

5 basic strategies for effective website optimisation

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Introduction:

The use of the Internet permeates through all sectors of Australian society, for strategic businesses this is a great opportunity to tap into a highly profitable marketplace, thus realising an additional and lucrative revenue stream for sustained growth.

Recent figures from the [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) (ABS) indicate a significant increase in online transactions between businesses from 2004 to 2006; online activities between firms grew by 40% to \$57 billion. There is every indication that this trend will continue as the number of Australian companies recognise the value of doing business online.

Small to medium enterprises (SME's) can actively compete with larger firms online due to the realistic costs associated with developing a business structure and marketing goods and services online; additionally, smaller firms can also market themselves online as well, if not better, than corporate entities as it matches the flexible and responsive nature of SME's.

Due to the constant pressures that SME business operators are faced with, online representation of their business is not at the forefront of their minds; marketing a business online can seem to be overly technical and require continual monitoring. This article lays out 5 simple steps to start business managers on the right path; it is also advised that expert support is sought after to provide best practices and the most cost effective online marketing strategies.



Figure1: 5 basic strategies for effective website optimisation

The 5 strategies can be grouped into 2 distinct classes; external steps assist in spreading your brand via external sources such as Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising as well as linking your site to bigger sites, while internal steps focus on activities to do with the business website, thus increasing the popularity of your site to the market.

External Strategies:

- 1. Create a Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising campaign:** [Google AdWords](#), as well as other similar services such as [Yahoo Search Marketing](#) and Microsoft's equivalent are typically where many business owners start. Without proper management of advertising campaigns, costs can blow out, which often leaves a negative impression of online marketing, sometimes resulting in business operators abandoning internet marketing completely. Some basic rules can be applied to minimise this risk:
 - **Develop targeted keywords:** create keywords that directly relate to your products and services, these will be invariably cheaper and will have less competing business.
 - **Position your adverts:** price your keywords toward the top, but not number 1; an advert at position 2-6 will be almost as effective as the top ranked, however make sure your adverts are returned on the first page.
 - **Create a variety of adverts with calls to action:** with a limited word count in the adverts this can be a challenge, create a number of adverts and monitor their effectiveness regularly.
- 2. Develop external links:** Link your sites to higher ranking sites that are associated with your offerings, this can be a professional organisation or technical body that will boost your position by means of association. Links to your site from higher ranking sites are a very powerful vehicle to increase the natural standing of your site compared to competitors. Marketing campaigns can also be purchased from many online sources, however make sure the programs are targeted to the market that you want to promote as well.

Internal Strategies:

- 3. Use targeted keywords and metatags:** Keywords are possibly the most effective way to describe your business offerings online, they can be delivered via a number of methods. PPC campaigns require accurate and targeted keywords to be successful, the same keywords need also to be added to websites to describe them in the best way possible. Metatags are used within the HTML code of the site to allow search engines (Google, Yahoo, etc) to index or categorise the site, again the keywords need to accurately describe the products and services on offer.
- 4. Create relevant content:** Just like keywords are used for search engines to index sites accurately, so is the importance of relevant keywords within the content of the website. Calls to action and the ability to facilitate a purchase decision at every opportunity is very important; concise and clear copy need to provide accurate, detailed information, but also delivered in short blocks of text that are easily readable. Consider a number of linked pages that firstly introduce a product or service and then link to subsequent pages that offer further detail, ending in possibly a technical paper.
- 5. Add an XML sitemap:** The development of an XML sitemap is an essential vehicle for making search engines list your website in the easiest possible way, describing your business and offerings in a formalised method and thus making search engines understand website content better. Search engine 'bots' or 'crawlers' regularly comb the Internet to make sure search results are accurate, using an XML sitemap facilitates this, thereby getting your site positioned in the best way.

Other activities at a glance:

The Internet is an ever changing environment and as a result there are new methods to marketing online almost on a daily basis, again reinforcing the need to utilise an eMarketing professional to make sure business websites are as effective as possible. Below are a few additional points to consider, however this is just the tip of the online marketing iceberg:

- **Align all advertising together:** Print, Internet, TV, radio and other campaigns produce the best effect when an integrated, central message is repeated throughout all media; this doesn't have to cost a lot if the correct media mix is used according to the demographic being targeted.
- **Create a range of information resources for your site:** Fact sheets, white papers or even articles that are hosted on the business website are an effective way of positioning; becoming a knowledge domain authority is a great marketing tool, but also assists in boosting sites in search engine result pages as they are geared to look for factual information across the web.
- **Consider new communication methods:** Blogs, RSS feeds and Podcasts are still very new vehicles to get marketing messages across. However depending on your target market demographic they may be very effective.
- **Monitor traffic statistics regularly:** Up until recently this was sometimes a long and labour intensive task, however there are cost effective and even free tools that can be used that offer an up-to-the minute snapshot of visitor traffic.

About Jalapeno eBusiness Consulting:

[Jalapeno eBusiness Consulting](#) was developed to assist small to medium businesses to market themselves globally via the Internet, empowering companies to reach out into the global marketplace and compete head-on with multinational firms. The company offers a diverse range of cost effective services at realistic prices, thus enabling business operators to focus on building their business growth. Jalapeno eBusiness Consulting is located in Ballarat, Australia with clients within Victoria and Tasmania.

About the author:

[Craig Allan](#) draws from over 20 years of professional experience from the Retail, Hospitality and Academic domains as well as traditional and eBusiness Marketing industries. He has worked in several management roles, including Customer Service Manager, Function Chef, Duty Manager, Bar Manager, University Course Co-ordinator, Specialist Systems Consultant and Global Marketing Manager. He has been employed by such firms as IBM, the University of Ballarat, Novotel, Myer Stores, Sparx Systems, Lemonthyme Lodge and the Convent Gallery; Craig has a Bachelors Degree in Information Technology and an Honours Degree in eBusiness.