

# *Websites That Work*

The Secrets of  
Successful Websites

*by Ron Giles*



# Websites That Work

## Introduction

There are many compelling reasons to establish a website. One of the biggest attractions is the trend from physical shopping to shopping online. The following are some statistics on the Internet in New Zealand.

**74.9% of the New Zealand population are Internet users** (285.5% increase from 2000).  
NZ has the 3rd highest internet penetration rate in the world

**95% of adult New Zealand internet users research goods or services online**  
**66% of them made an online purchase**

The average amount spent online was NZ\$774  
(Australian's average spend is lower at A\$570)

66% of online spend was for products  
94% of total product online spend by Kiwis was on NZ sites

34% of total spend online was for services (airline tickets, accommodation, car hire, movie/event tickets, insurances, mortgages, loans etc)  
69% of total services spend online was on NZ sites

The most popular single item of purchase was tickets for flights

The main reasons given for shopping online are:

- Ease of comparison of products and prices over the Internet
- Availability of a wider selection of products
- Avoiding crowds and ability to shop 24/7
- Reduced Internet prices for certain items.

93% of those who purchased online were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience

(Extract from a paper prepared by Zeald.com Research Staff)

And if you are thinking, well I don't want to sell stuff online, then this statistic from a recent survey is pretty scary:

**75% of New Zealanders judge a company/organisation by their website.**

So how is your company website looking? Happy to be judged as a company by the quality of your website? If not, read on .....

## Section 1 – Website Fundamentals

The Internet is the most fantastic development of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Nothing has changed the way we communicate, do business, interact with others as much as the Internet. We can shop 24/7 from anywhere; we can research any topic at a push of one button anytime; we can access services from suppliers around the world; we can share our lives with our friends around the world. So how are we going to make some money or use this phenomenon to achieve our goals. Let's look first at a shopping site – what we term an E-Commerce website. First question is:

### **What are you going to sell?**

Unless you have something unique, your product will be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of products available online. You need to start with a good product or service that has an existing market. Many Internet gurus insist that selling information, not a product, is the way to make real money from the 'net. So let us look at that option first.

One of the best examples is Corey Rudl who was the President (and Founder) of The Internet Marketing Center and author of the best-selling course, *Insider Secrets to Marketing Your Business on the Internet*. Rudl led the way when it came to developing practical, cost-effective internet marketing strategies for the home-based Internet entrepreneur. He claimed to have made hundreds of thousands of dollars selling his e-booklet *How to save money buying a car*. Rudl's formula for success was to use the ease of changing a website to continually change the wording, price or style of the offered product. The whole point of this was to see what works best.

Special offers can be made for a limited time and the results of that campaign assessed so that the most successful offers can be repeated. This is all part of producing a website that has a good conversion rate. That is the whole secret to Internet success. It is not all about attracting visitors or achieving a high Google ranking. The way to make real money is to have a high conversion rate.

There are several distinct stages in an e-business transaction:

#### **1. Attracting the customer**

This is done by establishing a presence on the Internet by putting up a website. The more attractive (or higher ranking) the website, the more potential customers it will draw. The sole aim is to sell your product – don't lose sight of that prime goal.

#### **2. Making a sale**

The easier you can make the web transaction, the more likely the customer will complete the purchasing process. If they get halfway through and find it all too difficult, they will abort the process and head off into the ether. It is a horrifying stat that on many E-Commerce websites, 50% of visitors bail out at the Shopping Cart stage. You want to maximise your conversion of a website visitor into a sale. The average e-business website, worldwide, has a conversion rate of 2-3%. If you can improve that conversion percentage, your profits will surge. As Matt

Coutts of Google says ".....*the smart website owners are not just necessarily looking at the rankings. They are looking at conversion. It's great if you're ranking for a phrase but unless that leads to sales that doesn't help you very much. The challenge is not to pay so much attention to ranking. Pay attention to traffic, pay attention to conversions and keep building good content.*"

### **3. Retaining your customer**

This is best achieved by analysing the web transaction and extracting information about the customer's preferences so you can sell them similar products/services in the future. For example, if you are selling wine on your website and you discover the customer buys mainly Chardonnay, then you can target them in the future with 'Chardonnay Specials'.

Certainly the costs of setting up an e-business can be much less than a business requiring offices or retail space or a factory. And yes, some entrepreneurs are making a fortune out of selling online. But it is not as easy as just setting up a website and sitting back to watch the orders roll in.

Your website should be considered an online business rather than simply a site consisting of a few brochure pages. Many websites stand alone with no bricks and mortar businesses to back them up and are hugely successful. One of the best examples of this is my client Merino Kids. They have no physical shop but are doing millions online. So much so, that they were the 7<sup>th</sup> fastest growing company in NZ in 2008.

But many other companies have found that the online business can also be combined very effectively with physical shops and enterprises. Every cent you spend on your site should be geared towards generating a good return on investment.

If you don't feel that you're able to do your website justice or you don't have the time to write good content regularly, then it is wise to employ the services of professional website content writers. Use an experienced website copywriters and you will see the money spent returned by way of improved conversion rates.

### **What makes a Website Successful?**

The secret to a successful website is the conversion rate. David Kelly, CEO of Zeald.com, describes this part of an e-business as *success metrics*. He believes every business on the planet follows a very simple formula which determines how much money the business generates. That formula is as follows:

**Leads (Enquiries) X Conversion Rate = Number of Sales X Average Sale = Revenue**

This formula shows us that the money a business generates is directly determined by:

- The number of enquiries or leads that the business receives
- The rate at which it converts those enquiries (the conversion rate) to sales
- The amount of money the customer spends each time they buy from the organisation (the average sale)

Below are two different types of website where the key success metrics can be examined to determine their success.

### **Sales Focused Website**

The performance of a 'sales' focused website is governed by the following formula.

$$\text{Website Visits} \times \text{Conversion Rate} = \text{Number of Sales} \times \text{Average Sale} = \text{Revenue}$$

As you can see from this formula, there are three key success metrics that determine how successful a website focused on 'sales' will be – those three things are:

- The number of visits that the website receives
- The rate at which it converts those visits (the conversion rate) into sales.
- The amount of money the buyer spends each time they buy from the website (the average sale)

### **Enquiries Focused Website**

The performance of an enquiries focused website is governed by an even simpler formula.

$$\text{Website Visits} \times \text{Conversion Rate} = \text{Number of Enquiries}$$

As you can see from this formula, there are only two key success metrics that determine how successful a website focused on enquiries will be – those two things are:

- The number of visits that the website receives
- The rate at which it converts those visits (the conversion rate) into enquiries.

### **Improving Success Metrics**

Here is a summary of some of the ways David Kelly suggests can improve success metrics on a website:

#### **Ways to attract visitors to your website:**

Email signatures (automatic footer/sign-off)

Search engine optimisation

Promotion of website on business cards, brochures, letterheads, signage, etc

Promotion of website on physical advertising & promotions

Email marketing

Online banner advertising

Website Directory listings

Search engine advertising (pay per click)

Affiliate marketing.

## **Website aspects that improve Conversion Rates**

Fast-loading website  
User-friendly website layout  
Professional, personalised website design  
Strong sales proposition  
Compelling sales copy  
Attention-grabbing headlines  
Strong Calls to Action  
Clear Conversion Pathways  
Simple Sales Process  
Convincing testimonials & references  
Riveting Case Studies  
Solid Guarantee  
Clear terms and conditions  
Privacy policy  
Website Security Assurance.

## **Methods of increasing the Average Sale amount**

Cross-sells  
Up-sells  
Specials and Promotions  
Wish-lists  
Volume pricing  
Gift vouchers  
Best sellers  
New items  
2-for-1 packages.

If sufficient attention is paid to the above factors, then a successful website is assured.

**An example is a Zeald.com client, Meat Cuisine, that is owned by Terry Lillis, a butcher with 30 years' experience. Meat Cuisine's shop in Panmure supplies the hotel and restaurant industry as well as the company's retail clients. The company approached Zeald.com, when its first website failed to meet expectations.**

**In its brief to Zeald.com, Meat Cuisine identified several key objectives for the website as well as barriers that might dissuade people from ordering. The website was required to:**

- 1. Ensure that Meat Cuisine product, (restaurant-quality meat at supermarket prices delivered direct to the home), became more widely available.**
- 2. Be visually appealing and show attractive and appetising images of cooked product.**
- 3. Be fast to download.**

**Customers had to be reassured that it was safe and practical to have a perishable product delivered to their home and that the meat they were receiving was fresh. Plus, they needed to appreciate that it was not cost-effective for Meat Cuisine if their customers ordered very small quantities. To overcome these barriers, a measured**

**campaign was conducted for the first two months after the site went live. This was structured so that:**

- **During the first month, no delivery fee was charged. This was to encourage people to order and to gain their confidence (the delivery fee is usually \$10).**
- **In the second month, purchases of more than \$50 (the average value per sale during the first month) were delivered free, and customers who bought more than three items were given a bacon pack.**

**Terry is happy to reveal that he sold \$50,000 of meat via his website in December 2005. The website ploy of offering free shipping for all orders over \$50 saw his average sale catapult from \$43 to \$74. Why so much more than the \$50 threshold? Who knows – maybe the customers just decided while they were over the free delivery cutoff, they may as well have a kilo of fillet steak as well. Such is the success of Terry’s Internet marketing campaign that it raises the question - does he need an actual physical shop? Amazon does not need one so maybe Terry can do the same. The Meat Cuisine website has met all the budgeted objectives and has encouraged people to disregard any barriers they may have had to purchasing meat online.**

The greatest advantage of Internet marketing is that you can try something different at no cost and see how it works. Try a lower price for a week and see if sales improve. Try a higher price for a week and see whether you were too cheap before and the customer thought you were selling rubbish. Try a ‘two for one’ offer. Test whether free delivery pulls in the punters. It is simply a matter of a quick change to your compelling sales offer and then checking to see if it worked. When you get a successful result, you can focus on that price or offer and reap the benefits.

It is even now possible with software from companies like Zeald.com to have an A/B split offer. Half your visitors will be directed to a page that offers your product for, say, \$19.95 and the other half will be directed to a page that offers the product at \$29.95. After a week or so, you can easily see which pricing worked best and make that your permanent offer.

## **Section 2: Website Strategy**

### **Establishing a Website Strategy**

In the early days of the Internet, people just threw together a website and loaded it on the 'net. Some even succeeded in making money. But now, with an estimated 160,000,000 websites out there, that approach will no longer work. You need to have a well-planned strategy so you know what will make your website successful. Basically this is the same process as you would go through to prepare a Business Plan for your business or enterprise.

### **Strategy Overview**

#### **Review the Economic Situation**

Prepare a short summary of how the anticipated economic situation will affect you and your website customers? Are they growing their business or cutting back? What are their prospects for the coming year? Will the government introduce any new measures that might affect your business or that of your customers? Are there legal, social or political developments that might affect your business?

#### **Strengths & weaknesses**

Carry out a S.W.O.T. analysis – consider your:

Strengths  
Weaknesses  
Opportunities  
Threats

This analysis is usually broken down into two segments:

#### **Internal Analysis**

These are factors that fall under your control such as:

- your Product Range
- your resources including personal capabilities
- your financial position
- your market positioning.

#### **External Analysis**

These are factors outside of your control such as:

- your customers
- your competitors
- environment
- government policy
- raw material prices

For example, when analysing your website competitors, you should ask questions like these - how are they doing? Are they increasing their market share? Who are the improvers? Why? What are they doing better than you? Where are you likely to lose business? How much

might be lost?

Other issues for a SWOT Analysis:

Margins - how can you improve your margins? Should you be concentrating on your better yielding business? (the ones with less work but better margins).

Costs – are you doing all you can do reduce your costs? Can you buy better? Are you using the leverage power your company has? Have you introduced all the cost recovery measures possible?

Customer Service – how are you perceived by the market? Where do you have to improve? When? What degree of customer service will your website customers expect? Have you got your fulfilment process sorted out?

Standing - what is your company profile like? Does it need to be higher? Do you need to a company P.R. campaign? How are you going to establish trust and credibility with a website visitor who only knows you through the website?

Agents/distributors/retailers (if appropriate) – Will you need separate sections of the website for your wholesalers? Will these sections need to be hidden from the public because you have different prices/discounts/quantity breaks for your wholesalers?

Staff – what is your staffing situation? Are they trained sufficiently to manage the website? Or to handle sales/enquiries generated by the website? If not, where do they need more training? When and by who? Internal or external? What external visits are needed/wanted/justified (e.g. to your website developer)? What are your ‘Service Standards’? Define the deadlines for documentation, reporting, invoicing, for each department. These should be agreed by all your staff and clearly displayed as your department’s Website Service Standards.

Team Building for the staff involved in the website project – what are you planning to do to increase team spirit? When? Do you need other people involved?

Support – what do you need to make the new website a success? From the Management? Administration? Finance? Sales/Marketing? Customer Service? Reception/Telephone?

What hardware/software do you need to function efficiently? What else restricts you from achieving the goals set? Are you and your staff competent in the use of the computer hardware/software that you are using to run the website or to process orders/enquiries? If not, define what you need.

Website Products/Services – are there any new products/services you should be offering on the website? When? What supply chain issues are involved?

### **Growth Opportunities**

From your SWOT analysis, you can make a list of opportunities where you can grow your website business. These then need to be reviewed to see whether they are viable in terms of

being worth the expenditure of time, effort, staff or capital.

You could set a target for a percentage increase in profit or turnover to grow your online business. But you need to work out where you will gain this increase in business. Can you go through the prospects for each major product group or service area and then work the total business increase? Or will the increase just happen as a natural growth of your website business? Will you have to target some segments/customers to achieve this increase? Will you need to get new customers to achieve this increase? If so, who, how many and how? Will they be wholesale or retail? What other business do you need to achieve the target? Where are there opportunities to grow your online business? Can you cope with the workload without compromising your service delivery?

### **Measurable objectives**

Having established viable website growth opportunities, the next step is to set down your objectives. All objectives should be SMART goals:

**S**pecific

**M**easurable

**A**ttainable

**R**ealistic

**T**imely

They should include target markets, website promotional activities, target customer groups, etc. If there are additional costs, like Google Adwords campaigns, these should be specified.

### **Action Plan**

An Action Plan is then developed detailing who will do what and by when.

This can be then entered in the individual's calendar/scheduler or whatever time management system is used. It should include trips, training, functions, reviews, meetings, etc.

The final plan should be feasible and attainable and acceptable to everyone involved.

### **Budget**

From the Website Objectives costing and the Action Plan, you will now be able to work out a realistic financial budget for your online business for the next 12 months. The addition of the budget sees the completion of your Website Business Plan.

### **Website Objectives**

What are the objectives of the website?

Brand Development

Generate enquiries

Generate revenue through online sales

Cost Savings – a cheaper method of distributing information, reducing support

Supporting your customer

## **Drilling down into factors that will affect your website planning**

### **Product/Service**

What are the strengths and weaknesses?

What are the benefits to your clients?

What is your Unique Selling Proposition (USP)?

Who are your competition?

Approximately how many products will be featured on the site? (A website displaying 1000 products will operate rather differently to a website displaying just 10 products).

### **Considering Your Market**

You need to take some time to consider who your target market is as you must tailor your website to that target audience:

- how old are they?
- where are they located – in one particular country or worldwide?
- will they be equipped with the latest browsing software?
- how experienced will they be with on-line purchasing?
- are there language factors to consider?
- what are their likely connection speeds?

The reasons for considering these matters are crucial – you cannot have a complicated website with streaming video and huge graphical files if your potential customer only has a slow 56k dial up connection. There is no point writing copy in a conservative, measured style when your product will be bought by teenagers. There will not be much business coming your way if your website is in English and you want to sell to the Chinese market.

### **Addressing Your Customer**

Once you have identified your target customer, the next step is to develop copy that will push their buttons and convert them into customers. So we need to identify:

- how did they find the website?
- what questions do they have on arriving on the website?
- how are we going to address those questions ?
- what pages are they going to visit to resolve their concerns?
- what do we eventually want them to do?
- how can we make sure that doing that is real simple?

If you are confident you can address all these issues yourself or inhouse, then go for it.

But the better option might be to use the services of a professional website developer to design, build and maintain your website. You should choose a website company that offers a Content Management System (CMS) for your website. That software enables you to make changes to your website yourself. You don't want to get into the situation where you have to pay your webmaster \$100 every time you want to make a minor change to your website. That is the most common complaint I get when I meet website owners. Their 'webmaster' has taken a new job and is now taking three weeks to reply to their emails. And two months to load new content on your supposedly up-to-the-moment website.

**Why do I empathise with such website owners? Because I had the same problem before I got my Zeald.com websites. Don't believe me? Go to [www.troutnz.com](http://www.troutnz.com) and see what a load of rubbish it is!**

A Content Management System is just that - it helps you manage your content. Essentially, a CMS allows you to create/edit/delete your web pages without having to learn HTML code. For larger sites, CMS also makes organising the content and web pages much easier. The content is largely stored in a site database, which is stored on a web server, alleviating the need to back up hundreds of HTML files.

It is a good idea to choose a website developer that has several employees. There is nothing more frustrating than to be told by your one-man-band Webmaster that he can no longer maintain your website as he is off to the UK to chase the big bucks. The costs of using a website development company can be as low as \$100 for a basic one page website and as high as \$50,000 for a highly-customised large site with an online shop and automated payment options. Putting together and publishing a website is not easy. It will consume a lot of your time so it is essential to do it right. Using a professional website services provider will usually prove much cheaper in the long run and the more professional-looking website will be likely to be more of a commercial success. Remember that statistic – 75% of New Zealanders judge a company by its website – how is your's looking?

## **DIY**

With modern website editor software, like Dreamweaver, you can design your own website, once you spend some time getting to grips with the program. And it can take a long time to get familiar with such software programs. You could use Microsoft Word and WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) converters to HTML. But the disadvantage is that such programs always produce some code errors as word processing software programs do not always convert your text accurately into HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language). This can result in mistakes in your web pages.

There can also be errors when the website is viewed on a different size monitor, as these will vary greatly in size these days of one metre plus wide TVs that double as monitors. If you understand HTML source code, you can correct these errors; otherwise you will have to rely on the accuracy of your text editor software. There are no real benefits in learning HTML; it is a time-consuming process. And it does not guarantee the website will be successful. In fact very few people that build their own website produce a commercially-successful website. How do I know that? Because I have been asked by hundreds (no exaggeration) of such website owners to do an audit of their website because their website was not successful.

## **Payment options**

What payment system to use depends on the volume of on-line sales that you expect. If it is likely that there will only be a small number of sales, then a payment processing system like PayPal is all you need. The process involves setting up an account with PayPal and providing a bank where funds can be remitted when you want. The person purchasing an item from your site pays PayPal by direct credit from their bank account or by using their credit card. There is no longer the need for the purchaser to set up an account with PayPal – all they need to know is the amount and what account to credit. When PayPal receive the money from the purchaser, they email the merchant advising of the receipt of cash. Once you confirm the transaction, the amount, less the Pay Pal fees, is immediately credited to your account. The PayPal fees are reasonable, around 3% of the value of the transaction. You can request PayPal to transfer part or the entire amount in your account at any time. There is a small fee for this but again, it is reasonable.

The other option for small volumes of sales is to request a Direct Deposit to your bank account. This can be done at a branch, or by telephone but the most common method is by Internet Banking. There is a small cost for the purchaser to set up the bill payment details, about \$2 at time of writing. This method is very efficient if both seller and purchaser are in the same country. If not, the fees charged by the banks for overseas transactions tend to make the process too expensive.

If you expect a large volume of sales, then you will need to set up a Merchant Credit Card account. If you already have a retail store with credit card processing, this is quite a simple process as you can take the credit card details and process them offline. But if you do not have a credit card processing facility, then you will have to enter into a relationship with a bank so that you can process credit card sales. This involves the meeting the usual bank criteria and battling the obligatory banking red tape. The bank will charge you a significant fee to set up the credit card processing account and you will be charged a fee on each transaction. This fee depends on the volume of business, the type of credit card and how much the bank wants your business. Unless your monthly sales are in the thousands, the costs of setting up such a payment facility may be too much for your fledging business to stand, at least in the initial stages.

## **PCI compliance**

### **So what is PCI Compliance?**

Zeald.com has prepared the following guide:

PCI Compliance is the banks/Visa's standard for how merchants should securely process credit cards. These days Visa is forcing the banks to ensure their merchants are PCI compliant. See information on the websites below:

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PCI\\_DSS](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PCI_DSS)
- <https://www.pcisecuritystandards.org/>

PCI compliance is a set of rules for how you can handle credit cards - they apply to everyone that processes credit cards (not just online vendors but also people taking them over the phone/fax or via an eftpos terminal at the point of sale)

While these rules have been around for a long time, with the increase in credit card fraud that has come with the rise of the internet, people are taking it much more seriously these days. These days, the banks are insisting people will be PCI compliant before they will give them a credit card processing facility.

On a website, the way to achieve PCI compliance is through the use of a payment gateway such as DPS. DPS will process the credit card securely and confirm or deny that the transaction was successful to the website - this means the website never needs to store or even see the credit card, which means there is essentially no risk of credit card information being stolen or lost. Doing this vastly decreases both your risk and the compliance costs of being PCI compliant

If you choose to process credit cards via other means (eg via fax or email or over the telephone) then you will likely need to conform to more onerous requirements to be PCI compliant. This is particularly so if you take credit cards via these means and then store them in an internet-connected database or fileserver. Or if take them over email, you will find it difficult to be PCI compliance. In this case, taking your credit card payments online through a payment gateway such as DPS will significantly decrease your risk and cost.

Summary:

1. PCI compliance can be easily achieved by using a payment gateway. Essentially nothing is required in this case
2. Customers who are storing credit card numbers electronically (eg via email or scanned payment slips) cannot become PCI compliant without significant expense to them.
3. You should use a payment gateway such as DPS
4. You should not collect credit cards online via email or other means than a payment gateway, as the costs and risks to your clients would be too great

Penalties for non-compliance are in the range of \$5000 – 100,000 **per month**. Banks can sue the merchant (owner of the website) should they not be compliant

Key points to note:

- Every company that processes credit cards needs to be PCI compliant
- PCI compliance is specific to a merchant – even if your website developer provides the necessary security features to enable their clients to be PCI compliant, it is still up to the merchant to ensure their own company (and website) is PCI compliant.

- To become PCI compliant, you complete one of four different self-assessment questionnaires, sign a document attesting that you have done so, (and in some cases get a third party network scan done of your systems, although this doesn't apply if using DPS), and submit this to your bank
- The simplest of these self-assessment questionnaires, SAQ-A, applies if you outsource card processing to DPS or other payment gateways.
- The most draconian, SAQ-D, is one that essentially no SMB in New Zealand is likely to be able to meet, applies to people who store credit card data online

### **Penalties for non-compliance**

<http://www.pcicomplianceguide.org/pcifaqs.php#11>

The payment brands may, at their discretion, fine an acquiring bank \$5,000 to \$100,000 per month for PCI compliance violations. The banks will most likely pass this fine on downstream till it eventually hits the merchant. Furthermore, the bank will also most likely either terminate your relationship or increase transaction fees. Penalties are not openly discussed nor widely publicized, but they can be catastrophic to a small business.

It is important to be familiar with your merchant account agreement, which should outline your exposure.

### **Self Assessment**

Your bank is responsible for ensuring you are PCI compliant, different banks take different approaches – if you are very high volume (greater than 20,000 transactions per year) they may insist on actual auditing by external agencies, but in general for most merchants they want a self-assessment questionnaire <https://www.pcisecuritystandards.org/saq/index.shtml>

- There are different versions of this form depending on what you do with cardholder data. If you use DPS then Option A applies (as you do not store or even get to see cardholder data), and this questionnaire merely asks you to confirm that this is true
- If you choose to store your cardholder data then option D applies, which is particularly draconian:
  - You must submit network scans every 90 days from a PCI-approved scanning vendor
- After doing the SAQ, you must complete an “Attestation of compliance”
- Then you must submit the SAQ, AOC, and evidence of a passing scan to your bank

SAQ Validation Type	Description	SAQ: V1.2
1	Card-not-present (e-commerce or mail/telephone-order) merchants, all cardholder data functions outsourced. This would never apply to face-to-face merchants.	<a href="#"><u>A</u></a>
2	Imprint-only merchants with no electronic cardholder data storage	<a href="#"><u>B</u></a>
3	Stand-alone terminal merchants, no electronic cardholder data storage	<a href="#"><u>B</u></a>
4	Merchants with POS systems connected to the Internet, no electronic cardholder data storage	<a href="#"><u>C</u></a>
5	All other merchants (not included in Types 1-4 above) and all service providers defined by a payment brand as eligible to complete an SAQ.	<a href="#"><u>D</u></a>

As documented above, PCI compliance is serious in nature and is here to stay. Any business or person looking to transact credit card payments online are strongly recommended to use a third party payment gateway to protect both themselves and their prospective customers who will be purchasing from their website.

And, if you are trying to do all this on your DIY website – good luck to you! It was far too hard for me so I gave up and still just use PayPal.

**Hosting your website**

There are a large number of companies that offer website hosting services and it is not easy to choose between them. Each tends to have a varying range of services and even more so, varying costs. It is important to choose a host offering adequate bandwidth (the amount of information that can be transferred over the network) for your website but not one where you are paying for unused bandwidth. Check out what other costs there may be for services you may need in the future. The quality of the technical support is critical and cheap hosting companies will aim to save money in this area. If you intend maintaining your own website, it will be vital that you have a patient and competent technical support team. There are some hosting companies offering website hosting for as little as \$15 per month so it pays to check around. Ask people you know that have a website, who hosts them and what their service is like, especially their Help Desk.

Another fact worth checking is the percentage of time the host has their servers ‘up’ meaning your site is online. If it is not, you won’t be doing much business.

**A friend found out that the hard way that not all hosting companies are equal. He had taken a cheaper hosting option as his website was only a small one rather than a full E-commerce website. After a year or so of being what he thought was ‘online’, a friend asked him what had happened to his website. Matt was bewildered. The friend told him that he had searched for Matt’s website on two occasions and it was not to be found. After some investigation, Matt found that his hosting company had got into financial difficulties and had not kept their hosting capabilities up with their ever-increasing number of websites. As a result, their servers kept crashing and Matt’s website was offline about 25% of the time. By comparison, most reliable hosting companies will guarantee a being online or ‘up’ percentage of better than 99%.**

### **Server Location Importance**

Several Zeald.com clients now host their websites on Zeald's overseas servers (in UK, USA, Asia and Australia). Why? Will their websites achieve a better ranking than if they were targeting a different country to where it is hosted?

My good mate - Ben Kemp, The SEO Guy, has addressed the issue of server location very thoroughly in the following article:

The importance of server location, with respect to your site rankings, traffic and consequent success is an aspect that gets overlooked by many site owners and one that gets minimal coverage in web design or SEO articles. Most articles are written by USA web designers & SEO practitioners and are therefore written from the point of view of a USA website – and most of those are only targeting USA customers. If you are targeting a particular market, you really need to have your website hosted in that country. That seems to be vitally important in countries like England, Australia and New Zealand.

### Location, Localisation & SEO

The problem here is the “decentralisation” of search - the way in which the major search engines have split their indexes up into country-specific search opportunities. Google (and other SE’s) know where you are because of the IP address allocated to your PC. They know this because IP addresses are allocated in numeric blocks or ranges, by country. There are significant impacts on both searchers, and on businesses, of this search decentralisation process. This is both a blessing and a curse, depending on where you are, where your site is, what you offer, where your customers are, and whether you are a searcher, or a site owner.

### Location & Searchers

For a searcher in United Kingdom, Australia, or New Zealand, you will have noticed that your Google sessions automatically default to Google.co.uk, Google.com.au, or Google.co.nz, depending on the respective country in which you reside. Searchers in the USA are blissfully unaware of this phenomenon.

The results of your search will also be biased towards sites physically located within your geographic area. Therefore, if you were to do the same search on the different country-specific versions of Google, you would usually get different results and sometimes substantially different, depending on the competitiveness of the particular search within those countries.

## Location, Site Owners & SEO

For a business located in the United Kingdom, Australia, or New Zealand, you are effectively competing on far more even terms with sites from your own geographic “web space” than previously. However, if you have a focus on delivering products or services within your own specific geographic region, it is essential that your site’s IP address be within the specific Country’s IP Address Range.

This means that your site should be physically located in a server in the UK, AU or NZ web space. If you’ve opted for cheap hosting on a server located in the USA, or India, you have severely prejudiced your chances of attaining top search engine rankings in your preferred search.

It is therefore vital for a business located in the United Kingdom, Australia, or New Zealand, with a focus on delivering products or services in another specific geographic region, you should have your web site physically located on a server in that country to gain the most traction in your search engine rankings. In so doing, you should also ensure that your offshore site adheres to local language conventions, spellings and usage e.g. if you are selling paint into the USA, you should use the Americanised “color” and not the normal spelling “colour” as would be done in the UK or NZ.

## How to Win The Global Localisation Game

If you are a business who has a significant actual or potential client base in more than one country, it makes sound business sense to also register [www.yourbiz.co.uk](http://www.yourbiz.co.uk) under [www.yourbiz.com.au](http://www.yourbiz.com.au) and the country variants you might require. You can then build a global network of mini-sites customised specifically for those markets. By careful linking between those sites, and making them complementary by ensuring that the content is not simply duplicated (and therefore in breach of Google’s Webmaster Guidelines) you should be able to generate significant additional traffic and business.

## **Section3: Website Planning**

### **Planning your web site**

It is absolutely critical that you prepare a Website Plan before even starting to build/commission a website. Just like every new business needs a Business Plan, every new E-Venture needs a Website Plan. This is needed to assist you in developing a comprehensive strategy for your new website. There are two main objectives of the website plan.

- Develop a clear and powerful website strategy.
- Plan an extremely persuasive website.

The website plan is a very comprehensive session that should be conducted by a website planning specialist, like the Zeald.com E-Business Consultants. It will prove of huge value as you develop your website to ensure you have considered all the elements that go into making a successful website. A qualified mediator will help you to be efficient and well organised in order to get through the plan in a reasonable amount of time – we allow 3 hours for a Zeald.com Website Plan.

As a minimum, it is absolutely vital that you include the following in your website plan:

- Company Overview
- Website Objectives
- Website Strategy
- Target Markets
- Website Sitemap
- Wireframes of the Main Conversion Pages
- Website Design.

### **Website Design Planning**

For the same reasons, it is also important that the design of your website fits your brand or product and projects it appropriately on the ‘net. You need to consider the complexity of your website, the style of it and language used in it. It needs to be quick to download, attractive, well structured, have interesting content and rank high on the major search engines.

Once you have established the overall ‘look’, you need to think about the individual pages. The website needs to be structured so that people can quickly find the information they are seeking. Nothing turns off a surfer faster than getting imbedded in a morass of information. Each page should have a distinct purpose and a focus to the information being presented.

Too many graphics or large photos will make your website too slow to download. If your site cannot be downloaded in less than 8 seconds on a 56k dialup, it needs work. For example, you can use thumbnails instead of the full photo to improve download speeds. Around 30,000 bytes is reckoned to be about the right size for a page to load in under 8 seconds. If you have pages larger than this, consider reducing them to around this level. The larger the website, the more important it becomes to have distinct pages with quick ways to access the individual pages – easy navigation, as it is termed. What it means is to do everything you can to have a user-friendly website.

## Website design pitfalls

Some commonly-used website features are not favoured by search engines and these should be avoided if you want your site to rate highly.

**Frames** - although frames can contribute a lot to the look of a website, they are a definite no-no in terms of search engine optimisation. The problem is that many search engines cannot read frames and cannot follow frame links. This means they skip over most of the website and do not index any of the content. Frames can also cause the text content to appear lower down in the html code. This means the Search Engines will concentrate more on the irrelevant text found near the top of the code. Frames also increase the size of your page and so dilute the impact of your keywords. A larger page will also be slower loading.

**Splash pages** – a splash page is an entry page with a large graphic image or a link instructing visitors to enter the website. Splash pages are bad news for Search Engine rankings as they contain very little visible body text and also contain a redirect. Search Engines only want to rank pages that contain the information surfers are searching for and so splash pages are not rated by most Search Engines.

**Graphics** - these also increase the size of your page with the same result; it dilutes the impact of your keywords and will hinder fast loading of your website.

**Java Script** – this is a design device that controls functions such as mouseovers where information is displayed when the mouse is positioned over a link. They also make the text appear lower on the page and reduce its importance in the eye of the Search Engine robot.

**Tables** – these adversely affect rankings in some search engines.

## Buying a domain name

This is a simple process that starts by going to a domain name supplier like [www.domainz.co.nz](http://www.domainz.co.nz) or [www.discountdomains.co.nz](http://www.discountdomains.co.nz) and entering the name of your preferred website. If it has not been taken, you can buy it by paying around \$55 with an annual renewal cost of around \$40, depending on who you get to manage the name. There are two approaches to buying a domain name. The obvious one is to find a domain name that is closest to what your core business is about. A domain name should contain the key words of your business. It should tell who you are and what you do.

But there are a few tricks to buying domain names. When I wanted to establish a website to support my babyboomers book, I found that [www.babyboomers.co.nz](http://www.babyboomers.co.nz) was taken. So I tried [www.babyboomersguide.co.nz](http://www.babyboomersguide.co.nz) and saw that it was available. I then found that the [www.babyboomersguide.com](http://www.babyboomersguide.com) was also available and made a decision to take both. It is becoming more common for people to buy a .com domain name even though the business may be targeting New Zealand customers. The .com domain name gives the impression of a more global enterprise which may add credibility to your venture.

Unless your product/service is very unique, it is likely that the obvious domain names will be taken. You may be able to register the variants like .org, .biz, .net or .info but if not, you will have to look for close alternatives to your desired name. You can check out the international

alternatives by going to a site like [www.networksolutions.com](http://www.networksolutions.com) and checking out the .com option. You don't need to put a website on each domain name site as you can just redirect that site to your main hosted website (although that will not help the redirected site Search Engine rankings).

The other way to choose a domain name is to think about what question a potential visitor to your site will enter into a Search Engine. For example, when I started promoting my trout fishing books on the Internet, it was easy to work out that the question most anglers would enter would be *trout fishing new zealand* or *new zealand trout fishing*. So I bought [www.trout-fishing-new-zealand.com](http://www.trout-fishing-new-zealand.com) and [www.new-zealand-trout-fishing.com](http://www.new-zealand-trout-fishing.com)

A space between words is treated the same as a dash by search engines. So when anyone punches in that question, my site will always rate highly as it is identical to the question entered by the person searching for information. Because that is quite a long name I also bought [www.troutnz.com](http://www.troutnz.com) which is short, to the point and more likely to be remembered. It also leads directly to my main website so surfers only have to remember that short name to get to my main site. I then took out the mailbox option on that domain name so my email address was simply [rongiles@troutnz.com](mailto:rongiles@troutnz.com). There would not be much email traffic if I had a mailbox that was [rongiles@trout-fishing-new-zealand.com](mailto:rongiles@trout-fishing-new-zealand.com)

But if you are not sure what words or phrases surfers are entering into the Search Engine search box, there are a couple of tools you can use. Up till recently, the main tool was [www.wordtracker.com](http://www.wordtracker.com). That gives you the most commonly searched for words/phrases in the last 24 hours on selected Search Engines. Naturally you would choose Google to be one of those. The problem for New Zealand would-be website owners is that WordTracker is that it only reports USA searches. So the spellings are American and the searches may not reflect Kiwi terminology.

But there is some good news. Google Adwords is now reporting words and phrases used by surfers using Google NZ. So that is much more relevant for those searching for good domain names. All you need to do is to open an Google Account and then you get access to Google Adwords free keywords report. Search for the most searched for words/phrases and register those as domain names. You then point those additional domain names to your website. Anyone entering those search phrases in to a Search Engine has a good chance of landing on your website.

The exceptions are when the search phrase is highly competed for – then this trick does not always work. I found that out when I bought [www.website-design.net](http://www.website-design.net) and [www.website-designer.org](http://www.website-designer.org). That did not produce the results I had got for 'trout fishing new zeald'.

While you are at it, sign up for Google Analytics and go to Webmaster Tools where you can prepare for the time when you have your website live.

So a primary domain name should be:

- relevant to your business
- easy to remember
- easy to type

Additional domain names should contain the most common words used to search for your product or service. They do not need to be any of the above.

## **Legal Issues**

Domain names are not necessarily associated with company names as the Companies Office and the.nz Registry operate independently. That means they both register names on a first come, first served basis. There may well be a company already with the name that you wish to register as a domain name. Or there may be a domain name registered with the name that you wish to register as your company name. If you proceed with either of those names, you may be setting yourself up for a legal dispute where a company tries to stop you using their name, be it their company name or domain name. Or a sharp operator may try to register your company name as a domain name and take advantage of your hard-won profile.

The way to avoid such legal complications is to search the companies and domain name registers to see if anyone has registered the name you want to use. If the name is critical to the success of your business, you should consider registering your company name or brand name as a trademark. This will give you more clout when it comes to a dispute over domain names.

Now you have a domain name, you have an IP (Internet Protocol) address that is referenced to your domain name. This is stored in DNS (Domain Name Servers). The address of your website is called the URL (Uniform Resource Locator). This will appear in the address box of your Internet browser when it connects to a DNS and then works out the address of the server. The browser is a software program that converts the text file into the visual display that you see on your screen. The browser finds the file from the instructions in the URL, for example:

<http://www.babyboomersguide.com/index.html>

This tells the browser to find a file:

- called `index.html`
- on a server with a unique IP address
- with the domain name [www.babyboomersguide.com](http://www.babyboomersguide.com)

The `index.html` is your home page and the browser will automatically open this page by default. Other pages in the website will have separate filenames such as:

[www.babyboomersguide.com/financialplanning.html](http://www.babyboomersguide.com/financialplanning.html)

## **Internet Browsers**

The two most common browsers are Microsoft Internet Explorer and Firefox. It pays to check your web pages using both of these browsers, as a web page can look different depending on the browser used. You should also check the loading speed of your website using a 56k dial up connection as not everyone has a fast broadband connection (50% of NZ residences were still on dial up in 2009).

If it takes longer than 8 seconds for your website to appear onscreen, you will need to redesign your site to get a quicker result. Web surfers are very impatient and studies have shown that 8 seconds is the maximum time that they will wait for a website to load. Even if

the surfer is on broadband, the expectations are higher. They might only be prepared to wait two seconds.

## **Keywords**

Most search engines rank the relevance, prominence, positioning and frequency of the keywords so it is vital to research your keywords carefully. You need to establish what words a websurfer would use to seek information about the topic of interest. In my case those keywords were: *trout, fishing, new, zealand*. It should be noted that search engines are case-insensitive and over 80% of queries are entered in lower case. So someone searching for information about trout fishing in New Zealand would be likely to enter those exact words. Many major search engines rank websites higher if they have the keywords in their domain name. If you can work out the key words for your website, you can consider buying those words as a domain name, like [www.trout-fishing-new-zealand.com](http://www.trout-fishing-new-zealand.com). Even if that is not your main website, you can use that site to rate higher on those search engines and then point that website to your main website. I do that with [www.new-zealand-trout-fishing.com](http://www.new-zealand-trout-fishing.com) and traffic reaching that website address is diverted to my main website.

There are two main tools for finding out which words/phrases are being searched. The first is [www.wordtracker.com](http://www.wordtracker.com) – the only downside for New Zealand is that it only reports USA searches. So it has USA spellings and American expressions. That can cause some problems. Like when I was searching for keywords for the lifestyle block section of goodground.com. It turned out that ‘lifestyle’ equated to ‘swinging’ (as in swapping partners) in USA. Not the market that goodground.com was targeting!

## **Common Keywords**

There is no use in just targeting the most common search. If Zeald.com targeted the keyword ‘website’, they would be one of millions of websites doing so. The most effective ploy is to try and find a niche in the market.

You do need to know the basics of how keywords work. Keywords and keyword phrases are the exact words someone types into a search engine to find something they are looking for online. If you have a site about "website consultants" then your goal is to get a top 10 ranking for the keywords "website consultants".

But if no one searches for "website consultants", it would be a useless keyword as you would get no traffic - no matter how perfectly your site is optimised for that keyword.

You can do some research and find a set of keywords that are commonly used by web searchers but a set that sees few competing websites. For example, my website [www.website-consultant.co.nz](http://www.website-consultant.co.nz) is #1 for the search words ‘website examples’. So if you then concentrate on such a set of keywords, or key phrase, your website will be visited by all those surfers searching for those keywords. As long as your website then has some information, products or services to interest that market niche, you are in business. You can then test that market niche exists by trialling a ‘pay per click’ program such as Google Adwords. That will quickly confirm if your target client is using those keywords. Don’t use more than 20 keywords or you will be penalised by the search engines that will characterise you as a spammer.

So how do you find out if a Keyword is any good? The best method is to go to [www.wordtracker.com](http://www.wordtracker.com) and enter the keyword there. They have a tool that will tell you how many people are searching for that keyword and how many competing websites there are trying to come up in Google when that keyword search is made. You can also use the keyword suggestion tools supplied by Google Adwords or Overture.

If you have a very-much-searched-for keyword like "website design", you will find it receives many, many thousands of searches each day. That's a lot of potential traffic but you must understand that thousands of competing websites want to rank highly for that keyword so it may be too competitive, especially if you have a new website. You simply will not be able to compete for or be ranked highly for extremely competitive keywords. Only well-established sites and businesses with very deep pockets have the resources to completely dominate those keywords. You will have better success if you target low to medium competitive keywords.

Online marketers have discovered that longer keyword phrases are usually the most lucrative. These phrases deliver better targeted traffic that is more likely to convert into a sale. An example is "trout fishing New Zealand" which will be more targeted than the general term "trout fishing" or even worse "New Zealand". If you have a site devoted to New Zealand trout fishing, then this keyword phrase will drive more targeted traffic and improve your conversion ratio. This is often called a "Long Tail" keyword strategy.

### **Here are Ten Great Tips on Keywords:**

#### **1. Make a Master Keyword List**

Obviously these keywords should be closely related to the theme of your site. Check the keyword competition by seeing how many sites are listed in Google for that keyword. Check on WordTracker the popularity of those keywords - if they are very common, it may be hard to get ranked high for your keywords. If you are only targeting the NZ market, use the Google Adwords keyword tool.

#### **2. Choose Related Keywords**

Once you have your master list of keywords, find long tail related keywords to target. Again, check out the competition and daily searches made for each chosen keyword.

#### **3. Use Quality Content For Your Keywords**

Creating quality content should always be your main goal. Write for actual visitors who will see and read your content. You must have good useful content that your visitors will use themselves and recommend to their friends or colleagues. Tie this quality content in with your chosen keywords. (See the section on content)

#### **4. Keyword In Domain Name, Title and URLs**

Having your keyword in your domain name will score big points from search engines, as we discussed earlier with [www.trout-fishing-new-zealand.co.nz](http://www.trout-fishing-new-zealand.co.nz). Then each page of content should contain your keywords in the title and meta tags for that page. Ben Kemp suggests that if you have your keyword in the URL and use hyphens to separate your keywords, you

will always rank highly as Search Engines recognise a hyphen as a space between words.

## **5. Page Optimisation**

Keyword ratio is a much discussed topic by SEO experts and many suggest you should have your keyword in the headline title (H1) of your page. Sprinkle your keyword and variations of it throughout your page. Don't get carried away with this tactic but make sure the Search Engine robots discover what your page is about. Many webmasters make sure they include their main keyword in the first and last 25 words on their pages.

## **6. Use Traffic Modules**

One technique that works very well in Google is clustering a closely-related topic or subject into a distinct separate section on your site. For example, the Articles section on my website [www.website-consultant.co.nz](http://www.website-consultant.co.nz) has 50 to 100 keyworded pages all relating to the subject of websites. Place a keyword linked menu on each page to connect all your pages together. Keep in mind, your main objective is to supply quality information to your visitors. One reason Google favours this type of structure is because they want quality content returned in their responses to any Search Engine Question.

## **7. Try Article Marketing**

Article marketing is writing short informative articles on keyword topics related to your sites. You then submit these helpful keyworded articles to ezine directories on the web. When your articles are picked up by related sites, you receive quality incoming links. The higher the quality of your article, the more links you will receive. Google now only rate incoming quality links as they believe those show how worthwhile a website is (who would bother linking to a rubbish website??!).

In this way, you also take advantage of the higher PageRank of the major ezine directories. Your keyworded articles on these high PageRank sites will get picked up by Google and displayed in the top 10 rankings. Now the displayed URL will be the article directory site but the links in the resource box will be pointing back to your site. Over time this article marketing technique will raise your own site's rankings for those keywords. It does take some work in preparing the articles but the effort is effective and it is simple.

## **8. Anchor Text And One Way Links**

Off page optimisation can help in obtaining high rankings in Google. Getting quality incoming links is very important. Anchor Text simply refers to "the underlined clicked on words" in your links. Most webmasters include their keywords in their anchor text as this tells the search engines exactly what the links are about.

## **9. Tags, Blogging And Web 2.0**

Take advantage of Web 2.0 by using blogs, RSS feeds and the social bookmarking sites like Bebo, Facebook, LinkedIn, Reddit and Digg. Try AddThis.com for a simple social bookmarking system. At the very least your site should have a blog and RSS feed attached to it as this is an effective way of boosting your keyword rankings.

Tags have become very important for getting higher rankings. Keep in mind, in free blogging software such as WordPress, categories will automatically be seen as tags. Blogger, which is owned by Google, now has a form where you put your keywords (tags) for each post you make.

## **10. PPC vs Organic Search**

Of course, one of the fastest ways to get your links displayed on Google is to pay for them by using Google Adwords. Your ad and links will sit side by side with the organic link results. In Pay Per Click advertising you bid or pay so much per click for your keywords and you only pay when someone clicks your links.

However, most webmasters would say that organic links (SERPS) will return better traffic than paid links or advertising. In most cases, this is probably true because Google's organic rankings are becoming more respected and more trusted by users. They simply carry more weight with surfers than do PPC's.

This makes it even more beneficial to obtain top 10 rankings for your keywords in Google. Depending on the competitiveness of your chosen keywords reaching the first page listing or even the favoured number one spot is well within any webmaster's reach. It is not easy but the rewards are well worth the effort.

Yahoo is a bit different. A high ranking on Yahoo is more dependent on the quality and content of your website. But now that Yahoo will use search results from Bing, it is not yet clear whether that will be the same in the future.

So, despite what they claim, automated ranking software will not guarantee that you automatically get a high ranking position. Some search engines now penalise you if you use automated listing software.

## **Planning your Home Page**

Writing for a website is very different to other print media writing. Copy on the Home Page should be short and sharp. You have only a few seconds to convince the visitor that your website contains the information they are seeking. The proven way to do this is through the use of attention-grabbing headlines, strong calls to action and clear conversion pathways.

### **Headlines**

You need to think about why your visitor is coming to your website. What concerns do they have? What questions might they be asking? What reassurances are they seeking? How can you convince them to buy your product or make an enquiry? The first step is to write a headline that catches their eye. You know how you scan the page of a newspaper looking for headlines that are of interest to you. You only bother reading the article where the headline has caught your attention.

It is no different with a website. If you have identified in your Website Strategy just what your target market might be interested in – then address that in your headline. Identify their concern: ‘worried about ...’ Home in on their question: ‘looking for information ....’ Reassure them: ‘read what other people think....’

The best way of doing this is to have a brainstorming session. Bounce some ideas for headlines around the table; note them all down, no matter how crazy they may sound; then consider them objectively in the cold light of day.

Then try it out on your Home Page. If you do not get much response, measured by visitors to the linked page; then try another one. Keep trying until you get a headline that really works.

### **Calls to Action**

These are pretty straightforward but it is amazing just how many websites out there just do not have clear and strong calls to action. They are as simple as:

- Read more here
- Contact us
- Buy Now!
- Enquire here
- Click here
- See what other people think
- Read a Case Study
- See our special here

We would normally suggest three or four primary calls to action on a typical Home Page. More than that and you risk confusing or overwhelming your visitor. Sure, great websites like Amazon have myriads of calls to action but most New Zealand surfers find such sites cluttered. They want simple, clean, uncluttered websites and that usually means three or four calls to action.

And be careful of dropping the ball after you have done the hard work of convincing your visitor of the merits of your product.

**Years ago I asked David Kelly to help me with the website of one of my very first website clients. They were trying to sell subscriptions for access to specialist services. There was great copy about the benefits of these services and it seemed a good deal. But we could not find anywhere where we could buy the subscription. There was no ‘buy a subscription here’ button. It turned out it was impossible to buy the subscription from the Home Page. No wonder their conversion rate was zero. The day they added such a button, they sold three subscriptions!**

### **Conversion Pathways**

That is the second part of the call to action – that button must link to the page where that call to action can be satisfied. In the case above – to the Product Page where the subscription could be added to a Shopping Cart.

So looking at our example calls to action above:

- Read more here – link to page with more information
- Contact us – link to contact us details
- Buy Now! – link to Product Page
- Enquire here – link to Enquiry Form
- Click here – link to next page in the conversion pathway
- See what other people think – link to Testimonials Page

- Read a Case Study – link to Case Study Page
- See our special here – link to Special Promotion Page

Yes, I know – it is not rocket science but you would be surprised how frequently we come across websites that do not have calls to action and conversion pathways. What is typical of earlier websites is the Heading: “Welcome to our website” and then a long page of rambling copy. Poof! The visitor has gone as soon as they saw ‘welcome to...’

Why are you welcoming them to the website? They have already found or been directed to your website one way or another. Get on with convincing them to take some action rather than waffling on.

### **Wireframing**

What on earth is wireframing, I imagine you are asking. I did exactly the same when David Kelly introduced us to it in 2005. It is simply the process of planning and arranging the structure/layout of your main conversion pages (Home Page, About Us Page, Enquiry Page). This process is called ‘wireframing’. For my clients, I also go as far as to write the copy for the main conversion pages, especially the all-important Home Page.

## Home Page Examples

Here is the Home Page layout from a recent Website Plan.

<h1 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">LOGO</h1>		<span style="font-size: 0.8em;">Client Name</span>
<a href="#">Home</a>   <a href="#">Services</a>   <a href="#">Customer Service</a>   <a href="#">FAQ's</a>   <a href="#">Forms</a>   <a href="#">About Us</a>   <a href="#">Contact Us</a>		
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; min-height: 150px;"> <p><b>Banner image</b> Photo taken through truck window looking at a TransOtway truck</p> </div>	
	<p>TransOtway are a NZ-owned, nationwide transport company specialising in refrigerated freight.</p>	<p>Grab a space! Book by noon today and get some great rates from Christchurch to Auckland. Go here now</p>
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> <p>Image of filleting room at</p> </div> <p>I have local and international markets – how are you going to get my freight to these markets? We'll go the extra mile to meet your requirements – find out how here (link to Services page)</p>	<p>Road Conditions See the latest road closures here</p>
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> <p>trailer inside shot</p> </div> <p>Can you also move my general freight? We sure can – we service the whole country. See our range of services and routes here (link to Services Page)</p>	<p>Testimonials excerpts</p>
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> <p>Shot of interior of P.N depot</p> </div> <p>Need storage space in Palmerston North? We have some great rates going at present. See the details here (link to Special Offer Storage Rates Page).</p>	<p>Export certified MAF</p> <p>Ronald McDonald House Sponsorship logo</p>

And one from an E-Commerce website:

<h1>LOGO</h1>	<b>Contact Us on</b> <b>0800 343434</b>	
<p>Home 1 Service 1 Product Information 1 FAQs 1 News 1 About Us 1 Contact Us</p> <p>Banner image Some striking stock photo – person tearing their hair out due to all the spam mail they are getting</p>		
<p><b>Search</b></p> <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Go"/> <hr/> <p><b>Service</b> Product Information FAQs News</p> <hr/> <p>Article on current spam level Article etc</p> <p>Become a Reseller. We have opportunities for resellers throughout the country – enquire here now. Don't delay – these reseller opportunities are going fast</p> <p>Icon</p>	<p><b>Image or icon</b> How do I stop spam? We can do that – find out how here (link to Product Information Page)</p> <p><b>Image or icon</b> Want to protect your email from malicious viruses? Our product will do this for you. See more here (link to virus page)</p> <p><b>Image or icon</b> Need to archive your historical emails. Our product can do this as well. Read more here (link to article)</p>	<p>Certifications</p> <p>Mail Marshal</p> <p>Find out more about Origin IT</p> <p>HP logo</p> <p>Microsoft</p> <p>Testimonial excerpt</p> <p>Case Study excerpt</p>

## **Section 4: Website Content**

### **Website Content**

Probably the best method of ensuring a high ranking across all the Search Engines is to have good quality content. Search Engines want real information – websites that answer the questions of surfers and provide the information they are seeking. If you concentrate on providing quality content and ensure the technical aspects of your website are Search Engine friendly, you are virtually assured of a high ranking.

### **Duplicate Content**

If you want to load some information on your website from another web source, you need to change it from the original. You can use content from another site and republish it if you add additional text to that content - then your rankings won't suffer. Just make sure you are crediting the original source - most commonly done in the form of quoting. Search engines do understand what you are doing in that respect and won't penalise you as long as you are not maliciously copying content.

What about duplicating content from within your own site, on different pages on one domain? As a general rule, duplicate content, while not preferable for SEO, will not be frowned upon unless the content intends to be deceptive or manipulative of search engine results. Search engines do a good job of choosing a version of your content to show in their search results, and will not fault you for having a little repetitive content within the pages in your website.

### **Duplicate Linking**

You might also be worrying about continually linking to the same URL within one page, as there is often talk around the web that search engines see repetitive linking within a single page to one destination to be link stuffing. This talk is not a myth, but there are ways around it.

Search engines are determined to provide users with a level of variety; they try to filter pages with duplicate URL linking so that users experience less redundancy when searching. The search engines will select what they think the 'best' version of that link is in their results. However, a search engine's idea of the best link and your idea of the most important one within your page might be different. To get around this, you can simply let search engines know which URL is most important to add weight to in your Sitemap. Alternatively, use 'no follow' links, which don't hold any search engine weight, but will still be useful for your users to get them to the URLs you want to repetitively link them to.

Duplicated linking, if for no other reason, will deter search engines from effectively crawling your actual content. If their robots are spending a lot of time crawling multiple URL links within your page, eventually determining that they lead to the same place, they will have less time to get to the rest of your content.

Duplicate content can affect your site's SEO in several ways, but as long as you are not publishing identical content, it's unlikely that you'll see your web pages penalised in their search engine rankings.

## **Long copy vs Short copy**

Earlier we discussed how copy on your Home Page should be short and sharp. But when you get to a product page, then long copy is best. David Kelly, CEO of Zeald.com, likes to surprise people with that finding. David quotes the example of Cory Rudle, mentioned earlier as one of the early gurus of Internet Marketing. Cory set out to sell a book about Internet Marketing. He started with a couple of pages. That worked OK so he added a few more. Conversion rate and sales improved so he added some more. Same result. This kept going until he had a product page 54 pages long! When he added more pages, conversion rates fell. So he cut back to 54 pages and made his first million!

**I can hear you asking already ‘who on earth would read 54 pages to buy a product?’ Well, I know one – my mate Mart Albrecht from GoodGround.com. He was in the early stages of looking at Internet Marketing opportunities. Mart bought the E-book and was delighted at his purchase. He even printed out a copy and got me to read it. It was brilliant and may even have influenced my decision a few years later to get into the website business.**

The secret of the long copy was that at every break point, Cory invited the visitor to ‘Buy now’. So whenever you had read enough and were convinced, you could go straight to the Shopping Cart page. Maybe you went there after one page; maybe you went there after 54! But whenever you felt persuaded to buy the E-book, Cory made it easy for you to do so.

Good website content is all about turning those curious website visitors into customers or enquirers; ones that buy, sign-up, click on your affiliate links or whatever it is that you want them to do. This is what you should concentrate on. Not about making a pretty website; but one that sells product or generates enquiries. Unless you have a lot of experience, that is not so easy to do. Good website content needs to get those visitors to take action. Getting visitors to your website is one problem but once they are there, get them to buy/enquire is quite another. This is termed the persuasion process.

### **Visitor Conversion.**

The Six Steps to Visitor Conversion:

1. Do I trust you?
2. Do I believe you?
3. Do you understand my needs?
4. What’s in it for me?
5. What do you want from me?
6. Is it worth it?

You cannot expect a website visitor to be convinced to buy a product by just displaying a product and saying Buy Now. You have to reassure them about the quality of the product; the

reliability of supply; the delivery process; the assurance of their money back and some information about the people behind the website. After you have completed that process, the visitor might be convinced to buy the product.

## **How Persuasion Affects Website Design**

It is vital not to lose sight of the main purpose of having a website – to generate business results! The success of any website is measured by the results that it achieves. With a website, we achieve that by making a highly persuasive website. Hamish Braddick, Design Director of Zeald.com, has listed a number of things that he believes contribute to a persuasive website:

1. Motivation of the user
2. Clarity of the Value Proposition
3. Incentive to take action
4. Friction elements of the process
5. Anxiety about providing information

By friction, we mean the obstacles in the way of the visitor achieving their desired goal (making an enquiry, buying a product, etc.) These obstacles may be forms that must be completed or a number of steps in the process (too many = too hard).

Website Marketing theory suggests a formula of:

Conversion =

$4\text{Motivation} + 3\text{Clarity of the Value Proposition} + 2(\text{Incentive-Friction}) - 2\text{Anxiety}$ .

Hamish goes on to outline that when someone visits a web page, there are three questions in their mind:

1. Where? (Where am I?)
2. What? (What is this about? What can I do/get/buy here?)
3. Why? (Why should I participate? Why should I be interested?)

Research shows that if a web page cannot answer those three questions in about three seconds, conversions will suffer significantly. But, it is important that these three questions are answered in the correct order. The tendency of many websites is to rush into Why before they have answered Where or What. Such websites answer Why through advertising-type statements rather than through establishing credibility through testimonials and Case Studies.

Many website owners fail to understand that Website Design is about communication; not decoration. It is the information that will persuade a visitor to take action. But that will only happen if the user is interested enough to read the copy. Then they must understand and believe that information before they will proceed any further. Just like general graphic design website design is the art of presenting that information with clarity.

## **Clarity in Website Design**

So how do website designers present that information in a clear and trustworthy way? They do so by establishing an ‘eye path’. Extensive studies have shown that website users have a

set way of viewing a web page. They start in the top left corner; move down the central column; across to the right column and then back through the website to the lower left column. By controlling what the visitor sees first; then second, third and fourth, a website designer ensures that a user's thoughts come in the right order to answer Where? What? Why?

## Design Elements

There are six elements a designer can use to control this eye path:

- Size
- Colour
- Shape
- Motion
- Depth
- Position

By using these various elements, the designer can emphasise some point over another one and so control the eye path. We can be sure that if a visitor reads anything on a web page, it will be the Opening Headline. So good website design will see the Value Proposition incorporated into the Opening Headline; such as the one often used by Zeald.com:

**‘Do you want to achieve amazing results from your website?’**

The size of the headline is what will draw the visitor's attention so make it BIG! Then it is important to remove distractions.

**Recently I put my [www.website-consultant.co.nz](http://www.website-consultant.co.nz) website through some independent usability testing. The results were clear but disappointing – my website had too many distractions. Too much clutter was distracting the visitor from the main goal – getting the visitor to make an enquiry about websites. This was particularly bad in the right hand column so make sure you ‘dumb down/dull back’ the content of those columns so they do not distract the user from the main message of the website.**

During the website planning phase, we spend a lot of effort working out what questions a website visitor might have; what reassurance they may want; what additional information might help to make a decision. Website surfers read and react quite differently to written words presented to them on a website to those in a brochure or magazine. Good website content is created by understanding the way people read a web page. Understand that and you can get them to take the desired action.

## Scanning a Website

Good website copywriters know that visitors quickly scan the screen to find key bits of information. They don't read every word. It is similar to reading a newspaper. Very few people read every item; they scan the page to find items of interest to them. The same applies to website copy but even more so as you only have three seconds to grab a website visitor's attention. They scan the Home Page or Landing Page to see if it answers/addresses their search question. If it appears it does not – they are out of there. If they see an item that

interests them – click – and they are off to that page. So how do we grab their attention?

We can sum it up:

- Attention-grabbing headlines
- Short, sharp Calls to Action
- Clear Conversion Pathways

Some other tips:

- Use subheadings for impact, to draw attention to the main point of the following paragraph.
- Use bulleted lists to deliver information in small chunks.
- Avoid mixing figures and words e.g. It was found that 758, 000, that's 65%, of all visitors to Wellington said the museum, Te Papa, was the best attraction. Better to have said "Most visitors voted Te Papa their top attraction." See how much more punchy that is.

Visitors use the > movement

Studies have repeatedly shown that website visitors scan the top left column first, then move across to the right. From there, they go back to the bottom left. From those surfing patterns, we discover:

- Most read or noticed - Top left section
- Least read or noticed - Bottom right.

So it is pretty easy from that information to work out:

Put important content at the 'top left' of the page  
Put trust & credibility information right middle  
Put your compelling offer/special bottom left

But never forget - website visitors are impatient so good website content must be:

### **Brief**

So don't use long words, flowery language or rambling sentences - you'll lose your audience because they can't be bothered reading all that prose.

### **Keyword Rich**

Good website content is 'Keyword focussed'. Every page of your website should be built with a critical keyword in mind. Good website content starts with your keywords - the ones that the visitors used in the search engine to find your website. Using those same keywords will help you to convince those visitors they have landed on a website that will supply an answer to their search. But don't overuse the keyword or it will disrupt the flow of your text.

- Aim for a density of around 5% use.
- Find variations that use the keywords in different combinations.

## Focus

Website visitors can only focus on one new idea per page so keep your web page focussed. That will be helped if you have plenty 'white space'. Reading from a screen is tiring. If your visitors are bombarded by busy, cluttered screens they will feel there is too much going on. This causes them to feel confused and they will unconsciously switch off from the information in front of them. A good example is Google's home page - just one thing right in the centre of all that white space. Here are some tips to help the focus:

- Give the content room; the page should be clean and uncluttered
- Give the visitors eyes a rest; they'll be better able to focus on the information on screen.

It is essential that good website content builds trust by being well-researched and having accurate facts and information. Visitors are put off by factual errors, spelling mistakes or poorly-researched articles. If you want those website visitors to be persuaded to take action, you need to really critique your content.

Think of the most successful websites in the world: Amazon, Google or Yahoo. There are valid reasons why they are so successful – they follow the guidelines above. If you want to do something way different, you are risking putting off your website visitors. So make sure you over-deliver with your good website content.

There is another bonus – search engines like good website content too! Don't forget the search engines that visit your website to read the content will reward you (and the website ranking) if the content is substantial and relevant.

**This method of achieving a high ranking was used by a client, Mart, for his website [www.goodground.com](http://www.goodground.com) This is a website providing information for owners of lifestyle blocks. Mart decided the quickest way to get a good ranking was to include a huge amount of quality information on the website. He commissioned a dozen different articles on subjects as diverse as 'Childrens' Safety on Lifestyle Blocks' to 'Making your own Biofuels'. These articles, together with information from various experts in different fields, has produced a website with over 50,000 words – not far short of the size of this book. Within two weeks of the website going live, goodground.com was ranked at #2 in Google in the sector Mart was targeting. This proved convincingly that quality content was the quickest method of gaining high SE rankings.**

When you've finished writing get someone who doesn't know your subject to read it through and judge:

- Does it make sense?
- Did it hold their interest?

It is absolutely critical to make sure every page has good website content to convert those website visitors into customers.

## **Top 5 Tips for Website Content Optimisation**

### **1. Get an appropriate Landing Page**

We all know you need to find a great market niche and a good product to take advantage of it. But it is also necessary to have a targeted landing page to encourage customers that may eventually buy your product. One good tip is that to ensure your landing page does not sell anything at all. It is a good idea for that page to give a valuable resource away for free like an E-book, newsletters, mini-course and even seminars that will educate the customer about the value of your product - just like Zeald.com does. Not only does it raise customer awareness but it also encourages customers to buy what you will eventually show them! We call that establishing trust and credibility or Pre Sales - give away some free information will help that.

### **2. Keep adding fresh content**

New content that is updated regularly is the best way to ensure that the search engine robots keep returning to your page again and again. Once the robots are trained to realise that the content on your page changes often and is completely original, you are assured of seeing see your website go higher up in page rankings.

### **3. Optimise for Search Engines**

You also have to ensure that the content is correctly optimised. This is possible by using keywords that are recognised by search engines as being related to your product.

You should stuff your content with an average of 2 keywords per page of 100 words. That means your page should run an average of 10 Keywords in a page of 500 words. Do not put in more than that as search engines tend to classify high keyword pages as spam or duplicated content. You can check this "keyword density" by using some keyword density tools you can find on Google. You should also create a lot of internal links where a single article links to another archived articles in your blog or on the site itself. This will increase site recognition and page rankings. Other important items are:

- Headlines and 'H' tags
- Keywords/ keyword phrases
- Title tags
- Description tags
- Keyword rich content
- Relevant text rich links to other relevant pages

### **4. Keep it simple**

Don't load your site with Flash elements or Splash pages. You might think that they make the site look great but will slow down your site. Such pages/elements are not be able to be indexed by the Search Engines as they can't read Flash.

## 5. Position the Keywords

You need add your keywords in the first very first line of the very first paragraph and the first line of the last paragraph. Search engines like this as it makes it easier for them to index the page. Also try to use lateral semantic indexing where you use the same keywords in the form of plurals or related variations. The larger the number of variations, the better the page ranking will be.

## The Top 20 Tips For Website Copywriting

Web copy should be bulleted, concise and easy on the eye. Clean and uncluttered is best - eye-tracking heat map studies say so. That means plenty of white space.

Photos should be informative, not decorative. Your website copy is very different to printed media like magazines or newspapers. Newspapers have had trouble transitioning from print to the Web as they are used to doing things differently. Many new webmasters still have difficulty too - they tend to write complicated, dense (cluttered) copy.

Studies have found that website visitors spend more time reading wordy content, but remembered 34 percent less than when they read really tight copy. That's because of the way people read on the Internet. It's the same reason designers on the Internet use sans serif fonts - so you can read faster.

"If a user is comfortable," said Nielsen researcher Tara Coyne, "not hindered by clutter and superfluous words, and can scan the main points, they will get the summary of the article quickly and easily."

People don't really look at images either unless they are pictures of real people and not models. Surfers like pictures that give them information and they will skip pictures that are pretty but not relevant.

Here's a list of suggestions to help you remember the Golden Rules. Keep it in front of you when you are writing your website copy.

1. Keep your writing tight - cut out all superfluous words. Be concise and edit firmly.
2. Copy of about 600-800 words is better for SEO and catching the long tail of the Search Engines.
3. Title – Subject – Support. Keep your copy in that order, like subject, verb, object.
4. Titles should be snappy and informative; clickable but clear.
5. Lead in sentences or paragraphs should get to the point. Tell the reader what the article is about straight away.
6. No fancy, wordy introductions where it is not clear what you're talking about.
7. Information beats fluff every time. Pretty is for literary books.

8. Information does not beat style every time. Style is always appreciated.
9. Sans serif fonts are easier and faster to read on computer screens. Don't use anything else.
10. White space is the best thing you can give your website.
11. Content should be quickly scannable – remember the 3 second rule.
12. Use plenty of bullets and subtitles.
13. People like lists so use them.
14. Pictures should be specific and informative, not just decorative.
15. Photos should be relevant to content.
16. People in pictures should look friendly and approachable.
17. Photos should be full body if possible.
18. Spelling is important - nothing looks worse than wrongly-spelled words.
19. Grammar is important; it adds to your credibility.
20. Online press releases should be even tighter than Web copy.

### **Trust & Credibility**

The visitor must be convinced of the quality/authenticity of your product or service before they will be persuaded to take action. Whenever you structure a Home Page or a Landing Page for a website that has multiple products or services, you need to be aware of the following key elements for establishing trust:

- Testimonials
- References
- Partners & Affiliates (borrowed credibility)
- Guarantees
- Awards
- Case Studies
- Evidence of a physical presence
- Privacy and other legal policies
- Professional design and error-free content (more credibility).

### **Establishing Credibility**

This is best done through the use of testimonials and Case Studies which will tell the story; build trust and convey the Value Proposition. Obviously, the better known or the more instantly-recognised the person delivering the testimonial is, will contribute more to establishing trust and credibility. The right hand column is often used to house these

credibility-establishing elements. Pick one or two items and feature them in the right-hand column.

### **How important is a Great Headline?**

A great headline grabs the visitor and draws them into your site. On multiple products or services sites, headlines that focus on your Unique Selling Point are best. Hit them right up front with the biggest and best benefit that you have – your USP.

You may also want to include an opening hook to support your headline and to ensure that you have really captured the visitor. The same principles for headlines and opening hooks apply here as they do for long sales copy.

### **Compelling Specials!**

Use your home page to hit your visitors between the eyes with a sharp special. Include one or two really good specials. Remember that the first order is always the hardest and the same goes for getting the first item in the shopping cart. If you can get the visitor to put one of your really sharp specials into the shopping cart, then chances are the customer will buy a number of other products. This is especially so if you have strong cross-sells and up-sells.

Don't forget to write the copy for your products or services that are 'on special'. This is one of the most overlooked 'basics' with a website that features multiple products or services. If you follow the above guidelines when writing your home page, you are well on the way to having a successful website.

### **What makes an effective Home Page?**

The home page is the most important page of your website. It is the one page that all your visitors will view. A poor home page can destroy any chance of achieving your website objectives as a visitor will bail out within a few seconds. A good home page is the blueprint for every successful website.

Your homepage should establish the key elements necessary to close a sale or to generate an enquiry.

If your website is focused on a single product/service, then you should launch straight into your main sales copy on the home page.

But if your website contains a number of products or services, then you need to write some copy for your home page that encourages your visitors to click into the pages that contain more details of those products or services.

### **Landing Pages**

Many website owners are not aware that visitors may not always land on the Home Page. Depending on what they have searched for, they may often land on another page which is known as the Landing Page. This is defined as the first page the user sees when they land at your site. If you are seeking to maximise the amount of profit you make from your online advertising campaigns, one key factor you should consider is optimising your landing page.

It is true that for most website owners, their homepage will be the most common landing page. But many canny website owners are creating targeted landing pages to increase the impact of their website promotion. One big benefit is that targeted landing pages can be customised by industry; for a specific product; to highlight a core message; or based on the source of the site visit e.g. a link on another website or a particular online directory. Studies have demonstrated that targeted landing pages vastly increase the number of clickthroughs and so produce corresponding increases in conversion rates and online sales. This ensures that every dollar you spend on online marketing and advertising is effective in driving visitors to your website.

### **So why are targeted Landing Pages more effective?**

Online marketing and advertising that do not direct visitors to specific landing pages may be wasting a lot of money. This is because visitors are leaving the website almost immediately after they arrive – ‘bouncing’ in website terminology. Inexperienced advertisers may direct all of their visitors to their homepage. The visitor is then forced to search the whole website for the specific product or service they are looking for. Most users just don't have the time or patience to do this. They simply press the 'Back' button and move on to a competitor's website that will give them what they want promptly.

### **Testing the Usability of Your Site & Landing Pages**

Website usability is a vital factor in website design and layout. The more the user has to think, the less likely they are to convert. But an easy-to-use site can dramatically boost conversion ratios. This principle can be applied to every page on your site, not just your landing pages. The key to good website usability is to remove the need for the user to figure out how to achieve their goals on your site - this is called having clear conversion pathways.

### **Brent Kelly, cofounder of Zeald.com suggests you aim at making your conversion pathways**

***primate-proof* – he means that you should make sure even a monkey could follow the conversion pathway e.g. Buy Now! Read more here. See more here. Find out more here. See how here. Contact us. Enquire here.**

This is particularly important on landing pages as a visitor who has just arrived at your site makes immediate evaluations about all aspects of your business. Studies have shown that the average visitor will spend only 3 seconds assessing whether that particular webpage meets their needs. This quick judgement will include whether you provide the service they're looking for, and whether you are a trustworthy company to do business with. At this delicate stage in your relationship with the customer, the customer is extremely fickle and can just as easily leave and go to a competing site. Even small adjustments to the quality of your landing pages can increase conversion rates dramatically.

So what are the best practices that you should be looking at in optimising your landing pages? You should consider these questions:

1. Do you have a clear headline stating clearly and succinctly the website's purpose?
2. Is the product title and image prominent and visible immediately, without scrolling?

3. Is the purchasing process obvious and understandable – primate-proof even?
4. Are there complicated options, buttons or links that could confuse or distract the user?
5. Will the user immediately know how to use your site and what they need to do to achieve their goal?
6. Have you checked that all of the links and buttons work? Here is not much point in having a 'Buy Now' button that has a broken link and goes nowhere.

Using optimised landing pages is a very important part of a Website Plan. Optimising your landing pages will not only increase sales but it can also free up advertising revenue to increase traffic from other sources. There are many factors to consider, but the focus has to be on the visitors' needs. You must provide the easiest and best possible website visitor experience.

## Section 5: Website Promotion

### Website Promotion

How will your target customer learn about the presence of your website and what will prompt them to visit it? Once you have your website, there is still a lot more work to do. You can have the best web site in the world, but if no one ever visits, it will be a waste of space, your time and your marketing budget. It's a common misconception that if you build a web site, people will visit it. This is simply not true! As with any 'bricks and mortar' business you must promote and market your web site in order to ensure its value and success.

### Forms of Promotion:

1. Word of Mouth
2. A Physical Sales force
3. Referrals
4. Email Marketing Campaigns
5. Ensure they are personalised, branded and have a WIIFM (What's In it for Me) for the person receiving it - i.e. that it contains information/offers of values to the recipient.
6. Search Engine Advertising
7. Google Adwords Campaign – geo targeted campaigns. Remember to set a daily/monthly budget to control your expenditure. Set up Google Analytics to track your success - Measurement = TMT = Continual Improvement = Improved results.
8. Website Advertising – placing banner advertisements on complementary companies/organisations websites.
9. Online directory Listings: Yellow pages (always with a link direct to the website) , [www.searchnz.co.nz](http://www.searchnz.co.nz) , UBD
10. Banner advertisements on Ezines and Newsletters sent out by other organisations or companies who also communicate with your target market.
11. Email Signatures
12. Banner advertisements on News Feeds – e.g. Herald – Viva living section
13. Affiliate Programmes.
14. Offline promotion; Business cards, letterhead paper, number plates, magazine advertisements, vehicle advertising, newspaper advertisements, bill-boards, Workshops, Seminars, Invoices, Labels, brochures etc.

That last form of promotion is extremely important - the first rule of web site promotion is:

Add your web site address to everything you already use to promote your business.

It is amazing what that extra line of text does for your image and business success.

Many companies forget this very simple, but highly effective, first step. It is no wonder there are so many web site failures. So add your web site address to everything, including your:

- Business cards
- Brochures
- Signage
- Letterheads
- Labelling and packaging
- Radio & TV advertising

- Newspaper and magazine advertising
- Press releases
- Letterbox drops
- Catalogues
- Yellow Pages <sup>TM</sup> and White Pages <sup>TM</sup> listings
- Direct mail letters
- And so on.

Anything going out, or in the public arena, needs urgent attention to include your site's address. To achieve the above, you should create a document that will become your advertising and promotions 'road map'.

A good start is to draft a document that will serve as an Advertising & Promotions 'map' for your current financial year. Many 'dot.com' and '.co.nz' failures are companies who probably failed to systematically broadcast their site address wherever possible. At this stage list your existing materials that require updating with your web site address. Your focus for this planning is primarily to assess timing requirements.

Even if the web site has only a 'construction' page at the time you prepare these updated items, you are working to ensure that everything gets updated as 'universally' as possible for your launch, using the same consistent messages.

To work through updating your existing materials in a well-coordinated fashion, create a list showing the items individually (later you'll be adding in your new 'online activities' and initiatives, as covered in the rest of this module). Give each individual item its own line and show in columns their timings (such as using a 'fill' in the column for the corresponding month), who should action the item, what the estimated costs are, comments, etc. A column for your comments is useful e.g., "ZB Newstalk additional voice-overs required. Get Sarah to prepare draft cover letter and purchase order for my approval".

Not only will this event calendar help you to be more efficient, e.g., cost savings from bulk-buying media placements or multiple print jobs; but you'll also be less likely to miss good promotional opportunities or find yourselves 'too late' to take advantage of benefits such as 'early booking discounts', etc.

Avoid last-minute, urgent-rate jobs or 'surprises' (and invest those savings into your other promotional strategies). And don't forget, you should only be interested in attracting website visitors who will be interested in your products and services.

If you lose sight of your target market, you will waste an awful lot of time and money by attracting people who are not the slightest bit interested in what you are offering. And what's the point in that?

## **Budgeting**

What is your budget? Your web site needs to have a marketing and promotion budget! So, just how much money can be allocated to the promotion and marketing of your web site each month? Even if the budget is small it will be a step in the right direction, because, if you neglect this, your site will suffer.

## **Search Engine Rankings**

For most search engines, ranking is based on a complex algorithm (formula) that is different for each search engine. It would be a huge investment in time if you tried to optimise your website to suit all of these various algorithms and then you will find that usually a page that ranks well on one search engine will not rank so well on other engines. You would need to write separate doorway pages optimised for each search engine to achieve this. Good luck with that.

## **Search Engine Optimisation**

If you are going to use your website to sell a product or promote service, then you have to get visitors to the site. This is achieved by promoting the site through advertising, promotion or by rating highly in the popular search engines, especially Google. Surveys have shown that 80-90% of people discover websites through a search engine and 65% of those will be using Google. Several other major search engines also use the Google search engine so if you rate highly on Google, you will also rate highly on those linked search engines. Your website may need to be tweaked by an expert so your site rates in the first ten – that is, it will be on the first search page. Web surfers do not tend to go past the first page when they are searching. The top 10 listings receive nearly 80% more traffic than those in position 11 to 30. If you are not listed in the first ten, it is important to do something about it. This is called Search Engine Optimisation. The aim is to get into the top three listings to maximise your exposure.

## **Top 10 Search Engine Ranking Factors**

This document represents the collective wisdom of 37 leaders in Search Engine Optimisation.

### **1. Using the main Keyword in the Title Tag**

Placing the targeted search term or phrase in the title tag of the web page's HTML header has consistently been the most important on-page SEO factor for the many years.

### **2. Anchor Text of Inbound Link**

The Anchor text of the inbound link is one of the most concise assessments another person can make about what your site/page is 'about'. But it can be hard to influence that tag.

### **3. Global Link Popularity of Website**

The overall link popularity/authority as measured by links from other quality websites - a site's overall link popularity will drastically effect rankings.

### **4. Age of Website**

Defined by the date of the launch of website when indexable content is seen by the Search Engines - aging has taken on more significance in the ranking factors. It is very difficult for a new website to gain a first page ranking in Google. There has been some speculation that

many websites fall over in the first few months. Google does not waste space ranking those websites, until they prove they are survivors.

### **5. Link Popularity within the Website**

This refers to the number and importance of internal links pointing to a certain target page - without the proper linking structure, the target page may not get enough emphasis.

### **6. Topical Relevance of Inbound Links**

The relationship between the sites/pages linking to the target page and the target keyword must be relevant. Such relevant incoming links are important and will help with rankings.

### **7. Link Popularity of Site in Topical Community**

The link weight/authority of the target website amongst its topical peers in the online world - a niche site may not have a high quantity of links but a few links from the 'authorities' in the web community is often enough to rank the site above the authorities for niche-related keywords.

### **8. Keyword Use in Body Text**

Using the targeted search term in the content of the page - it is important to use the keyword/phrase throughout the page. This is called keyword density and there are several free tools to check this aspect.

### **9. Global Link Popularity of Linking Website**

The link popularity of the linking page and website is probably the most important factor when deciding on a link.

### **10. Topical Relationship of Linking Page**

Evidence of page contents from a linking page affecting rankings of page being linked to has been important for a long time.

A high ranking in a Google search is not achieved through luck. It results from a partnership between the website developer's technology and the client support systems. It is also vital that clients take the trouble to write high quality content. And then they need to continually improve their websites, testing, measuring and tuning them to constantly enhance their performance.

**When my trout fishing website, [www.trout-fishing-new-zealand.com](http://www.trout-fishing-new-zealand.com) was struggling to get into the top thirty sites, I asked a fishing mate and website listing expert to help out. Ben Kemp was a Lake Brunner trout fishing guide who spent his off season improving website rankings through Search Engine Optimisation. After Ben had given my site a makeover, my ratings jumped to #1 in Google, Yahoo and MSN – the rest don't matter as these search engines are by far the most important . There was nothing particularly obvious on the web pages to reveal what Ben had done. It was a matter of adjusting the**

html code, and inserting meta tags, alt tags and keywords so that they optimised the site for ranking when the Google spiders came crawling over it. The bad news is that it is much more difficult to get a high ranking for each page of your website on all the main search engines as individual internal pages usually rank lower than the Home page. The exception is an internal page that has been specially optimised for a more specific keyword search term, one not targeted on the Home page – these are called Landing Pages.

## Achieving a high Search Engine ranking

### How do I get a good ranking on



The answer is not straightforward. Why? Because Google uses a complex algorithm to rank web pages. This ranking formula is extremely important to website owners because knowing which factors Google uses to rank websites is critical to optimisation of your website.

The trouble is Google rarely tell you what the current ranking formula is!!

Google's ranking factors affect how and where you are listed in their search engine results. Since obtaining top positions for your targeted keywords often spells success for your site, knowing Google's ranking factors can be very beneficial.

Everyone knows that Google is the biggest search engine – for example, they account for 64% of visitors to my website. Getting on the first page of Google is essential to the success of any website that is relying on Search Engine ranking.

I have listed below some of the main factors that affect the ranking of your website. You should be optimising your web pages with these factors in mind. Webmasters who concentrate their SEO efforts on optimising for Google will give their site an edge over the opposition.

The main ranking factors to consider are:

#### **1. Keywords in your Website Title and on your pages**

Put your keyword (or keyword phrase) in the title of each page and also in your content. Many webmasters use variations of their keywords on a particular page and also include it in the main headline.

#### **2. Keywords in your URL**

It is important to keep your page relevant to the website. It is useful to have your keyword in your URL. A good example is [www.website-consultant.co.nz](http://www.website-consultant.co.nz) where the targeted keyword is website consultant. You should also use your keyword in the secondary headlines. And make sure you place it in the description and your other meta tags. But, whatever you do, keep your content readable and useful. Be aware of the text surrounding your keywords as search engines may become more semantic in future years, so context is important.

### **3. Create high quality, relevant content**

Content is King! You must have high quality, relevant content on your pages to get a good ranking in Google. Your content should be related to the subject of your site and updated regularly. I try to add a new article every second day. I believe it is the quality of my content that saw my babyboomers website indexed in two days and ranked #1 after only four weeks.

### **4. Internal onsite linking**

Internal linking is important to your overall ranking. Make sure your linking structure is easy for the robots/spiders to crawl. A simple automated sitemap with links no more than three clicks away from your home/index page is vital.

### **5. Only get links from high quality related websites**

It is important to only link from high quality (ones with a good Page Rank) sites. Being linked to by high quality sites shows the search engines that your website is very useful to your visitors. Build relationships within communities on the subject of your site. Be extremely careful with your outgoing links – if they are not high quality and relevant to your website, don't add them. I even am a bit harsher – if the outgoing link is not producing revenue for my website, I don't add it. Just ask yourself the question – what's in it for me if I add this link.

### **6. Global Linking Popularity**

One of the major ranking factors is the Global Linking Popularity of your site. You should try to build large numbers of inbound links from quality sites. One simple and effective way to do this is through writing articles and submitting them to the online article directories. Only related websites will pick up and display your articles with your links back to your site. These are usually one-way-links which are more highly-rated by Google. Articles with quality content that will help the reader first and the links will come naturally.

### **7. Anchor text is very important**

Anchor text is an important factor as these inbound links should be related or relevant to your site's topic. This will play an important role in your rankings. Don't ignore the text surrounding your links and use different anchor text links to avoid keyword spamming. Keep in mind, as search engines become more semantic, the whole text of your article will probably be considered your anchor text, thus making articles even more important to your rankings.

### **8. Topicality of your incoming links**

Your inbound links should also come from related websites that are regarded as an authority in your field. The more links you have from these popular, authority sites, the higher rankings you will get – as long as those sites are relevant to your content. Many SEO experts suggest you should have a steady stream of new sites (inbound links) added each month to keep your

rankings growing. These links will age and increase your rankings after 4 or 5 months. Both quality and topicality is important.

## 9. Reliable server and service

Like any business, Google is just supplying a product to its customers, so this service must be continuous and available at all times. Make sure you have a good reliable server because any extended downtime, when your site is inaccessible to the Google robots (spiders), may be detrimental to your rankings. If the site is down for more than 48 hours, you could be dropped from the index.

## 10. Duplicate content is a no-no!

Make certain you don't place duplicate content on your site. This may affect your rankings and get your pages sent to the supplemental index. Be careful not to use duplicate title or meta tags on your pages as this will lower and disburse your internal page rankings, resulting in poor optimisation.

For the best search engine optimisation, every item of content on your website should be original; not previously published elsewhere on the Internet. The reason for that is that copying content from other websites and republishing it on your site will harm your search engine ranking because search engines like to present searchers with unique content from the original source. You can copy content (as long as you give credit to the original writer) but you need to add an introductory paragraph. This will be enough to show the Search Engine that this is not duplicate content.

There is no debate that Content is King and good quality content will eventually see your website rise to the top of the rankings:

Results **1 - 10** of about **150,000** for [website consultant](#). (0.27 seconds)

## Search Results

### 1. [Zeald.com Website Consultant Ron Giles](#)

Need a *website*? Want a better *website*? Author and *Website Consultant* Ron Giles can help. Get free advice on any aspect of *website* development.  
[www.website-consultant.co.nz/](http://www.website-consultant.co.nz/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

### 2. [Search Engine Optimisation, Marketing & Web Site Usability ...](#)

Our *consultants* at Online Advantage Ltd New Zealand NZ offer full Search Engine optimisation & marketing services and specialise in *Web Site* usability.  
[www.onlineadvantage.co.nz/](http://www.onlineadvantage.co.nz/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

### 3. [website-consultant.co.nz Site Profile : Ron Giles Website Consultant](#)

*website-consultant.co.nz* Site Profile for Ron Giles *Website Consultant* on NZS.com with business information as well as technical information relating to the ...  
[www.nzs.com/site-profile/website-consultant.co.nz/](http://www.nzs.com/site-profile/website-consultant.co.nz/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

#### 4. [Opus International Consultants](#)

Opus. Skip *Site* Navigation. ... has recently won four Silver Awards of Excellence at the Association of *Consulting* Engineers of New Zealand (ACENZ) Awards. ...  
[www.opus.co.nz/](http://www.opus.co.nz/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

#### 5. [Helen Hewitt - Website Consultant, Internet in Whangamata - finda ...](#)

Helen Hewitt - *Website Consultant*. I enjoy working with other Small Business owners, with regards to their business websites. - finda New Zealand.  
[www.finda.co.nz/business/.../helen-hewitt-website-consultant/](http://www.finda.co.nz/business/.../helen-hewitt-website-consultant/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

#### 6. [Search Engine Optimisation Consultants | SEO Training | SearchMasters](#)

Or is your *website* moulding up from lack of visitors? You need to be talking with SearchMasters, master Search Engine Optimisation *Consultants!* ...  
[www.searchmasters.co.nz/](http://www.searchmasters.co.nz/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

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Results 1 - 10 of about 20,800 for **babyboomers**. (1.65 seconds)

### Search Results

#### 1. [Baby boomers website by babyboomer author Ron Giles](#)

*Babyboomer* Ron Giles is the author of a book on how the *baby boomer* generation can take new directions in their lives.  
[www.babyboomersguide.co.nz/](http://www.babyboomersguide.co.nz/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

#### 2. [Baby boomers book](#)

More information on the new book by Ron Giles - All the f words for New Zealand *Babyboomers*.  
[www.babyboomersguide.co.nz/Babyboomers+book.html](http://www.babyboomersguide.co.nz/Babyboomers+book.html) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)  
[More results from www.babyboomersguide.co.nz](http://www.babyboomersguide.co.nz) »

#### 3. [Baby Boomers – a mini history... - KiwiBoomers](#)

A Statistics Department booklet on *Baby Boomers*\* showed most were prosperous and at reasonably advanced levels of urbanisation and industrialisation. ...  
[www.kiwiboomers.co.nz/index.php?option=com...](http://www.kiwiboomers.co.nz/index.php?option=com...) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

#### 4. [Scoop: Baby Boomers Refuse To Retire](#)

31 Jul 2009 ... As the first of New Zealand's largest and most influential generation start turning 65, the big question taxing society is, "Will our aging ...  
[www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PO0907/S00298.htm](http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PO0907/S00298.htm) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

#### 5. [Scoop: The Great Baby-Boomers Economic Stagnation](#)

10 Jul 2009 ... "... a serious depression seems improbable; [we expect] recovery of business next spring, with further improvement in the fall.  
[www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL0907/S00116.htm](http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL0907/S00116.htm) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)  
[More results from www.scoop.co.nz](http://www.scoop.co.nz) »

#### 6. [Ten ways for baby boomers to redeem themselves - 30 Jun 2009 ...](#)

I argued in my blog post last week here that Generations X and Y should leave New Zealand because *baby boomers* were stopping any change to the status quo ...  
[blogs.nzherald.co.nz/.../ten-ways-baby-boomers-redeem-themselves/?...](http://blogs.nzherald.co.nz/.../ten-ways-baby-boomers-redeem-themselves/?...) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

Results 1 - 10 of about 116,000 for [trout fishing new zealand](#). (0.16 seconds)

### Search Results

#### 1. [New Zealand Fly Fishing-New Zealand Fishing-NZ fly fishing guide](#)

...

*New Zealand fly fishing*-the complete independent guide to fly *fishing* in the North Island and South Island of *New Zealand*-Rivers, lakes, maps, *fishing* guides ...  
[NZ fishing waters](#) - [Regional map](#) - [NZ fly box](#) - [Regulations](#)  
[www.nzfishing.com/](http://www.nzfishing.com/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

#### 2. [New Zealand Trout Fishing - Ron Giles, New Zealand Angling Author](#)

*New Zealand* premier *trout fishing* website hosted by leading author Ron Giles. Learn the secrets of fly *fishing* NZ and buy Ron's latest books on-line.  
[www.trout-fishing-new-zealand.com/](http://www.trout-fishing-new-zealand.com/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

### 3. [Fly Fishing New Zealand](#)

Superb Fly *Fishing* with the best *New Zealand Fly Fishing* Guides. Learn the secrets of where and how to catch big *New Zealand trout* from a local expert.

[www.flyfishingnz.co.nz/](http://www.flyfishingnz.co.nz/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

### 4. [New Zealand Fly Fishing Guide - Taupo Fly Fishing Guide ...](#)

*New Zealand fly fishing* guide/Taupo fly *fishing* guide specializing in fly *fishing New Zealand* for *trout* around Lake Taupo and Tongariro river, North Island, ...

[www.newzealandfishing.com/](http://www.newzealandfishing.com/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

### 5. [Best of New Zealand Fly Fishing : The Best of New Zealand Fly ...](#)

Specialist tour operator offers articles, detailed accommodation and guide profiles, testimonials, and photos.

[www.bestofnzflyfishing.com/](http://www.bestofnzflyfishing.com/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

### 6. [Dream Trout New Zealand - Fly Fishing Guide Taupo, NZ](#)

*New Zealand fly fishing* with Taupo *trout fishing* Guide Craig Farrar. Fly *Fishing* for wild *trout*, Taupo, Central North Island, *New Zealand*.

[www.dreamtrout.com/](http://www.dreamtrout.com/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

## **More on Incoming Links - How important are Incoming Links for Google Rankings?**

Many website owners and webmasters are not sure how to go about gaining incoming links so that their sites rank well in the search engine results. Google, Yahoo and MSN/Bing all calculate link popularity as one part of their search algorithms. So building link popularity is an important part of getting recognition and high placement in the search engine result pages (SERPs). In my experience, this factor is more important in the first three months of a website 'going live'. After that, content becomes more important.

Link popularity is a count of how many web pages point to one of your web pages.

### **The Google Version of Link Popularity**

PageRank (PR) is a Google tool that gives a value to every web page on the Internet, with 10 possible rankings. In essence, it is an expansion of the simplest link popularity calculation.

If you look at the Google PageRank tool:

- 1/ The Gray Bar in the PageRank tool indicates that a web page has not been added to the Google PageRank database, or it might mean that Google has banned the website.
- 2/ PR0 to PR10. PR0 indicates that the web page has been added to the Google database, but it does not yet have any PageRank assigned to it, usually because there are not any high (more than PR3 value pages) that link to it at this time.

If you are tracking PageRank from the Google toolbar, you should understand that the database that stores PageRank values is only updated once every 3-4 months.

### **Google PageRank Basics**

Since Google drives the largest portion of search traffic on the Internet, it is important to understand their link popularity system. All web pages have been assigned a PageRank value by Google, according to the value of the web pages that link to them. This number is always changing as links are added, lost or change in value.

Pages linking to your pages have their own Google PageRank value, according to who links to them, and the value of the pages that are linking to their web page. As the web pages linking to your web pages gain value, then your pages will also gain value in the Google PageRank algorithms.

As a Webmaster, it should be your goal to create as many links to your website, as you can. Eventually, most of those linked web pages with real value will gain their own PageRank, and they will pass some of their PR value to your web pages.

Initially article marketing was a great way of improving your Google PageRank. It was common for a new article placement to help the ranking of any website mentioned in the article to initially rise in the search rankings, then to drop away after a while after that initial impact. But article placement was abused by SEO practitioners and Google has downgraded their importance.

### **Building Link Popularity**

In essence, even if search engines did not include link popularity as a part of their ranking criteria, you would still want to develop links to your website. Links are the pathways that keep surfers moving from one website to another. The goal is to get the website visitor to click the link to the target website. With every visitor to a website being a potential customer, it makes good sense to get as many visitors to the website as possible. That goal requires getting as many links as possible pointing to your website.

### **Google's Main Index and Supplemental Listings**

In order for the referenced website to get the PageRank it needs to climb in the search results, the web pages linking to it must have their own PageRank. As a single web page gains in link popularity and PageRank, the web page will also improve in the search results.

When a new article is placed for the first time, it is always placed on a "brand new" page on the Internet. New pages on the Internet, by their very nature, do not have any external links pointing to them and therefore, they do not have any established PageRank.

In recognition of this new-to-the-Internet status, Google is giving a pass to those new web pages. As far as the Google algorithm is concerned, these brand new pages might have value, but that value cannot be determined yet, as Google does not yet register the number of links pointing to the page.

At the end of Google's "pass window", Google checks to see if this new page has developed

any of its own inbound links. This will determine the Google PageRank value. If the new web page has not developed any value of its own, after a window of 30-45 days, then the new page will be moved from Google's main index to Google's Supplemental listings. If the new page has developed PageRank, then the page will remain in Google's main index.

Google say that having urls in the supplemental results is not a penalty on the website. The main determining factor of whether a site is in the main web index or in the supplemental index is PageRank.

Many web pages that have slipped into the Supplement listings may gain their own PageRank over the medium to long term and then those pages will return to Google's main index. If your articles are valuable resources to surfers, then those articles will be given their own inbound links and therefore PageRank. But just don't expect that to happen overnight.

As a general rule, it appears that the average web page will gain a measure of PageRank somewhere in the range of 90 to 180 days from the day the web page went live. While not all pages will receive inbound links (and therefore PageRank), enough of them do to make the whole process worthwhile.

### **Yahoo & MSN/Bing**

Originally Yahoo and MSN did not employ a link popularity calculation in their search algorithms. But when Google became the dominant search engine, then the other SE's had to respond, if they want to stay competitive. So after years of lagging behind Google, Yahoo and MSN decided it was time to add a link popularity calculation into their search algorithms.

Then the whole game changed when Microsoft launched their new Search Engine, Bing, in 2009. Initially, the Bing search returns seemed very similar to Google. My website, [www.website-consultant](http://www.website-consultant.com) was #1 in Google; #2 in Yahoo and #1 in Bing. In mid July, 2009, MSN/Bing started sending out their own robots/spiders. Coincidentally, the rankings changed. My website-consultant website went from #1 in Bing to #6! Around the same time, Yahoo and Microsoft announced collaboration. At this point, we have no idea how this will affect rankings on Yahoo and MSN/Bing. Will Bing will take over as the search engine provider for Yahoo? Will Yahoo robots cease trolling the 'net? Will the manual editor regime of Yahoo be replaced with a Google-like automated indexing on Bing?

The ultimate question is: will this really give Google significant competition in the search engine race? It is too far too early to tell but I suspect it is not going to make a huge difference. Why? If a typical Google user has tried Bing and decided to continue using Google as their search engine of choice, they are not going to abandon it just because Yahoo is using it. Does it matter that much to Google if Yahoo users are using Bing? They were already using Yahoo over Google, so what's the impact on Google?

Microsoft and Yahoo may get some more advertisers out of this, with the combination of Bing and Yahoo making up a greater percentage of the search market share. But it is not likely that this is going to draw advertisers away from Google, which still controls the dominant amount of that market.

Bing's launch may have highlighted some things you could do with a search engine but the

launch has been more about branding than anything. Despite the fact that Bing does have some new features, weighing it all up, this partnership between Yahoo and Microsoft is unlikely to have much of an effect on Google. Although most of us would like to see more competition in the search industry, there is no guarantee that this new collaboration will provide it.

Why? Because Google is so dominant for a simple reason – we like Google. I use Google. 65% of you readers use Google. Even if the some new competitor offers a product that is just as good or even better in some ways, Google would have to drop the ball and drive people to Bing for there to be a significant change to the search engine market.

The problem is that Google is so far ahead and the fact that it has been for so long. It is not just Google the search engine. Think about all of the products that Google users are already using: from Gmail to Google Analytics to Adwords to Adsense, etc. Google search is only part of the package.

### **Google Analytics**

At Zeald.com, we started developing complex website statistics analysis tools some years ago. When we saw Google were spending billions on such tools (Google Analytics), we backed off and just preconfigured our websites to accept easy assimilation of the Google Webmaster tools. Website users have a lot of their online lives invested in Google and switching Search Engines is probably not likely for most of them. It is all about convenience and familiarity.

Time will tell - just make sure your website host is keeping up with these developments and keeping you appraised.

But whichever Search Engine is dominant - your website will never gain link popularity if you do not increase the number of links to your website. If the web page never gains link popularity, it will not gain PageRank, and it will not rise in the search engine rankings. If you are not accomplishing link popularity and search engine placement, then you need to work harder on gaining quality incoming links. This is critical in highly-competeted for keywords; in less competitive areas, original content will be just as effective, ranking-wise.

### **Reciprocal Links - Good or Bad?**

#### **The Downside of Reciprocal Linking**

It is surprising how many people still think that it is still important to exchange links with other websites. Have a troll through my website and see if you can find any reciprocal or outgoing links. I'll save you the trouble - there is only one - to [www.zeald.com](http://www.zeald.com) (my main source of income!). Unless there are overwhelming commercial reasons for having an outgoing link; don't have them! You have spent a lot of effort to get a visitor to your website - why make it easy for them to leave your website? The old days of having pages of outgoing links are long gone. If someone wants to pay you for one – fine. Or if you are being paid commission for a purchase made by someone coming from your website to a website you have linked to – fine.

In the old days, (like 5 years ago!), Internet experts raved on about the importance of adding reciprocal links to your website in an effort to gain Search Engine ranking. The theory was

that Google, in particular, rank highly websites with a huge number (more than 2000) of incoming links. This was based on the idea that Google want to have popular sites ranking highly on their responses to Search Engine user's questions. The theory presented was that the reason those sites are popular is that they contain a lot of good content. Because they have good content, many other sites will link to them.

So you were told the first thing you needed to do was to begin reciprocal linking i.e. trading links with other sites. But the rules have changed and you should ignore those "reciprocal link request" in your email inbox. Why?

### **1. Most of the requests are automated**

It used to be flattering to get a link request, as it showed that someone had visited your site and wanted to exchange a link. But these days most of the requests are done with automated software and it means that no one has actually visited your site. Automation is not necessarily bad, but it leads to all kinds of abuses. It can prevent you from picking out the good links from the bad. Even if you have an automated directory to handle link requests, you will still be swamped with large numbers of link requests.

### **2. Most link requests are of very low quality**

The original idea of linking was to provide your own visitors with quality sites that were relevant to the topic of your website or complementary to it. The links were provided as an additional resource to your own site; adding and amplifying the information on your website. Today many sites have been set up only to make money from Google AdSense or other similar advertising programs. Driven by the need to get a high PageRank, many webmasters spent all their waking hours sending requests to large numbers of websites, whether they were related to their site or not. If a link is to be a resource to visitors of both sites, then the two sites should somehow be related and the sites should be of comparable quality. Most reciprocal link requests fail this test.

### **3. Links are buried on pages where they will never be seen**

In addition to being a resource for your own visitors, you want to exchange links in hopes of getting some targeted traffic back to your site. It used to be easier in the old days. What would happen is a webmaster would have a site with, say, ten different pages and one of his pages would be a Links Page. On that page, they would display a large number of links. The link to this page would be prominent in the website's navigation tabs. You would normally be assured of getting some serious traffic, if your link was placed on this kind of page.

That has all changed. People now build huge directories of hundreds of categories, stuffed with pages and pages of links. It is extremely unlikely that many visitors will drill down through all the pages and find your site in such a directory. The other downside of website directories is that many of them now seem to be a huge source of spam. Get a link from these dodgy directories and watch your junk mail folder fill.

### **4. Many of the link requests are for Three Way Links**

What is a three way link, I suspect you are asking? I link to site A, then they will give a link to my site originating from site B. Three way links were a device that tried to get around the fact that Google no longer rates outgoing links, only incoming links. If someone links to you

without asking you and doesn't request a reciprocal link; that means that your site is really good. This is why Google rates more highly true one-way links. The three-way links proposed by many Webmasters are just an attempt to trick the search engines; they are not true one-way links. Google soon got wise to such schemes and this kind of effort will yield little benefit to the linking websites.

And, with this kind of linking arrangement, you first have to check out who you are linking to. So you are then faced with the chore of checking another site that is going to link to you. Usually the site where the link to you will be placed is some kind of obscure website directory, essentially just a link-farm.

This is the state of reciprocal linking today. I have never bothered trying to gain reciprocal links for my websites. Yet my websites still rank Number 1 in their fields. Why? Quality Content! That goes back to the original premise if your website has quality content, other websites will link to you. Even if you don't have many links, Google will rank you highly solely due to the quality and volume of your content. But I have learned from experience, that if you are in a hugely competitive field, great content alone will not guarantee you a high ranking.

People come to the Internet to solve a problem, find a solution and get information. If you can make your website a true resource and a great place where visitors can get the information that they need, then it will not go unnoticed.

But if you are not convinced and want to gain more links, here are a few suggestions on how to get quality incoming links without adding reciprocal links:

### **1. Blogs and Forums**

You can learn something from forums and blogs and you can contribute something as well. Always try to leave your domain name when you make a comment or a posting. If you offer good advice, you will gain a good online reputation and become known as an expert in your field. This newly-found recognition as an expert, combined with links from these blogs and forums, will be worth much more than low quality reciprocal links.

### **2. Article Marketing**

Article marketing involves writing articles about your field of interest and distribute them for publication on other websites, blogs and ezines, with a link back to your site. Each time your article is published on a website, you get an incoming link to your site. As with most good things, this method has been pounced upon by Internet marketers and the net is flooded with millions of low-quality articles. But if you produce worthwhile, original articles, you can still gain some benefit from distributing your articles.

### **3. Social Networking**

The latest method of increasing incoming links is to use the huge power of the social networking websites like, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Bebo, Flickr, Linkedin, etc, etc. If it is good enough for Lance Armstrong, it is good enough for you. Load your profile on every one of these sites – every time with a link to your website(s). You will soon build up a number of quality incoming links.

So instead of adding to the flood of reciprocal link requests, build your own quality content and start using more reliable methods of increasing the number of incoming links to your site.

Your overall Search Engine Optimisation strategy should be to provide valuable, relevant content and plenty of incoming links. These are most important ranking factors Google uses to rank and display their search engine results. Optimising your site and keywords for these factors will see you have on-line success.

### **Paying for exposure**

Many website owners just can't be bothered with the hassle of constantly updating the website so it meets the ever-changing criteria of the search engines. An option is to pay for a sponsored listing. You choose the key words and then set the amount you feel you can afford for every 'click through' – someone that clicks on the link to your site on the Google search engine. How much you are prepared to pay affects the ranking of your link. If you bid 10 cents per click through and someone else bids 11 cents, their link will be placed above yours. You can set the limit of the amount that you want to spend per day or per week. When that amount is reached, your link is removed until the next day or week. What this means is that you can spend as little as \$50 per week and test the effectiveness of this new marketing technique. You will get maybe 500 click throughs for your fifty bucks and it will be easy to analyse just how much business was gained from this advertising campaign. That is difficult to gauge with most other forms of advertising like TV, radio and any of the print media.

### **Is your website in Google?**

If you wonder why your site does not appear in a search on Google, you can quickly check if its actually being indexed... try the following search;

“site:www.yoursite.co.nz” and of course, replace “yoursite” with the URL of YOUR site! e.g. site:www.trout-consultant.co.nz

This should produce a list of all the pages in your site that Google has found, and decided were worthy of indexing. If no pages were found then you need to call

Google offers several similar little tools, if you go to Google Webmasters Tools. Each of these tools provides useful information about your site, and an insight into the way Google “sees” it. In a Google search box, just type the operator and your domain name (less the http://www/ portion as per the previous example.)

e.g.

**site:babyboomersguide.co.nz** will list all the pages that have been indexed by Google

**allinurl:babyboomersguide.co.nz** will list all the pages that refer to your site's URL

**link:babyboomersguide.co.nz** will show every website that is linked to your site

**cache:babyboomersguide.co.nz** will display the current cache of your site

**info:babyboomersguide.co.nz** will show all the information Google have about your website

**related:babyboomersguide.co.nz** will show a list of websites that are similar to your site

See the Internet Glossary on my website if any of the above terms are not familiar.

## Google Sitemaps

Signing up for a Google SiteMaps account is also a good move as a great deal of extra information about your site - as Google sees it - is available. This includes Crawl and Index errors, and also a range of Crawl & Index statistics. It is possible to gain an insight into what keywords Google associates with your site - both from the site itself, and from the sites that link to it! The errors (if any) are very important, as they may reveal sound reasons for Google not indexing your site fully.

Whilst submitting a sitemap is in itself no guarantee of inclusion, or of rankings, it can help get all pages indexed and at the same time ensure that appropriate emphasis is placed on the most important pages, e.g. that the Product/Services pages are treated as more important than the About Us, Privacy Statement etc pages.

If your site does not show up in the site:yoursite.com search, you certainly have a problem that you need to get to the bottom of. There can be a variety of reasons for exclusion from Search Engine indexes, including;


- 1/ Insufficient incoming links - some Search Engines think that if no one links to you, then you are not worth indexing...
- 2/ You have duplicate content - multiple domain names pointing to the same pages
- 3/ Other transgressions such as hidden text, excessive use of doorway pages, cloaking etc

### Submitting your sitemap to Google

A couple of years ago, Google and Yahoo insisted that website owners produce an automated Sitemap - this is just a complete list of all the pages on your website. The reason was to make it easy for the Search Engine spiders/robots to find every page on a website. An automated sitemap will automatically add a new page you have added to your website to the Sitemap, making it easier for the Search Engines to find and index the new page.

One of the most common omissions by new website owners is to fail to submit their sitemap to Google. Many website designers (usually the graphic designer, non-commercial types) will tell you this is not necessary - Google will find you eventually. That may be true - but how much business will you have lost in those months?

The process is not overly complicated but is worthwhile. After submitting my Sitemap and URL to Google, both my Zeald.com websites were indexed in 2 days. So tell your website developer you want an automated Sitemap and go through the process below:

1. Go to <https://www.google.com/webmasters/sitemaps/login>
2. Sign in to Google Sitemaps with your Google Account details.  
(If you are not using Gmail or other Google Account service, Create a Google Account by selecting the "Create a Google Account" link and follow the directions)
3. Click the Continue button underneath Add a Sitemap - Get started with Google Sitemaps  
You will now see the site overview. Select the Add tab at the top of the page  


4. Under What type of Sitemap would you like to add?, select the General Web Sitemap option. Then click the Next button  
General\_Web\_Sitemap\_option.jpg

5. In the field labelled Enter your Sitemap URL below: Enter the address of your dynamic Sitemap from your website, This page is an automatically generated by the Zeald.com website manager software and updated every time you make a change on the website. This address should read [http://www.\[my domain name\]/sitemap.xml](http://www.[my domain name]/sitemap.xml) for example.  
<http://www.meatcuisine.co.nz/sitemap.xml>  
Then click OK  
Enter\_sitemap\_URL.jpg

6. Verify you are the website owner - Next you need to verify that you are the website owner. Google provide you with a Verification file which is a link that Google require you to setup on your website, so proving that you have the authority to make changes to the content of your website.  
The easiest way to do this is by using your CMS to create a Redirect. A redirect of the address file provided by Google to any page within your website.  
verification\_file\_name.jpg

Login to the administration of your website and copy the Verification file name from your Google sitemap account.

If you have a zeald.com website, you can find the detailed instructions on how to do this in the Help Centre.

If you have a website from another supplier, you will have to ask them how to do it on your site.

If you are not sure about some of the terms used in this article, check them out in the Internet Glossary

You can also use the statistics provided by your hosting company to improve your website. One important piece of information is on what page visitors left your site. There is some problem with that page. Maybe you have a external link to another website that is proving so attractive to your visitors that they are leaving your website in droves. Or the page is so slow loading that your surfers have given up and clicked somewhere else. Remember many people are surfing at 56 kps on a dial up modem. Only 50% of NZ residences are on broadband at this point. And if they live in the country, it might be even slower than 56k. If your website takes more than 10 seconds to load, you are in danger of losing your visitor.

**An example of just how slow some websites are occurred to me recently. I accessed the Internet at a motel using a dial up connection. I noted that I was connected at 36.4 kps. The first-ranked website on my Google search took more than three minutes to load. If I did not particularly need to see that website to prepare for a presentation, I would have been long gone. One suspects that even though that website is highly ranked, it will not be a commercial success.**

Other information available from your hosting company will include:

- what country visitors live in
- what browser they are using
- what version of Microsoft software they are using

- what page they arrived at your site
- what Search Engine sent them there
- how long they spent on each page
- what pages they visited
- where they left the website
- the number of hits this week/month/year
- more importantly - the number of page visits this week/month/year
- the number of page downloads your visitors made

There will probably be more information available than you can handle. You can spend days analysing your website stats and even more days modifying your website. It is necessary to be disciplined and allocate a certain number of hours to the task of reviewing your stats and improving your website.

But leave it that – don't let it become an obsession. It is important to keep your website updated as a neglected website will fall in the Search Engine rankings. They send out 'spiders' which are automated website checking software programmes to check websites every three months or so. Every time they find that your website has not changed, they will rank your website lower. If they visit your site three times and find it has not changed, they will delist it completely from their rankings. So you must refresh your website regularly to keep up your ranking.

**A friend of mine found that out recently. Sarah Kerr has a very successful Interior Design business. Having a regular spot on a national radio programme helped considerably and Sarah felt her website was also contributing. But when I checked out her website, I found it was invisible on the 'net. Even when I entered the name of Sarah's website into a Google search, it did not come up. The reason was that the website content had not been changed for a year or so and Google had delisted the site. Their spider had visited the website three times and found nothing new. They had assumed it was an obsolete website and accordingly delisted the site (removed it from the Google index). The lesson is – keep refreshing your website. Sarah now does that and is back to having a real web presence.**

It is important to spend at least 3-4 hours per month analysing, improving and updating your website. Less than that means you are not harnessing the power of this amazing machine.

## **Web 2.0**

Just when you thought that you had worked out the best SEO tactics, the Internet goes and changes on you. And not just the rules of the game but the whole web platform. Web 2.0 changes the whole ballgame. It not only places the web user squarely in the middle of things, but it gives that user the means and power to create and manipulate data. Web 2.0 and interactivity dramatically changes how we view and use the web. Actually, in many respects, it creates a whole new Internet.

Just what exactly is Web 2.0? What does it mean? Is there a precise definition that all webmasters can get their heads around and understand? Unfortunately there is not. And many believe Web 2.0 is just another one of those contrived buzzwords generated by some marketing whiz kid!

## **Do you need Web 2.0 on your website?**

My clients are often asking 'what is Web 2.0 all about? Do I need it on my website?' That is a good question. There is a lot of hype about Web 2.0 but it is more than a passing fad. Web 2.0 is simply a phase in the evolution of the World Wide Web. Whether or not, it is a major development - well, the jury is still out.

The main thrust of this phase of the Internet is that the Web is no longer simply about information, it is now more about interaction. There are new and existing applications and technologies associated with Web 2.0 - from blogs to social networks to RSS. These new developments enable consumers to interact with your company and your other consumers. It also means your consumers can participate in and influence decisions made by your company management. In this way they control their website visiting experience.

## **What's in Web 2.0 for you?**

So what does this all mean to your Internet business? Consumers are now better educated, Internet-wise, and are accustomed to more interactive relationships which maybe sustained over a longer period of time. As options for communicating with consumers expand, companies have an increasingly difficult task of determining where to invest their scarce resources. As we have always emphasised at Zeald.com, to make the best investment decisions, you need a measurement strategy for your website initiatives. This needs to be a solution that enables you to track and monitor the business impact of Web 2.0, particularly as it relates to your Internet Marketing investments.

Those of you with a modern website will already have website analytics and measurements, either in the backend of their website or supplied by their website host. That is nothing new but there are new requirements for measuring in the Web 2.0 world. Companies that are able to effectively measure all their web interactions with visitors, both Web 2.0 and conventional websites, will enjoy a competitive advantage.

The importance of measuring unique visitors has always emphasised by all website gurus; the Web 2.0 paradigm accentuates this importance. Succeeding in the Web 2.0 world means that you need to measure and value the website engagement with your consumers. It is no longer about conversion at a point in time. It is now about the nature of the relationship over time, and the many ways that an individual website surfer can add value to your business.

## **Social Media and Web 2.0**

Web 2.0 can be characterised by such sites as YouTube, MySpace, Del.icio.us, Digg, Flickr, LinkedIn, Bebo, Facebook... there are more popping up every month. Web 2.0 technology involves uses website scripting languages such as Perl PHP and RSS feeds to construct interactive platforms that websites can use to create all this user-generated content.

Many refer to these evolving formats and scripting platforms under the name AJAX (Asynchronous JavaScript and XML). That comes from Google and takes web-based interactive programs such as Google Maps, previously only associated with desktop applications, but now being applied on the web. If you have used Google Earth, you will realize how powerful and revolutionary these new applications can be, not to mention, they are a whole lot of fun. The latest development is to apply these interactive web-based

applications to mobile phones. There is a lot more benefit to be gained from having Google Maps on your cell phone than on your desktop!

### **Where did the name Web 2.0 come from?**

Most give the credit to Tim O'Reilly, a regular innovator of technological changes on the 'net. O'Reilly has been at the forefront in discussions and conferences on the nature and substance of the 'meme' open source platforms dominating the new social media.

Where all this new interactive website phase ends up is unknown but all website owners should equip their sites with Web 2.0 features and take full advantage of all the SEO possibilities presented by this stunning new Internet development.

Here are the top interactive features suggestions for your website:

### **Have a Blog**

Get a blog on as many of the social networking sites as you can. Include a link to your website at the beginning or end of your blog and that is another incoming link to be recognised by Google. That will be important to improving your PageRank. Having a blog will also place your site into the whole tagging process. Each category you create in your blog will be seen as a tag by such sites as Technorati.

### **Tagging**

You should always be aware of the tags (keywords) you're creating with your blogs and sites. This can have a very beneficial effect on your traffic and rankings. Closely relate these tags to the content on your sites and build higher rankings in all the major search engines.

### **RSS Feed**

It is a good ploy to include a RSS feed on your website. This is a fairly simple procedure to set up using the free server-based programs. RSS stands for 'Really Simple Syndication' and your RSS feeds will get your content distributed across the web. This is a simple and easy way to tap into the new Web 2.0 universe.

### **Social Media - Social bookmarking**

Join as many of the interactive sites as you can: Bebo, Flickr, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Del.icio.us, Digg, Wikipedia, Squidoo, and LinkedIn where you can list the different topics that interest you. User-provided content is what drives these social networking websites and that content is what makes all these social media sites successful. Include links back to your websites in your posts helps to promote your website and can generate massive traffic

### **Interactive Platforms**

Place interactive JavaScript and platforms on your own sites. Have membership forums, polls, blogs, feedback forms, and user-contributions... this all helps to build unique content-driven sites. Let your website visitors do the work of providing content for you!

## **Having a Newsletter**

Giving visitors an opportunity to sign up for a free email newsletter is a good way of gaining returning visitors as well as adding to your database.

## **Google Maps**

A Google Map can help to make your website more interactive. Google maps can be used in many ways: you can use it to display a map of your location or you can use one of its built-in features to add more functionality. It is also possible to customise applications for your website using Google Map's powerful development API.

## **Google Custom Search feature**

The Google custom search allows websites to implement search functionality on their website using Google's powerful search algorithms. It is possible to restrict the search to your website only or include other partner websites in your searches.

## **Creating a Long Tail**

This is especially important for affiliate marketers as you need to cover special niches where there is less competition. These narrow 'net niches make up a large portion of the vastness of the 'net. Creating content in these unique areas will get your site included in the search engines a lot quicker and keep it high in the rankings.

## **Related Articles**

This tool can be used to improve the readership of your website by providing users with content that are related to the article that brought them to the website in the first instance. It is relatively easy to implement on a website; either by assigning manual tags or keywords or automating the process.

## **Commenting on articles**

This is commonly found on blogs. Allowing users to comment can be useful in many ways. In addition to feedback, it also allows the content to build up with user-generated content. It should only be added to relevant sections of the website.

## **Most Recent Posts**

If you have a blog, then you can display a list of 10 most recent posts from your blog on your main website. It can add value to your website especially if your blog and website target the same niche.

## **Surveys/Polls**

Having a survey or a poll on your website is a great interactive tool as they can be used to get feedback from your customers or clients.

## **Latest Content Tab**

A list of latest content from relevant sections of the website can improve the usability of the website.

### **Feedback forms to gather information**

Feedback forms are still an effective method to collect response from website users. It is used by many websites. The form should be customized to the specific needs of a website.

There is no doubt that Web 2.0 will have an increasing role in the development and evolution of the web. Make sure your sites are optimised for the Web 2.0 game. Create blogs, RSS feeds, interactive forums, membership areas, user-generated content and really make your website interactive havens. Just remember to tag everything and your sites will reap the benefits of this new Web 2.0 generated SEO gold rush.

### **Will a Blog help your Search Engine Rankings?**

The latest SEO technique is to use a blog to generate additional traffic to your website. This can mean significant increases in traffic, especially if you can generate qualified traffic. But how effective is a blog in improving your search engine rankings? That all depends on how well you do you write the blog.

### **Disciplined Content Creation**

You want to attract visitors who want exactly what you are offering on the website. That requires a disciplined approach to content creation:

Research and consider carefully what your post is about, and always keep in mind why you are writing it. In other words – don't lose sight of the objective!

Identify the keyword phrase/s that people are using to find information relevant to the topic of the blog. You can use [www.wordtracker.com](http://www.wordtracker.com) or Google Adwords keywords tool to identify these. Or study the report in the backend of your (modern) website that details the words/phrases that your website visitors used to find your website in the first place.

Ensure you place keywords in the title of the blog and early in the first paragraph. Then put some additional emphasis on those words, such as bold / italics

Include “exact match” keyword phrases throughout the body of the article.

Add tags i.e. a short list of specific relevant keywords - this may be used in the post page Keyword meta tag.

Write a concise Excerpt, loaded with keyword phrases - this may be used in the post page Description meta tag.

If you are not a great speller - use the Spell Checker. This article may be the first introduction a potential client has to your business and you must impress them right from the start. Remember that you NEVER get a second chance to create a first impression!

## **Business Blogs Should Inform & Educate**

A business blog is there to inform and educate potential clients about aspects of your business by trying to provide useful information without a blatant sales pitch. On a website, this is known as having ‘pre-sales pages’. You are inspiring trust and credibility by providing free information. Encourage visitors to “read the free report” or “contact us for more information” but don’t overdo the sales pitch. Your goal is to convey your depth of knowledge; provide I for free and so build credibility.

## **Blog Search Engine Optimisation**

If you want to maximise the effectiveness of your blogs, it is not sufficient to just write it and forget it. You need to ensure that your Business Blog is properly “optimised” to produce unique, accurately categorised, and clearly-labelled content. This requires some SEO work on your blog to ensure that your Posts, static Pages and Category pages are unique. WordPress is probably the fastest and easiest blog platform to customise. It also has a comprehensive array of free SEO options, although some of these may be outside of the scope of new website owners.

## **Accurate Content Cataloguing Pays Dividends**

If you pay attention to detail to blog generation, blog publishing and Search Engine Optimisation of the blog page, you should see dramatic improvements to blog traffic. At the same time, it will ensure that visitors get exactly what they were seeking, thanks to the accuracy of your blog content cataloguing efforts.

That will encourage social networkers to bookmark the website, or specific webpage, and to come back looking for more information.

## **Email marketing**

### **Building up a Database**

It is important to use a variety of ways to build up your database. Some of the best methods of gaining email addresses are:

- having a regular newsletter
- getting visitors to sign up for special offers/services
- have a competition where visitors can only enter if they advise their email address
- getting visitors to become VIP members to get discounts, etc
- offering a free information service

For example, I offer a free information service about trout fishing in New Zealand on all of the websites I use to promote my books. These websites are visited by around 6,000 people every month. Any of those visitors can email me with a question on any aspect of troutfishing in New Zealand. I usually receive several enquiries a day and all these correspondents are added to my database. That database now totals over 3,000 from four years of offering this service. If my hosting company was a little more sophisticated (a little unfair as I use one of the cheapest) they would have an email marketing programme that would enable me to

segment my database and send targeted offers that would appeal to my fellow fishing fanatics.

Another very effective way of adding to your database is to have a stand at Trade Fairs, shows and other similar exhibitions. The most successful method is to have a competition where you offer a handsome prize. To enter, people must complete the entry form and include their contact details, in particular, their email address. It is not hard to gather up to 1000 email addresses from one major show to add to your database.

Once you have established a customer database, you can regularly email them with special offers. Research has shown that nearly 80% of people want to hear from their favourite online marketing companies. As you know from your daily spam, there are a lot of junk emails out there. As a result of that, your email marketing offer has to stand out, even if the recipient is keen to see what you are offering. A good promotional email will have the following elements:

- clear, simple language
- be very readable
- have a good hook to grab the reader's attention
- tell the reader what action to take
- focus clearly on the offer
- put a strong emphasis on the benefits
- have an exclusive offer
- be no longer than 2-3 paragraphs

Just like writing for a Home Page, you need to come up with an attention-grabbing Subject Line. An uninteresting or overly smart subject line will see a quick punch of the delete button. Avoid subject lines that scream out "This is an advert!" It is a much better approach to make the subject line simple and short. That will ensure it is easily understandable.

But the short, sharp copy should also imply a benefit e.g. "Discount tickets?" or "New website conversion techniques" and especially "Free .....".

Definitely avoid deceptive subject lines that trick the recipient into opening an email that is not related to the subject line – that smacks of Nigerian scam emails. And will get the same result.

Your email should definitely be personalised – by that we mean addressed to the recipient's first name. This will help to build relationships with your audience and to reassure them this is not spam email. Email marketing modules, such as Zeald.com's product, can automatically send mass email messages with personalised fields, driven by a database.

Personalisation of the email will help you speak directly to your prospective customer and achieve the goal of effective online marketing. BUT - personalisation can work against you so keep in mind these issues:

- Garbage in, garbage out. If the information in your database has missing or incorrect fields, you can end up with a very messy email
- Avoid personalisation in the Subject line as it can look artificial. And if you use an informal Subject line like "Hi, Ron!" the recipient will expect to find an email from a

personal friend. They may be annoyed when they find a commercial message from you instead.

- Be sensitive to privacy concerns and don't overdo the personalisation. An email with too much of the recipient's personal information will seem like an abuse of privacy.

The advantage of personalising your email marketing messages is to make them sound personal, like a communication from one friend to another.

## **Autoresponders**

So what is an 'autoresponder'? Basically, it is an e-mail software program that enables an email sender to send automated e-mails when they are not able to respond to incoming e-mail. Autoresponders can respond to an e-mail or other inquiry without human intervention. For example, if an e-mail address is no longer valid, an autoresponder in the mail server will send sends an "undeliverable message" automatically to the sender. If the recipient has a new e-mail address or is on vacation, an auto-responder can be set up to reply with an appropriate message.

Sophisticated autoresponders can produce a degree of personalisation, for example, by incorporating the recipient's name in the responding message. With an autoresponder, you can deliver your sales message or other information rapidly. And you can deliver it 24 hours a day to any Internet email user in the world.

But how can you create an autoresponder message that gets real results? Here are some tips:

### **1. Focus on the reader**

Your message should be about the customer's needs and how your product will meet those needs. Emphasise the benefits. Rather than thinking about selling a product or a service, think of yourself as providing benefits. To determine the benefits, ask yourself, "What does the customer get out of my product?" The answer should be something like "more time," "more money," "more pleasure," "an easier life," "better health," or "greater safety."

### **2. Make it personal.**

As with any sales letter, write your autoresponder message as a one-to-one communication. Imagine that you are just sitting down to talk to a friend. Let your message be friendly and informal but also interesting. Use contractions like "you're" and "don't" and "we'll". 3.

Benefits are different from features. Don't tell me about the features of this wonderful 2.5mm drill bit when what I want is a 2.5mm hole.

### **3. Include a "call to action."**

Just like you did with your Home Page, make sure you include strong calls to action. Be clear in your mind about what you want the reader to do after reading your message. What do you want – an email enquiry; a visit to your website; a call to your toll-free number? Let the user know what exactly what response you want - and let them know in a compelling, urgent, benefits-oriented way. Include complete contact information, and check it for accuracy.

#### 4. Offer useful information.

One good autoresponder strategy is to offer a free report giving useful information but including a sales message -- an "advertorial" approach. For an example I offer a free E-Book available by downloading it on my website. This has valuable information and hopefully will convince my email recipient to buy my full book. My clients don't resent my pitch because they got so much value from the free E-book.

#### 5. Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.

You will be judged whether you are a professional or a rank amateur by the quality of your marketing communications. Take the time to edit your email message for errors. It pays to get someone else to proof read your email copy.

#### 6. Use layout to make it easier to read.

Here are a few tricks you can use to make your message more readable:

- For a headline, use ALL-CAPS and insert a blank line before and after.
- Use short paragraphs, say 5-7 lines at the most.
- Set out material in bulleted lists (like this one).
- Use "white space" to centre important material and call attention to it, like so:

Now available:

Free E-Book to make your website work!

Download it now here.

#### 8. Read the messages people send to your autoresponder.

A good autoresponder system will send you a copy of the request every time someone downloads your E-Book. With most systems, the user doesn't have to type anything in the body of their message when they send in the request. But often they do! By reading the message and replying to the user personally, you may increase your chances of selling to that person.

If you create a well-written, persuasive message, your autoresponder can help you increase your sales and fulfil the goals of your email marketing. Here is an example of one I used:

##### 101 Troutfishing Tips

It's a new book from Ron Giles. If you were one of those readers that told me they did not want to buy all three of my books to get all my fishing techniques - this book is for you. It's jam-packed full of practical ways to improve your catch rate. And all this at half the price of my last book!

It's also just the right size to keep in your car and refer to next time you are having a tough fishing day. I have had plenty of those and often find that the fishing picks up when you change to a completely different technique. Try it and see it works for you.

I am emailing you as you contacted me for fishing advice through my website. You can buy this new book right now on that same website [www.trout-fishing-new-zealand.com](http://www.trout-fishing-new-zealand.com)

New Zealand anglers can visit their local bookstore - it is in stock now (just in time for Father's day so send the kids down to buy a copy). Or if you want a signed copy, you can buy direct from me. Simply email me at [rongiles@troutnz.com](mailto:rongiles@troutnz.com)

Best regards,

Ron Giles

**P.S. Free trout flies**

The first 20 people to buy the book from me will receive two trout flies tied by my own fair hand. With those flies and this book, catching a trout is virtually guaranteed! I look forward to hearing from you. If you do so right now, you will score those free flies.

A postscript is a classic way of getting the reader's attention. You can restate the benefits or add some extra incentive for the punter to take some action, as I did above.

A good idea is to test your email by sending it to yourself using a variety of email providers such as Google G-mail, MSN Hotmail, Yahoo and any of the other providers of free email accounts. This will show up any formatting errors that might occur across the different email services.

**Email Marketing and the Anti Spam laws**

**FAQ's provided by the anti-spam team at [info@antispam.govt.co.nz](mailto:info@antispam.govt.co.nz)**

Q: Does receiving a business card count as inferred consent?

A: That would depend on the circumstances of the swap. Inferred consent relates to the development of a relationship between parties. It would only apply if the electronic message send specifically related to the relationship that had developed at the time the business card was supplied.

Q: Is it legal to buy lists if they were not electronically harvested?

A: You must be very careful. You do not know where they have got their list, it may have been generated with address harvesting software and of course consent must be able to be established.

Q: Can I establish consent by emailing my existing customer database asking them to unsubscribe if they do not wish to receive messages?

A: No. A commercial electronic message may only be sent if the recipient has consented to receive it. If you don't think that the recipient has consented then the 'click here to unsubscribe' type of email cannot establish consent for future purposes. Many recipients may treat it as spam and not respond or even open it. There is no real relationship when the communication is one-sided and the recipients silence should not be taken as acquiescence.

Q: If I have swapped business cards with someone do I have to keep the cards as proof of consent?

A: If there is a direct relationship and consent applies it would be preferable for you to retain the business cards in some form. If there is a complaint under the Act it is up to the sender of the electronic message to prove that consent exists.

Q: If I send out media releases do I need to ensure my media contacts opt-in?

A: It can be inferred from the business of your media contacts that they agree to receive your

media releases that you might have inferred consent to send it. If you are not sure, write to them and get their express consent. Can also be deemed if the address is conspicuously published i.e. website and the messages is relevant to the business

Q: Is verbal consent okay and do I have to keep a record of it?

A: Yes, it is okay. There is no obligation in the Unsolicited Electronic Messages Act for consent to be in writing. However, it is advisable to keep a record of verbal consent. If a complaint is ever laid the onus of proof of consent is on the sender of the message.

Q: Is it considered spam if we run a campaign encouraging existing customers to email a friend?

A: Friend get friend campaigns usually encourage subscribers to provide the name and email address of a friend who is sent and emailed by the company or promoter encouraging them to opt-in/register. In this case if the company/promoter contacts the 'friend' it is spam because the message is unsolicited.

Q: Can we include two tick boxes for consent – one agreeing to receive messages from our organisation/client and one for agreeing to receive promotional material from third parties?

A: If the customer ticked the box saying that they agreed to receive promotional material from third parties then it would not breach the Act to send them such material.

Q: What if a business has a really long name – what are the rules around reducing the business name?

A: The abbreviated use of a companies name is suitable, as long as the abbreviation would allow the recipient to clearly and accurately identify the company i.e. organisations such as TVNZ and VTNZ for example would be fine.

A: What about SMS systems that cannot accept replies. Can we ask them to unsubscribe by email instead?

Q: No. The unsubscribe facility must allow the recipient to respond to the sender using the same method of communication as the original electronic message. If you send commercial text messages, you must arrange an unsubscribe facility through text messaging, free of charge.

Q: Is a confirmation email saying 'thank-you for unsubscribing' okay?

A: Yes. If it is within 5 days!

Q: Do I need to have an unsubscribe 'button' or some other flash unsubscribe facility?

A: No. A clear instruction in the subject line will suffice

As discussed before the Act stipulates that your unsubscribe function just needs to be Clear and conspicuous

Free

Functional for at least 30 days after the original message is sent

Able to be sent using the same method of communications that was used to send the original

message.

Q: When does the five working days commence (in which you must honour the unsubscribe request)?

A: The clock starts the day after the recipient used the unsubscribe facility. Therefore you need to ensure that you have a system whereby all unsubscribe requests are actioned within the 5 working day period.

In reality, it doesn't much matter whether you think you're a spammer or not. What matters is what the recipient of your email thinks. That's the person who has the power to cause you trouble or ruin your company's reputation on the Internet.

It is true that most spammers are promoting get-rich-quick schemes, questionable health products, pornography or other seedy offers. And it's true that most spammers try to hide their identities so they won't lose their Internet access or wind up in court.

But the essence of spam lies in another direction: how the email list was built. If your list is made up of people who specifically asked to be on it, your list is an opt-in (permission-based or voluntary) email list. If you placed people on the list without their permission and then emailed them, you are on dangerous ground. You're sending unsolicited email. There is a good chance that someone will regard you as a spammer.

Many Internet users resent spam because it invades their inbox (a very personal space) and hijacks computing resources. Some will retaliate. Count on it.

So are there ethical ways to use email to reach your audience on the Internet? Yes. I recommend the following spam-free methods for getting your message out without making enemies:

**1. Build your own house email lists.**

Collect email addresses on your website, at networking events, at trade shows, on product registration cards, during sales calls – in fact at any other point of contact with potential clients or prospects. But you need to make sure that everyone on your list knows exactly how you will use his or her email address. Your own in-house email lists are a valuable asset.

**2. Start an announcement list.**

This is a simple in-house email list designed to keep you in touch with your database. Use it for distributing company news, new product releases, special promotions, customer service changes, personnel changes or other items of interest to your contacts.

**3. Publish an email newsletter.**

An email newsletter, or ezine, is a way to keep your company's name in front of your customers. Be sure to offer value -- industry news items, how-to articles, analysis and commentary about your particular industry. Your ezine will position your company as an expert in the field and will enhance the reputation of the company.

## **Conclusions**

Once you have launched your website, you cannot just sit back and watch the money flow in. Not only do you need to promote your websites using the techniques outlined but you must keep adding new content. This keeps the website 'fresh' and keeps the Search Engine spiders checking your website regularly for new content to index.

You also need to 'tweak' your website regularly. At Zeald.com, we call this process Test, Measure, Tune or TMT. It can involve Usability Testing which is the process of checking if your website is visitor-friendly i.e. visitors can easily access information, make an enquiry or buy the product you are selling. If they can't do that easily, they will vote with their digit and move on to the next site. Things like Bounce Rate and Exit Pages are easily measured so when you make a change, you can check whether these measurements have improved. Google Analytics provides a whole range of tools to help in this regard.

Your website will need ongoing care, maintenance and attention. If you provide these, you will be well on the way to online success. Good luck!

Ron Giles