



# THE 10 ONLINE MARKETING SECRETS YOUR COMPETITORS DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW



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# With an effective online marketing strategy, your small business is all set to succeed on the web.

These days, there are more ways to market your business than ever before. However, with limited resources, a small budget, and little time to invest in marketing your business online, the many possibilities on offer can often seem overwhelming, and as a result we see many small businesses who simply ignore the opportunities that online marketing presents.

If this sounds like you, then it's bad news for your business. By not engaging in online marketing practices, you could be driving business away and sending your potential customers straight to the competition, or missing out on business completely, because nobody can find you online.

It's time to take action and give your competitors a run for their money, using these 10 tried and tested digital marketing methods that are both easy and effective.

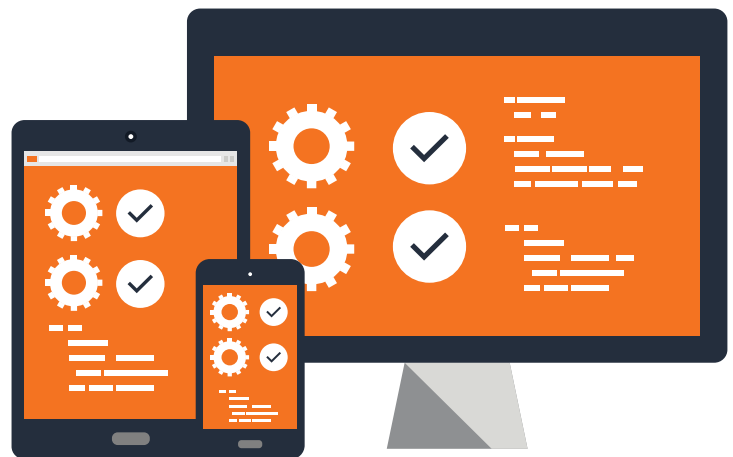
Read on to discover exactly what your competition is already doing, and why you should be too:

## 1. Go Mobile

First and foremost, you need a **responsive website**.

What does this mean? A responsive website is one that identifies what screen size a visitor is using to browse the web, and then adapts its different design elements to fit the device.

This means that no matter what devices your website visitors are using, be it smartphones, tablets, laptops, or desktop computers, they will always enjoy a great user experience, with no need to zoom in or pinch the screen to view content.



Why do you need it? Recent figures show that

66% of people now use their mobile phone to browse the internet<sup>1</sup>, with 40% of online sales occurring last year on smartphones and tablets alone<sup>2</sup>.

What's more, a third of visitors will abandon a website and head to a competitor's site instead if it doesn't display properly on their mobile device<sup>3</sup>.

That's not all – search engines such as Google and Bing prefer websites with responsive designs, as they deliver a better user experience for mobile users, so if you want to rank highly in search results – and therefore reach more customers – your website really does need to adapt to every screen size.

To put it simply, without a responsive website, you could be missing out on a significant amount of business.

<sup>1</sup> [www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/media/facts](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/media/facts)

<sup>2</sup> [www.ecommerceweek.co.uk/news/461/mobile-overtakes-desktop-traffic/](http://www.ecommerceweek.co.uk/news/461/mobile-overtakes-desktop-traffic/)

<sup>3</sup> [www.images.adobe.com/content/dam/Adobe/en/max/2015/pdfs/state-of-content-oct.pdf](http://www.images.adobe.com/content/dam/Adobe/en/max/2015/pdfs/state-of-content-oct.pdf)

## 2. Time is of The Essence

Visitors have high expectations when they land on your website. If they can't even judge the quality of your website content because the page is taking too long to load, then you're in trouble.

It all relates to our increasingly mobile world. With greater ease of access to unlimited information right at our fingertips, our need for instant gratification has increased and our patience has lessened.

This means your customers won't hang around to see what you've got to offer if your website speed isn't up to scratch – and why should they, with so many other options on the web to choose from? In fact, according to Google, all it takes is for your website to take longer than 3 seconds to load, and 53% of visitors will abandon it in search of something faster<sup>4</sup>.

Many things can cause a site to slow down, such as bulky content, too much data, or even an outdated or overcomplicated design.

Take time to make time, and check that your website is performing up to speed.

There are many free website speed tests that you can use to determine whether your site's load times are a problem, such as Google's PageSpeed Insights. This will help you identify ways to make your site both faster, and more mobile-friendly.



## 3. Know Your SEO

Getting to grips with **the basics of Search Engine Optimisation** will do wonders for your business.

SEO is the process of optimising your website in order to rank higher in search results, and therefore drive more traffic to your site. There are varying skill levels involved, but just by mastering the essentials, you'll help your business get found online.

Firstly, pick your keywords. These are words and phrases you want your website to appear in search results for, so they need to be relevant to your business, and as niche as possible.

Your competitors are already optimising their websites for the most obvious search terms, so to make sure potential customers find your website first, you need to pick keywords which are less competitive, but more relevant to your target audience's needs.

For example, if you sell furniture, a common keyword choice might be 'dining table', but if you instead optimise your page for 'round pine dining table', you're more likely to reach someone looking for exactly what you sell.

Once you've picked out your keywords, include these throughout your copy so that search engines know to show your page in search results – just remember not to overdo it – keep your copy natural!

Next, you should include your keywords in your page title and meta description. These are shown in search results when your website is displayed.

It's important that you give every page on your website a unique page title and meta description. Not only does this help search engines decide whether your website is relevant to the search query, but it also acts as a sales pitch of sorts, encouraging users to choose your website from the selection on display.



## 4. Location, Location, Location

As a small business on the web, it's also vital that you optimise your website for local search.

By making your location obvious, you'll help both search engines and potential customers discover your website when looking for local businesses. With nearly half of all Google searches now carrying local intent<sup>5</sup>, it's clear that targeting your nearby area is an effective way to win business online.

To do this, make sure your up to date business information is available on every page of your website, not just your homepage and contact page – this should include your business name, address, and phone number.

Don't forget - it's important that this is displayed in text form so that search engines can read it, rather than displayed as part of an image.

You'll also want to optimise your content for local search. Use locational keywords throughout your copy, **your page titles, your meta descriptions, and even your web address** – your website should show your location in as many places as it makes sense to.

If your business is based in multiple locations, you'll also want to create a separate, optimised, and unique page for each one.

Lastly, make it easy for people to get in contact with you. It's all very well including your local information on your site, but if it's not easy to find, it's not going to do much good. Make sure your phone number is displayed in a prominent position, and be sure to include contact forms throughout your website.



## 5. Put Yourself On The Map

To really take advantage of local search traffic, get your business listed on Google My Business.

Essentially a free business directory, Google My Business will help you get your business in front of more customers. By providing Google with all the relevant information, you'll be able to improve your local ranking and enhance your presence in both search results and on Google Maps.

You will need to verify your business when you claim your Google My Business profile. The verification process can take 1-2 weeks, but then it's simply a case of entering in the verification code that is sent to you, and filling in your business details.

Make sure you fully optimise your listing and fill out every section so that it's complete. This includes writing an engaging description, and entering in accurate business categories, hours, contact details and so on. You should also include high resolution images – i.e. images that are neither blurry nor pixelated - to further boost your appearance in search results.

Your business information will then be displayed in local searches, and better yet, your customers will be able to review your products or services.

The more positive reviews you receive on your Google My Business listing, the more your local ranking will benefit. You'll also stand to gain more business as your star rating, and thus credibility, grows, as 74% of people say that positive reviews make them trust a business more<sup>6</sup>.



## 6. Content is King

On the web, content is currency, and fresh, frequently updated content is worth its weight in gold.

By regularly updating your website with high quality content, you're able to show new visitors, existing customers, and most importantly, search engines, that your business is active and your website is full of relevant and up to date information.



One of the most effective ways to increase your ranking in search results, constantly adding to or updating your website's content means that search engines continually reassess your site's position in listings. The more you improve your content with valuable, reliable information, the greater your chance of Google ranking your website higher with every change you make.

More content also means more opportunities to optimise your site. With each new piece of content you create, you can include more keywords, and where new pages are called for, you can also add another unique page title and meta description, all of which will help you get found online.

As well as this, updating your website is crucial for engaging your target audience, as it allows you to keep existing customers informed, and provide new visitors with the relevant information needed to convert them to customers.

**The easiest way to keep your content fresh is to add a blog to your website.** This will allow you to post regular articles, industry news stories, company updates, product features, and more, providing you with the perfect means to keep your website active, your customer base engaged, and search engines happy.

Just remember – the new content you add to your website has to be good quality for it to have a positive effect, so keep your site updated, but make sure content standards remain high!

## 7. Spell It Out

Whilst regularly adding new content to your website is a great way to get your business noticed by more people, it won't mean anything if that content is peppered with poor spelling and grammar.

In fact, far worse than simply rendering your fresh content efforts worthless, spelling and grammar mistakes can actually hurt your business.

According to recent studies, 74% of web users will notice the quality of spelling and grammar on a company's website, and an incredible 59% said that bad grammar and obvious spelling errors would stop them buying from a business<sup>7</sup>.



The reason for this is that poor grammar and misspelled words equate to poor attention to detail. Many customers will see this as unprofessional, or feel that it suggests a lack of care on the company's part, leading to a decline in trust in that company's ability to provide a good quality service.

Clearly, carrying out a website-wide content audit to check for any mistakes is well worth it, especially if it will stop you losing out on more than half of your potential customers. After all, you only get one chance to make a first impression, and with so much competition out there, it's in your best interests to present your business as professionally as possible.

## 8. Quality Over Quantity

Adding quality content to your website doesn't just stop at the written word. Everything that you present to your site visitors needs to add value, including your visual content.

In the world of online marketing, aesthetics are everything. The web is built on powerful visual imagery, and in order to appeal to your customers, your business website needs to look the part too.

Rather than littering your site with images however, you should focus on the quality of its appearance. Make sure you're using professional photography to show off your products and services at their best, and ensure that every image is relevant to your business.

In fact, when considering the look and feel of your website, remember that these days, less really is more. Web design as a whole is generally a lot cleaner and simpler, and a few well-placed, high quality photos will create a much greater impact than an endless supply of low-resolution, irrelevant images on your site.

Appropriate imagery will also help to simplify your website content for users, by breaking up large sections of text and making the context of your words immediately obvious to anyone quickly scanning the page.

Images can also be used to optimise your website. Make sure you include keywords in the alt text (the text description of your image) of each one so that your images show up in search results.

One thing to remember when adding images to your website though is that you should never just take a photo from the web and use it on your site.

Unless the photo was taken or the graphic was created for you, you may be breaking copyright laws by taking somebody else's visual property without permission. **You can avoid this by using public domain images.**



## 9. Ready, Set, Action!

No online marketing guide would be complete without talking about the power of the call-to-action (CTA) button.

In order for your website to serve its purpose, every piece of content should be encouraging your visitor towards an action. To ensure that this is effective, it's essential that you include a CTA button that allows your visitor to complete this action.

One of the most valuable website features for converting visitors to customers, your CTA button makes it clear to someone on your site what you want them to do. Whether you want them to buy your product, subscribe to your newsletter, or fill out your contact form, this simple component will compel them to do so through a clear, concise, and direct command.

Your call to action should therefore be attention grabbing or emotive, and should make people want to click.

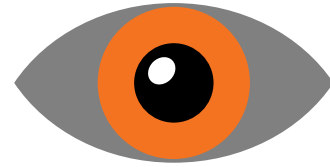
It must be easy to understand, should complement the design of the page, and needs to be positioned in the most logical place to generate the greatest number of click-throughs. On average, content that contains a CTA button will have a click-through rate that is 2.85 times higher than that without<sup>8</sup>.

The final step towards customer conversion, it's imperative that you make CTAs an integral part of your online marketing strategy.



## 10. Check Out The Competition

This is the online marketing secret your competitors really don't want you to know – make sure you keep tabs on what they're doing to market themselves online, because you can bet that they're checking up on you.



The easiest way to build your marketing strategy, by doing your research you'll be able to find out exactly what your main competitors are – or are not – doing to get ahead.

Once you've identified what's working for them, you'll have a good idea of where to take your business next in your quest for a successful online presence.

Are your competitors on social media? Take note of which platforms they use, what they post about, and what gets the best reactions, and consider adopting similar practices in your own social media strategy, or even getting started on social media in the first place if you've not already done so.

Do they blog? Glean what information you can from this, and also use it as a source of inspiration to see what you should be blogging about yourself.

What directories are they listed on? Make sure you're listed on these sites too to give yourself your best chance, and also look for listing opportunities they may have missed so that your business can fill in the gaps for potential customers.

Whilst monitoring the competition will help you figure out what direction to take your digital marketing efforts in, remember that you don't want to copy them exactly, rather you want to use what you learn to influence and inspire your own approach.

The important thing is that you stay informed of what's going on around you, and know the latest marketing tactics in order to keep one step ahead.

**So there you have it, you now know the 10 online marketing secrets that your competitors are using to win business on the web – now it's time to get out there and put these practices to good use.**

Not sure where to go from here? At **it'seeze**, we provide professional web design services throughout the UK and Ireland, so if you're looking for a responsive website that loads quickly, is search engine optimised, and has a high-quality, unique, and professional design, we can help.

If you'd like to learn more about our work, or even if you just want some friendly advice on how to improve your website, get in touch with your local **it'seeze** consultant Arturo Ottengo on **0121 2708478** or **07577 199639**, or email [arturo.ottengo@itseeze.com](mailto:arturo.ottengo@itseeze.com).

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