

How to Make a Successful Website: 10 Critical Factors



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What does it take to make a successful website?

For most businesses and brands, it won't happen quickly or easily.

It will take time, effort, and resources.

But that doesn't mean you'll need a huge budget to effectively compete.

A successful website is monitored, measured, and improved over time.

Your website is what will help you stay top of mind – and tops in your respective industry.

Focus on these 10 critical factors for your website to be successful.

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1. Clearly Define Your Goals

While we should always start a web or marketing project with goals, we need to consider both ourselves and the user with our website.

The site can only generate traffic, leads, and sales when we make sure we have what our target audience wants and we can deliver it for them in a satisfactory way.

Defining goals for both your organization and your user should be easy to do.

If the goals don't align, then you'll likely have a problem where you'll seek to make profits yet not be able to deliver the product and experience your audience seeks.

It is painful to invest time and money into a site to learn that everyone is [bouncing](#) and no one wants or understands why they should buy from you as you focused too much on your end goals and not theirs.

2. Earn the Trust of Your Audience

Be clear and transparent in what you are offering and what you want your audience to do.

Know what motivates them and what you're strong at.

Leverage that.

Too often websites lack the emotional or credibility connections needed to [earn trust](#) and the sale.

A prime example that I see often are ecommerce sites (and even service company websites) that lack an [About Us page](#) that has substance.

Users want to know who they are doing business with and not that you're just another commodity site in the space.

If you can't put names, pictures, culture, philosophy, or some type of story on your website, you'll lack the ability to state what you're about.

Customers care about your intentions.

Even cost-conscious shoppers simply looking for the lowest price need to feel like you're a legit business before plugging in credit card details.

3. Find Ways to Stand Out

Differentiation is key.

You can still use a website template and look different.

By customizing imagery and styles tailoring them to your brand, you can stand out.

This goes along with earning trust.

When you tell your story and create factors like price, quality, customer service, what you do with profits, how you give back, etc., you create the bond needed to

stand out from the rest of the templated sites selling the same products or services.

4. Focus on Usability & User Experience

Make it easy for your audience to get to the content they want.

If you're a viral video website, land users on video pages.

If you have products or services, make sure that users can get to the desired page with the fewest clicks possible.

In addition to having intuitive main menu navigation optimized for mobile and desktop experiences, think about the placement of your search box and other cues to get to popular content.

Don't assume that a user is willing to click several times to get to the latest cat video or the hot selling product that everyone wants.

5. Remember the SEO Fundamentals

This seems like a basic thing, but don't forget about [SEO](#).

At minimum, know [how the search engines crawl and index](#) your content and ensure the basic on-page factors are optimized.

There are lots of ways to make this easy, including through [plugins](#) and semantic coding.

SEO has [technical aspects](#) and goes beyond on-page, but if you can at least ensure your content can be indexed (and is being indexed) and that you are customizing all of the [on-page elements](#) to literally represent what your content is and is about, then you can win half the battle.

6. Optimize Your Landing Pages

[Landing pages](#) are great tools for campaigns.

This includes PPC ads, email promotions, inbound marketing efforts, and more.

Having a system that allows for quick creation and customization of landing pages is critical for success if you're doing any marketing.

Make sure that your system gives you control and that your site allows you to set indexing status, change navigation, and separate these pages from the normal navigation paths if you're using them for dedicated campaigns outside of navigable normal website content.

7. Use Your Analytics

Another that seems like a given, but go beyond just installing [Google Analytics](#) on your site.

You need information on demographics, [goal completions](#), and more that you can't get unless you take a few quick steps to set them up.

Don't assume that you can set it and forget it and go back months down the road and see how things are going.

You don't have to log into Google Analytics every day.

At the very least after getting it customized, set up some reports and alerts that automatically come to you so you have the pulse of what is working and what isn't and can adjust on the fly rather than reacting when it is too late.

8. Learn from Heat Mapping

Heat mapping and in-page analytics tools are great sources of additional information on the user experience.

Many of the aspects that are critical to website success are UX related.

Tools like Lucky Orange (I'm a customer and fan – not a compensated endorser) give you insight into how far users are scrolling, where their mouse tracks, how much of a form they complete before bailing, where they get stuck on your website, and a lot more things that Google Analytics can't show you.

By monitoring this level of detail you can fix UX hangups and further fine-tune the site to see success.

9. Make Sure Your Website Works All the Time

Uptime is often all we think about when it comes to making sure our websites work.

However, you may not notice issues like JavaScript not firing, buttons not working, a browser-specific bug, or mobile experience issue without the right protocols in place.

By just watching sales data and monitoring uptime, you may miss that a segment of your audience is hitting a roadblock.

Many users won't seek you out and contact you when they can't buy or can't get to the content they want – they just leave.

Make sure that your code is functional and cross-browser tested.

10. Listen & Learn Continuously

Don't assume.

We're good and optimizing and learning along the way with marketing. SEO is an ongoing process that includes fine-tuning.

Don't let your website be a static place that has a different management philosophy.

Listen to [your target audience](#) and users and learn.

Do this through [social media](#), customer service channels, analytics, heat mapping, and any data and touchpoints you have.

Be active in seeking feedback and ways to improve so your website is an asset that grows and evolves as your business does.

Conclusion

While most of the aspects that lead to a successful website tie into user experience and your brand, it is important to understand and leverage technology, insights, and feedback to optimize and refine your site over time.

Remember, optimization isn't just confined to SEO.

More Web Development Resources:

- [50 Questions You Must Ask to Evaluate the Quality of Your Website](#)
- [SEO-Friendly Hosting: 5 Things to Look For in a Hosting Company](#)
- [How to Choose a Domain Name That Will Stand the Test of Time](#)

CATEGORY

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