



Web Presence Management...Building Online Dominance

10 Things Businesses MUST Do To Stay Relevant Online

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Introduction

It has become extremely difficult over the past few years for businesses to leverage the internet in order to more effectively market to potential and existing clients. Nearly all who venture into the world of internet marketing under the power of their own steam are met with frustration and the seemingly insurmountable task of staying ahead of the learning curve.

The internet itself, especially where marketing and dollars are concerned, is in a constant state of flux. Disruptive technology and the latest shiny object to chase are the new norm. Gone are the days of an established set of tools and best practices that could help anyone willing to utilize and deploy them. Anymore, staying plugged in and ahead of the curve is the best practice. Marketers are now forced to mirror the state of flux by becoming more dynamic and progressive with each passing day.

While the following information may read like a list, we assure you that it is in fact an actionable toolkit. If you follow these simple steps you will be well on your way to a better understanding of this complicated marketing landscape. What's more, you'll be miles ahead of your competitors!

- Take the time to read through and understand each piece.
- Become proactive in your efforts to learn more about these specific disciplines and channels.
- Employ the tactics.
- Participate on the channels.
- Stay the course. This is most certainly a marathon and not a sprint.



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1.) Have a High Performance Website

This is the centerpiece of your web presence and the hub for all other online activity. Your website is the one piece of owned media that falls within your complete control. Other online touch points such as social networks are not owned by you and can be shut down or regulated at any time.

Merely *having* a website is not enough. Your website needs to be versatile and malleable enough to keep up with the ever-changing web and how it functions. Content Management Systems (CMS) are the new norm in effective web presence management. Using a CMS platform allows you to launch and promote new content at will and in real-time from a user-friendly and intuitive dashboard. This feature all but eliminates the need for a web designer every time you need to make an update to your site. A CMS puts YOU in real-time control.

[Wordpress](#) is the free, open-source CMS platform that has gained the [most traction online](#). Wordpress is thought of by many as simply a blogging platform. While it is true that you can blog from your Wordpress driven website, it has also become a preferred platform from which to build your entire site. Your Wordpress site will integrate with and act as a portal to all of your social media identities. This allows for two way communication between you and your existing and potential clients. Easy to implement calls to action and portals to other touch points enable you to more effectively encourage and monitor deeper engagement from your site's visitors.

Because society and the world dictated it, we all had to bite the bullet and build a website at some point. This website was (and still is in many cases) merely a static page on the web that contained useful information for our would-be clients. The problem with a static page is that it doesn't work very well as a marketing piece. It lacks the interactivity and capability necessary to engage with today's internet user. Content management systems and social media now allow us to have a much more robust and practical "web presence". This effectively allows us to realistically leverage the incredible potential of the World Wide Web to our advantage.



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2.) Create Content (Blogging) - No Longer Optional

Many businesses, even those with an otherwise great presence on the web, still don't fully understand the many [benefits of blogging](#). A blog is a section of your website that gets updated with new content on a regular basis. Older content is archived chronologically as you add new blog posts. All of the blog posts can also be categorized and tagged in order to group posts together by topic. This makes your content searchable for your readers.

Blogging gives our readers (and the search engines) exactly what they want to see – fresh, new, and valuable content. Blogging allows us to deliver real value to our would-be clients. The search engines reward this discipline by assigning credibility to our website. The act of blogging insures that we will be shown favorably by the search engines as people view search engine results pages for their searches.

Blogs typically have a comment section that shows up beneath every post. This section allows readers to comment on your posts and have a dialog with you. Having the ability to comment adds two-way conversational dynamic to what would otherwise be simply a piece of static content. Questions can be asked and answered. Opinions and perspectives can be shared, all of this making your reader a part of the conversation.

Having a blog on your website is far more than just another method to broadcast your marketing message to an audience. Your blog posts should be written with your reader in mind, in an effort to deliver something valuable to your audience. People are much more likely to do business with those people that they like, know, and trust. While networking and interacting in real life is by far the best way to build a rapport with another human being...blogging is how this is accomplished online.

3.) Content Must Be Optimized - Search Engine (And Human Search) Friendly

In recent years we had the option to hire someone to “optimize” our website. This was typically a one-time occasion where an expert would adjust the code in the backend of our site to please the search engines. [Search Engine Optimization](#) (SEO) was an event based discipline. If you've had experience with SEO for your website, then you know that whatever impact and results that were derived from these efforts usually faded away and appeared to be less than effective after a period of time.



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The search engines are in a constant state of flux, forever adjusting their algorithms in an effort to serve up the most valuable and relevant content. Gone are the days of SEO being an event based tactic, but SEO is not dead, far from it. It too has evolved as the Internet has dictated that it must. Search engines, like Google, recognize that there has been a revolutionary shift in the way that people using the Internet find, consume, and share content.

All of the content on your website needs to be optimized. This is a two-fold thought process and tactic.

- We have to optimize our content to be easily digested and easily shared by real human beings. We must deliver content that delivers real value to our readers. In a world heavily impacted by social behavior on the web (Social Media), we have no choice but to encourage conversations around our content on third party sites like Facebook and Twitter.
- Search engines view our websites differently than our human viewers. The actual code that makes up our websites are what the search engines scan, or “crawl” in order to see what our site is about and if the world at large feels we are relevant and worthy of top placement in search engine results pages. Our “Meta” information is code that is pro-actively built into each piece of content on our website. Having a good understanding of how the search engines function and what real searchers are looking for enables us to optimize our behind the scenes code.

4.) Social Media Participation – It’s Not Just A Buzzword Anymore

With the advent of social media, businesses in general have had to adopt and integrate [new behaviors](#) where their marketing efforts are concerned. Businesses that refuse to acknowledge and embrace both the technology AND the cultural shifts are likely to find themselves fighting for survival in the near future.

Social networks were developed with one purpose in mind: keeping people connected to their family and friends. Quite frankly, as business owners we are intruders who desire to exploit these channels for our own gain. To utilize these channels successfully, one must be prepared to give in order to get. While social networks are in fact excellent marketing channels if used respectfully, there is a certain degree of quid pro quo that represents the other side of that coin.



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Your clients and clients pick their own channels these days...society at large has shifted toward social media to keep up with those that they like, know, and trust. Our challenge is to be a part of these conversations and to offer real value to those that choose to engage with our professional presence within these social channels.

Participation itself is not nearly enough. Merely being present on a social channel and blurting out a marketing message three times a day will never gain you a new client. Social media participation done right looks a whole lot more like “before the sale” marketing. Social media facilitates digital word-of-mouth and facilitates new relationships. With this in mind, it is necessary to approach with caution. A bridge burned on social channels is quite final.

Much like our blog content on our website, we should always strive to be a “friend” to our connections in social media. Our intent should be to deliver value to our connections and to the stream at large. Behaving thusly (as opposed to merely blurting our marketing messages with an agenda) attracts the right kind of attention and helps us to grow our reach by attracting new fans and followers.

The search engines are very aware of the fact that people consider and trust input from their own personal contacts and connections. The search engine algorithms are adjusted to recognize whether or not our web presence receives inbound links, or “signals” from social networks. It is therefore vitally important that we do participate on these channels and that we deliver real value to our connections...so that we can keep them and grow our sphere of influence on the social web.

5.) Email Marketing – There’s Still Power In “The List”

[Email marketing](#) is one of the most effective ways to nurture and convert leads into new clients. Scheduled and intentional emails, or Newsletters, sent out to those that have opted-in and engaged with your content is the only proactive method available to you once someone has left the confines of your web presence. Email is still the primary tool for communications, and as such should never be overlooked as a potential lead generation tool.



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As a best practice, having an email strategy as a part of our overall marketing strategy is very important. Using third party services like [Constant Contact](#) or [MailChimp](#) is user friendly enough for most people to work with when sending out newsletters and staying in touch with those who have expressed an interest in our services.

As a best practice, it is a good idea to have a “call to action” on your website. It should be placed front and center and compel visitors to “Sign up for our newsletter to stay in touch and receive valuable coupons”...this is how we gain new subscribers and grow our list. Think about it – have you ever downloaded something from the web or subscribed to a newsletter before? To go one step further, have you ever been compelled to buy a product or service because of an email you received because you subscribed to something?

6.) Facebook – Just Hit 1 BILLION Users

Facebook, the giant among social networks just reached [1 Billion users](#) . The world’s adoption of this powerful site and the amount of time that people spend on the network are [mind boggling](#). No other social network or platform has attained such mass adoption. The sheer numbers and the ease of use of the Facebook interface have made it so very easy for us all to stay as connected as we want to be with our family and friends. The fact that businesses have learned how to effectively leverage Facebook to engage potential clients means that you have to at least consider embracing [Facebook for your business](#).

Businesses are able to create a business page on Facebook that people can “Like” in order to stay connected. People who “Like” your page are then able to see the updates that you post and the content, pictures, and videos that you share. When someone engages with your content by either “liking”, “sharing”, or “commenting” on an update that you posted, this action is then seen by all of that person’s connections. This grows the awareness and reach to an even larger audience each time this happens.

Businesses on Facebook often consider it as one of their most valuable channels. I can tell you from experience that in almost all instances, Facebook is in the top 5 of sites that drive traffic to ALL of our client’s websites. As a top traffic driver and relationship facilitator, Facebook is a no-brainer in my opinion. Take the time to investigate how Facebook is being used by your peers and competitors; you’ll be glad you looked into it.



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7.) Google+ - Deeply Integrated With ALL Google Products...Un-Ignorable

[Google+](#) is Google's answer to a "social layer" that integrates with all of their other products. Social networks tend not to play well with other social networks. There is fierce competition among these players in the social space. Search engines like Google and Bing are becoming more and more semantic over time. They are also moving closer to a "real time" results delivering machine. It is necessary for search engines to consider and factor in the social connectedness of each person who uses one or more of its services. Inventing Google+ from the ground up fixed the fact that Google itself had no social layer of its own.

Google+ is very much a social network where you can connect with others by adding them to your "circles"...and they can add you. Your updates on the platform can then be seen by those within the "circles" you decide to share with. One of the best features in the minds of many is the "Hangout" feature. This feature allows up to ten people to video chat simultaneously. This is a fun and very addictive way to communicate with groups of people.

Businesses can create a [business page on Google+](#). If search engine optimization and search results are important to you, then you **must** have a Google+ page for your business and you **must** keep it updated. Not too long ago Google+ announced that they would actually favor and reward businesses that had Google+ pages. We have seen time and time again as search results favor our Google+ updates. This alone helps us to see past all of the naysayers and Google+ haters. If we can show up more, and more quickly by using our Google+ business page, you can bet we're all about it.

8.) Video – Even If You Don't See The Need

Many businesses feel that what they do doesn't lend itself to video quite so well. Well, this is not necessarily true. Consider that YouTube is the [second largest search engine](#) on the planet. Only Google is bigger, and they own YouTube. These facts alone should tell you that in order to gain a broader reach you'll need to utilize video.

There are other considerations as well. For one, people will engage with your video content more often than they will your written pieces. Something about the face-to-face interaction brings a familiarity and an affinity that you simply can't achieve with any other medium. Search engines index and offer up video content much more quickly than any other media online.



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The point here is that people tend to engage with video more often than other content pieces. Video also optimizes better for search engine results pages than any other content format. Having a free [YouTube Channel](#) for your business allows you to upload video content that can then be tagged with relevant terms and phrases. These videos can then be embedded on your website and shared on sites like Facebook. This effectively puts your video content in several places at once, increasing your chances that people will discover you!

Video tells a story and delivers information in a way that no other medium can compare to. If you honestly can't come up with a few ideas for video that will tell the story of you, your business, or your services, you'll still need to utilize video. There are many third party services online like [Animoto](#) that will allow you to upload simple images and convert them into a nice video. Consider a walk through tour of your location. Perhaps you could create a nice PowerPoint presentation that could then be converted to video? It is extremely important that you don't overlook video; however you may decide to embrace or deliver it.

9.) Google Local (formerly Google Places) - Put yourself on the map and keep it there

Google Places was the tool that allowed you to claim and optimize your place pin on Google maps. Now that has all changed and been replaced with Google Local. While building a web presence is a marathon, Google provides a service that can occasionally help small businesses rank faster than they normally would. This service is known as Google Local (formally Google Places.)

Google Local provides listing information for local businesses, whether big or small. When internet users search for a product/service plus city name, they receive local search results. These local search results offer small businesses the ability to compete in Google despite the size of their web presence. Occasionally, these Google Local results will begin to appear before traditional website listings.

Many factors play into how your Google Local listing is ranked in search results. The algorithm changes often and no one other than Google knows exactly what plays into making a listing rank well. We do know, however, that accuracy and consistency across the web about your business play a major role in Google Local. It is extremely important that the listing is completed 100%. You can access this service through your Google account.



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10.) Analytics – Someone Has To Watch The Numbers

With everything that we've covered here today active and running simultaneously, someone needs to watch for and understand key performance indicators (KPIs) to insure that you are not wasting too much time with any particular channel or discipline.

Obviously you will want to dedicate more time to the tactics that are producing results and a return over those that don't have a high yield. You can monitor your websites traffic extremely well using [Google Analytics](#). This is a free tool from Google that gives you a tracking code to place in the code of your website. With Google helping you to track your traffic you will be able to keep track of who your visitors are, where they came from, how long they stay on your site, how many pages they view, and much, much more. Google Analytics is quite complicated for the beginner but they offer some pretty [good tutorials](#) to help you along. Once you play with it and get past the learning curve, you'll be analyzing and tweaking your tactics and strategy like a pro!

Thank you for downloading our white paper!

TrustWorkz®, Inc. as a company exists and thrives in this ever-changing space. Our mission is to leverage the incredible power of the internet to deliver tangible results to our clients by helping them to be found online. This effectively delivers new clients and internet dominance.

We share this toolkit with you today in the hopes that you will in fact integrate some of what you've learned. We are certain that you will see tangible results if you do...after all; these are the very same best practices and tactics that our WebOps® exercise on behalf of our clients.

Stay in touch by following our blog on our site at: <http://TrustWorkz.com>

We'll analyze your web presence for free at: <http://trustworkz.com/free-consultation>

Our Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube links are at the bottom of every page here.

If you'd like to know more about our services, please contact our Digital Marketing Consultant, Susan Wright at susan@trustworkz.com or call us at 770.615.3275



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