doing business with you once they know, like, and trust you (you've probably heard that). And publicity helps fast-track that whole process.

Because publicity helps raise awareness through increased visibility of your business, it can convince prospects to buy from you instead of your competition. Or to hire you when they hadn't been planning on using such services in the first place (maybe because they weren't aware of what you did).

The Direct Marketing Association reports that people need to see information seven times (sometimes referred to as The Rule of 7) before the content is remembered, processed, and a decision is made regarding whether to act on it. Each article or media mention can help inform and educate buyers and get them closer to that seventh time seeing information about your company.

The media, and its many players, typically serve a particular audience. Those audiences are often separated by one or more characteristics. The first is geography.

Some media outlets serve a local audience. These include your daily paper and local TV and radio channels, as well as any local web portals, such as those devoted to news, businesses, or cultural activities in your area.

Others serve a particular demographic group. These may be parenting guides, newspapers for members of the LGBTQ community, radio stations for the politically-minded, or magazines for small business owners.



Photo: Kate Adams, founder of [Kateboards](#) and August 2019 Amber Grant winner, from a [feature article in SDVoyager](#), April 2019.

Publicity

When we talk about the media, we're really talking about the people involved in gathering, reporting on, and sharing information they've collected that they think is of interest to their target audience. There is typically a publisher or producer as well as reporters, writers, and editors who do the research and reporting work. Those are the people you'll want to connect with.

A publicist is a professional whose job it is to convince the media to give attention to their clients—and the clients pay for that service. You can certainly choose to pay a publicist to pursue media coverage on your behalf. Many businesses do. Just be ready to spend several hundred to several thousand dollars a month for that work.

If you're just getting started or are bootstrapping your company, you may want to pursue your own publicity (we're going to tell you how).

Linking Publicity and Sales

Now, some people will argue that since you can't often directly tie publicity to sales, it's not worth doing. Not true. Anything that generates sales for little or no money is probably worth doing.

The good news is that technology is making it much easier to track the sales that result from media mentions and can even place a value on it. This is possible through a number of different types of tools:

- **Website links.** If an online story mentions your company and includes a link to your website, you can often see

where your new traffic has originated and spot the media outlet that drove them there.

- **Reference codes.** If you make a special offer as part of some media coverage, you can create a unique code for a particular article or show. Then, when a buyer uses it, you know exactly where they heard about or saw it based on the code.
- **Google Alerts.** If you begin to see traffic to your website rise and you aren't sure why, a free Google News Alert that you set up using keywords can help. You should have one created to alert you when any mention of your company name or your personal name is made. (Here are instructions for [setting up a Google Alert](#).)

Before these technologies existed, however, companies could place a dollar value on media coverage even if they didn't know whether it resulted in sales. You can do this too. The technique is called equivalent ad value (EAV).

To calculate the EAV of any media coverage, you measure its length and then compare that to what an ad of an equivalent size would have cost. You can find that information in a media kit that most outlets share on their website.

For example, say your company's knit cap was caught on camera for two seconds during the Super Bowl. To air a 10-second spot during that time would have cost \$25,000. So you just earned at least \$5,000 of free publicity ($\$25,000 \times 2/10$).

You can do the same calculations for print coverage, radio mentions, or website references, too.

Keep in mind that editorial coverage, or coverage that isn't part of an ad, can actually be worth much more than paid advertising. Everyone knows that ads are purchased, so buyers can be skeptical of any of the claims made in them. Conversely, editorial coverage is seen as unbiased and more trustworthy, and is, therefore, more valuable.

Types of Media Outlets

There are two main types of media outlets: 1) consumer press and 2) trade press.

Consumer press. Media outlets that serve individual buyers are part of the consumer media. These include local TV stations, daily newspapers, product review websites and guides, local radio stations, and general interest magazines. If the ads displayed are designed to convince individuals to buy products, it's likely the media is part of the consumer press.

Examples of consumer outlets include *Cosmopolitan*, *USA Today*, and *The Today Show*. The topics they cover are generally of interest to a broad cross-section of the population.

Trade press. The trade press serves people who are members of a particular profession or industry, such as doctors, small business owners, or pizza shop franchisees. Their interests are often unique to how they earn

a living and the media coverage is therefore much narrower.

Doctors may read the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, for example, to stay on top of the latest research or what kind of legislation may impact their job. Small business owners may scroll through articles and blog posts at Inc.com or watch TV shows like CNBC's *The Profit* to learn about ideas, technology, and issues that are relevant to running a company.

And pizza shop franchisees may subscribe to *Pizza Today* to stay current on more efficient pizza-making equipment or toppings that are catching on in other parts of the country or world.

The information the trade press gives attention to is usually only of interest to its narrow target audience.

Who Cares?

To determine what kind of publicity will best benefit your company, start by thinking about your target audience. Who will care about the information you share? Possibilities include:

- Customers
- Potential customers
- Your local community
- Fellow entrepreneurs
- Shareholders
- Suppliers

Publicity

Then, think about what media your target audience pays attention to, such as the following:

- Local newspaper
- Local TV coverage
- National TV coverage
- Local trade press
- National trade press

This is important because you want to try to secure media coverage that your target audience will see. There's little point investing time and resources to convince the largest paper in the UK to cover your company if your target audience lives in Detroit.

Reaching Potential Outlets

Once you are clear about who your target audience is and the types of media they pay attention to, it's time to create a list of media targets where you'd like to have your company profiled or covered.

There are a few ways to go about this, using tools and directories as well as going straight to the source. A combination of all of the below may work best:

- **Ask your market.** Find out what media your target market follows by asking them directly. You can do this on a casual basis when you're chatting with them, email a quick two-question survey through SurveyMonkey, or add a question to your online order form about your customers' favorite magazine or website, for example. This can be a

good starting point, especially if you keep hearing the same name(s) repeatedly.

- **Google.** If you're not sure what the media outlets are in your local area or profession, turn on Google. Type in queries like "trade publication for rock collectors" or "magazines for surfers" and see what turns up.
- **Local bookstore or newsstand.** While Google often knows a lot, it can also be helpful to walk into a bookstore and peruse the different magazines and newspapers available. You may come across a publication that speaks to your target audience that you'd never considered, or rule out others based on the content they provide (even though the name suggests it would be perfect).
- **The Writer's Market.** This [annual guide to writing markets](#) was designed for writers but is also a potential treasure trove of publications and websites you may want to target. You can buy the hardcover guide or buy a short-term subscription to the online database and do your own searches for related media. Some of the details provided will be immaterial to you, since you're not trying to sell them a reported story, but the contact information for editors can save you considerable time hunting online to find the right person to connect with.

Once you have at least a partial list of media outlets you'd like to have your business mentioned in, it's time to start connecting with them.

The Two-Pronged Approach

There are, essentially, two ways to pursue publicity. You can take a proactive approach or a reactive approach. And, taking both simultaneously is actually the best strategy of all.

Being Proactive

Being proactive involves designing and disseminating information about your business in the format in which your target media wants to receive it. You can't just jot some notes down on a sheet of paper or email and send it in. Haphazard won't work. Instead, you need to provide information about your organization in the format the media prefers. These formats can include:

- Press releases
- Press kits
- Tip sheets
- Backgrounders
- Bylined articles
- FAQs

There are certain types of information that are best suited to particular formats, so you just need to know which works for which.

Press release

Press releases are the most common publicity tool and they're most often used to make announcements. You generally don't want to announce negative information if

you don't have to, so send out press releases when you have good news to report, such as:

- Honors and awards
- Sales milestones
- New products or services
- New hires

Ohio State has a great overview of [how to format a press release](#).

Press kit

Press kits are typically used to make a major announcement—meaning, it's such a big deal that you need more than a single press release to do it justice. Your kit typically contains several elements that help provide the background and context to explain why your announcement is such a huge deal.

These often include:

- Backgrounder(s)
- Press release
- Corporate fact sheet
- Management bios
- Q&A with CEO
- Images

FitSmallBusiness has a nice overview of [how to prepare a press kit](#) that you may find useful.

Tip sheet

Sometimes you want to get some attention for your business, but you don't have any announcements to make. In that case, you may want to consider creating a tip sheet.

Publicity

A tip sheet generally contains useful information for your target market related to the products or services you sell. It's best if the tips are what the media refers to as "ever-green," meaning they'll help your prospects and customers no matter when they're read.

Here are some examples of different tip sheets companies could create:

- Hair salon: This year's top 5 holiday hairstyles
- A bookstore: The 10 books local CEOs or business leaders are currently reading
- A graphic designer: How to spruce up your logo without breaking the bank.
- A caterer: How to save money while planning a memorable event.
- A realtor: How to make your cozy home feel bigger to buyers.
- A baby gear retailer: How to swaddle your newborn.

The key is to offer information of interest to your target market, without much in the way of self-promotion. Ideally, you'll present yourself as a market expert, not a salesperson.

Here is a [guide to creating a tip sheet](#) from our friends at StartupNation.

Bylined article

In some cases, you may want to pursue the opportunity to write a complete article and submit it to a media outlet. If your name

appears on it as the author, it's called a "by-line" or "bylined article."

Although few consumer publications accept bylined articles, trade journals often will. To find out if a trade journal your audience reads accepts article submission, do a Google search for "article submission" and the name of the publication, blog, or website. Alternatively, you could go to the media website and search the phrase "article submission" to track down any instructions that have been posted about the process.

If you discover a newspaper or journal accepts submissions, draft a brief email outlining what you'd want to write about. You'll want to have read a few back issues to better understand the types of topics they cover to confirm that your idea would fit. If the editor accepts the idea, find out how long it should be and what your deadline is.

Many submissions give the author a free resource box or short section at the end where they can identify themselves and their business and include the website URL. Definitely ask if that's the case with your article, and be sure to send along your information if so.

When the article runs, you want to be sure as many people as possible will see it. So, you may want to pay to have reprints made, share it on your website, and link to it on social media.

All of these proactive methods are designed to help you persuade members of the media to quote you in articles they're writing or broadcast reports they're planning. Your job is to encourage them to

consider using you as a resource in an upcoming story they may prepare.

Being Reactive

Of course, the opposite of being proactive is being reactive. Although the word often has negative connotations, in this particular case, being reactive can be both effective and efficient. That's because being reactive involves finding out what articles, TV reports, and stories reporters are already planning, so that you can suggest yourself as a helpful source.

There's much less persuading and pleading needed in this approach, because the stories are already planned—the reporters and writers are covering the topic—the only question remains who they'll interview.

So, how do you find out what they're working on? The short answer is that there are platforms and tools that exist to connect reporters with potential sources. You need to tap into these tools:

- Editorial calendars
- ProfNet
- Help a Reporter Out

Editorial calendars

Many trade journals create schedules for their upcoming content, called editorial calendars. Typically tied to specific themes, an editorial calendar will generally tell you what article topics are slated for the year's issues. Consumer publications typically do not create editorial calendars.

To find if a media outlet has created one, download their media kit from the website and look for the editorial calendar within it. Or do a search on the website for "editorial calendar."

What you'll see is often a matrix listing all the issues for the coming year and the topics planned underneath each issue title.

For example, the [March/April 2020 issue of University Business](#) magazine, for college and university administrators, includes articles on:

- Admissions
- Safety and security
- Purchasing
- Meeting diversity goals
- Video conferencing

Note that these are fairly broad subjects, so if you have an idea for an interesting story related to campus safety and security that ties in well with your company, for example, you'll want to email the editor, suggest that angle, and offer to serve as a resource for whoever is assigned to write the article. You aren't offering to write it, but to be interviewed as an expert on the topic.

To map out a plan for approaching all of the media outlets you'd like to be mentioned in, list all of your target magazines, newspapers, radio and TV shows, and podcasts, and then jot down the topics and issue dates of greatest interest to you. Reach out to the editor with a suggested article title and offer to be a resource for the writer or reporter assigned to draft it.

Publicity

ProfNet

Hunting down editorial calendars to find future articles for which you might be a fit does take work. Fortunately, there are some tools that make attracting publicity even less work.

ProfNet.com, owned by Cision, is a tool used by reporters and writers in need of sources for their stories. Those sources might be professors, stock analysts, scientists, small business owners, moms, teachers, doctors, or college students, to name a few.

The reporter logs into ProfNet, which is free for them to use, and types up a description of the news piece they're working on and the type of people they want as sources for their story. ProfNet then disseminates that description to all of its subscribers in the hopes that some may be a fit for the reporter's needs.

For example, a *Forbes* writer may want to interview retailers in advance of Black Friday to understand what they've done to make the most of that busy shopping day. Or a writer for *Real Simple* might ask women to share their best beauty tips. The article topics and types of sources needed can vary greatly.

ProfNet primarily serves public relations agencies and larger companies, with a subscription cost that starts at several hundred dollars a year.

Help a Reporter Out (HARO)

Help a Reporter was inspired by ProfNet as a way for smaller companies to get in

on some of the publicity opportunities that were out there and to serve journalists and writers who really wanted to interview ordinary people or startups, neither of which could afford ProfNet.

HARO, as it is now more commonly known, is free. Sure, there are some premium features you may decide to pay for, but you can also stick with the free version which delivers three email digests every weekday, each filled with dozens of planned articles in need of interviewees.

ProfNet and HARO represent two ends of the spectrum of "journalist matchmaking services" in terms of cost and accessibility. There are now several players in the field, offering similar services at a variety of price points.

- **HARO**: FREE
- **PitchRate**: FREE
- **SourceBottle**: FREE
- **KITI** (formerly MediaKitty): starting at \$89.85/year
- **MuckRack**: starting at \$99.00/year
- **ProfNet**: starting at \$1,650+/year
- **PitchBox**: starting at \$1,800/year
- **GroupHigh**: starting at \$5,000/year

The key to success with these tools is to keep your eye out for any positive story for which you might be a fit. It doesn't matter if the article has nothing to do with your business as long as the information you share would be useful and positive; your bigger goal is to increase awareness of your com-

Outbound vs. Inbound Marketing

pany or brand. And remember, don't ever complain or trash talk someone else as part of an interview. You can only damage your business, not help it.

So whether the article is on strategies for attracting top talent or your go-to pen, you want all the coverage you can get.

Respond to any opportunity for which you are truly a fit and briefly tell the reporter your thoughts on their topic. This demonstrates that you'd be a good interview; no one wants to waste their time on a call with someone who really doesn't know what they're talking about.

Spend a few minutes every day skimming the leads that come in and immediately respond with the information the reporter is looking for. In general, the faster you respond to those opportunities, the better your odds of landing an interview.

The result of all these publicity-seeking activities is to shine a spotlight on you and your company so that potential customers learn about you and what you do and will be more likely to buy from you when they have a need for your product or services.

Outbound Marketing Examples

Mass media advertising (television, print, radio), publicity, trade shows, direct mail, cold calling.

Inbound Marketing Examples

Search engine optimization, pay-per-click advertising, blogging & content offers, email marketing & drip campaigns.

There are two primary types of marketing strategy: outbound and inbound. While the goals of both are to generate interest and encourage sales, how those goals are achieved varies.

Outbound Marketing - The Megaphone

- Trying to find customers
- Broadcasting your message to as many people as possible
- Pushing a product onto an audience

Outbound marketing involves reaching out to a large number of people in an effort to create broad interest in a product or service. Usually, it's a one-way conversation with very general information about the product, sent with the hope that someone who receives the message is interested in buying.

Inbound Marketing - The Magnet

- Trying to be found by customers
- Delivering your message to people who are interested in the topic
- Pulling a selective audience toward a product

Inbound marketing focuses on creating quality content that draws people toward a product or service, usually through on-line search. Whether it's an organic or paid search engine result, that content appears because it's relevant to the search performed. Therefore you're only marketing to people who are researching or shopping for what you're selling.



Advertising

Although publicity may get you the biggest bang for your buck, it's also the marketing tactic over which you have the least control. That is, what the writer or reporter chooses to say about your business is totally up to them. Sometimes, what actually appears in print or on TV is very different than the article you envisioned.

That's not the case with advertising, however. Since you pay for advertising, you completely control what is said and how it is expressed. You also decide when your ad runs, in terms of the print issue or TV show, and how large or long it is time-wise.

You also don't have to wonder if you came across as stuffy or if you explained yourself clearly enough during an interview since you have the opportunity to review and approve every ad being produced before it appears.

Where to Advertise

There are many different types of advertising and places where you can place ads. Whether they are a good deal for you will depend on whether your target market pays attention to the media featuring the ad and what the cost is.

For example, placing a full-page ad in your local newspaper announcing a major national award might be a great deal if your audience is local and they all read the paper. That would be a very efficient way to spread the word.

If your target audience is teenage boys who are obsessed with Fortnite, however, the best place for you to advertise, if possible, is within the game. If you can't buy in-game ads, then investigate ads in *Fortnite* magazines or with leading players' YouTube channels.

The best ads provide information of interest to your target market when and where they are open to receiving it.

Various Types of Ads

There are many kinds of ads you can place, including:

- **Print** (found in a newspaper, magazine, or newsletter)
- **Bill stuffers** (small flyers that are inserted in bills or other materials you receive in the mail)
- **Radio** (recorded or announcer-read ads that play on local, streaming national, or Sirius radio stations)
- **TV** (video ads that are recorded and run on particular channels or during certain shows that you choose)

Advertising

- **Digital Display** (banner ads on websites, such as the banners that run across the top of certain sites)
- **Digital Search** (ads that appear with search results in search engines like Google or Bing; read more on this subject below)
- **Social media** (you can now pay to have social media posts on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn appear for specific audiences)
- **Outdoor** (such as billboards and road-side signs)
- **Cinema** (still or animated ads that run before movies begin)

Keep in mind that a single ad, or a one-time running of an ad, rarely makes a difference. Remember the Rule of 7? Your ad needs to be seen or heard multiple times before it begins to register and spark a response in your prospect or customer, which means that you need to plan an ad campaign, not a one-and-done single occurrence.

For this reason, the size of your budget may determine what you can do. Advertising is often the most expensive marketing tactic available, so it generally shouldn't be the first one you try. Once you have a steady revenue stream and you've invested in other marketing tactics, you might consider some advertising. But don't feel you have to; some companies never advertise—Krispy Kreme, Lululemon, and Rolls Royce, to name just a few.



➤ Image: The iconic World War II print ad campaign featuring Rosie the Riveter aimed at recruiting women for the defense industries.

Digital Search Advertising

Similar to SEO, digital search is a form of advertising that generates traffic to your website based on keywords that people type into a search engine. While a well optimized site will improve your rankings, it may take longer than you'd like to get the results you're after. This is where you may consider investing in digital search. With digital search, you can start generating clicks to your website the same day you publish your ads. This is a great feeling when you're ready to start advertising your product or service and you want instant results.

Pay-Per-Click

Digital search, also known as PPC (pay-per-click) advertising, works by charging you every time someone clicks on your ad. This metric is called CPC (cost-per-click). The cost per clicks vary widely depending on your industry and the quality of your ads. Google looks at how relevant your ad is in relation to the user's search query and then assigns you a quality score.

The main search engine that offers this type of advertising is Google. Their platform is called Google Ads. If you're starting out for the first time, you can request a coupon worth \$100 in free clicks, which will give you the leeway to launch your first set of ads and test the waters without having to risk much. Simply call Google Ads support at 877-906-7955.

How to Run Your Own PPC Campaign

If you're planning on running your own Google Ads campaign, Google offers free training resources for you to jump in and learn. There are three main concepts you'll need to understand:

- **Keywords** are words and phrases that people will type into a google search that will trigger your ad. If you sell running shoes, and someone types in "Saucony high support running shoes" then your ad could appear on the search results page. You'll need to understand the different match types of keywords.
- **Ad Copy** is your chance to shine. Ad copy gives you 30 characters to state your offer. Plus an additional 90 characters to describe your offering. You'll want to boil down the essence of your product or service and write compelling messaging that will attract people to click your ad.
- **Landing Page** is the place where people end up once people click your ad. You'll want to choose your landing page carefully and make sure it is relevant to what people are searching for. For example if you sell 10 different types of soap, and someone clicks on an ad that is about your organic soap, don't send them to your home page; send them directly to the organic soap page of your site.

How to Choose A PPC Agency

If you don't have the time or desire to monitor your digital search campaign, you could consider partnering with a digital marketing agency to run it for you. There are a lot of digital and PPC agencies out there. They'll all have a basic understanding of Google Ads and how to optimize a campaign, but many just follow the same standard playbook without taking into consideration your specific goals. So it's important to vet an agency carefully before hiring them. Here are some important factors to consider:

- **Track Record.** Have they produced results for other clients? Review their case studies and ask to speak to some current clients.

- **Longevity.** How long have they been managing digital search accounts? This is an ever-changing field; an agency that's been doing it a long time has successfully navigated the many changes Google can throw at advertisers.
- **Reporting.** How do they present performance data to you? How often? Just reporting on how many clicks you got and what it cost you isn't useful. You want your agency to show you which of those clicks led to conversions on your site; your ultimate cost per conversion is far more important than your cost per click.
- **Pricing.** You'll consider various pricing structures. There are usually four different types that you may encounter: performance based pricing, a percentage of monthly ad spend, a flat monthly rate, or hourly. There's no right or wrong answer, there really is no one-size-fits all. It comes down to what you feel most comfortable with and how well you feel the agency aligns with your objectives.

Advice to Aspiring Female Entrepreneurs from Past Amber Grants Winners



Kate Adams
Founder of [Kateboards](#)

There are several things I'd like to share:

I will say that the idea of not starting Kateboards scared me much more than starting it. It might be good to ask yourself if you feel the same way about your idea/business.

Don't underestimate the importance of taking excellent care of your health. Without good health, running a business (or doing much of anything) is even more challenging.

Have a plan for what you want to create and accomplish. Do your homework. Ensure that what you're pursuing is something you truly value and feel connected to. Don't shy away from your dream, because you think someone else is doing it better. There is a lot of noise out there—come back to your center. Do it your way. Stay on your own path and trust that what you're doing is worth it.

Don't be afraid to ask the big, bold questions. Encourage and support those around you.

"Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage." —Anaïs Nin.



Elena Mascherine
Owner of [Love Again Local](#)

FOCUS, FOCUS and FOCUS! You can do anything if you can focus on your idea, know your strengths and run with it! I have always embraced the **bold** and *simple* concept with everything I have done. It's so easy to get distracted and get off course.

Opening a restaurant has *many* parts to it. There is finding a location, negotiating a fair lease agreement, designing the space, fitting out the kitchen and buying the equipment, getting proper permits, licensing, and setting up your business as an "entity." There is hiring staff, paperwork and more paperwork. There is menu development, menu pricing, and food ordering. If you don't focus on one thing at a time, you can get swallowed up. But if you convince your stubborn self that you can do it, then you will do it.





Resources

References

All of the resources mentioned in this WomensNet guide are listed below alphabetically for your convenience:

[**BNI**](#) - Networking

[**Caldwell**](#) – Mailing list broker

[**Constant Contact**](#) – Digital newsletter provider

[**Domain Broker**](#) – URL procurement

[**Door Hangers**](#) – Grassroots marketing tool

[**Google Alert**](#) – Keyword monitoring

[**HARO**](#) – Publicity opportunities

[**LeadsPlease**](#) – Mailing list broker

[**Mailchimp**](#) – Digital newsletter provider

[**Moo**](#) – Business card designer

[**MOZ**](#) – Keyword research tool

[**Panera**](#) – Bulletin board location

[**Press kit formatting**](#) – Formatting instructions

[**Press release formatting**](#) – Formatting instructions

[**ProfNet**](#) – Publicity opportunities

[**SEMrush**](#) – Keyword research tool

[**Tip sheet**](#) – Publicity tool

[**Trader Joe's "Fearless Flyer"**](#) – Newsletter example

[**Vistaprint**](#) – Business card designer

[**Writer's Market 2020**](#) – Publication research tool

Resources

Further Reading

There are an abundance of online resources, especially for digital marketing topics. Many of these are blogs and articles published by platforms that offer paid subscriptions for automating digital marketing

tactics and testing. So while the content may be self-serving at times, these are the industry thought leaders. We've culled some of our "go-to" sites and resources below, also listed in alphabetical order.

[Alexa](#)

[Conversion Rate Experts](#)

[ConversionXL](#)

[CopyHackers](#)

[Crazy Egg](#)

[eMarketer](#)

[HotJar](#)

[Hubspot](#)

[Invision](#)

[Marketing Experiments](#)

[Neil Patel](#)

[Optimizely](#)

[QuickSprout](#)

[Search Engine Journal](#)

[Search Engine Land](#)

[SEMrush](#)

[Unbounce Blog](#) and [Unbounce Resources](#)


[UserTesting](#)

[VWO Blog](#) and [VWO Tools](#)

[Wider Funnel](#)

[Wordstream](#)

[Yoast](#)



We sincerely wish you
good luck on your future
business goals.

We hope this guide will
help you effectively
grow your business and
achieve your dreams.

—*The WomensNet Team*



ambergrantsforwomen.com