

Internet Marketing

A highly practical guide to every aspect of internet marketing

Written by Alex Trengove Jones, Anna Malczyk and Justin Beneke with contributions from Catherine Parker and Candice Winterboer

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO INTERNET MARKETING

Key concepts

What is internet marketing, history and pioneers of internet marketing, today's internet marketing context, with a specific focus on the South African landscape, future trends, how the tactics taught in this textbook fit together.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO INTERNET MARKETING

1. Introduction

Internet marketing is the fastest growing and most exciting branch of marketing today. As the world becomes ever more connected, keeping up with developments and trends is vital for marketers trying to reach new audiences – who are more discerning, fragmented and cynical than ever. Technology and software are changing at such a high rate that it seems almost impossible to keep up with trends. Products and services are evolving and adapting to the online sphere. The web is constantly shifting, growing and changing – everything is fleeting.

How do savvy internet marketers cope with all this? They harness the power of the web – and its myriad tools – for their own needs. They find unique and personal ways to interact with customers online. They plan, organise, implement and measure complex internet-wide strategies seamlessly. Most importantly, they never stop learning, growing and adapting themselves.

You are well on your way to joining their ranks.

In this chapter, you will:

- Discover what internet marketing is (section 2)
- Learn about the history and pioneers of internet marketing (section 3)
- Explore today's internet marketing context, with a special focus on the South African space (section 4)
- Learn about future trends (section 5)
- Discover how all the tactics taught in this course fit together (section 6)

2. What is internet marketing?

Internet marketing – often called online marketing or eMarketing – is essentially any marketing activity that is conducted online through the use of internet technologies. It comprises not only advertising that is shown on websites, but also other kinds of online activities like email and social networking. Every aspect of internet marketing is digital, meaning that it is electronic information that is transmitted on a computer or similar device, though naturally it can tie in with traditional offline advertising and sales too.

Internet marketing has three cornerstone principles:

1. **Immediacy.** The web changes at a blistering pace and online audiences, whose attention spans are short, expect on-the-minute updates and information. To keep the favour and attention of this group, you must respond to online messages and interact with communities as quickly as possible.
2. **Personalisation.** Customers online are no longer faceless members of a broad target audience – they are individuals who want to be addressed personally. Use the wealth of personal information available online to your benefit by targeting the relevant people precisely and personally.
3. **Relevance.** Communication online must be interesting and relevant to the reader, otherwise it will simply be ignored. With all the information that is competing for your audience's attention, you must find a way to stand out and engage readers. The best way to do this is by giving them exactly what they want, when they want it.

Throughout this course, you will learn tips and techniques for making all your online communication more immediate, personal and relevant.

3. The origins of internet marketing

3.1 The birth of the internet

The internet is the newest and youngest medium, having been around in its current form for just about 20 years. The very first interconnected computer network was developed as a joint project between the US military and several research organisations, and went live in 1969. New advances came slowly at first: network email was invented in 1971 (though the system was very slow and primitive), international connections were established in 1973, the term “internet” was first used in 1974 and the first real online protocols were introduced in the 1980s.

Everything accelerated in the early 1990s as Tim Berners-Lee, acknowledged as the creator of the internet as we know it today, built on his earlier revolutionary work and released the URL protocol, web browser software and the World Wide Web to the public. By 1993, businesses started taking an interest in the internet. The debate raged about whether they were permitted to use the internet for commercial purposes, since it had been established as a strictly educational and

non-commercial arena. Eventually, however, the businesses won out and the last of these restrictions were dissolved in 1995.

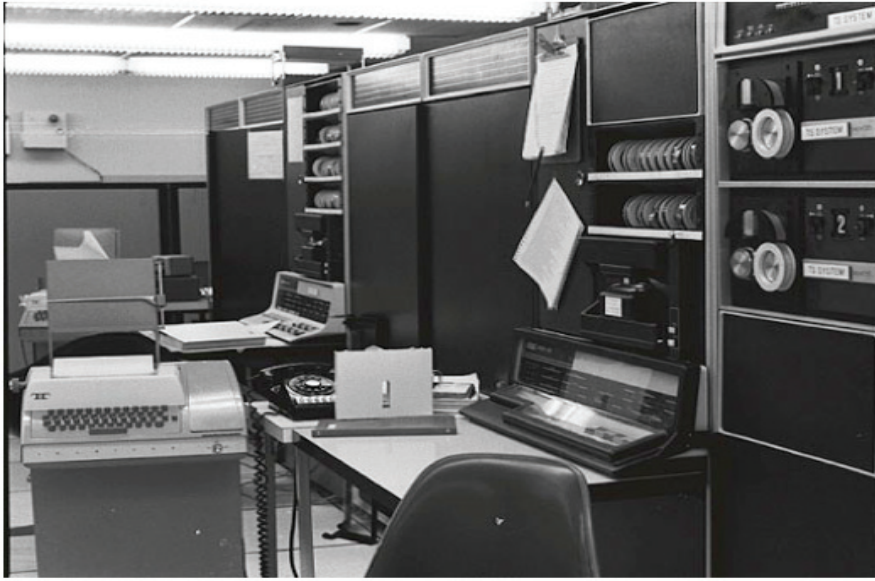


Figure 1: The first email ever was sent between these two computers.

(Source: history-computer.com)

Early internet giants like Yahoo and Amazon launched their online platforms in the mid-1990s amid a wave of new search portals, including Alta Vista, Excite and Infoseek. Google launched in 1998, taking search to a new level of accuracy and convenience. Other commercial websites, like the auction site eBay, began to dominate the web, solidifying the interactive and global commercial potential of the internet.

In 2004, the concept of “web 2.0” – the interactive, commercial, cooperative and user-centric web – exploded into public consciousness. Its main characteristics were the rise of social networking, the invention of tools that made creating and customising personal pages increasingly simple, and the big push by online marketers to make their advertising and products more accessible and desirable to online markets. Commercial strategies have become more prevalent and innovative since then. Recent years have seen a growth in web consciousness as users become more adept at filtering and steering online content.

In December 1995, the internet had 16 million users, which equated to about 0.4% of the world’s total population. It surpassed 100 million users in early 1998 and continued to grow exponentially since then. The 1 billionth user joined in December 2005. According to Internet World Stats, there were 2 billion users online by June 2010 – that’s 30% of the world’s population.

3.2 Marketing moves online

Websites first

The first marketing activity online started in the early 1990s with the creation of

simple, text-based websites with basic information about a product or company. These were complemented with basic emails – often unsolicited spam – that shared information in a rudimentary way. As web tools evolved, so too did the websites, incorporating images, sounds, videos and more advanced formatting styles.

Advertising takes off

As regulations fell away in 1995, internet marketing – and especially advertising – boomed. To put the growth in perspective, US online advertising spend in 1994 was zero dollars, and leapt up to \$301 million in 1996. Another year later, the market was worth \$1 billion. Search engine optimisation (SEO) started tentatively in 1995, relying on luck and guesswork before hackers managed to crack the first algorithms in 1997. Companies began thinking about advert placement and started buying advertising space on related websites, with links back to their pages and often accompanied with data-gathering measures such as asking customers to enter their contact information. In 1998, HotWired began selling banner advertising space to large corporate clients and achieved a remarkable 30% click-through rate.



Figure 2: The first banner advert in the world, run on HotWired by AT&T.

(Source: www.netlingo.com/word/ad-banner.php)

Online search portal Yahoo capitalised on this trend and offered advertising space on its massively popular home page, quickly developing extra software for tracking user preferences so it could target the advertising more effectively; it became one of the few “dotcom” companies to earn a tidy profit from online advertising. Google took the idea, streamlined it and improved the advert-targeting algorithms. In 2000, it introduced AdWords, an advertising service that allowed marketers to pay only for adverts that were clicked on by a customer. The strategy, which accounts for 95% of Google’s current revenue, became phenomenally successful and is now the benchmark search engine advertising method.

The dotcom phenomenon

The rapid improvement of online technology and the new business ideas that it inspired led to the “dotcom boom” of the late 1990s. The boom was a time when enthusiastic but inexperienced businesspeople conceptualised and financed – through loans, advertising and venture capital – radical and exciting new web-based companies. Unfortunately, because the medium was so new and the strategies untested, many dissolved into nothing and a lot of investment money was lost (a well-known example is Boo.com, a fashion retailer that burned through R1,5 billion in just one year and then went bust) – the dotcom bubble had burst. This had a massive effect on online advertising spend, which fell 33% from 2000 to 2002 and made companies much more cautious of advertising online. The online advertising market was rescued by search engine advertising, a field led by Google.



Figure 3: A graph illustrating the dotcom boom in the late 1990s, followed by the market crash in 2000 and 2001.

(Source: weblog.blogads.com)

The rise of the social web

Despite some failed marketing strategies – the annoying pop-up adverts that appeared in 2001 were quickly neutralised by pop-up blocker programs – online marketing recovered and grew rapidly in tandem with the rise of the social, sharing-based web 2.0. The corresponding rise in online commerce – notably auction websites, online retailers (etailers) and banking – has added to the financial focus of the web.

The last and most profound change to the marketing space was the rise of social media, which was gradual from 2004 and meteoric from 2006. Social media platforms, such as social networking sites, opened the space for user-filtered and recommended content – including marketing material. As the social media platforms grew and people created exponentially more connections with each other, the vision of viral marketing – the online equivalent of word of mouth – became real. On the other hand, it made the necessity for online reputation management clear, a lesson that computer company Dell learned the hard way during the infamous “Dell hell” scandal in 2005.

Dell received a series of complaints after it had changed some of its products and services, and one disgruntled blogger, Jeff Jarvis, vented his frustration on his well-known blog. Other voices joined the online outcry, sharing stories and linking blog posts and articles. Dell ignored the issue completely and remained silent in response to complaints, but the mainstream media picked up on it and catapulted it into public view. What followed was a two-year assault on the reputation of Dell, which had reacted too slowly and unsatisfactorily to the negative online buzz. The situation led to extremely negative publicity, substantial losses in sales and plummeting long-term public perception. You can read some of Jarvis’ posts at www.buzzmachine.com/tag/dell/page/7/.

3.3 Success stories

3.3.1 Hotmail links its users

One of the earliest internet marketing success stories is Hotmail. Hotmail launched in July 1996 as one of the first free webmail services available to the public. It garnered a respectable but hardly groundbreaking 500,000 users by December 1996. Then, a small and brilliant idea made the service's users increase exponentially: Hotmail added a short description and link to the signature of every email sent over its network, encouraging readers to sign up for their own free account.

The signature was attached to emails that went out, sent by users at no extra cost to themselves or the company, and the message benefitted from the perception of peer recommendation – if a colleague or friend was using and promoting the service, it must be worthwhile. A year later, in December 1997, Hotmail had 8.5 million subscribers, and it continued to grow, surpassing 12 million in 1998. Considering that there were an estimated 70 million web users in December 1997, Hotmail held well over 10% of the market. The company was sold to Microsoft eighteen months after launch for \$400 million. This remains one of the simplest, smartest and most effective marketing strategies of the early web.

3.3.2 Google conquers search

By the time Google entered the search market in 1998, online search engines were already well known, generally had very loyal followers and had apparently saturated the market. However, Google used a clever marketing strategy: it separated itself from portal sites like Yahoo by emphasising its focus on search with a minimalist interface that contained little more than its logo and a search box. The company touted its revolutionary new search algorithm and famously stated that it was not “evil”. Putting this into practice, it made a point of listening to customer feedback, improving the product constantly and adding new features and tools. News about the new search engine spread mostly by word of mouth.



Figure 4: The original 1998 Google logo.

(Source: Google)

The turning point for the company came in 2000 when Google launched its AdWords service, a means by which marketers could bid on certain search keywords so that their adverts appeared on search results when a user entered those keywords. As the AdWords were auctioned off, Google's revenue shot through the roof. The simple and innovative system matched web searchers and advertised content more accurately than ever before, saving marketers money and time. AdWords is still Google's highest-earning product.

3.3.3 Blair Witch leverages viral marketing

The well-known horror movie, *The Blair Witch Project*, was promoted almost exclusively online and combined a variety of media and approaches to do so. The movie itself, released in 1999, was filmed on a small budget and was never intended for wide mainstream release. However, the creators had the idea of promoting their film to potential investors online and built a website for it. Through word of mouth facilitated by online channels, the site's popularity grew and started attracting new visitors.

Its biggest appeal was the wealth of interactive content related to the legend and the film, both of which were entering the public consciousness. This included not only videos and sounds from the film, but also fabricated news stories, photos, biographies and accounts of the imagined events, all of which tied in to form a coherent and fascinating narrative. Have a look at the page on www.blairwitch.com. The website had over 10 million page views in the week that the film was released, and the average time spent on the site per person was an unprecedented 16 minutes. It also ensured that the film got a wide release and netted over \$250 million worldwide.

3.3.4 District 9 sweeps social media

A more recent example of a successful online viral marketing campaign is the science fiction film *District 9*. The film, directed by South African Neill Blomkamp, was widely advertised over social networks, both locally and abroad. Its marketing strategy took a clever approach of subverting racial segregation laws and replacing them with human-alien divisions. The online component involved videos of the fictional Multi-National United (MNU) corporation as well as other staged videos like protests and news reports.



Figure 5: A District 9 advert.

(Source: bccideas.wordpress.com)

Fans became very engaged with the content and it spread virally from District 9's website, Facebook Page and Twitter account around the world. The real effect was seen after the opening of the film. Viewers enjoyed the film so much that they commented widely online to encourage others to view it – the film even became

a trending topic (one of the most-mentioned topics) on Twitter for several days afterwards. In the end, the movie far eclipsed its humble \$30 million budget and became a worldwide phenomenon. See a detailed analysis and all of the videos here: digital-marketeer.com/2009/06/24/district-9-movie-experience-viral-and-online-strategy.

4. Internet marketing today

Throughout its history, the internet has reinvented itself many times – and the changes are far from over. The current web is dominated by socialising, cooperation, sharing and personal entertainment. It is a space both for work and play – an essential tool for virtually every business and the go-to repository for all forms of media culture products. People of all ages are spending more and more time online, and are turning to the internet for better services, convenience and life-enhancing tools: just consider how people use online shopping, online banking, web communities that cross all boundaries, instant news and updates, social networks and chat, self-expression and any of the dozens of other things that the web makes possible. 2010 was the first year where online advertising spend overtook the amount of money spent on newspaper advertising in the USA. It was the same year that online readership overtook traditional newspaper readership, which illustrates just how large an impact the internet has had on the marketing and advertising industry.

4.1 Global trends

The internet marketing field hasn't stood still. Here are some of the current trends:

- **Social media marketing.** Whether it is a fad or here to stay, social media has made an indelible mark on the web landscape and, concurrently, on marketing tactics. Social media marketing involves using peer recommendations, sharing, building brand personality and addressing the market as a heterogeneous group of individuals. It also uniquely encourages customers to create content and buzz around a product themselves.
- **Viral marketing.** This form of marketing involves the exponential spread of a marketing message by online word of mouth (sometimes referred to a “word of mouse”). A major component of viral communication is the meme – a message that spreads virally and embeds itself in the collective consciousness (“Don't touch me on my studio” is a recent South African example). Viral marketing is closely tied to social media, since social media platforms and their sharing functionality are the main way that a message is able to “go viral” online. Keep in mind, however, that viral marketing does not make a holistic online marketing campaign and should be just one of many tools used to create awareness and encourage interaction.
- **Brand as product.** More than ever before, brands are creating personas and identities around themselves rather than the products they sell. The online space allows customers to interact and converse with the brand personally and directly.

- **Ad fatigue.** Web users have become very familiar with online advertising and have learned to tune it out – or have even installed programs like Adblock Plus to block it altogether. Marketers today have to think of very innovative and eye-catching strategies to entice wary viewers.
- **Targeting.** Virtually all online advertising is targeted to reach specific readers. Unlike the broad-strokes targeting done in traditional marketing (placing an advert in a relevant magazine, for example), web targeting can be extremely precise. With the immense amount of personal and usage data currently available, targeting can be done automatically and extremely successfully.
- **Golden oldies.** Despite all the exciting new strategies, email and website marketing remain among the most useful and effective techniques. These strategies do, of course, use new tools and tactics (like advanced tracking, integration with social networks and customer-generated content), but their essence stays the same.

Refer back to this list in the future and see how much has changed – chances are, many of these strategies will sound outdated in a few years.

4.2 The South African context

South Africa occupies a unique space as both a quickly evolving first-world society and a developing third-world country with gross social inequalities that cannot provide even the most basic human needs to many of its citizens. It also exists in an interesting technological space: high-speed internet connectivity and infrastructure are very poor, basic internet access is enjoyed by about 11% of the population, but close to 100% have access to a cellphone. The average internet user has a relatively low level of proficiency but is likely to have a Facebook profile (over 50% do). However, those who are online represent the most affluent sectors of society – those that any marketer ideally wants to target since this group has the most spending power.

4.2.1 Internet growth in South Africa

YEAR	USERS	POPULATION	% PENETRATION
2000	2,400,000	43,690,000	5.5%
2001	2,750,000	44,409,700	6.2%
2002	3,100,000	45,129,400	6.8%
2003	3,283,000	45,919,200	7.1%
2004	3,523,000	47,556,900	7.4%
2005	3,600,000	48,861,805	7.4%
2008	4,590,000	48,786,115	10.5%
2009	5,300,000	49,052,489	10.8%

Figure 6: Internet usage and penetration statistics for South Africa.

(Source: www.internetworldstats.com)

South African internet usage has more than doubled between 2000 and 2009, currently sitting at 6.8 million people (or close to 14% of the population). Accelerating growth started around 2007, when connectivity prices began to drop and service providers started competing in earnest to get a share of the relatively small market. The government's growing appreciation for the value of improved IT infrastructure is leading to the gradual growth and availability of new services at lower rates; however, this process has been slow.

In addition, the advent of new undersea telecoms cables, notably SEACOM, has boosted connectivity and allowed internet service providers (ISPs) to offer affordable and fast uncapped broadband packages. The broadband usage penetration is sitting around 9% currently. This may seem low, but for a country that only had 500,000 subscribers 18 months ago, it is showing a definite upward trend. Mobile 2G and 3G networks are widely available throughout the country and are well used due to the wide prevalence of cellphones, over 60% of which can access the internet.

4.2.2 Commercial forces

Over 80% of South African web users shop online, with 50% stating that this is the main reason that they used the internet; of these, 41% spend between R800 and R4,000 a year, while another 13% spend over R8,000. There were over 1,014 online retailers operating in a market that was worth R929 million in 2007 (not counting the R1.8 billion spent on online air ticket purchases). Online banking is also an extremely popular service, though it is growing more rapidly in the mobile market: First National Bank alone has 2 million registered customers who use cellphone banking.

Unfortunately, in comparison to worldwide trends, South African online marketing spend is very low. In 2009, online ad spend was R419 million (though this doesn't take into account money spent with Google, which doesn't release its financial numbers and which likely makes a considerable contribution to the amount through its AdWords program). This compares unfavourably to the estimated R22 billion spent in the same time on TV, print and radio advertising. The main factors that contributes to this is the small internet population (and even lower broadband usage) in South Africa. However, the picture is improving: online ad spend increased by 31.4% between early 2009 and early 2010 and is growing faster than other sectors. This is in line with global trends.

4.2.3 Cultural forces

One of the most important factors in the growth of the web is the creation of a unique South African web community. South African web users are also social creatures: Facebook is by far the largest service with 3.8 million profiles (and 1.6 million of those are accessed from a cellphone). Around 30% of web users access YouTube, use MXit and have a Twitter profile. The LinkedIn South African community is the tenth largest national community on the network.

Many are also turning to local alternatives and locally relevant websites to start conversations and interact in uniquely South African ways. This is already becoming evident. One month before the start of the 2010 World Cup, the word "vuvuzela" became a trending topic on Twitter because of an impromptu vuvuzela-blowing

event organised online. This trend was started locally and remained high on the list throughout the month-long event. Another example is the “Don’t touch me on my studio” meme that originated from a rowdy TV interview with an AWB leader; the phrase spread quickly online and leaked over into popular culture, becoming a staple of jokes and conversations. You can read more about this at www.timeslive.co.za/local/article393927.ece/Dont-touch-me-on-my-studio-.

4.3 Why you need to be online

1. Your market and competitors are already there. If you market and sell products or services to a middle-class clientele, you need to extend your strategy to include the internet.
2. Web users expect the highest convenience and information at their fingertips. All companies need a website as their central point of contact. If your details don’t come up in a web search, you will be ignored.
3. Customers are fickle. They will not expend a lot of energy to find you online. Even worse, if your competitor is easy to find online, your potential customers will happily turn to them.
4. Since South Africans are using, socialising and buying on the web – and especially because current advertising spend is still very low – now is an excellent time to move your marketing into the online sphere and capitalise on a new and connected audience.
5. Audiences want to interact with and converse about your brand and products. Give them the opportunity to do it in a mediated space, and become part of the discussion.
6. Online marketing is almost always cheaper and more targeted than traditional. You can reach the best customers at the lowest price.

When done smartly, your online marketing plan will integrate seamlessly with your traditional tactics, won’t cost a fortune and will expose you to a market that you had previously been invisible to.

4.4 Why you need to educate yourself

Despite its seeming ease and accessibility, internet marketing is not something that just anyone can do without formal training. The online space is full of cultural, legal and financial pitfalls. Traditional strategies don’t translate directly onto the web. Customers have different and challenging expectations. The way that you spend money and schedule your campaigns works very differently. And with the plethora of new developments, tools, protocols, strategies and approaches, it is impossible to keep up with everything on one’s own. Keeping yourself educated and informed is the only way to ensure that you stay relevant and innovative. There are two parts to this: first, learning the basics and the principles of the field, and second, keeping up with new developments.

4.5 Remember the realities

When marketing online in South Africa, it is important to keep certain realities and risks in mind.

- Relatively few people are online, and those who are usually have limited data and slow connections. Anything that you put online has to be accessible to the lowest common denominator.
- Many South Africans browse the web on their cellphones. Keep your marketing mobile friendly whenever possible.
- South Africans are cautious browsers – they are very unlikely to make impulse purchase decisions or to trust a new brand or product that they find online.
- Basic computer skills are generally quite limited, so online content has to be clear and easy to use; otherwise, customers will simply give up.
- You need to adhere to legal and ethical codes of conduct – not doing so can lead to harm to your brand image at best, or severe legal sanctions at worst. Make sure you are informed about the latest laws regarding electronic communication.
- As more human interaction is done online, virtual communication becomes tiring and disconnects people from the real world; any interaction online must be personal and supported by offline marketing efforts.
- Privacy – or its slow erosion – is a big concern for web users. As the borders between public and private life begin to blur, customers are wary of giving out personal data.

5. The future of internet marketing

Naturally, it is impossible to predict what the future of internet marketing will hold, but two things are certain:

1. The field is growing and will become the largest and most important marketing sector in coming years.
2. The growth will be driven by new innovations in technology.

On top of that, web users are becoming more aware and marketing savvy, and their attention spans are shortening as desirable content becomes ever more quickly available. This market is more likely to challenge, debate and denigrate a brand – but it is also more likely to share good content and products with an exponentially growing social circle.

5.1 Technology and convergence

Convergence is the process by which many technologies meld into one. Consider your cellphone: it makes calls, has a small camera, functions as a web browser and calendar and probably does a range of other software-based tasks. This is a good example of a basic convergence device: many functions are compressed into one piece of technology. Many devices are far more complex. Apple's new iPad tablet computer performs thousands of possible function and can be used as a portable computer, document reader, web browser, media platform and so on. Convergence also happens between seemingly unrelated devices. For example, some advanced refrigerators include a small computer and internet connection: the appliance monitors what food is in stock and automatically orders the necessary replacements at an online grocery shopping site when you run low. Child-protection devices monitor a child's location over GPS and its vital signs with a range of sophisticated equipment. Content can now move seamlessly between desktop and mobile devices. In an always-connected, converging world, marketing will have to adapt constantly and spread along these new technological lines.

5.2 Future trends

5.2.1 Consumer control

The internet has already effected a radical shift in the way that media and consumers interact. Traditional media have a one-to-many approach: the media outlet beams its message down to a host of passive consumers. The web, however, relies on many-to-many interaction: anybody can post content or comment on what they see, and media outlets no longer have complete power over their broadcast message. In the world where everything is social and shared, the consumer has a lot of power – and it is likely to grow. Marketing agencies foresee that they will need to hand even more control over to customers, who want to engage on deeper and more significant levels with content. The trend may go so far as letting customers create and mediate marketing content, with agencies keeping oversight and steering from the sidelines.

5.2.2 Always on the move

Technological devices are shrinking in size, lending themselves more and more to portability. Already, powerful computers can fit inside wristwatches and cellphones, hide in car dashboards and meld seamlessly with work and home tabletop surfaces. Consumers will expect to have round-the-clock access to all of their data, regardless of where they are and what device they are using. Marketing messages will have to be just as flexible. There are many opportunities here for even more specific and user-relevant content. A device with GPS will know exactly where it is and where the nearest restaurants, cinemas, shops, utilities and user's friends are; it will store user preferences and recommend nearby locations. Large billboards can gather user data from the people in the area, average out the demographic statistics and display adverts that are most relevant to the largest number of customers who are passing by.

5.2.3 The rise of web 3.0

Nobody is quite sure what web 3.0 will entail, or even whether it hasn't already started. General consensus is that it will involve the advent of the truly semantic web. The semantic web is a concept that means the exponentially growing amount of data will be categorised in personal and human-usable ways, enabling even better, more meaningful and more accessible content than ever. In other words, raw data will become real information. Web 3.0 also involved the concepts described above, especially portability, control over marketing and customisation of everything. In the far future, experts even predict the invention of web-based artificial intelligence that will think ahead and source information before a user even knows it's needed. Since web 3.0 is all about "me", marketing must take personalisation and engagement to a new level.

6. Marketing tactics in unison

Imagine the following marketing journey online:

You are a book publisher and you are releasing a book by a new author. A potential customer searches Google for her favourite genre and sees the sponsored advert announcing the book launch. She clicks it to access the information, which takes her to a microsite created especially for the launch, primed with keywords. The page displays a link to your Twitter feed and another link that allows her to read a sample chapter if she fills in her name and email address.

Curious about the book, she submits her details and immediately likes the material. She writes about it in her own Twitter feed, cross-posting it on her Facebook profile, including your URL and Twitter username. Her friends immediately follow the link, and some enter their details. One of them says he will attend the book launch, and another pre-orders the book on Kalahari.net. Using your web analytics tools, you are able to track how many people respond to her posting, and where – and how – they engage.

She isn't sure about the book herself and sends a question to your Twitter profile. You and the author both respond within ten minutes, sparking a conversation between you and another of her friends. Because she is engaging with you, you decide to offer her 20% off the ebook version that she can read on her smartphone. A few weeks later, you email her and her friends some bonus video content that relates to the book, and let them know about another author whose writing they may enjoy.

Does this sound like the kind of engagement you would like to have with your customers? When you integrate all of the strategies in this course into a holistic marketing plan, results like these are not only possible, they're easy.

6.1 Online equivalents of traditional techniques

- **Physical office > website.** Think of your website as the public face of your company. Where before customers would visit or phone your office to find out about your products or to make business arrangements, this can now all be

done on the official website. A website can offer additional features, like useful resources, online shopping and customer support.

- **Direct postal mail > email.** Email is the targeted, personalised equivalent of traditional posted direct mail. It has several advantages. Firstly, it is much easier for the client to act on the information if you include a link or a fill-in form for a competition. Secondly, it is easy for the customer to opt out of the advertising, making it less intrusive – or they can share it further if they find the content useful. Thirdly, it is much easier to construct a specifically targeted list online, due to the wide availability of demographic information. And finally, email marketing is cheaper and quicker, since there is no printing or posting involved – which also makes following up and answering questions easy.
- **Traditional advertising > online advertising.** Print, radio and television advertising usually requires a large investment upfront for creation, and a second large sum for placement. Online advertising carries a much lower risk, since it can be fully controlled, changed, retracted and modified at any time. The more targeted the advert, the more likely you are to generate qualified leads and higher returns.
- **Surveys, polls and market research > web analytics.** The traditional way of measuring the effectiveness of a marketing campaign was to take survey and polls of consumers and to measure the effect on the company's income; both quite blunt and subjective measures. Web analytics are very different – they allow absolute and precise measurement of every activity that your marketing material is involved in, giving you the best picture of what works.
- **Traditional PR > web PR.** Traditional PR usually happens behind closed doors, as individual problems and complaints can be dealt with in private, or on the large scale, through impersonal broadcast media. On the web, PR takes on an entirely different dimension, because anyone can read what others are saying about your company. If the message is bad, a substantial crisis can occur. Brand management and PR are incredibly important on the web, because even one dissident voice can have a marked effect.
- **Word of mouth > viral.** Traditional marketing relies heavily on word of mouth to spread slogans, brand names and recommendations, and the web is no different. However, online word of mouth has the tendency to spread virally, as each agent is linked to exponentially increasing numbers of people down the line. If every Facebook user has an average of 100 friends, then every profile is just two steps away from 1 million others. Figures of this scale indicate just why ideas can spread virally on the web.

6.2 Linking tactics together

The saying that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts applies well to internet marketing strategy. No one aspect of internet marketing can exist in isolation – the various parts must network, interlink and reference each other to succeed. Here are just some of the ways your tactics can work together.

- The website is the cornerstone of the entire campaign and the destination

for all links that are published. It is the repository of your company's online content and the destination for accurate and up-to-date information about your offerings.

- An email newsletter should link to your website and social networking profiles. It keeps interested customers informed of relevant news and special offers.
- Online adverts drive web traffic to your website and inform viewers about the characteristics of your brand and product in a few words.
- Proper use of keywords promotes your website and ensures that your online adverts appear to the right people.
- Social media channels can drive word-of-mouth promotion and make your brand more personal. They link to your website, serve as an alternative to email updates and act as the launch pad for viral marketing promotions.
- Mobile marketing lets you communicate with customers on the go, facilitating social networking, using the website and getting updates.
- Finally, web analytics lets you monitor your customers' online activities and enables you to measure the return on investment in order to evolve and improve your overall strategy to increase returns.

6.3 Planning is essential

Any rushed, half-hearted or unstructured online marketing attempt is doomed to failure and invisibility. Simply creating a website or Facebook profile doesn't mean that you are marketing yourself online; using these applications and tools are just steps in one small part of the ongoing, intensive and risky process. Planning involves aspects like growing your contact base, organising strategically timed promotions, scheduling time for social network maintenance and monitoring, ensuring consistency throughout all communications, spreading the information manually, and so on. It is not enough to build a website and expect your customers to come to it. Without proper planning, budgeting and management, your internet marketing strategy will fizzle out. On the other hand, with a little thought and care and with the proper tools in place, you can get massive returns for relatively little money and time. It all depends on your approach, determination and perseverance.

7. Summary

You're embarking on an exciting and challenging learning experience, one that you and your business will benefit from immensely. Internet marketing is a dynamic field that is going to evolve considerably in the next few years, and now is the best time for South Africans to get aboard the bandwagon.

In this chapter, you:

- Learned about the basics of internet marketing and all its components

- Learned about the brief history of internet marketing and the companies and people who revolutionised it
- Explored the South African internet marketing context, and the industry as a whole.
- Learned about possible future trends
- Discovered how you will integrate all the parts of this course into a holistic marketing strategy

8. References

1. Wikipedia: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Internet
2. First network email: openmap.bbn.com/~tomlinso/ray/firstemailframe.html
3. Statics in internet growth: www.internetworldstats.com/emarketing.htm
4. A brief history of the internet: ezinearticles.com/?A-Brief-History-of-Internet-Marketing&id=434488
5. Detailed history of internet marketing: ecommerce.hostip.info/pages/708/Marketing-Internet-HISTORY-INTERNET-MARKETING.html
6. The short history of internet marketing: www.fastcompany.com/magazine/139/click-here.html
7. Case study: Dell hell: www.docstoc.com/docs/23282777/Case-Study-Dell-Hell
8. The history of SEO: www.webmasterworld.com/forum5/1008.htm
9. Statistics on online shopping in South Africa: www.southafrica.info/news/business/141975.htm
10. A repost on mobile usage by bank customers: www.pymnts.com/research-and-markets-the-mobile-internet-in-south-africa-2010-new-report-based-on-extensive-surveys-and-backed-by-first-national-bank-20100730005331/
11. Statistics on advertising spend: www.emarketer.com/blog/index.php/tag/print-and-online-ad-spending/
12. Online spending in South Africa: www.epnetwork.co.za/sa-online-spending.asp
13. Online marketing spend in South Africa: allafrica.com/stories/201007230729.html
14. Web 3.0: www.labnol.org/internet/web-3-concepts-explained/8908/

15. The Blair Witch Project: www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Independent-Film-Road-Movies/Internet-THE-BLAIR-WITCH-PROJECT-PARADIGM-AND-ONLINE-FAN-DISOURSE.html
16. E-Marketing (5th edition). Strauss, J. and Frost, R. (2009). Prentice Hall.
17. District 9 on Twitter: mashable.com/2009/08/20/twitter-reviews-district-9
18. Internet statistics for South Africa: www.internetworldstats.com/af/za.htm

CHAPTER 2

WEBSITE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Key concepts

The website as the center of an online marketing strategy, specification sheet, principles of visual web design, creating and managing content, legal requirements, technical requirements, step-by-step process of web development.

CHAPTER 2: WEBSITE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Introduction

Your website is your most important tool for creating a marketable web presence – it is the cornerstone of any web strategy. It is also your brand's home on the web, the site that anyone can visit for up-to-date facts, information, offers, community and other features –the equivalent of an online business card. Your website is your online office, the hub of business activity. This chapter will help you understand why a website is so vital, how to create a tailored page for your marketing needs, and what common mistakes to avoid.

In this chapter, you will:

- Learn why the website is the centre of your online marketing strategy (section 2).
- Find out what a specification sheet is, and how to create one (section 3).
- Explore the principles of striking visual web design (section 4).
- Learn how to create and manage content on your website (section 4).
- Learn the legal requirements for your website (section 4).
- Explore the process of website development and learn to understand some of the technical requirements (section 5).
- Learn the step-by-step process of web development (section 6).

2. Your website is the centre of your strategy

What makes a website so important for marketing? Why is it the central element of any online marketing strategy? Here are a few reasons:

- You control the page. A website is a place where you can express your brand and marketing message fully, in whatever way you want. You are generally not constrained by anything except your imagination and budget. It is also the definitive source for accurate facts and information about your business and products.
- It is a powerful tool. A website is not just an information page: it can be a powerful marketing and business tool. For example, if you analyse the data on who visits your page, you can get a good idea of who is interested in your offering (you will learn about web analytics in chapter 8). You can include an online store, a community and other features too. You can also customise your website to reflect exactly what your target market is looking for.
- All roads lead to your website. As you will see in the mind map below, your website is the hub that all your other marketing strategies lead to. In effect, it is the final destination for every aspect of your online campaign.
- You are expected to have one. If a customer can't find you at www.yourbrand.co.za, they are unlikely to expend any more effort to find you. Today's connected audience takes it for granted that you have a slick website with all the requisite information. Gone are the days of leafing through the Yellow Pages (unless it's online); you need a website that is easy to find and even easier to navigate.
- It is your brand's online home. Your website is the one part of the web that is completely devoted to your brand and marketing message. It serves as a reference point for customers, fellow businesses and even your own staff. Not only do you provide content, you can also use it as a point of sale, a social community and a message board.
- It is stable. While your social networking pages, advertising campaigns, email newsletters and so on will change, your website will always remain in the same place (at the same web address). This is extremely important on the ever-changing web, especially for links that lead to your content.

Think of your website as the online equivalent of your physical office. When clients visit your office, they expect certain services and features to be in place. The same principles can be applied to your website. For example:

The physical office	The website
The customer needs to know where to go in the building.	The customer needs to know what parts of your website to visit. This is called the user experience (see section 4.4).
The environment should be clean and welcoming, and should look professional and neat.	The website must be designed according to good principles so that it looks professional and is easy to access and navigate. This is called the user interface (see section 4.4).

If the customer has a question, it can be answered by an in-house representative.	If customers are looking for answers, they can either find what they are looking for in the information contained on your site, or they can access the website's contact page.
The customer browses your products.	The customer browses your online catalogue or services page.
The customer takes a business card and leaflet.	The customer bookmarks your page and signs up for the email newsletter, follows you on Twitter or becomes a fan on Facebook.
The customer makes a purchase.	The customer uses your online store or an online form to make a purchase.

As you can see, the website plays an integral role in the standard business activities and can even supplant the functions of a physical office in many ways. If your business is already transacting online, it is vital that you have a website; if you are considering moving your business onto the web, your website is the logical and best place to start your strategy. This module will guide you through designing and developing an effective marketing website. In module 3, you will learn how to create valuable copy for your page, and in module 6, you will be shown how to optimise your page to make it easy to find online. Your website will also form the basis of several assignments for this course.



Figure 1: This mind map depicts how all the topics you will learn about later in this course lead back to your website.

2.1 Your target market

Arguably, every business today could benefit from having a website – its own corner of the web with which to attract potential customers. However, before you embark on this process, you must spend a lot of time considering what is most appropriate for your target market. Ask yourself:

- Who makes up the target market? Men or women, young or old?
- Are they online? If no, your website needs only the most basic features, just in case somebody does look for it. If yes, you will need to make sure that your site is easily recognisable and more elaborate.

- What do they expect from a website? Information or interactivity?
- How web capable are they? Advanced users or novices?
- How will they view your website? On a PC, laptop or cellphone?

Since you are creating a website for your target market, and not yourself, this analysis must inform every step of the website creation process.

3. The specification sheet

Web development and design is an extremely complex process that often requires input from many different parties and takes a long time to do. Therefore, it is vital that your website is planned and organised properly, so you can avoid troubles and costly mistakes down the line. The standard industry approach is to create a specification sheet (occasionally called a technical standard) that details exactly how a website will be designed and built. There are two main types of specification sheet: design and technical.

This document can be created by you alone, but is generally drafted in consultation with your designer and developer. Specification sheets vary in detail, complexity and technical content. It is always best to err on the side of too much detail, but don't worry too much about the specific technical jargon; if you explain what you want clearly enough, your developer will translate your requests into technical terms for you.

Keep in mind that a specification sheet is a contract between you and your service provider, and is intended to protect both parties when confusion or disagreements arise. Always keep a copy of your specification sheet for yourself, and make sure all changes are approved by both sides. Also take note that leaving the design and development in the hands of a technical person may result in an end product that works but has no visual appeal or marketing logic. You need to have a hand in the whole process to make sure that your website works but is also nice to look at and communicates the correct message.

3.1 Design specification sheet

When a car manufacturer conceptualises a new car, they create a document that outlines and graphically depicts exactly how the vehicle will look from every angle: its colours, shapes, fittings, accessories and so on. Designers who are creating a website do exactly the same thing. The design specification sheet generally includes:

- The overall goals of the website – the objectives you want to achieve with your page
- The design deliverables – do you just need a website design, or do you also need a new corporate identity, logo or other elements?
- A list of your required pages

- Individual page layouts (including the navigation bar, links, headers and footers and so on)
- The structure of the website as a whole (which pages link to each other, how many subsections there are, etc.)
- Site content and a search engine optimisation strategy
- A specification of the colours and visual design elements (like the logo, patterns, background, images, etc.)
- The fonts, text styles and headings
- The functionality of the pages (in other words, what each page will do)
- The intended user experience (what journey a typical user will take through the site, depending on the purpose of their visit)
- Deadlines, time requirements and budget

All of these elements are expanded on in section 3 of this chapter.

3.2 Technical specification sheet

A technical specification sheet is the document your web developer will create to outline the technical programming aspects of your web page. Developers use this as a working document and it is not necessary for you to understand all of the complex details and jargon. A technical specification sheet generally includes:

- The type of programming language used
- Where the website is hosted (on your own server, a local server or an international server)
- What the domain (web address) of the website will be (for example, www.mycompany.co.za)
- What kind of content management system is used (the program through which content on your page is added, changed and updated – also referred to as the “back end” of a site)
- What security, if any, is implemented
- What behind-the-scenes functionality your website has (for example, how your online forms are coded)

These topics are dealt with in section 5 of this chapter.

Programming languages

There is no need to be intimidated by the complex-looking jargon around programming languages. In essence, a programming language is just a way of

expressing a desired outcome in a way a computer will understand. Here are the most popular programming languages.

HTML. This is the most basic and most common programming language, and is used for building virtually all websites. Read more here: www.wisegeek.com/what-is-html.htm.

XML. This is a specific programming language for creating databases of content, because it uses customised tags to identify, label and store information. Read more here: www.wisegeek.com/what-is-xml-or-extensible-markup-language.htm.

CSS. This is programming tool for designing websites. It allows the programmer to create set styles and then apply them easily to HTML-coded websites (for example, you can define what a heading should look like, and then apply that style to all text that is tagged as “heading”). Read more here: www.wisegeek.com/what-is-css.htm.

Flash. This is a complex programming language used to create media-rich, dynamic websites. Although the pages can look nice, we recommend that you avoid building a Flash website because it is more expensive to develop, takes a long time to load and is much harder to optimise. Read more here: www.killersites.com/articles/articles_FlashUse.htm.

Java. This is a programming language that allows you to create small applications, like games and interactive elements, and put them on your page. It is unlikely that you will need to use Java on your website. Read more here: www.boutell.com/newfaq/definitions/java.html.

4. Web design

Web design is the process of planning and creating the way your website will look and feel. It is the first part of creating your website and is the stage where you can implement your creative ideas, branding and visual appeal.

4.1 Planning

As with any marketing strategy or project, thorough initial planning is essential. Planning a website involves considering its role in your business plan and allocating sufficient resources to the development and upkeep of the page. At the planning stage, answer the following important questions.

1. What is the purpose of your website? Try to summarise your goals and objectives in two sentences, and let this definition inform every stage of the development process.

Our website should be easy to find for people looking for gardening services in the Cape Town area. Visitors should request a quote and contact us by email.

We want our website to rank high in search results and draw traffic to our active Facebook Page. We also want to generate prospective leads with

our email newsletter subscription.

Our website must provide useful content for people in the book publishing field. We want to entrench our position as the leading book publishers in our genre.

2. What do you need on your website? Make a list of all the tools and functions that are essential for your website, and be strict with yourself not to include unnecessary extras. This list is important because if your project goes over budget, you will know which elements are not negotiable, and which can safely be cut. In strictest terms, the only essential aspects of a website are the home, about and contact pages, a navigation bar and your corporate branding; however, this would make for a bland site. Let your website's purpose guide you.
3. What do you want on your website? Once you have noted the essentials, think of the other useful elements that it would be good to have on your website. Again, be careful not to add frivolous and excessive details. Some useful additions include:
 - A contact form that your customers can fill out, so that you can get their contact details along with their permission to send them emails.
 - One-click sharing on your content so that readers can instantly post your content to their Facebook, Twitter and other profiles (more on this in chapter 7).
 - An automated feedback form for complaints and queries.
4. How much control do you want over managing the website? Do you want to be able to do everything yourself, or would you prefer for your developer or IT department to manage your page and update your content? In addition, consider how often the content will change: if you post a blog article every day, it is easier and quicker to manage the website in-house, but if the content is relatively static, you can safely leave your developer to manage it.

4.2 Visual aspects of your website

Once you have planned out the overall holistic aspects of your website, you can begin thinking about the way that it actually looks and behaves. Be careful not to get too carried away by the potential of what you can include on your page – start simply, and you can always grow the content from there. In addition, remember that your website is for your customers and visitors, not for you – don't add elements just because you like them; your primary consideration should be if they add any value to your target market. The “keep it simple” rule applies here.

4.2.1 Design considerations

Your website is a public face for your business and its design should therefore be treated with considerable care and consideration. One of the first steps you should take is to research your competitors' pages to get a general feel for what your

industry's standards and expectations are. Also have a look at pages of companies in related industries for ideas. Be sure that any design you choose is appropriate for your type of business. For example, here are four websites for legal practices.

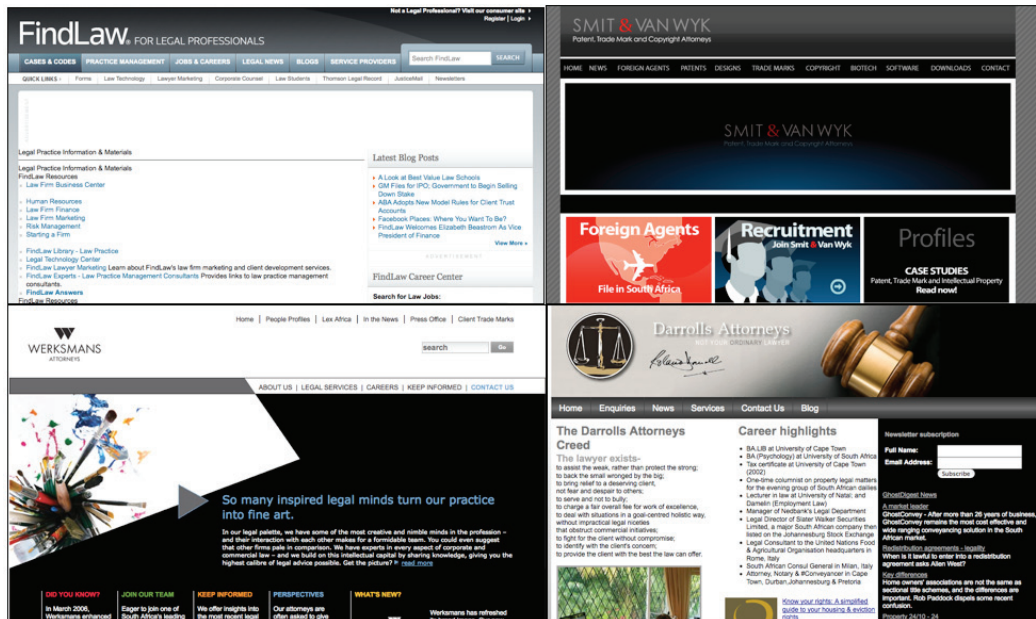


Figure 2: Four websites for legal services or law firms.

All four pages have a very conservative design and favour black, white and shades of grey over bright colours. This is in line with the professional and serious image that legal professionals aim to portray to their customers.

This also speaks to the target market, which is a related and important point. While it may seem like a good idea to create a website that is radically different from your competitors', so that you stand out, this tactic is likely to backfire unless you have done some extensive research. This is because your target market has already defined the standards for your industry and has certain set expectations. A lawyer's website filled with brightly coloured animations and an unusual layout will be dismissed as untrustworthy, regardless of the actual content and reputation. However, you can still come across as professional and trustworthy by doing something different, within these parameters.

Another important consideration is that your website must fit in with your overall corporate identity (your company's logo, colours and print designs). Creating a holistic and uniform brand image is vital and your website – as an integral part of your strategy – must fit in with your other marketing communications. Your designer will be able to advise you on adapting your corporate identity for the web, since this involves considerations like using web-safe colours and fonts (see section 4.2.4).

4.2.2 Pages on a website

Every website consists of a number of pages, some essential and some optional. The number of pages that your website will have completely depends on how intricate your website is and what business need it fulfils – an informational page

listing your contact details will be quite small, whereas a content-rich online marketing hub will be much more detailed.

Here are the three essential pages any website should have. Refer to chapter 3 for guidelines on creating the written content for your pages. It is a good idea to name these pages as below, since these are the names web users expect to find and understand.

1. **Home.** Your home page, also called the index page, is the welcome page for your website and the first thing that your visitors will see when they arrive. Technically, this is the only page that your website must have (since it must have at least one page and this will, by default, be the index page). Your home page should serve as a roadmap to your most important content and should guide new customers to the best parts of your website. Keep the page clean and include a small amount of written content introducing your brand.
2. **About.** Your about page is the place where you describe your company and state what your brand's goals, origins and business principles are. Include information that you think your customers would like to know, including your proven experience, track record, awards and feedback from customers. Some companies like to include a page with photos of their staff or managers, especially if they run a service business or the people are well-known figures. If it is relevant and interesting, write a short piece about the history of your company. Note that this page is not used to describe the services or products you offer, but is rather a little background on the company and what it is aiming to achieve.
3. **Contact.** Your contact page is vital because it provides your customer with the means of reaching you and potentially entering into a commercial relationship with you. Include the contact details you want your customers to use – if you want them to visit your premises, provide your address (and maybe even a map and GPS coordinates); if you prefer them to call or email, add those details too. Note that you are expected to provide an email address – since your customers have chosen to interact with you online, they need an equivalent online contact medium. If you have a presence on any social networks, include those details too. Finally, if you get many questions and support queries, consider adding an online form that customers can fill out to save them the hassle of constructing an email. Keep in mind that if you don't have a contact page, people won't be able to get hold of you. Make it as easy as possible for potential clients to connect with your business or brand.

Aside from these three, your website can have a wide variety of other pages – again, depending on your type of business and what you need from your website. Here are some suggested additions.

1. **Products.** It is useful to have a dedicated page that explains your products or services in more elaborate terms. A restaurant can display its menu, a service provider can outline its services and additional features, while a product seller can list the types, variations and features of their products. If your product or service is very complex, or if you have many products, consider creating one page that lists all your offerings and a separate page for each individual product.

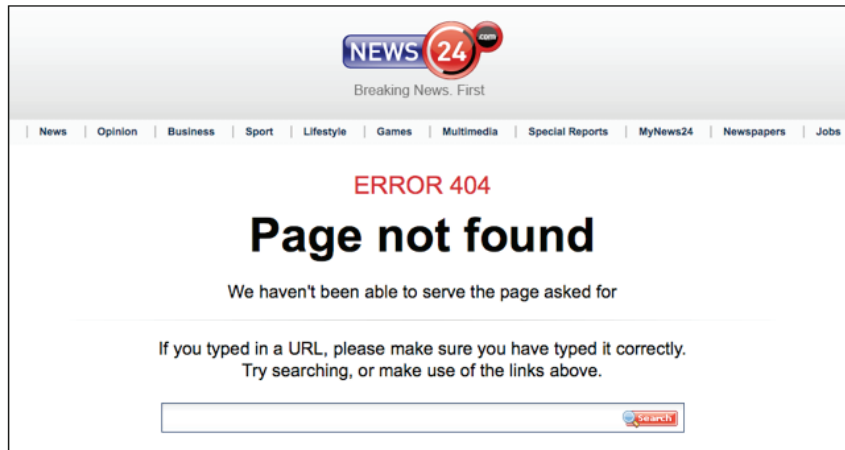
2. **Blog.** If you have the time and energy to run a blog (see module 7 for more on this), this is a good addition to any website. A blog is an online journal where you can post short, regular articles on your topic of expertise. This is a great way to demonstrate your knowledge, provide useful content for your customers and improve your search engine ranking (you will learn all about SEO in module 6) – not to mention a way of opening a channel of communication with your target market to interact with you. A blog is also a good place to announce the latest news and press releases for your organisation. Be aware that a blog requires a lot of work and maintenance, and that a poorly maintained blog can do more harm than good. Ensure that you have the time and resources to create at least one post every two weeks, and more if possible.
3. **Custom error page.** If somebody types in the incorrect web address for one of your pages, they will get a “404” error message. This usually looks like this:

Not Found

The requested URL /directories/type was not found on this server.

Additionally, a 404 Not Found error was encountered while trying to use an ErrorDocument to handle the request.

However, you can customise this page to display a specific message to your customers, to redirect them back to your real page. A good error page will have a short explanation about the error, advice about how to return to the previous page and a link back to your home page, like this one.



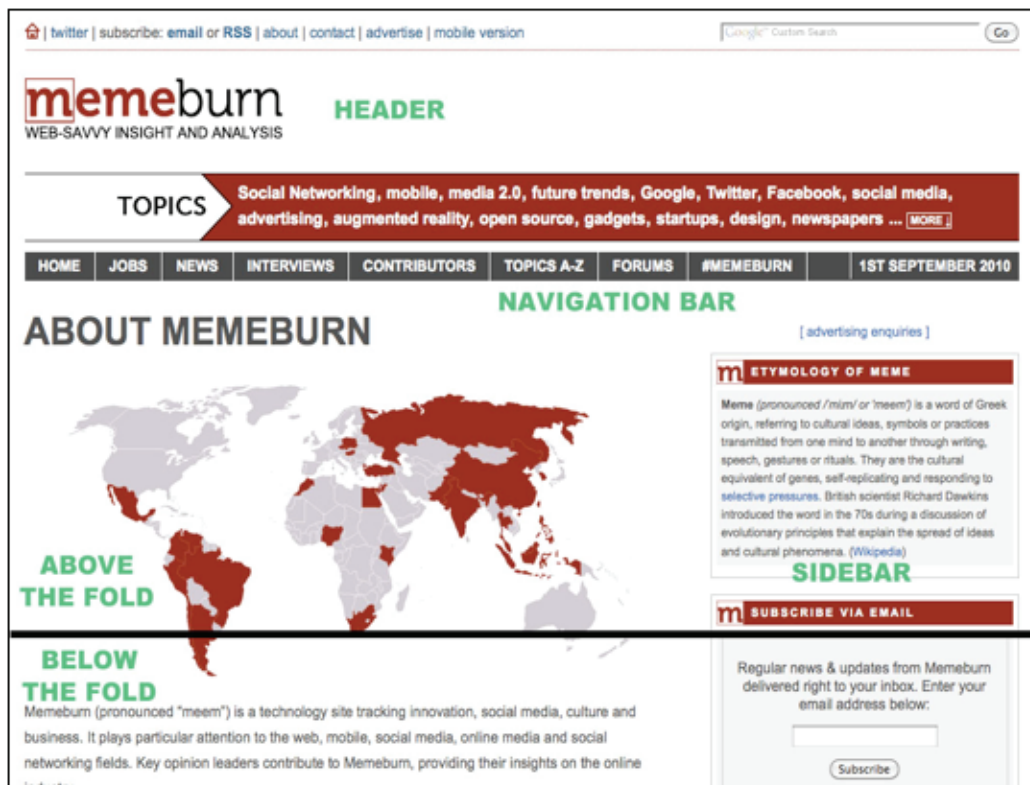
If you have a sitemap, you can include a link to it. The most important thing is that your customer should not leave your website just because of a small mistake or typo. Your web developer will be able to create a custom error page for you. You can find more advice on this here: www.codinghorror.com/blog/2007/03/creating-user-friendly-404-pages.html, and you will learn more in module 6.

4.2.3 The parts of a web page

Every page on your website consists of several distinct parts or elements. There

are two important concepts to consider. First, these elements can either be static – which means that they remain identical on each page of your website (this is also called “universal” or “global”) – or dynamic – which means that they change from page to page. Second, every web page has a “fold”, which is the imaginary line at the bottom of your screen: if an element is “above the fold”, it means you can view it without scrolling down; “below the fold” is the opposite of this. Because of this, content that is above the fold generally gets more exposure than content that is below it, which in turn impacts where you’ll place elements and key information on a web page.

The image below indicates the design elements of a typical web page, including an indication of where the “fold” is (the black line through the page).



Here are the main components of a web page, and the criteria that should apply to them.

- **The header.** Your header is the top-most element of your web page and is the part that includes your brand name and logo. This is where customers will look to identify your page, so be sure that it is clear and striking. Your logo should always appear on the top left of the page, and should be a clickable image that takes you to the home page. Your header will be static and will always appear above the fold.
- **The navigation bar.** One step below your header is the navigation bar – the row of buttons that visitors click on to get to other parts of your site. Always make sure that your navigation is a horizontal bar at the top, and not a vertical bar. Depending on the complexity of your page, your navigation bar could consist of just a few buttons, or it could have elaborate dropdown menus with many links. Your navigation bar will usually remain static and

will always appear above the fold. It is vital that you give your links obvious names, so that visitors have no trouble finding what they need. The worst type of navigation is “mystery meat” navigation, where the visitor is not given any clues about where each click will take them.



Figure 3: An example of “mystery meat” navigation is the Nando’s website (www.nandos.co.za). Most of the image elements on the page are clickable (the books, plants, utensils) but none of them clearly indicate where they will take you – which makes any web user more hesitant to click. The site is saved by the plain-language navigation at the bottom.

If your page is complex enough, you could consider adding contextual navigation, which is navigation that changes dynamically depending on where the user is on your page. Examples of this are “breadcrumb” links, which show where in the context of the entire website you are, and expanded navigation bars, which appear as submenus to the main navigation.



Figure 4: Breadcrumb links on www.kalahari.net show you which part of the store you are viewing.

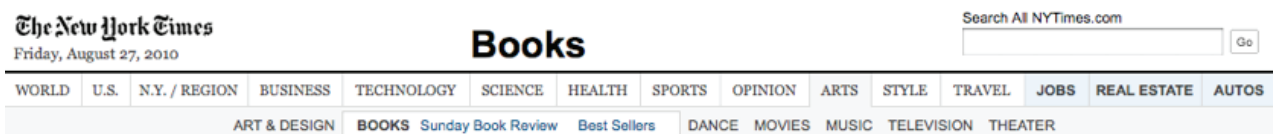


Figure 5: The NYTimes’ expanded website navigation. The first row is the main navigation bar, while the second row is the expanded “Arts” section (within which the “Books” link has been expanded even further).

- **The main body.** Below your navigation bar, and comprising the largest part of your page, is the main body – which includes all your text, images, articles and links. The body of your page is the only truly dynamic element of your website and appears both above and below the fold, depending on how much content you include. Therefore, it is very important to plan your page content so that the most important links and information are immediately available and visible, and that supplementary or secondary content is placed below the fold.
- **The footer.** The footer is the bar that appears at the bottom of the page, and can play many different roles. First, it is the place where copyright notices, terms of use and other legal documents are stored. Second, it can work as a secondary navigation with links to related pages, or can even be a duplicate of the top navigation bar. Third, it can provide additional links to less important elements, like the company’s social networking profiles. Lastly, it can be a way to add keywords into the link’s anchor text for SEO purposes. In almost all cases, the footer will be static and will be below the fold. Very few people scroll to the bottom of a page, so never include any vital information there.
- **The sidebar.** The sidebar is the vertical bar that runs down the length of a page on either the left or right hand side – or sometimes on both. Sidebars can have many functions. Typically, they are used to display useful related links, updated news, the company’s social networks and other valuable information. Depending on how a sidebar is used, it can be a primary aspect of the page or a supplementary, less significant resource. This will also define whether it is dynamic or static. Since it runs the length of the page, it will have parts that are both above and below the fold.

4.2.4 Basic web design principles

Whether you plan to design your website yourself or to hire a professional to help you, it is important to understand the principles of good web design. Even though a lot of what makes a page attractive is in the eye of the beholder, there are definite web design principles that you should keep in mind. Remember to tailor your page to the expectations of your customers.

Keep it simple. A website with a complex navigation, many sidebar links, lots of text and dozens of images will only confuse and put off your visitors. Keep your design as simple and neat as possible, and trim away excess content – especially on your home page. Your visitor should have no doubt about what you want them to look at and click. If you do need to present a lot of information, make sure it is extremely well structured and that your navigation is clear.

Prefer minimalism. Web design puts a high value on “white space”, or the empty places between page elements (which is typically, but not necessarily, white). It is good to have a lot of white space so that your page looks uncluttered and stylish. It also helps lead the viewer’s eye to the most important elements – which is part of a good viewer interface (see section 4.4). This doesn’t mean having a page that is practically empty; it means that you shouldn’t clutter things and all the elements of your page should have their own place and be easy to see.

Screen resolution. Screen resolution is the size and shape of the computer

monitor that your page will be viewed on. Most web users have quite a high screen resolution, though most still use the “square” aspect ratio rather than a “widescreen” one. For a detailed overview, have a look at www.a3webtech.com/index.php/best-screen-resolution.html.

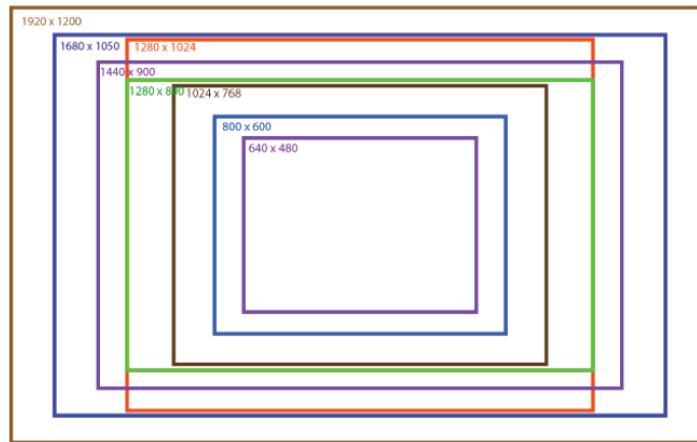


Figure 6: These boxes show the sizes and shapes of various screen resolutions.

Limit your colours and fonts. In line with the philosophy that simple is best, keep your design to just a few complementary colours and never use more than three fonts on your website – one is sufficient, as is a standard size. A very important thing to remember when planning your content is never to make entire words or sentences capital letters unless it is absolutely necessary – in the online world, using caps is the equivalent to shouting. Take inspiration from your corporate identity and existing business designs.

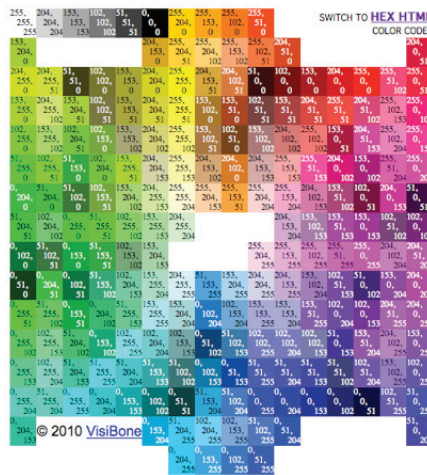


Figure 7: A colour chart indicating web-safe colours. The numbers in the boxes are the specific codes that identify each colour.

(Source: html-color-codes.com)

Also, make sure that your colours and fonts are “web safe”. Web-safe fonts and colours are those that anyone using any type of computer and web browser will be able to view. Never use elements on your page that are not web safe, no matter how nice they may look: if your customer doesn’t have your obscure font installed on their computer, they will just see an empty page or a line of gibberish.

Your designer can advise you on the best fonts and colours to use. View these resources to see a list of web-safe colours (html-color-codes.com) and fonts (www.fonttester.com/web_safe_fonts.html).

Practical considerations. Use your own common sense when you assess your own page and make adjustments accordingly. Is the text too small or too big? Does the font and background colour combination make the words hard to read? Is your heading too big or indistinguishable from the main text? Do your images load properly, or do they take a long time to appear? Do you have to scroll sideways to view the whole page? Are there any unnecessary elements cluttering your view? Are related topics and items grouped together, or is there no discernible order? A detailed examination of your page will reveal issues like these.

To see more things to watch out for, refer to www.ratz.com/featuresbad.html. Remember that a website isn't about its individual elements at the end of the day, but about what it looks like as a whole – so assess your website as a whole once you are happy with the elements.

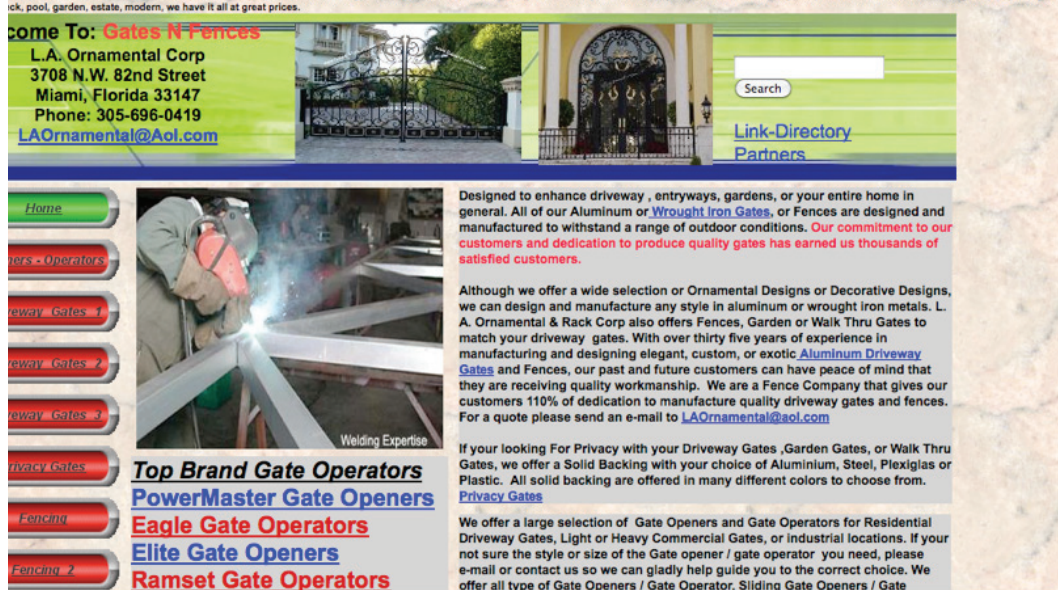
Standardise your style. There is nothing worse than a schizophrenic website with a new design on every page and a different font and colour for each element. Make sure that your design stays consistent throughout your website. A good way to ensure this is to tell your developer to use CSS (which stands for “cascading style sheet”) when coding your website. This works just like paragraph styles in Microsoft Word: you can define what “heading 1” or “body text” should look like by creating a CSS style, and if you ever want to update your page, you can simply tweak the CSS and the update will be applied to your entire page.

If you want to consider some more advanced aspects of designing for web, have a look at this detailed article: sixrevisions.com/web_design/gestalt-principles-applied-in-design.

4.2.5 Examples of web design

Bad design:

id of Gate Openers and Operators, Elite, Viking, DoorKing, Power Master, Ramset, Allstar, FAAC, Apollo, SEA. We are also manufacturer of Custom gates in Aluminum, Iron, Steel our Ornamental gates are second to none. For all line of Access control equipment, Telephone entry system, intercom, keypad and gate accessories and safety devices, loop detector, safety loop, photo cell. Offering complete Custom decorative fencing matching designs for back, pool, garden, estate, modern, we have it all at great prices.



come To: Gates N Fences
 L.A. Ornamental Corp
 3708 N.W. 82nd Street
 Miami, Florida 33147
 Phone: 305-696-0419
LAOrnamental@aol.com

Search

[Link-Directory Partners](#)

Home

Gate Operators

Driveway Gates 1

Driveway Gates 2

Driveway Gates 3

Privacy Gates

Fencing

Fencing 2

Welding Expertise

Top Brand Gate Operators
PowerMaster Gate Openers
Eagle Gate Operators
Elite Gate Openers
Ramset Gate Operators

Designed to enhance driveway , entryways, gardens, or your entire home in general. All of our Aluminum or Wrought Iron Gates, or Fences are designed and manufactured to withstand a range of outdoor conditions. Our commitment to our customers and dedication to produce quality gates has earned us thousands of satisfied customers.

Although we offer a wide selection of Ornamental Designs or Decorative Designs, we can design and manufacture any style in aluminum or wrought iron metals. L. A. Ornamental & Rack Corp also offers Fences, Garden or Walk Thru Gates to match your driveway gates. With over thirty five years of experience in manufacturing and designing elegant, custom, or exotic Aluminum Driveway Gates and Fences, our past and future customers can have peace of mind that they are receiving quality workmanship. We are a Fence Company that gives our customers 110% of dedication to manufacture quality driveway gates and fences. For a quote please send an e-mail to LAOrnamental@aol.com

If your looking For Privacy with your Driveway Gates ,Garden Gates, or Walk Thru Gates, we offer a Solid Backing with your choice of Aluminium, Steel, Plexiglas or Plastic. All solid backing are offered in many different colors to choose from. [Privacy Gates](#)

We offer a large selection of Gate Openers and Gate Operators for Residential Driveway Gates, Light or Heavy Commercial Gates, or Industrial locations. If your not sure the style or size of the Gate opener / gate operator you need, please e-mail or contact us so we can gladly help guide you to the correct choice. We offer all type of Gate Openers / Gate Operator, Sliding Gate Openers / Gate

This website has many problems, including:

- No focus – the viewer doesn't know where to look or what to click.
- Multiple colourful backgrounds and font colours are confusing – what is a link?
- No defined corporate identity – where is the logo and the brand-appropriate design?
- Hard to read text in the navigation bar (grey on red).
- Vertical navigation makes the visitor scroll down, and the links are not clearly named.
- Far too much clutter and content that is not optimised for web reading. No white space to guide the eye or create a sense of order.
- Unrelated content – why is there a picture of a welder?
- The page is not centred – it appears on the left of the screen.
- In addition, the site plays music automatically. This is undesirable for several reasons: it dramatically slows the loading time of the page, it annoys the viewer and it can infringe copyright, as it seems to do in this case.

Good design:

The screenshot shows the Twinings Foodservice website. At the top right, there are links for Home, Links, and Site Map. Below this is a gold navigation bar with the Twinings logo and the text 'FOODSERVICE'. Underneath the navigation bar is a secondary menu with categories: TEA DELI, BLACK TEA, GREEN TEA, WHITE TEA, REDBUSH, INFUSIONS, ICED TEA, HOT CHOCOLATE, COFFEE, and OVALTINE. The main content area features a 'Welcome to the Twinings Foodservice Website' section with a paragraph of text and a large image of a cup of tea with a Twinings tea bag. Below this are three boxes: 'Ethical Tea Partnership' with a photo of tea leaves, 'New Tea Deli' with a photo of tea products, and 'Rainforest Alliance Certified' with the Rainforest Alliance logo. At the bottom, there is a footer with the website URL 'WWW.TWININGS.CO.UK', 'LEGAL POLICIES', and copyright information '© TWININGS FOODSERVICE 2010 - R.Twinings and Company Limited.'

- Excellent design layout means that the entire page appears above the fold (you don't need to scroll down at all).
- Good use of white space and symmetrical layout. Content is minimal.
- Having two navigation bars is confusing, but the links are clearly labelled.

- Text is well laid out for readability and is short, and the headings are clearly defined.
- The three blocks at the bottom suggest calls to action.

4.2.6 Web style guides

The process of designing a website involves choosing specific colours, fonts, images, layouts and other elements. Once your page is conceptualised, it is a good idea to create a web style guide. Your web style guide is a document that defines all your design choices, so that your approach is standardised and easy to refer to if changes need to be made. It also defines key framework and technical aspects that are important to remember when making additions or changes. This document is very useful for maintaining a coherent and attractive website and helps a new designer get up to speed with your design choices. You should update it regularly to make sure it conforms to your current designs.

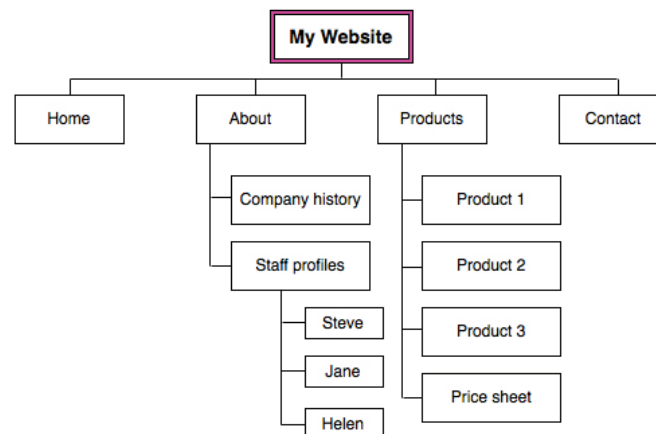
For a small business, it is sufficient to note the basic style elements, colours, fonts and layout preferences, as well as the approaches to usability and user-friendliness (for example, never having more than five headings in the navigation bar). If you want to create a more detailed web style guide, you can refer to this link: www.pebbleroad.com/articles/view/Creating-Maintaining-a-Web-Style-Guide.

4.3 Content aspects of your website

Making your page eye-catching and engaging will attract web users to your content, and good content will draw them further in to your products and communities. A website must be both beautiful and interesting to keep the typical web user's attention. Therefore, you should spend a considerable amount of time planning and structuring your content. There are four important aspects to keep in mind.

4.3.1 Hierarchy

Your content must be organised in a strict hierarchy depending on where it appears on the page, and which page in the overall website it is located on. Your content hierarchy is intrinsically linked to your navigation, and you can structure both of these parts simultaneously. For example:



Each box is a separate page that can be accessed from the page that is one step higher in the hierarchy. This outline also informs your navigation and helps you structure your user journey through your website. It also shows how related content is grouped together.

On an individual page, the most important content must appear at the top, while less important information should be listed in order of relevance below. In addition, group related page elements together – for example, have one area for product photos, one area for social networking links, and so on. This will help organise your page for the benefit of your visitors.

4.3.2 Call to action

- Follow me on Twitter!
- Click here to sign up for our weekly newsletter.
- Click to buy now!

The call to action should be unambiguous – your visitors want to know what is important, desirable or relevant on your page – so don't be afraid to steer them with action words and stand-out graphics.

Sitemaps

You may have seen the term “sitemap” used on some websites. A sitemap is essentially a visual depiction of the hierarchy of your website, to help users find out where they are on your page or where the content they are looking for is. There are two types of sitemaps.

1. HTML sitemap. An HTML sitemap is a useful tool for your visitors if they ever get lost or need to find specific content on your page. This type of sitemap has to be updated manually by the website owner if a page is added, moved or deleted. Not many people use a sitemap, so it is not crucial for simple websites. However, they can help to ensure that visiting search engine spiders are able to find and assign context to all of your website's content (you'll learn more about search engine optimisation in chapter 7). Here is the complex sitemap for Apple's website: www.apple.com/sitemap and a simpler example: conformis.com/Sitemap.

2. XML sitemap. An XML sitemap is a file created in a markup language called XML that contains a list of your site's URLs. An XML sitemap is useful for search engine optimisation because it gives clear direction to a search engine as to where the important content is on your website. You can automatically generate an XML sitemap using a variety of free tools online. Once created, the sitemap will reside on your website's server, but can be submitted directly to the search engine concerned. With Google, for example, you'll submit it through their Webmaster Tools interface. Your web developer will be able to help you to set up your Google Webmaster Tools account, create your XML sitemap and submit it to the engine.

To assess whether your website is achieving its goal, create some key performance indicators (KPIs). A KPI is a type of action that you want web users to take when they visit your page – it is the measure of success for your website's goal. For

example, if your goal is to get more people to join your social networks, your key performance indicators will be the number of clicks on your social networking links and the number of new members in your community – if these numbers are high, your KPIs will show that you are achieving your goals. You will learn how to measure and analyse this type of data in chapter 8.

4.3.3 Writing for the web

Web copywriting is a specific and unique type of writing, and often requires a specific touch to get it right. The most important things to remember are to keep your writing very simple (using short sentences, common words and plenty of paragraphs), to put the most important ideas first and to structure your text so that it is easy to read (by using bullet points, bold, spacing and so on). You will learn more about writing for the web in chapter 3.

4.3.4 Content management system

A content management system (CMS) is the system that you use to add or change content on your page. CMSes come in varying degrees of complexity, and the one you will choose to use will depend on your internet skills and on how often you modify your page's content. The three options are:

1. Basic template CMS. This type of CMS can be used by anyone because it is very simple and just requires the user to enter the new data. No technical knowledge is needed. If you have ever used WordPress (www.wordpress.com) or Blogger, you have used a simple template CMS. Yola also has a basic template CMS. This is also the cheapest option, but has the fewest features.
2. Open source CMS. This type of CMS is more advanced and can be customised by a web developer to include the features you want. This can be a good option for non-technical people, depending on your choice of open source CMS. Joomla (www.joomla.org) is a popular option. Open source CMSes are also free.
3. Custom CMS. Some advanced websites need a custom-build CMS and generally require a web developer to manage them. This option is viable if you plan to hire an agency to create your website or if you have a dedicated IT department; however, the other options are perfectly suitable. Building a custom CMS is very expensive.

If you plan to update and add content to your page often, choose a CMS that you find easy to use – that way, you can manage the content yourself without having to hire a web developer. If your page is going to remain largely static with few changes, which is unlikely, it is all right to pick a more complex option – but even in this scenario, you can save yourself time and money by using a system you understand. The complexity of your website is largely dependent on which CMS you choose.

4.4 The user interface and user experience

The user interface and user experience are two aspects of the most important

part of creating a website – tailoring it to your users. Above all other concerns, you should strive to make your site as accessible and appropriate to your target market as possible. Remember – your website is for them.

4.4.1 User interface

The user interface is literally what your customers will see and interact with when they visit your website. This includes aspects like your links, your navigation, clickable buttons, forms to fill out and even your page's layout. Your user interface must be tailored to your target market – simple enough for novice web users, or interesting enough for advanced ones.

4.5.2 User experience

The user experience is a more holistic and general aspect of web design, but is extremely important. The user experience involves every part of the interaction with the website, and includes:

- The mood or feeling the site design evokes
- How visually pleasing and appropriate the website is
- How responsive and easy to use it is
- The journey through the page – is it easy to find everything you need and to travel between sections? Does the website flow or stutter? Are there enough choices? Are there too many choices?
- Whether the elements on the page are appropriate and targeted to the user
- What value the user perceives in the page and the product
- How well the user can engage with the content (for example, by sharing or commenting on it)

Advertising agencies and website developers can spend months researching how users interact with a website – they even create imaginary personas and work through the website as though they were those people. There is no single way to create a definitive user experience, but you can plan for a specific one. Naturally, your ideal journey takes the customer from your home page to the website's goal, whatever that is for your website. You can manipulate how a user browses your page by including strategic links to relevant content, and by clearly stating your call to action whenever you can. Make sure that none of your pages are dead ends – there should always be something more to click on and explore.

For a small business, the best ways to get insights on your user experience are to track your web analytics, especially with heat maps that indicate the places of most activity on your page (you will learn about this in chapter 8), and simply to ask the customers. If they feel a page is too cluttered and confusing, you should consider streamlining the content or splitting it up over several pages. If they can't work out what your website wants them to do, you should revise your calls to action and the placement of your links and images. There is a great

overview of the principles of creating a user experience here: 52weeksofux.com/post/475093254/10-principles-of-ux.

4.5 Legal and ethical considerations

Any online activity is governed by a host of national and international laws that you must abide by. It is easy to stay within the bounds of the law and good ethics by following the four guidelines below. In general, using common sense will ensure that your page is legal – for example, don't steal other people's content or post pornography where a child could easily find it.

Respect copyright. Copyright is the exclusive right of a creator to use and exploit their creative work however they choose. This means that nobody else may use, adapt or sell the work without the creator's permission. For your website, never infringe anybody else's copyright by taking images, texts or videos off the web and using them without asking for permission (and potentially paying a royalty fee) first. In other words, don't just take videos off YouTube or images from Google Image Search. If you would like to quote a short section from somebody else's article, you can do this as long as you reference the source and provide a link back to the original – this is called fair use. To protect your own copyright, include a copyright notice in the footer of your website.

Copyright © 2005–2010 LunaMetrics. All Rights Reserved.

The Creative Commons licences have made it possible to use content where it has been permitted – pay attention to the different variations of the rules, which generally allow content to be used as long as you attribute it to the owner. You can read more about it here: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_Commons.

Terms of use and disclaimers. To protect yourself from litigation and to establish acceptable behaviour by users of your website, you can include terms of use. If you do a web search for “terms of use”, you will find many examples of the kinds of terms that are generally set. By default, anyone who accesses your website implicitly agrees to your terms of use. If your website contains content that may be considered defamatory or offensive, you can add a disclaimer stating that your company does not necessarily endorse the activities that users perform on your site – for example, if they post obscene material in a blog comment. Note that if anything outright illegal is posted on your page, you are responsible for removing it and can still be held liable for it. This highlights the importance of monitoring and moderating your online community.

Privacy policy. If at any point you ask your users to provide you with personal information, like an email address, name or date of birth, you must spell out exactly how you will use that data – and what you will not do. It is not acceptable to sell or give the information to anyone else without informing the users about this possibility first. In general, this information should be held in strictest confidence and should only ever be used for your own marketing purposes, to the extent that you have defined in your privacy policy. For example, if a customer signs up for an email newsletter, it is unacceptable to use that information to find and contact them on Facebook. Always err on the side of caution when dealing with

user data. If you want to use a customer's feedback, name or photo on your page (for example, in your testimonials section) always email them to get written permission first.

Communication online. If you allow your users to communicate through your website – for example, by allowing comments or hosting a forum – you must know how to balance the right of freedom of expression with the obligation to respect privacy and dignity. It is never a good idea to allow anonymous people to add content to your business website. Instead, enforce a registration procedure so that you can monitor who wants to post on your page – and that you can remove them if they violate your rules. Your terms of use should spell out acceptable behaviours clearly, and anyone who registers should have to indicate that they accept those terms. It is a good idea to have a brief, plain-language version of the most important terms.

4.6 Applications

Getting an expertly designed and developed website is exciting and professional, but it is also time consuming and expensive. For small businesses that want a basic website to showcase a small amount of information, the alternative is to create your own website using one of the excellent free tools available online.

4.6.1 WordPress and WooThemes

WordPress (www.wordpress.com) is a free online website-building program that is primarily designed to create blogs and simple websites. It simplifies the process of adding and modifying content on your website, and allows you to make some modifications to the appearance and layout of your pages. Since WordPress is primarily a content-based tool, its design aspects are less flexible than other website builders.

To remedy this, you can download and apply free themes from WooThemes (www.woothemes.com/themes/free). A theme is a customised design that can be added to your WordPress website. While the standard WordPress options may be quite boring and unprofessional, WooThemes will make your page look slicker and more unique. If you want, you can also choose from one of the many paid-for themes.

For an in-depth tutorial on creating a WordPress website, refer to this resource: www.build-your-website.co.uk/build-websites-wordpress/wordpress-basics-course.htm.

4.6.2 Yola

Yola is a free website-building tool that lets you focus more strongly on design elements and useful add-ons. Its simple and friendly interface allows you to literally drag and drop features like text, images, videos, maps and other tools onto your page. You don't need any technical experience to build a Yola website. Like WordPress, Yola has a wide variety of themes that you can use – some free and some paid-for. For this course, you will be creating a website in Yola. See your assignment for more details.

4.6.3 Other options

There are many other applications available for free (or for a small fee) online. They vary in complexity, features and purpose. Here is an overview of some of them:

- DoodleKit (doodlekit.com/home) is a simple website builder that allows you to create an attractive website quickly.
- Tank (withtank.com) is a website builder created specifically for the creative artistic community, and puts an emphasis on slick and flexible design. It gives users control over more technical aspects of the page too, like CSS and HTML coding, for those who have these skills.
- TypePad (www.typepad.com) is a specialist blogging tool that can also be used to create an elegant website. TypePad offers a free trial but requires payment afterwards.

You can find a longer list here: alternativeto.net/software/yola.

5. Web development

Web design is the process of conceptualising and creating the appearance of your website. Web development is the process of turning those ideas into a functioning website. Don't worry – for this course, you will not be required to do any technical programming or work with any confusing code.

5.1 Outsourcing or hiring?

Since building a website seems like a daunting and long-term task, you may be considering whether you should outsource or hire your web developer. If your website is relatively simple and you can manage the content yourself, it is cheaper and easier to outsource your web development. Choose a developer who charges a fair rate (neither too high nor too low) and find one whose portfolio you like. You will occasionally need the developer to do some updates and corrections on your page, but you can be largely self-sufficient. This is the best option for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

On the other hand, hiring a developer makes more sense for a bigger company with a complex website that needs to be maintained frequently. While this option is more expensive (since you will be paying a monthly salary), it is convenient to have a developer on call if your website encounters a problem. This is also a consideration for companies whose entire business is web based, like an online retailer or service provider, where any website problems can lead to a considerable loss of business. The middle ground is to hire a developer on a part-time basis or on retainer, which means that the developer allocates a set number of hours to your company and website each month.

5.2 Communicating with a web developer

Developing a website is expensive and complex, so it is vital that you communicate properly with your web developer – and that you listen to their professional advice. The first important aspect is making sure that you have the correct documents. These are:

- Your design specification sheet and the designs your designer has created, which you have approved.
- Your technical brief, which you will work on with your developer and transform into your technical specification sheet.
- Information about your hosting and domain name arrangements.

When you meet with your developer, explain in normal language what sorts of features and goals you want for your website, outlining as many details as possible, and feel free to show examples. Take the time to understand the developer's input and suggestions, and ask them to create a technical specification sheet for the project. Then do your homework by researching the suggestions made to make sure you fully understand the parameters of what the developer has suggested. Remember that a developer is a professional but may not be looking at all the important aspects, like your target market, so be open to new ideas but keep your own view in mind.

A web developer will strive to make your website meet the following five criteria:

1. Easy to update. Ideally, your website should have a simple CMS that you can manipulate easily and without technical expertise.
2. Quick to load. Your website must have a small enough file size so that it will load quickly for a wide variety of people using different computers, connections and browsers.
3. Easy to find. Depending on your contract agreement, your developer will optimise your website so that it will be found easily by a search engine. Note that this could be a separate expense.
4. Interactive. Your developer will include interactive elements like the navigation, links, a search feature or other additions. Your development costs will vary depending on how many extras you want.
5. Secure. Your developer should put measures in place to protect your website against spammers, viruses and other web risks.

Like with any other project, make sure that you clarify rates and deadlines before you approve the work – and be prepared for unexpected delays or problems, which can occur regularly with web development. Outline the exact outcomes and deliverables of the project in clear terms; find out what service or maintenance agreement – if any – is included in the cost. Keep a good documented record of all decisions made, in case there is a dispute about an aspect of the project.

You will be given the chance to make small corrections as the project progresses, within reason, but understand what it means when you “sign off” on something. Signing off means that you are happy with and fully approve the feature under discussion; after you have signed off, the element cannot be changed again (except at considerable cost when the developer must revert the project to an earlier phase). Be completely sure that you are happy with something before you sign off on it.

Refer to this resource (boagworld.com/business-strategy/web-design-brief) for some excellent advice on communicating with your web designer and developer.

5.3 Hosting and domain name options

5.3.1 Hosting

Hosting is the service of storing your website on a specific computer, called a server, so that web users can access it through their browsers. Every website needs to be hosted somewhere. You have two options for hosting:

1. You can hire space at a web host. Getting your site hosted externally is a good and affordable option for websites that are small in size and that have a moderate number of visitors. A small or medium website can be hosted for as little as R150 a month, although with the cheaper the option, you get fewer features and extras.
2. You can host your website yourself. This is a more complex and expensive option up front, but can be worth it if your website receives a lot of traffic. You will need to have an IT professional to manage the server, but you won't have to pay monthly hosting fees. This option is generally only viable for big companies.

5.3.2 Domain name

Your domain name is your website's web address, like www.nandos.co.za. First, you have to pick a domain name that represents your company. Consider the following points:

- Are customers more likely to look for your company name because your business is well known and reputable, or will they look for the service that the business offers in general terms?
- Keep your domain name short so that it is easy to remember and type. At the same time, avoid confusing acronyms (www.frdll.co.za) that nobody will be able to recall.
- Use keywords. Like you will learn in chapters 3 and 6, keywords are specific words that you use to describe your product. Try to include a keyword in your domain name to make your website easier to find. For example: www.abcwebdesign.co.za – just bear in mind that it still needs to be relatively short. Having a keyword in your domain name isn't essential. You could also choose something that is easy to remember, through you will need to build a

strong brand around the name.

- What domain do you want to register under? Choose .co.za if you are a specific South African business, or .com if you market your services overseas.

Second, you have to check if your chosen domain name is still available. Every website must have a unique name. To see if your chosen one is available, simply type it into the address bar at the top of your browser and press enter.



If your domain name is available, you can go ahead and register it. To do this, we advise that you speak with your internet service provider (the company that provides your internet connection) and let them handle the process for you. A domain name costs R50 per year to register, plus your ISP's admin fee of around R30. The process is very complex and you shouldn't attempt it yourself, but here is how it works for your interest:

1. Visit <http://co.za>.
2. Open the application form and copy the text into the body of an email.
3. Fill out the form (you will need to understand a lot of technical jargon to do this – this is a task for your technical team).
4. Email the completed form to coza-admin@co.za.
5. Pay the R50 fee by credit card or EFT to activate your domain.
6. Ask your web developer to add a piece of code that will force a web browser to go to your page even if people leave the “www” out of your web address, as many people tend to do. Forcing this redirect means that people searching for “abccompany.co.za” will still end up on the correct “www.abccompany.co.za” page.

Never use more than one domain name

You may be tempted to register several domains that all direct web users to your main website, because “many domains are better than one”. Don't do this. Google and other search engines will not assign any extra value to content repeated in more than one location online (referred to as duplicate content). In fact, having content in multiple locations can hinder your search engine rankings, as inbound links to your site will be spread across more than one place, resulting in lower search engine rankings for those individual pages. In addition, Google has become increasingly better at “flushing out” secondary content it thinks is duplicated from its index, and only returning content it considers as being from the primary source.

If there is a very common misspelling of your web address, or a valuable web address with keywords relating to your business that you want to use, there is one technique you can try. Create a single page on your second web address with content that is slightly different from your main website, and steer all the links on the second site to the equivalent locations on your main site. For a good example

of this, look at www.bostonwebdesign.com, which is the secondary web address for Boston Interactive, located at www.bostoninteractive.com. All the links at the first address will take you to pages on the second, main website.

If the domain name is not available, you have two options. First, you can contact the current owner and ask if they will sell the name to you – though the price may be much higher than it would be because it is in demand. If you negotiate a fee, the domain registration details will be updated and the name will transfer to you. Second, you can modify your domain until you find one that is available. Try adding an underscore (urban_farmers) to separate words, “sa” (urbanfarmingsa) to the end of the name, or a keyword, like “abccompanybrokers”.

5.4 Reasonable expectations

The main source of conflict between business owners and web developers results from unreasonable and uninformed expectations of the website-building process. Don't be under the illusion that proper web development is cheap and easy; if you want a good end product, you will have to invest time and money into it. Here are some of the prices and durations you can expect, to give you a sense of reasonable expectations. Note that it isn't good to pay more or less than these figures – you'll either be overcharged or you'll get an inferior product. The estimates below are rough, so it is possible that the quotes and deadlines you get will differ.

Cost expectations for a simple website:

- Design: R5,000 to R20,000, depending on the number of pages and the complexity of the visual elements. Add an extra R5,000 for a customised email template design that you can reuse.
- Images: If you want custom artwork for your site, expect to pay R1,000 to R3,000 per image. For photographs, you will need to purchase them from a photographer or stock library for anything from R10 to R1,000.
- Development: R15,000 for a basic website built from a premade template. R20,000 to R40,000 for a more customised page.
- Custom CMS: R20,000 for the most rudimentary version. Every additional element, like a custom forum or ecommerce tool, will cost extra – R40,000 or more each.
- Search engine optimisation: Expect a R15,000 once-off fee, and monthly maintenance of R5,000.

In total, you can expect to pay around R30,000 for a good, simple and effective website. For R50,000, you will get extra useful features.

Duration for creating a simple website:

- Design: 2 to 6 weeks, depending on the complexity of the design work and the number of pages.
- Development: 8 to 10 weeks for a basic site with a premade template. Up to

a year for a very complex page.

The entire process should take 4 to 6 months, with a few weeks leeway for problems that arise.

6. Website development step by step

1. You conceptualise and plan your website.
2. You consult a variety of web design and development experts and get quotes from them.
3. You choose a developer and designer and develop your design and technical specification sheets with them.
4. The designer creates a visual mock-up of your website for you to approve.
5. The developer takes the mock-up and transforms it into a functional website. You then approve the final version.
6. You pay your developer, the website is uploaded to your hosting provider and it goes live.

7. Summary

Getting a well-functioning and effective website is the first and most important step of your internet marketing strategy. Depending on your needs, you can build a website yourself or get a team of specialists to help you. Either way, keep all of the design and development tips from this chapter in mind throughout the process.

In this chapter, you:

- Learned why your website is so important for online marketing.
- Learned all about specification sheets.
- Learned how to design a website so that it is attractive and usable.
- Learned how to create the right types of content for your website.
- Learned about the legal requirements of having a website.
- Discovered how website development works and how to communicate with your web developer.

8. References

1. An example of a website specification: www.vordweb.co.uk/example_website_specification.htm
2. More about website specifications: www.vordweb.co.uk/specification.htm
3. Above the fold: www.marketingterms.com/dictionary/above_the_fold/
4. Creating the perfect 404 page: www.alistapart.com/articles/perfect404/
5. Web typography: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_typography
6. Bad website design elements to avoid: www.ratz.com/featuresbad.html
7. Tips for outsourcing your web development: memeburn.com/2010/08/10-tips-for-outsourcing-your-web-development/
8. E-Marketing (5th edition). Strauss, J. and Frost, R. (2009). Prentice Hall.
9. User experience resources: www.uxbooth.com/

CHAPTER 3

ONLINE COPYWRITING AND WEB PR

Key concepts

What is web copywriting, good writing in general and writing for the web specifically, nuances of writing for your website, email newsletter and blog, using free tools to manage your online reputation, engaging with your online audience effectively.

CHAPTER 3: ONLINE COPYWRITING AND WEB PR

1. Introduction

Virtually all online communication is conducted in written form. People are reading and writing more than they ever have before. At the same time, reading and writing are two of the hardest activities to encourage in your online market, since both take considerable time and concentration. In the first part of this chapter, you will learn the basic techniques for good, engaging online copywriting and the skills to apply this knowledge to different forms of web writing.

The second part of this chapter deals with online public relations, or web PR. People communicate very differently on the web to real life, and different rules apply for approaching and engaging with customers. This section will teach you how to engage with people in this new environment, how to use online tools to maximise your PR resources and how to handle reputation crises.

In this chapter, you will:

- Learn what web copywriting is and where it is found (section 2).
- Revise the principles of good writing in general, and writing for the web specifically (section 3).
- Learn the nuances of writing for your website, email newsletter and blog (section 3).
- Discover all aspects of web PR and learn to use free tools to help you manage your online reputation (section 4).
- Learn how to engage with your online audience effectively (section 4).

2. Online copywriting

2.1 What is it?

Online copy is any promotional written communication, as opposed to images, graphs or other content, that you publish online. Online copywriting is not the same as online writing in general. Specifically, copywriting is the art of creating persuasive text that promote your product or brand. Copywriting explains, endorses, convinces, attracts and persuades. Any writing that you publish about your business, both online and off, will fall under the category of copywriting: your website, brochures, promotional articles, emails and so on. While professional copywriting for marketing purposes is a specialist skill, anyone can learn to write effective, engaging content about their brand.

2.2 Where do I find it?

Everywhere. Here are just some of the places where you will find online copywriting:

- **Websites.** All text on a website is web copy, from the home and contact pages to the customer feedback and product descriptions.
- **Blogs.** Business-run blogs are the epitome of online copywriting.
- **Email promotions.** Any marketing messages sent by email, like newsletters and special offers, fall under copywriting.
- **Online adverts.** The text of any online advertising is also web copy, since it is persuasive writing used to promote your product or brand.
- **Promotional articles and press releases.** If you write commissioned articles about your product, even ones that are loosely related, you are writing web copy.

Copy can be divided into two broad categories. Short copy comprises the small bits of text that are dotted around your website, in your online adverts, your promotional emails, blurbs and so on. Short copy is generally only a few sentences long and must be direct, to the point and action oriented.

Long copy, in comparison, is any longer piece of writing, like a blog post, email newsletter, press release or article. Long copy allows you to expand on an idea and build a brand personality, which helps you engage with your readers, but needs a strong headline and good style to ensure it is read. Both long and short copy have an important place on the web and in your brand strategy.

3. Writing for the web

Excellent online copywriting needs to adhere to two rules: first, it must follow the conventions of good writing in general, and second, it must adopt the special

principles of writing for the web. This section spells out these sets of rules, and provides guidelines for writing for your website, email newsletter and blog. Always remember that your writing must be suited to your target market, especially in your level of formality and use of slang or jargon. When in doubt, keep it polite and simple.

3.1 General principles of good writing

Start with a plan. Before you begin writing, take some time to plan exactly what you want to say and what purpose you want to achieve with your writing. Consider how you want to present your information – should it be a list, a blog article, a table or maybe even an image instead of text? Keep your goal in mind as you write.

Keep it simple. Simple writing means short sentences, clear and direct phrasing and avoiding complex words or jargon. Use as few words as possible to bring your point across, and avoid padding your writing with unnecessary adjectives.

- Wrong: Our very exciting new service will completely and totally overhaul the way you understand and think about web design, CSS, CMS and customer subscription solutions.
- Right: Our new service will change the way you look at all aspects of web development.

Be active, not passive. Wherever possible, write your copy using an active voice rather than a passive one.

- Passive: A large range of services is offered by our company to meet your needs.
- Active: We offer a large range of services to meet your needs.

Write for readability. Readability is a word that means “ease of reading”. There are many ways to make your text easier to understand. Use bolding or italics to highlight important words, short paragraphs to keep your ideas separate, bullet points to outline important details and subheadings to give your text structure. Do not write whole words or paragraphs in capital letters – this is the equivalent of shouting online and has the same negative reaction. Most web readers scan text, which means they run their eyes over it quickly without absorbing everything. Using these tricks will make your text more scannable and will make sure the crucial things stand out.

- Wrong: Our product has many features, like helping you to manage your digital documents, keep a list of your online contacts, archive your emails and manage your diary.
- Right: Our product features:
 - o Manage your digital documents
 - o Store online contacts

- o Archive emails
- o Manage your calendar

Be consistent. Every aspect of your brand should be consistent, and this is especially important for your writing. Always make sure that your written communications use the same terms, vocabulary, spelling, tone and level of complexity, not to mention the small but vital stylistic elements. Though you will use different techniques for your website, blog and other channels, all your writing should feel that it comes from the same source. An excellent way of achieving this is to create a style guide for your brand. A style guide specifies the standard terms, spelling and so on for your brand-related writing – for example, do you spell the word “internet” with a capital or lower case “i”? You can consult an editor to help you construct one, or you can download this detailed guide: www.techwr-l.com/files/examplestyleguide.pdf (note that it refers to US conventions). The Yahoo Style Guide is also an excellent starting resource: styleguide.yahoo.com.

Be creative. It is perfectly acceptable to let your own creative voice come through in your writing. You don’t want to sound like a carbon copy of every other product or brand available. A bit of brand personality (discussed in more detail chapter 7) is a good thing. Also be creative in what content you create – find new angles, ideas and niches to explore.

Use correct spelling and grammar. You will look extremely unprofessional if you have dozens of grammatical mistakes and spelling or typing errors in your writing. If you keep things simple and consistent, you should have no trouble writing correctly. Don’t hesitate to consult a dictionary or grammar guide if you are stuck (you can find many useful resources online).

- Wrong: Our web tool have many useful featur. You can customize your web site easiliy.
- Right: Our web tool has many useful features. You can customise your website easily.

Proofread your writing. One of the easiest ways to check whether your writing is correct and clear is, quite simply, to read it. Proofreading is the process of reading a piece of text in detail and fixing any stylistic, grammatical or content mistakes that you find. Even if you are not a language expert, you will find that you pick up lots of small errors on your own. You can also consider hiring a freelance editor to check your writing for you. A helpful hint is to leave the content for a day before you go back to proofread it – the time refreshes your mind and makes it easier to pick up any errors.

3.2 Principles of writing for the web

While web copywriting should adhere to all the general rules above, there are some added technical and stylistic rules that apply to online text. One of the most important things to remember is that web readers are active participants rather than simply passive readers. They will click links, navigate to new pages, multitask when browsing, open multiple tabs and so on. They will not read a web page from start to finish, but rather create their own journey through it. This is one

of the reasons why creating a user experience is so important (as you learned in chapter 2) and why writing for readability is crucial. Keeping their attention is very difficult, and your approach to writing for the web must take this into account.

Keep web copy short and simple. The quicker and more directly you can make your point, the better. Put the most important information prominently at the top so that it appears above the fold of the website (the part of the website that is visible without scrolling down). Break your copy up into short, readable paragraphs – this creates space and makes it easier to read. Above all, make sure you preserve a no-nonsense approach to your brand and product; web users will see through your marketing rhetoric easily and will mistrust your message.

- Wrong: If you have ever had the problem of not being able to access your email on your cellphone, maybe you should consider trying out our product sometime.
- Right: Can't access email on your cellphone? Download our product now.

Be genuine and honest. Your writing must reflect the credibility of your brand, and must be genuine so that readers feel a personal connection through the impersonal online medium. Always write accurately and honestly about your product; readers will immediately notice when your writing is hype rather than genuine enthusiasm. Avoid exaggerated words and clichéd “marketing speak”; web readers expect content to be frank, clear and true, and any indication that this may not be the case will drive them away. A good way to come across as genuine is to adopt a friendly, open and unassuming tone.

- Wrong: Our unbelievable time management product will promote absolute synergy throughout every aspect of your business! You will get 100% more productivity instantly!
- Right: Our time management product will help your employees work together more efficiently. Previous customers have reported a 20% increase in productivity after the first month.

Focus on headlines, leads and captions. Often, you concentrate so much on the main body of text that you overlook the “little extras” like the headline, the lead (the introductory line) and captions for your images. Don't ignore these elements. The headline is the most important piece of writing on the page because that is what draws a person to read your content – or not. Try to keep the headline both as short and as specific as possible.

Writing an eye-catching headline

- Keep it short, preferably under 10 words
- Be as specific as possible
- Use simple, unambiguous words
- Try to make the reader curious by using intriguing and emotive words
- Entice the reader by asking a question or making a bold statement

- Address the reader directly by using the pronoun “you”
- Headlines with numbers work well (e.g. “5 tips for...” or “The top 8...”)
- Headlines that suggest a benefit or reward are also effective (e.g. “How to...” or “Why you should...”)
- Be honest – don’t let your headline mislead the reader about the content of your article

The lead, or first line of your text, is vital because most readers decide whether they will read the rest of the text based on it and the headline alone. There is a copywriting idiom that states that the purpose of the headline is to get the first line read, the purpose of the first line is to get the second line read, and so on. Captions for your images are also important, since they help readers to scan the page for interesting information. The caption should be quite short, describe your image and indicate its relevance to the text.

- Bad headline: Great new offer! (Unspecific, uninteresting, sounds like a marketing ploy.)
- Bad headline: Your business could be made more successful if you follow these steps (Indirect phrasing, long-winded without providing much indication of what the article is about.)
- Good headline: Double your Twitter followers in 3 steps (Clear, direct, promises useful advice in an easily digestible quantity.)
- Good headline: Are you at risk from online identity theft? (Direct and intriguing, creates a concern in the reader’s mind, sparks curiosity.)

For a good overview of eight types of effective headlines, read www.copyblogger.com/how-to-write-headlines-that-work.

Have a clear call to action. A call to action is a statement that tells the readers exactly what you want them to do – should they buy your product? Share your article? Follow you on Twitter? The only effective way to get people to do what you want is to tell them directly. Your call to action will be related to the goal of your marketing campaign and to how you measure conversion (more on this in chapter 8). If you want to grow your online social community, the desired action will be to engage with your social networking profiles. If you want to increase sales, you may want visitors to download your brochure or free sample.

- Wrong: There are many ways you can keep in touch with us. Browse our website to see more about us.
- Right: Sign up to our newsletter now to keep up to date with special offers and promotions!

Create value. There are hundreds of billions of articles on hundreds of millions of websites on the web – what will make people read yours? Don’t get caught up with trying to write well for the web and forget to make your content meaningful and valuable to your audience. Consider what the users of your product may want

to know about, how you can make their lives easier or how you can entertain them. Provide enough information so that anyone who wants to buy your service or product can find what they need; web users can be quite cynical and will want to consult a lot of information before they make a decision and hand over their money.

It is good to consider taking one of two approaches: either become the niche expert in your field by writing about industry-relevant details and news (have a look at www.carblog.co.za, a blog for people interested in automotive news), or become a generalist teacher, somebody who educates outsiders or novices about the industry (for example, www.goodadvice.co.za writes blog articles that teach laypeople about finance concepts). Have a close look at how both blogs approach aspects like jargon, assumed knowledge, familiarity with basic principles and levels of specific detail.

3.2.1 Search engine optimisation (SEO)

SEO is one of the most talked-about aspects of online marketing and is so complex that it will be dealt with separately in chapter 6. Don't worry: you do not need to know or apply any SEO principles until then. For now, here is a brief explanation for the sake of completeness.

Search engines such as Google have special processes for deciding which web page shows up first in their lists of search results. SEO is the process of getting your page as high up on that list as possible. There are many technical ways of improving your position on this list, but two of them relate specifically to copywriting: keyword optimisation, and the hierarchy of content on a web page. Here is a primer on these concepts so that you can keep them in mind for this chapter – you will learn how to use them properly in chapter 6.

- **Keywords.** When somebody searches online, one of the ways that a search engine knows that your page is relevant to the search request is that the same words appear on the web page as in the search term that was used. Therefore, the more frequently these “keywords” appear on a web page, the more relevant that page will be to a search engine for the query that was made.
- **Content hierarchy.** Another way that a search engine identifies relevant content is by analysing content areas on a web page. Some areas are valued above others in terms of importance: for example, a search engine considers the main page header to be more important than sub-headers. Similarly, it will consider sub-headers to be more important than a paragraph of body copy. Therefore, if your chosen keywords appear in these important places, such as in your page's main header, a search engine will see the page as more relevant for search queries relating to that keyword.

Once you have worked through chapter 6, return to this section to see how you can apply SEO principles to the points mentioned above.

3.2.2 Tailoring your web copywriting

All web copywriting should follow the rules spelled out above. On top of that, every

specific location has its own nuances. To refine your style, answer the following questions:

1. What is the purpose of this platform?
2. Who is the audience?
3. What content do they want?
4. What action do you want them to take?

Have a look at the table in section 3.6 to see a summary of the following content.

3.3 Writing for your website

Your website is the public face of your brand online and therefore needs to contain content that is both general and informative. It has to appeal to people who know nothing about your company but who are looking for a solution to a problem that your product is designed to solve. It also has to provide valuable content for those who already know your offerings, since it is extremely valuable to encourage repeat visits. Think of your website as your office's reception desk – what do people need to find and learn?

Your website will consist predominantly of short copy that is written to encourage an action. Remember that your home page is your first, and possibly only, chance to make a good impression. A visitor who arrives on your page wants to know exactly what is available and what is valuable on your page, so point them directly to the best content. This is a vital part of creating the smooth user experience you studied in chapter 2. Consider the following home page text (underlined text is a link):

Welcome to Alpha Design!

Put your company online with our one-stop web design, web development and hosting services.

Want to learn more? Visit our Services page to see our packages and rates.

To get our latest news and special offers, follow us on Twitter – or sign up for our free newsletter.

Questions? Get in touch with us on 021 123 4567 or email@alpha.co.za.

All of the most important information is directly available to the reader and is not hidden in blocks of text. The readers immediately knows where to look for the content they are likely to need and are encouraged to join the brand community. If you've correctly anticipated your audience's needs, they will click your links and explore your website. You will still need to have at least one paragraph of text either explaining what you do or solving a problem your target market has – this allows you to include keywords that are relevant to your business, making search engines see you as valuable to the search query.

Here are some other elements to consider.

- **Your contact page.** Keep your contact page to a minimum by providing your details clearly and separately. Don't include any text that is not directly related to your contact details – this page must be as slimmed down as possible.
- **Your navigation.** The row of links at the top of your page, which take visitors to other parts of your website, must be extremely clear and obvious. Try to avoid obscure page titles because your visitors are much more likely to leave your site than to spend a long time browsing for what they need. Also, stick to terms that web users will be familiar with, like “home” and “contact”, rather than inventing your own.
 - o Bad: Main | Company | Work | Product | Customers | Details
 - o Good: Home | About | Our portfolio | Our product | Testimonials | Contact
- **Your “about” page.** Customers who visit your “about” page are generally looking for two types of information: your business credentials and your company's history. Provide both by giving a quick summary of your origins and services (don't go into too much detail here; save it for a dedicated page), and also including a lengthier but optional story of how your company came about. Using a personal angle is engaging and shows that you are a real, trustworthy person to do business with.
- **Repetition.** Don't be afraid to repeat key information on your website. Use the same keywords and key phrases to emphasise the selling points of your business, and be consistent in your use of terminology. Repetition also provides an obvious link between different pages, which makes navigation easier for the user.

3.4 Writing for your email newsletter

Your email newsletter is very different from your website because it is targeted at people who have already taken an action to connect with your brand. Its main purpose is to keep customers engaging with your brand on a regular basis and to update them on your news. It is also a good way to share the longer content you create for your blog, if you have one.

Because email is sent to a person's inbox, it should be more conversational and informative than your website. Also keep in mind that people have limited time to read emails and often don't enjoy doing it, so make sure that your newsletter is short and entertaining and that it addresses current, relevant issues. Provide links back to your website for those who want to read more content or find out more about your brand.

Your subject line, like an article headline, is the most important part of the message because it will determine whether your email is opened. Keep it consistent and clearly branded so that readers know what to expect when it arrives in their inbox.

You will learn all about setting up an email marketing campaign in chapter 4.

3.5 Writing for your blog

A blog is an online journal or article repository that is updated regularly and that focuses quite narrowly on a specific topic. You will learn more about how and why to create a blog in module 7, but here are some pointers on writing great blog content.

- While you will be writing about topics that you're an expert on, you should still always think first and foremost about what your customers will be interested in reading, not what you want to tell them. For example, if you're a tax consultancy, writing a blog post comparing different types of tax software is likely to be more useful than writing about your own services directly. Remember that your blog posts should add value to your readers without asking them to do anything in return. A blog shouldn't be used to blatantly sell your services, but rather to add value to your target market.
- Focus on a specific topic or angle and stick with it. Since you are writing a corporate blog, position yourself as an expert in your industry and write relevant, up-to-date and informative articles about your field or an aspect within it.
- Although you are writing long copy for your blog, keep the individual articles short. Write short, frequent entries that focus specifically on one idea rather than longer, more detailed ones. Shorter articles are easier to read and reference later on. Also, structure your pieces meticulously by using subheadings, bullet points and paragraph breaks. On average, your blog posts can be between 300 and 400 words long.
- Blog articles are a great way to improve your website's ranking through SEO. You will learn how to do this in module 6.
- Personal stories and case studies make for enjoyable reading and are an excellent way to showcase customer experiences with your product. What problem did you solve? How did you improve someone's life or business?
- Advice articles that your readers can learn from are very popular. Topics such as "5 ways to do..." or "4 reasons why..." are compelling, well structured and provide value to the reader.
- Encourage audience interaction in your blog post. Ask your readers what they think of the topic you're talking about so that they're encouraged to leave comments. A blog that has lots of reader interaction is likely to be more interesting to other readers, and also encourages existing readers to return to your blog in future.

3.6 Summary

	Website	Email	Blog
Purpose	<p>To inform about product/brand</p> <p>To encourage visitors to make a purchase</p> <p>To engage with your other platforms (e.g. email, social networks)</p>	<p>To remind subscribers about your brand</p> <p>To inform about new offers</p> <p>To keep customers updated</p>	<p>To inform and entertain readers</p> <p>To position your brand as an expert in the field</p> <p>To explain the need for your product</p>
Audience	<p>Potentially anyone</p> <p>People already interested in your brand/product</p> <p>People looking for a solution to a problem</p>	<p>Existing customers</p> <p>Interested people who can be converted to customers</p> <p>New contacts you want to introduce to your brand</p>	<p>Members of your brand's community</p> <p>People in your industry</p> <p>Readers interested in your content but not necessarily your brand</p>
Content	<p>Informative and detailed</p> <p>Promotional</p> <p>Highly organised</p>	<p>Interesting and relevant</p> <p>Value-added material</p> <p>Condensed and regular</p>	<p>Informative, useful, valuable and educational</p> <p>Indirectly related to your product</p>
Action	<p>Become a customer</p> <p>Engage with other marketing channels</p>	<p>Click through to your website</p> <p>Forward to friends and colleagues</p>	<p>Comment and engage with material</p> <p>Share the content with friends and colleagues</p> <p>Convert to customers</p>
Style	<p>Open and honest</p> <p>General and explanatory</p> <p>Simple, scannable and well structured</p> <p>Repetitive</p> <p>Conveys brand personality</p>	<p>Brief and conversational</p> <p>Entertaining and readable</p> <p>Promotional</p> <p>Tailored to your readers</p>	<p>Conversational and engaging</p> <p>Personal and friendly</p> <p>Open-ended</p> <p>In-depth and informational</p>

4. Web PR

If selling a product is the first goal of any marketing campaign, selling the brand itself comes a close second. This is the essence of public relations: controlling what is said about a brand and directing the conversations around it to maintain the brand's public image. PR is a massive worldwide industry and any company with a public profile needs to engage in it to some degree. In addition, the internet has introduced a number of new challenges and opportunities that traditional PR practitioners need to understand.

An excellent recent example of web PR in action is how clothing brand LOFT turned a negative sentiment around to their benefit. In July 2010, the company posted some pictures of a skinny model wearing their new cargo pants on their Facebook profile. Even though the photos were pretty typical of the brand's previous promotions, fans complained that the pants wouldn't look good on normal-sized, "real" women. They demanded proof that the pants were suited to all body types. In response, LOFT's own manager of digital programs, a woman named Julie, posed for photos wearing the pants and uploaded them to the Facebook page the next day. Other women of different sizes from the company did the same. The fan response was extremely positive, the product was affirmed and customers became more supportive of the brand. You can read more about this and some other web PR scenarios here: mashable.com/2010/08/30/social-media-attacks-brand.

4.1 How is web PR different from traditional PR?

Traditional and web PR are two branches of the same practice that have evolved to work in two completely different media. Both are fundamentally about creating engagement between people and the brand and neither can be wholly supplemented by the other. Traditional PR operates in the world of mainstream, top-down media, while web PR negotiates the web, a democratic medium where anyone can create and influence content. The best way to see where the two types differ is to compare how the PR process works traditionally and online.

4.4.1 Steps of a PR campaign

1. Conceptualise the message. The first step of any campaign is to brainstorm the message and effect that you want to spread to the public. This step is dependant on your brand and market and is essentially identical both in traditional and web PR.
2. Create the message. At this stage, the two branches of PR begin to diverge, though most principles of creating a good, compelling and effective message remain the same for both. Writing for the web requires a special technical approach (incorporating SEO, scannability and other features like links), but aside from some cosmetic differences, the core message and goal will be the same.
3. Deliver the message. Here, traditional and web PR diverge completely. Traditional channels for PR are print publications, events and broadcast

media, while web channels range from the online equivalents of these (news sites, online events and internet shows like podcasts) to completely unique channels, like social networks, websites and email. The distribution strategy also differs, since web media requires a much wider-ranging and diverse approach to reach an equivalent number of people.

4. **Observe the response.** This is one step where web PR truly shines, because measuring activities and sentiment online is much easier than doing so in the real world. As you will learn in chapter 8, finding, tracking and assessing online metrics is easy and can be automated with web tools. Where traditional PR relies on delayed and guesstimated data, web PR benefits from accurate, up-to-the-minute figures.
5. **Respond.** One of the main components of PR is responding to the public's response to the marketing message, magnifying or minimising the impact as appropriate. Traditional PR does this by assessing feedback and providing a broad response through the same broadcast media channels, a process that can take a considerable amount of time. Web PR is the opposite: it relies on highly accurate data and involves giving personalised, instant responses to commenters.
6. **Follow up.** Most PR messages don't exist in isolation and will be followed up with subsequent messages that have been influenced by the response and discussion around the first. This process is much slower in the traditional sphere than on the web, where short attention spans and the deluge of new information mean that your brand will be forgotten very quickly.
7. **Network.** Networking and building relationships with influential people is crucial to any PR practitioner. Traditionally, this is done by approaching people at events, calling businesses and arranging meetings, building working relationships with media channels and so on. On the web, the picture is very different: with millions of people connected to each other, networking becomes easier and faster, but building meaningful connections can be more challenging because people are more sceptical of digital communication. Online networking also requires creating and maintaining web profiles, which can be time consuming.

5. Important aspects of web PR

5.1 Engaging with the audience

One of the most dramatic ways in which web PR differs from traditional is that you can engage with your audience more personally and directly than ever before; in fact, engagement is the key element to successful web PR. Here are some guidelines for navigating the current web landscape.

5.1.1 Challenges of web 2.0

Web 2.0 – the user-created, social, sharing online experience – is the current web

standard. While its openness and networking potential are beneficial to public relations, it is also a challenging landscape to navigate because it has its own rules, accepted practices and conventions. A PR practitioner must know how to relate to the target market in their medium and according to the accepted principles of interaction. Here are some points to remember.

- Create online social capital. Social capital is the influence, respect and value that your brand has within your social network. You gain online social capital by being active and approachable, being frank and honest, interacting with people personally, sharing useful and interesting content (not only yours) regularly, and so on. Unlike in traditional media where the medium frames the content (e.g., an article in a reputable newspaper is by default assumed to be of equal value), in the online world you must create your reputation and value from scratch.
- Active interaction. Simply putting your content online will do little to promote your message. You have to take active steps to share and spread it so that it stands out in the ever-flowing stream of information. Use the social capital you have built on your blog, website and social networks to help propagate your message (you will learn how to use social media in chapter 7). You must learn how to generate your own online buzz actively.
- Listen more than you speak. On the web, everybody wants to express their opinions, good and bad. Web PR therefore requires that you spend considerably more time listening to your audience than you do speaking to them. The bonus of this approach is that you will get a good sense of popular sentiment around your brand and marketing strategy.
- Talk about others. In relation to the previous point, a good online PR strategy doesn't just involve publishing your own material, since your followers will quickly get bored with your overt marketing message. To be a valuable source, you should share content that is related to your industry or field, or material that your audience will likely be interested in. For example, if you run a bookshop, source reviews of your most popular titles and share news from the literary world.
- Personal recommendations count. Online, reputable media sources like newspapers carry less social capital than recommendations from personal contacts. Your marketing campaign will not be a success if it is limited to these channels. The most valuable way to spread content is through personal recommendations, meaning that your clients pass the message on to their friends. Encourage your customers to share your content with incentives and by producing valuable, quality material. This strategy can be modified for your website by including customer testimonials – although less effective, it mimics the principle and makes the brand seem more authentic.
- Be visible. The most important expectation that web users have is that you are easy to find. A search for your brand name should bring up your website, the social networking profiles that you are running, articles about you, your microsites and so on – and all on the first page of results. If you are invisible, nobody will interact with you and your PR strategy will be for naught.

A trickier and more desirable outcome is that you appear in search results when somebody searches for a term related to your brand, such as your type of product (e.g. “industrial vacuums” rather than your company name). This is an important way to gain new customers who are not already familiar with your brand name, but who are looking for your product or service online. You will learn how to become visible for non-branded terms related to your business in chapter 6 on search engine optimisation.

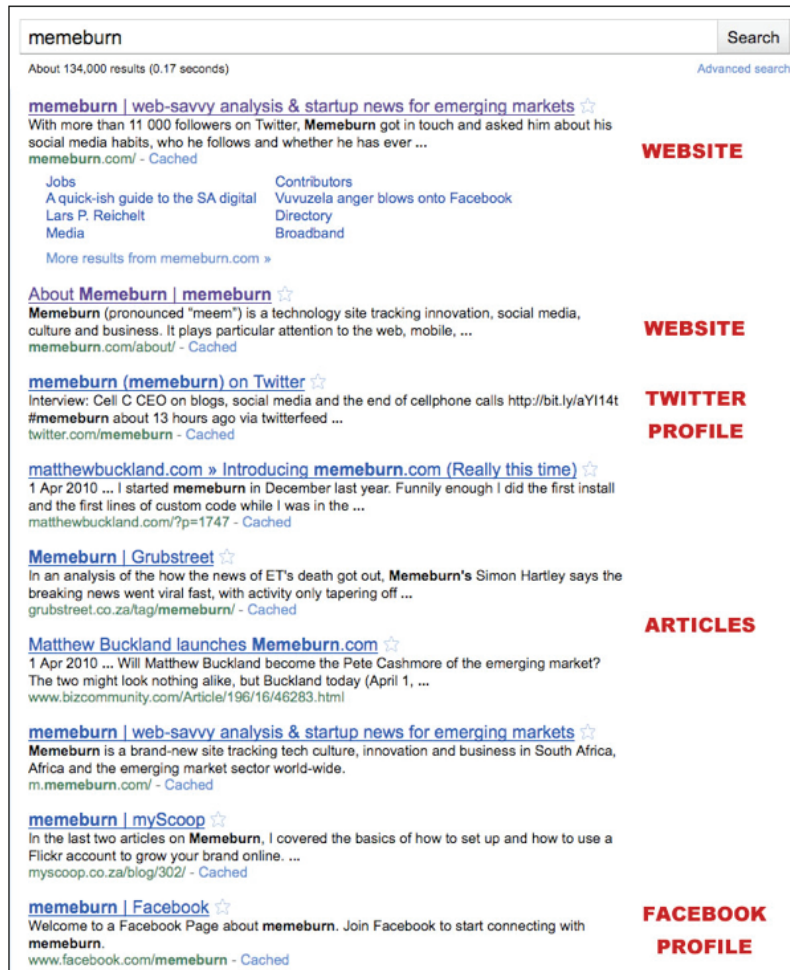


Figure 1: Local technology site Memeburn has excellent visibility on the first page of search results. However, the site does not appear within the first 50 results for “tech blog” or “technology innovation blog”, which will hamper it gaining new readers.

- Focus on one channel at a time. The web offers a lot of tools, many of which you will explore in this course. It is important, however, to plan your online PR strategy very carefully and to expand slowly. Managing two or three social networks is doable, but trying to run a dozen will result in confusion and negative sentiment (for example, if you cannot keep track of and reply to comments on all platforms). Once you have created a solid and effective strategy for one channel, you can branch out and introduce others.
- Register on all platforms. While this may seem to be the opposite advice to

the previous point, there is an important distinction. If you do not register your company profile on the most important social networks, there is a chance that someone will “hijack” the name and either demand money for it or spread misinformation under your guise. You do not need to be active on all the platforms you register, but make sure that you have secured the profile name for yourself. A tool like KnowEm will help you do this automatically (knowem.com). This doesn't mean you need to sign up to every platform; pick the ones you want to be visible on.

5.2 Online distribution channels

Distributing your media online involves using three approaches: publishing on your own platforms, distributing to external channels and encouraging sharing by individuals. All three are equally important and complement each other. Here is how to get the maximum benefit out of each one.

5.2.1 Your own platforms

There is no restriction on what you can publish on the platforms you own: your website, blog, social media profiles and so on. This is generally the first way that your online message becomes public since you can control it fully. Publishing on your own platforms is very important for informing your customers, controlling the accuracy of the information and improving your search engine ranking (provided the article appears on your page first). It is also vital that the information is on your page in case journalists or other media writers want to find it. If you publish a lot of news and frequently send out press releases, you could consider adding a “press” section to your website so that anyone who wants to write about you can access the most accurate information. However, unless you have built up considerable social capital, using your own channels is generally considered the least reputable medium since the marketing focus is so overt and will usually be seen by the lowest number of people.

5.2.2 External channels

To really get the message out to the largest number of people, you must spread the word through neutral channels. This is the crux of your online PR distribution strategy, because it involves building relationships with online news and publication sources. Leverage your existing contacts, call or email online news sites, approach industry bloggers and so on. Be prepared to create custom content for these publications that fits their focus.

If you want to automate the process, you can use several online tools, depending on the nature of your message. If you want to publish a press release, consider approaching an online press office that will distribute the content to the relevant sources, or set up a press office at a reputable news site (have a look at the press service offered by BizCommunity: www.bizcommunity.com/AdvertisingRates-pressoffice.html). For interesting articles that are indirectly about your brand (for example, an article on the principles of using colour by a design agency), syndicate your content to online article directories. Article directories are websites that allow you to publish your articles, categorise articles by subject area, allow others

to take and publish your articles and promote the most popular pieces. A local example is www.articledirectory.co.za, and many international ones can be found with a simple web search. You can also make sure that your blog, for example, is connected to your Facebook Page and Twitter profile, so that when a new post is published, it gets pushed to these platforms automatically.

If you write blog articles, an alternative approach is to join a blog network in your business or industry category. A blog network collects and publishes posts by its members, allowing the best pieces to rise to the front page; this way, you will reach people who are directly interested in your content. This helps to build relationships, increase traffic to your page and improves your SEO strategy through link building.

5.2.3 Distribution by individuals

Ideally, you want real people spreading the word about your product online – not only sharing your content, but creating their own material about you. A personal recommendation is the highest form of praise your content can get, and is also the hardest to get right. Above all, it takes time and energy to nurture an active community that is willing to distribute your content for you. The ultimate goal is a viral message – one that rapidly spreads across social media from person to person without any added input from you. You will learn about this strategy in chapter 7.

6. Online reputation management

Online reputation management (ORM) is the process of monitoring and responding to conversations about your brand and product. Online, these conversations can happen anywhere and between many different kinds of people, and the sentiment won't always be positive. To successfully manage your online reputation, you must both monitor your brand and manage what is being said.

6.1 Monitoring

Monitoring your online reputation involves gathering data from a wide variety of channels, sources and types of media. Monitoring involves gathering both quantitative data (data that can be counted, like number of comments, page views and Likes) and qualitative data (data that is uncountable and subjective, like the sentiment in a comment or the tone of a question). There are many excellent online tools that help you manage this process and some are outlined in the next section and later in chapter 8.

Naturally, you should monitor the conversations on your own platforms, including social media interactions, comments on your articles and emails. You should also keep an eye on influential people in your industry and network. Beyond that, you will need to use specialised tools to find and evaluate mentions of your brand, product and industry further afield online. The by-product of this process is that you can find new marketing opportunities in your field because you will be aware of relevant discussions.

6.2 ORM tools

The tools you use will depend on the size of your company, how much you are prepared to spend and how much media attention your brand gets. Most small businesses can comfortably manage their online reputations with free Google, Twitter and Facebook tools. Larger companies with a strong online presence need to consider a paid-for alternative.

6.2.1 Google Alerts

Google is an incredibly powerful search engine and an excellent tool for keeping track of your brand. Even a simple Google search for your company name will reveal a lot of useful information, but it can take a lot of time if you perform the same searches every day. Google Alerts is an easy-to-use tool that automates this process: you set up Alerts for as many keywords as you want, and Google sends you an email whenever a new mention of that keyword appears online, along with a link to the location. Here's a step-by-step guide to setting up your own Alerts.

1. You need to have a Google account to create Alerts. If you are already using Gmail, Google Docs or any other Google application, you already have an account. If you don't, visit www.google.com/accounts and create a free one quickly and simply.
2. Once you have an account, go to www.google.com/alerts.
3. You will see the following screen. To create an Alert, type a word into the "Search terms" box. If you click "Preview results", you will see a Google search page for the keyword you entered.

The screenshot displays the Google Alerts beta interface. At the top is the 'Google alerts beta' logo. Below it is a text input field labeled 'Search terms:' followed by a 'Preview results' link. Underneath are four dropdown menus: 'Type:' with 'Everything' selected, 'How often:' with 'once a day' selected, 'Email length:' with 'up to 20 results' selected, and 'Deliver to:' with a blurred email address. At the bottom is a 'Create Alert' button.

4. You can set the properties of your Alert to customise how you receive notifications. "Type" refers to the type of media content you want Google to check; it is recommended that you stick with "Everything" to get the broadest spectrum of results. "How often" determines how frequently you receive notifications from Google and "Email length" determines how many individual search results you will be sent. Finally, "Deliver to" specifies the email address the Alert will be sent to, and is by default your Gmail address.

Type:

How often:

Email length:

Deliver to:

How often:

Email length:

Deliver to:

Email length:

Deliver to:

Tweak these settings to suit your needs, and remember that you can always edit them later.

5. Click “Create Alert” once you are done.
6. Google will keep track of your Alert and will send you an email when something new is posted online. The email will look something like this.

Google Alert - internet marketing Inbox | X

☆ **Google Alerts** to me [show details 1:2](#)


News 8 new results for internet marketing

[Tiffany declares dividend](#)
BusinessWeek
Internet Marketing Master's Degree Learn Effective Internet Marketing Strategies While Earning Your Masters Online! NYSE Technologies NYSE Euronext The ...
[See all stories on this topic »](#)

[Urologix names Spangler to the board](#)
BusinessWeek
Internet Marketing Master's Degree Earn your degree online with Full Sail University & prepare for your new career! Hot Careers in Internet Marketing Get ...
[See all stories on this topic »](#)

[Renovate Your Online Marketing](#)
Constructech
"So we've developed a system that helps contractors do their **Internet marketing** and build relationships without having to hire and manage developers or ...
[See all stories on this topic »](#)

[LiveDeal Announces Customer Success with InstantPromote\(R\)](#)
MarketWatch (press release)
LAS VEGAS, Aug 19, 2010 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- LiveDeal, Inc. (NASDAQ:LIVE) , a Las Vegas based provider of **Internet marketing** services for small businesses, ...
[See all stories on this topic »](#)

[Master your Mind and you will Master Marketing](#)
Triple Pundit
I believe that this is the key skill that separates excellent marketers from average ones, in the world of **internet marketing** in particular. ... 

Suggested Google Alerts:

1. Your company name
2. The names of your products
3. The name of your CEO and prominent company personnel
4. Your industry (e.g. web development, gardening services)
5. Your location, where relevant
6. Your URL (web address)
7. Your biggest competitors
8. Your most important SEO keywords

6.2.2 Social media tools

Social networks like Twitter and Facebook also have sophisticated search tools that allow you to track mentions of your brand and profile. On Twitter, you can search for a keyword or brand name; if you leave the search results page open, it will update live as new posts are created. Search for the same terms that you use for the Google Alerts, but also include your brand's profile (@BrandName) and hashtag mentions of your brand (#BrandName). A hashtag is a way for Twitter users to indicate the subject of their post, and savvy users will put your company name as a hashtag to draw attention to it (for example, "Received great service from #BrandName. Thanks. #goodservice"). Here, the two hashtags indicate that the subjects of the post are related, and anyone who searches for either of the two will find the other in this message. Facebook, LinkedIn and other social networks will have similar search features.

6.2.3 Paid ORM tools

Large or busy companies that need an even more effective and efficient way of monitoring their brands should consider investing in one of the powerful paid-for tools available online. Two popular tools are saidWot (www.saidwot.com), a South Africa-specific application, and Trackur (www.trackur.com).

Both saidWot and Trackur allow you to manage many aspects of your online reputation from one simple dashboard. SaidWot is a South African service that focuses specifically on ORM, providing holistic value by not just aggregating data but by ranking and filtering it based on its relevance, sentiment and credibility. Trackur is a social-media-specific tool that focuses on finding and summarising brand mentions on social networking platforms. Both offer a range of services and pricing plans that you can explore if you are interested in using a paid tool. In chapter 8, you will learn much more about web analytics and related tools.

6.3 Managing

Managing your online reputation essentially means responding to comments made by the community. Since the web is built on the principle of user-generated content – media created about your brand by your community – you need to have a good response strategy in place to address not only your own channels, but also the peripheral buzz that is created by customers and fans. Always try to keep your response proportional to the original comment, whether good or bad.

If the feedback is positive:

- Respond with a quick thank you or acknowledgement. This is very important; many marketers mistakenly believe that they don't need to interact with positive comments because they aren't harming the brand. However, if a customer takes the time to write a positive blog article about you, return the favour by leaving a comment and linking to their blog. Make sure that the comment is from an actual person and not a spammer.
- Promote good comments, but don't overdo it. Don't repost every single bit of praise you get; save that action for the really stellar comments.
- Keep the good comments flowing by adding information, opinions and personal messages to the conversation.
- If somebody has gone well out of their way to promote your brand, like getting five friends to sign up for your service, find a way to thank them publicly – give them a discount, a special present or something else appropriate.

If the feedback is negative:

- Recognise that people may have legitimate complaints and take each individual one seriously on its own merit. It is better to be overly careful about this than to let a legitimate problem slip.
- Apologise sincerely and directly, but keep it in proportion to the complaint or issue. Over- or under-apologising will make you look trite and disinterested. Apologise once and move on.
- Don't be defensive. Even if you think the person complaining is wrong or inaccurate, you will damage your brand's reputation even more by being defensive about the complaint in a public arena. Even if you respond privately and are defensive, you risk angering that potential customer, who could repost what you've written to them. Stay level headed by acknowledging the person's point of view, and calmly and objectively stating your side of the story. It's worth noting that other people viewing the interaction are more likely to side with an individual than with a business.
- Address the problem out in the open, being honest about what is going on, and take the communication offline as soon as possible. Offer a suitable compensation in line with what you would normally offer. Refuse to be drawn into a public argument.

- Turn the negativity to your advantage by showing that you are genuine about wanting to help solve the problem; many companies have created extremely loyal customers by addressing their dissatisfaction quickly and effectively – just think of the earlier LOFT example. But try to avoid turning the issue into an overblown PR stunt, because it will look artificial.
- If somebody is spreading misinformation or otherwise trying to smear your brand image, respond levelly and present your case with facts and details to back up your point. If the commenter persists and will not listen to reason, consider removing them from the community or requesting a take-down notice from your internet service provider. Don't react by making excuses; just state the facts and keep yourself from getting drawn in emotionally.
- NEVER delete or hide negative comments. Online content can be archived and retrieved, even if you remove it. You will look extremely bad to your customers if you try to cover up bad feedback or pretend that an issue doesn't exist. Rather, bring it out into the open, deal with it definitively and then rely on your responsiveness and demonstrated fairness to deal with any later issues. The way you handle a negative comment often determines whether people are convinced of your credibility.

6.4 Crisis management

A handful of negative comments or dissatisfied customers won't sink your brand, but a full-scale online crisis can have massive repercussions. A reputation crisis comes about then a negative message about your brand goes viral and spreads to a large part of your community, and beyond. Consider the effect that the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill had on the brand image of BP (especially the creation of subversive social media like the @BPGlobalPR Twitter profile that satirised the company's meagre and ineffective response), or how a small printing error led to considerable trouble for Woolworths when they were publicising their Lovebirds campaign (read all about it here: www.spatula.co.za/yuppiechef-holds-woolies-lovebirds-ransom). Crisis management is a vital component of ORM because you never know when a small mistake can turn into a viral explosion. The key to good crisis management is planning in advance; that way, you can roll out your strategy as quickly as possible and minimise the impact.

1. Prepare a contact plan for your most important stakeholders and contacts in case a crisis arises. Even a quick email to your media contacts and digital distribution partners will make a big difference.
2. Make a communication strategy for your online communities. Speak louder than the threat facing you by addressing your community swiftly and in person. Have a special message ready for each of your chosen platforms and post it as soon as you can – and be completely honest. Assign someone to monitor the discussions and to respond quickly as the situation evolves.
3. Don't ignore the crisis and hope that no one will notice just because it is online. Word will quickly spread to the offline media if the problem is serious enough. It is best to address the problem in a platform that you can monitor and control to some degree.

4. Find the places online where the discussions are most active and go straight to the source. Open up dialogue directly on those platforms and prepare to field difficult questions and accusations. Be humble and honest but don't be cowed: show what steps you are taking to reverse the impact. If you are wrong, admit it.
5. Monitor your online reputation closely, using the tools you have chosen. See what actions are helping the situation and which are fuelling the fire, and tailor your strategy accordingly.

A reputation crisis is a difficult time but can have a positive spinoff. If your company shows that it takes criticism seriously and makes considerable strides to fix the issue, your brand may end up being stronger than ever.

7. Summary

This chapter touched on two important aspects of online communication – copywriting and web PR. How you present yourself online will determine how likely customers are to buy your product and service.

In this chapter, you:

- Learned how to identify copywriting on the web.
- Learned the tricks and techniques of writing good copy for the web in general, and specifically for your website, email newsletter and blog.
- Read about the techniques and tools of online reputation management and web PR.
- Learned how to interact with an online audience, both in good times and in a crisis.

8. References

1. How to write a compelling offer: www.copyblogger.com/kids-eat-free/
2. The basics of web copywriting: www.provenanceunknown.com/edit/basics.html
3. Copywriting style guide: www.provenanceunknown.com/edit/style.html
4. How to write great headlines: www.copywriting.com/blog/copywriting/ted-nicholas-on-headlines/
5. How to manage your ORM simply: www.heavychef.com/how-to-manage-orm-simply/
6. Why ORM is important: www.heavychef.com/why-orm-is-so-important/

7. Managing an online reputation crisis: www.smartcompany.com.au/Premium-Articles/Top-Story/20080714-Online-reputation-6-steps-to-manage-a-crisis.html?source=RSS
8. Guide to ORM: outspokenmedia.com/guides/orm-guide/

CHAPTER 4

EMAIL MARKETING

Key concepts

Email marketing as a useful tactic, planning, creating and distributing an email campaign, online applications, creating an email database, dos and don'ts of sending a campaign, key benefits and drawbacks of email marketing.

CHAPTER 4: EMAIL MARKETING

1. Introduction

When was the last time you hand-wrote a letter to a friend, neighbour, colleague or family member?

With an estimated 294 billion emails sent each day and over 1.9 billion email users worldwide, it is no surprise that electronic communication has replaced traditional alternatives. There are adults today who have never known about or taken part in traditional forms of business communication.

What does this mean for marketers?

Email (electronic mail) has increasingly become a trend for marketers to communicate with current and prospective customers, a method that is formally called direct marketing. Marketing by email is so popular because marketers are able to send direct messages to potential customers, which means that campaigns can be extremely targeted and more affordable than traditional channels, and the return on investment is measurable. Emails are usually sent with the intention to sell, promote, educate, inform or persuade and are most commonly packaged in the form a newsletter, flyer, competition or sales promotion.

Unfortunately, as with many marketing techniques, the good is accompanied by the bad. In this case, the bad is spam: unsolicited commercial messages sent in bulk to people you do not know. Although this definition is subjective, if thousands of emails that are not relevant to your personal or professional life clutter an inbox, it makes it harder for marketers to communicate with their customers. In 2010 alone, 90% of all emails sent per day were spam. Although these statistics are high, email marketing is not a dying technique. However, marketers need to ensure that they do not abuse this medium and must know the rules of the game so that they can craft unique, inbox-friendly, customer-relevant emails that convert to sales instead of adding to the clutter.

In this chapter, you will:

- Learn the definition of email marketing (section 2).

- Learn why email marketing is such a useful marketing tactic (section 3).
- Discover how to plan, create and distribute an email campaign (section 4).
- Decide which application to use to distribute campaigns (section 4).
- Learn how to create an email database (section 4).
- Discover the dos and don'ts of sending a campaign (section 4).
- Read about the key benefits and drawbacks of email marketing (sections 5 and 6).

2. What is email marketing?

Email marketing is a technique commonly used by marketers to communicate with prospective and current customers by email. The goal of the communication is to educate, promote and ultimately persuade readers to convert to repeat and loyal customers. For example, a shoe company can email all customers who have bought shoes in the last year about a winter shoe sale. With the increase in email usage, email marketing is an ideal channel for direct, personal, affordable and often a very powerful promotion.

Many believe that traditional direct marketing is obsolete, since the readership of flyers and pamphlets received in the post is often very low unless they come from well-established brands like Pick 'n Pay. Marketers have to push through the clutter to be heard and to stand a chance of building a relationship with long-term loyal customers. Ultimately, it comes down to what sells; in order to sell, you need to persuade. Email marketing is the modern-day direct marketing equivalent and, because it is virtual, it allows a two-way conversation to be initiated and maintained.

3. Why use email as a marketing technique?

Why would a marketer choose any marketing technique? To reach their customers and persuade them to buy or use their service. Email marketing, when done correctly, can have a very high success rate. The scale of the campaign, the design of the template, the content and the distributor all contribute to the end result and will be discussed in detail during this chapter.

Here is a list of some of the key reasons why marketers should choose email marketing.

- **Quick and simple.** It is relatively quick to send an email campaign. Once you have designed the basic template and content, it is easy to upload them to an online database and distribute the email campaign with literally the click of a button.
- **Reach.** Email is an ideal platform for direct marketing, especially when your

target market is spread across multiple geographical locations. You are able to reach thousands of people with one message.

- **Keep customers informed.** Newsletters are a perfect example of how email marketing can keep customers informed. Updates, new releases, news and press releases are all great ways to inform and persuade customers. Most importantly, customers are kept up to date with the latest news and deals, such as special offers, online deals and discounts.
- **Cost.** Compared to traditional marketing options like print, television and radio, email marketing is a much cheaper channel of distribution. You do pay a small amount per email address (a few cents) and a monthly subscription to the online application you use to distribute the emails, but it is much less than printing and postage costs.
- **Build relationships.** By emailing customers and prospects regularly (this does not mean every day), a relationship forms over time. People like to feel connected, which is key to relationship marketing. Each technique becomes a tool for building long-term relationships with customers.
- **Increase traffic.** Email marketing helps increase traffic to your company's website when you link relevant content in the email to pages on your website. These links should also be tracked (discussed further in section 4.5) so that you can report on the click-through rate of an email campaign. Adding a newsletter signup call to action to the home page of a website also encourages visitors to sign up for future email marketing campaigns.

4. Plan, create and distribute a campaign

4.1. Plan

Before you decide on the design, content and distribution channel, you need to have a clear plan for your email marketing campaign. Make sure to consider the following before sending any emails.

- **Goals.** Determine the goals of the campaign and make sure they are measurable. For example, if a retail store sends a newsletter to all its current customers to promote a 10% discount on fleece sweatshirt until the end of the month, what are the goals? To sell more fleece sweatshirts? To sell other products? If so, which products, and how are you going to measure whether the increase in sales was directly related to the newsletter? Defining the goals upfront makes it easier to determine the success of the campaign.
- **Online and offline strategy alignment.** Make sure that your online strategy is aligned with your offline one. If you are selling fleece sweatshirts at 10% off, make sure that the in-store promotions align with the online discount sales strategy.
- **Consistency.** When planning the design and layout of an email campaign, it is

important to think about the long-term effect of this campaign on customers. For example, a monthly newsletter should have new content but a consistent template from month to month. The branding, logo and colours should be the same across all marketing material.

- Timing and frequency. Firstly, it is important to consider the lifestyle of your target market before scheduling the day of the week and time of day when you will send the email. If your target market is corporate, Tuesday and Thursday before noon may give better results than Monday morning or Friday afternoon, when people are either bombarded with emails or are out of the office. To ensure that your email has maximum readership, time and frequency are critical factors to consider. Secondly, keep your email time and frequency consistent. If customers are used to receiving a newsletter at the beginning of every month, commit to sending one at that time every month. This helps maintain a loyal and trusting relationship with your customers and to build credibility.

4.2. Build a database

You cannot send an email marketing campaign without having people in your database to send it to. But how do you get emails into your database?

There are several options, some legal, some less so; this is evident in the increasing amount of spam in recent years. You can buy a database of contacts for specific industries online: just search in Google for “email databases” and you will find several unsolicited options. The international laws regarding spam and electronic communications vary and it is important to research all the facts before sending your first campaign. In South Africa, the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act, 2002 states the following:

1. Any person who sends unsolicited commercial communications to consumers, must provide the consumer: with the option to cancel his or her subscription to the mailing list of that person; and with the identifying particulars of the source from which that person obtained the consumer’s personal information, on request of the consumer.
2. No agreement is concluded where a consumer has failed to respond to an unsolicited communication.
3. Any person who fails to comply with or contravenes subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable, on conviction, to the penalties prescribed in section 89(1).
4. Any person who sends unsolicited commercial communications to a person who has advised the sender that such communications are unwelcome, is guilty of an offence and liable, on conviction, to the penalties prescribed in section 89(1).

How does this apply to your email database?

- Make sure that you have an “opt out” or “unsubscribe” option on all commercial emails. Most email service providers will offer this facility. The service provider

will store your database and will update it automatically when people opt out or in (see section 7 for more on email marketing service providers).

- You need to be able to identify the source of every contact in your database, meaning where you found the consumer's email address.

How to source contacts without any negative legal implications

- Email current customers and ask their permission to add them to your emailing database.
- Add a “forward to a friend” link at the bottom of your email to encourage readers to increase distribution by sharing the email with friends. All additional email addresses will be automatically saved to your database, ready for the next email campaign.
- When speaking to prospects either by phone or email, ask if they would like to subscribe to your monthly newsletter.
- Research potential customers online, approach them by email, acknowledge where you found their information and explain why you are contacting them. For example, a non-profit networking organisation for guest houses in the Cape Town area should research all guest houses in the Western Cape, find their website and contact details and write a personalised email to explain their intentions. This process is time consuming, but it is critical that you do not send a new prospect a mass email. Personal communication is always best, especially on your first point of contact. A good example of this is CapeAds: they read through all Gumtree advertisements, contact each advertiser and ask if they would like to post an advert on CapeAds as well.
- Make sure that you have a clear call to action on your website for visitors to sign up for your next newsletter. Add incentives like competitions and discounts to encourage people to sign up. Here is an example of a “subscribe to newsletter” call to action on GetSmarter's website. Once you have clicked the banner, you land on the second image and complete three simple fields.



- All commercial email communication is an opportunity to ask permission for personal information. Add a line to your email signature that informs all

correspondents that you send out regular emails with updates, news and new information, and ask if they'd like to receive this communication.

With all of the above sourcing techniques, incentive is the key to success. People need a good reason to hand over their personal details.

Do not worry if your database is small when you start off. If you are a start-up business or do not have an existing client list, your database will grow organically over time as you attract more customers both through online and offline techniques, word of mouth, repeat business and new marketing campaigns. This, in turn, will strengthen brand awareness. One qualified contact is better than five unqualified contacts.

Most email service providers automatically add recipients to your database when they sign up through the website call to action mentioned above. However, it is no surprise that your competitors want to stay informed about the latest events, news and updates from your company as well. Make sure that someone is screening your database regularly to weed out any competitors who may have signed up. Some competitors will use personal email addresses to avoid getting caught. Make sure you pay close attention to your mailing list.

4.3. Design or choose a template

This is where the fun begins and ends. Designing an email can be really enjoyable, especially if you have creative flair. But before you even begin discussing templates, colours and imagery, it is vital that you go back to the drawing board and review your goals and available resources for the specific campaign.

- **Goals.** What is the purpose of the campaign? Is it a competition? Promotional sale? Newsletter? Informing customers that your office has moved location?
- **Resources.** Do you have in-house design and technical staff available to create and code a custom email template? Do you have outsourced contacts who could design and build the email for you? How large is the database you are emailing? Does your database consist predominantly of corporate or personal email addresses?

These are all questions that need to be answered before you decide on how you are going to design, build and distribute your email. If you have the design and technical resources at your disposal and it is not too much cost to the company, use them. But luckily, today there are many email distribution service providers that also provide pre-built templates that you can use straight away or customise to varying degrees, depending on the service provider and your own HTML knowledge. The next section discusses the different service provider options and recommends applications to use for email campaigns.

Plain text, HTML and images

Emails are received by many different email clients (for example Microsoft Outlook, Apple Mail, BlackBerry Mail or Gmail), each with their own settings and business

rules about what is and is not spam. The goal of any email is to reach the desired person. Spam filters are not very friendly to email marketing campaigns. Spam filters are on every email client and are there to prevent spam mail cluttering the inbox. You need to understand how spam filters work and then avoid some common mistakes to ensure that your email reaches your recipients.

Abide by the following rules:

- Use HTML, no CSS, only tables. If you are not a technical person, don't worry: all you need to know is that HTML is the term used for the code that developers use to build websites and email templates. There are good and bad ways to write code. It's important to stick to the rules of the game; otherwise, search engines, web browsers and email clients will not like your emails very much. For those who know a little HTML, try to code your newsletter in neat, clean W3C-compliant HTML code (www.w3.org) using inline styles. Writing code in Microsoft Word and then exporting the code to HTML is not professional and spam filters do not like it as Microsoft Word carries special characters across.
- Images. Avoid using too many images and not enough HTML; spam filters cannot read images and become suspicious of the email's contents. Add "alt" tags to all images and make sure that they are saved for the web (more on this in chapter 6). Avoid using the .png image format. Create a plain-text version of your email as well (most email applications create this for you), just in case someone cannot download your images – at least they can still read your email content and links.
- CAPITALS. Do not use capital letters, especially in the subject line. This is considered the online equivalent of shouting.
- Test. Do not use the word "test" in the subject line, especially when sending a test email to multiple colleagues or to the client. Make sure that your system administrator also knows that you are sending test emails so that they can whitelist your email service provider's (ESP's) server (so that your email is not presumed to be spam and blocked). Most ESPs should be able to explain how to whitelist their servers.

ESP

An email service provider (ESP) is a service that hosts email marketing services on servers that are specifically optimised for this purpose. While you control your email marketing account, create the content and send out emails using a web browser, the ESP's servers and internet connections do all the technical work. ESPs are also referred to as email marketing applications. You usually pay for this service, either per month or per email recipient. These applications provide a step-by-step process for creating email templates without you having to know any HTML. Read more on ESPs in section 7.

Most email marketing service providers, like MailChimp (www.mailchimp.com), have been accepted by internet service providers (ISPs). Whenever a recipient on their network reports your email as spam, they alert the email service provider,

which automatically removes the email address from your database so that you don't get reported again.

Layout and content

There are four primary sections to any email:

1. **“From” email.** This is the first thing people see when they receive an email. Deciding whether to open an email or not is often completely based on the “from” email address. Make sure it is recognisable by the reader by using the company name (e.g. marketing@getsmarter.co.za or info@getsmarter.co.za). Use a branded email address and not your regular Google or Yahoo account.
2. **Subject line.** Apart from being inbox friendly, make sure that your subject line contains facts, specific details about the email, reasons for the email and sufficient incentives for the recipient to open and read it. Attraction sells. Entice the reader with a compelling subject line (e.g. “Woolworths November Newsletter: Excellent summer specials”). Make sure that your company name appears in the subject line if you have not included it in the “from” email. Do not make the subject line too sensational (e.g. “Massive Sale” or “Incredible offer”): this may arouse suspicion and cause your email to be blocked by email clients that have aggressive spam filters.
3. **Email body text.**
 - Address the recipient. If you have their name and company in your database, feed it through into the email to make it more personal: “Dear {name}, I see that you work for {company} in the {category} industry. My new offer may interest you.” (If you are sending a targeted email to one industry that is identified in your database, add that industry.)
 - Date. Always date your newsletter. Most email distributors do this automatically.
 - Be specific. State who you are and why you are emailing in the first line or two of copy. Keep your message to the point and professional.
 - Images. Visuals are always a hassle since many email clients shrink images to keep the file size down. Not everyone is able to download images and a slow internet connection can make the process time consuming and frustrating. Newsletter templates usually include some images, like logos, but use them sparingly. You should still be able to understand the main message of the email without seeing the images.
 - Top to bottom. Put the most valuable content at the top of the message in case a recipient only previews the email instead of opening it.
 - Back to your website. Always think of ways to direct readers back to your website after they have read the email. Try adding in a few hyperlinks to relevant pages on your website or blog.

- Opt out. Always add a “unsubscribe” or “opt out” link at the bottom of the message text. By law, readers should always be able to unsubscribe from an email at any time. The process of unsubscribing should be easy and quick. Most email service providers offer to add these facilities to emails, which then appear automatically.
 - Text only. When sending an HTML email campaign, always send a “text-only” email option as well. A text-only email is literally an email that contains only text and links. Most email service providers automatically generate a text version from your HTML email, but make sure you read through it before sending to make sure the formatting is correct.
4. **Signature line.** Email signatures should be standardised on all emails, whether it is a commercial email marketing campaign or just a day-to-day correspondence with a customer.

Make sure you include the following:

- Name of company
- Marketing tag line
- Website URL
- Contact numbers
- Email address
- Social networks, if any (for example, Facebook and Twitter)

4.4. Distribute

Gone are the days of sending bulk emails from your personal Outlook or Gmail email account. There are three reasons why this is not an efficient way of sending email campaigns.

1. It is very difficult to manage, organise and sort contacts in a database.
2. It is hard for people to automatically unsubscribe from emails, or to be added to a campaign through the website signup.
3. Unless you are a design and coding expert, it is extremely difficult to design a professional email using your email client.
4. You will battle with credibility because spammers use free mail accounts to send unsolicited emails.

Luckily, there are several email service providers (ESPs) available that provide a simple step-by-step process for designing, writing and distributing email campaigns. Examples include MailChimp (www.mailchimp.com), Campaign Monitor (www.campaignmonitor.com), Graphic Mail (www.graphicmail.co.za) and Constant

Contact (www.constantcontact.com). Here are some reasons why it's good to use an ESP.

- **Improve email delivery.** The best ESPs maintain their own anti-spam protection and build a strong reputation with internet service providers (ISPs), so most emails will easily pass ISP-level spam filters, even with a new account. If there are any delivery issues, the ESP and ISP technical support teams will work together to ensure email delivery.
- **Mailing list management.** All professional ESPs provide mailing list management. All contacts can be imported and managed in the ESP.
- **Improved design, layout and formatting.** There is no need to know HTML to design a beautiful email. The leading ESPs offer free, customisable templates. All designs are built in a multi-part format (which means that the email is broken into separate parts) that ensures that recipients receive the email in the proper layout. ESPs will also create a plain-text-only email for those email applications that cannot read HTML.
- **Legal compliance.** ESPs are all familiar with the spam laws in their country or region (depending on where the ESP is registered) and they ensure that their clients are all compliant. Every email will have a one-click “unsubscribe” link to ensure that every recipient has the choice to opt out at their convenience.
- **Tracking and reporting.** ESPs have their own tracking and reporting functions as well as offering the ability to integrate with Google Analytics (more on Google Analytics in module 8). You are able to report on click-through rates, bounce rates, forwarded emails, which pages were opened most, who unsubscribed and much more. (More on this in section 4.5 of this module.)
- **Free.** Most ESPs offer a free service to small businesses. Prices increase with the number of contacts that you have on your mailing list. See email-marketing-service-review.toptenreviews.com for the top ten ESP providers and their pricing breakdowns.
- **Accessible anywhere.** ESPs are all web-based applications and can therefore be used anywhere in the world. You do not need to be at your office to send an email campaign.

Timing and frequency

It is critical to any campaign that its time and frequency are planned and executed correctly. If you are segmenting your mailing list into categories and then sending different campaigns to each segment, consider when potential readers will be at their computers to maximise the effect of the campaign. Also ask, how often should I email this segment of the mailing list?

If you have new content to write about, once a week is sufficient; never resend the same content just to make up your weekly email quota. Spam filters will not like this. A monthly newsletter has an obvious frequency; however, make sure that the newsletter is sent on the same day and roughly the same time every month. As with print circulations, readers like consistency.

4.5. Example of an email newsletter

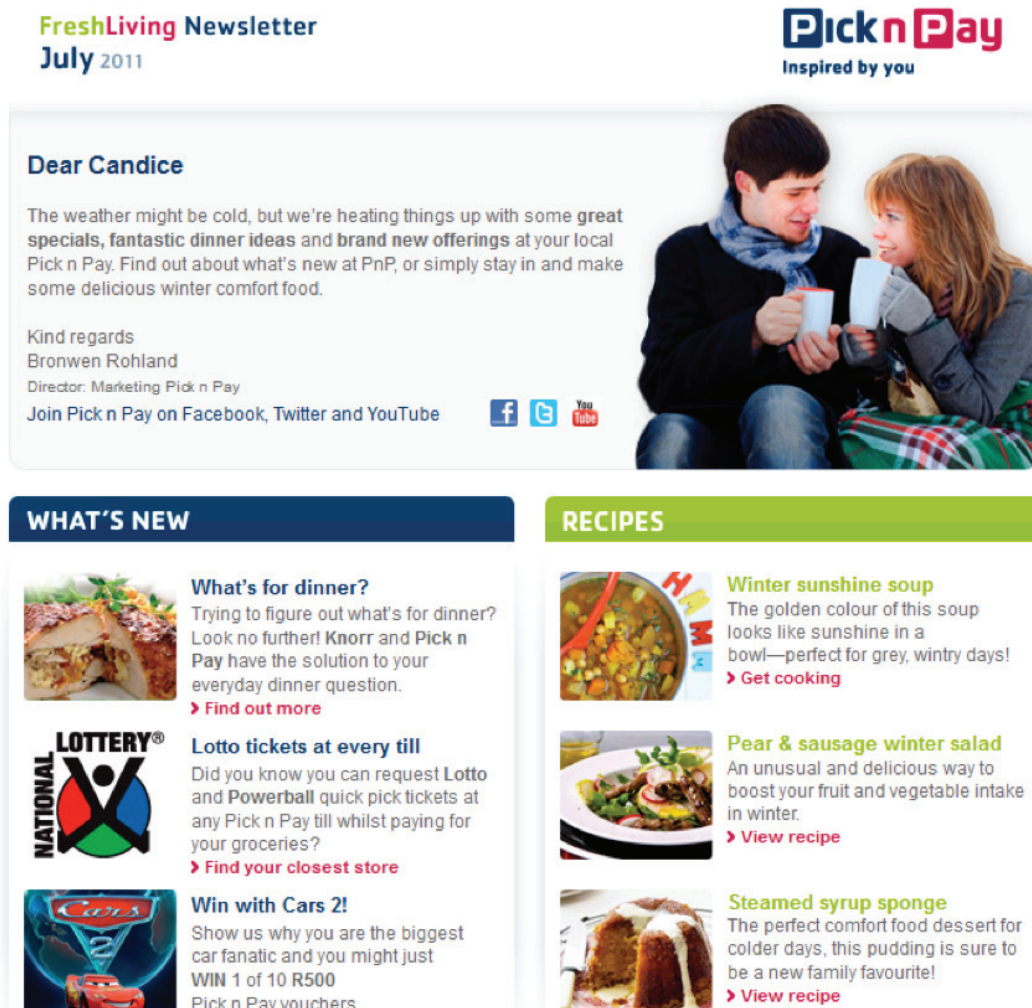


Figure 1: Pick n Pay's monthly email newsletter.

4.6 Track and measure success

The moment you click “send”, your ESP will start tracking critical data on your email in order to report back on its progress – as people open, forward and click on links in the email. Watching the statistics related to your email is as important as following the statistics of your website and will provide key data for measuring your return on investment (ROI).

Here are a few terms of the trade that will help you understand the reporting features of your ESP:

- **Bounce rate.** The percentage of email addresses that did not receive the email. A “hard bounce” means that the email was sent to an “undeliverable” email. A “soft bounce” is when someone’s email account was temporarily unavailable; this usually happens when a server is busy or the account is too full. The lower the bounce rate, the better. On average, you can expect about

10% of your recipients to bounce, but this does vary across industries. Here is a list of industry benchmarks for email statistics by MailChimp:

www.mailchimp.com/articles/email_marketing_benchmarks_for_small_business

- **Open rate.** The percentage of recipients who have opened their email at least once (emails sent minus bounces). There is no guarantee that people have actually read the email, but at least they have opened it. Here is a list of the open rate trends by MailerMailer: www.mailermailer.com/resources/metrics/open-rates.rwp
- **Unique opens rate.** This measure is the “open rate” excluding duplicate opens by the same person, and is a more realistic and reliable static.
- **Unsubscribe rate.** The number of people who have clicked “unsubscribe” on your email. These email addresses are automatically removed from your mailing list by your ESP.
- **Click-through rate (CTR).** The number of links to your website divided by the number of opened emails. Make sure that there is a good match between the content on your email and the target market who receives it so that they are more likely to click through to your website.

5. Tips for achieving success

- Set up a separate email address just for sending email campaigns (e.g., newsletter@getsmarter.co.za or email@getsmarter.co.za) and use it as the “reply-to” address for all email marketing. The email address must not change when employees change and should therefore not be your personal email address. In addition, spam filters need to know that the address belongs to a human and not a spambot (an automated program that sends spam).
- Monitor new subscribers. Be wary of abusive or potential spam email addresses such as “abuse@”, “nospam@”, “postmaster@”, “marketerspam@” as inactive subscribers.
- Verify subscribers. It is good practice, though not essential, to verify your subscribers with a signup confirmation. An email is sent to the new subscriber once they have signed up to join your mailing list. The email will contain a link that they need to click on to confirm their subscription. This is a very good tactic to prevent spammers infecting your database and sending people email they did not actually subscribe to.
- Always test your newsletter before sending it. Make sure you send it to multiple colleagues and your client if you are emailing on their behalf. You will be surprised how often you will miss a spelling or HTML error.
- Check your content and spam score. Check whether your email distributor has a built-in content checker, and run your email through it. Here are two

examples of content and spam checkers: SpamCheck (spamcheck.sitesell.com) and Lyris Content Checker (www.lyris.com/resources/email-marketing/contentchecker).

- Plan how you want to segment your mailing list for future emails. Think about how you would like to segment your mailing list, for example by industry or occupation. Make sure that you continually update your mailing list when you receive new personal information. Check to see that your signup form asks for all the information you need for future segmenting. Depending on the ESP, you might even be able to send information directly from your content management system to the ESP mailing list.
- Plan, plan, plan. Always plan your calendar and your content. Sending a weekly email needs to be planned long in advance. Writing content, designing templates and segmenting mailing lists all need to be planned. Committing to a weekly or monthly campaign will only succeed if all parties involved know what needs to be done when. Knowing what type of content you would like to include (e.g. calendar of events, latest news, staff updates, competition and promotions) always helps with planning.
- Always be present. Especially for your first email campaign, make sure that you are present, preferably in the office, when the email is sent. Typos, broken links, distorted layout and server outages are common occurrences that require human contact to manage.
- Track, track, track. The only way to measure the real ROI of your email campaign is to track and analyse everything relevant to your campaign's success. As discussed under section 4.4, most ESPs have their own report features, plus you can integrate with Google Analytics to measure your email's success and its direct effect on your website's statistics. Make sure that you know what your goals are before sending an email so that you know what information to look for, as the statistics can be overwhelming at first.
- A/B testing. It is very difficult at first to know how your audience will respond to certain imagery, content or promotional material. Testing different versions of your email is a critical process for ensuring that you maximise your success and learn from mistakes. In A/B testing, you send a slightly different email to a sample of your target audience, see how they respond and then send another variation to see if there is any difference. A few ideas for elements to change:
 - o Subject line
 - o Imagery
 - o Product selection
 - o Headline
 - o Promotional offer

6. Drawbacks of email marketing

- Spam. The last thing you want is for your email to land up in your recipient's spam folder. Make sure that your emails are professionally checked by content and spam checkers; this will increase the likelihood of delivering a successful campaign.
- Free, but not free. Make sure that your ESP will not display advertisements in your email – this can be very distracting and has the potential to negatively impact on your brand image.
- Terms of service. When signing up for an account with an ESP, make sure that you read the “terms of service” very carefully, as local South African laws may be different from those of the host country of the ESP, often the US.
- Backing up. Make sure that you back up all contacts in the ESP mailing list to a local server or computer regularly. Most ESPs allow you to export contacts to Excel. Make sure that you save the login details for your ESP account somewhere safe.
- Avoid being bounced. Emails are received by many different ISPs, firewalls and webmail systems, which all have different spam filters and email preferences. For example, many large corporations have very strict firewalls and spam filters that may prevent emails arriving at the recipient. It is therefore critical that email marketing is not the only online technique used to communicate with customers, but rather one element of a holistic marketing approach.

7. Applications

There is a wide variety of email service providers to choose from, each with their own pros and cons. For the purpose of this course, we have outlined three leading ESPs below. Before choosing an ESP, make sure you research all the options available.

Email marketing has the following components:

1. Collecting email addresses
2. Managing email addresses
3. Creating emails
4. Sending emails
5. Analysing the results

It is really important to choose software that specialises in email marketing itself, and not just on one of its features.

Here are a few things to consider before choosing an ESP:

- Private vs. shared IP. Check whether the ESP has a shared or private IP address. An IP address is a number that identifies a website: the equivalent of a postal address. Most domain names can be translated into IP addresses. For example, GetSmarter's domain name is www.getsmarter.co.za and its IP address is 41.204.223.132. If your ESP has a shared IP address, spam filters could blacklist some users and prevent your email from being delivered. Having a dedicated IP address is best. If you would like to learn more about private versus shared IP addresses, have a look at this resource: www.simplycast.com/blog/important-information-when-using-dedicated-ip-address.
- Reporting. ESPs should offer detailed reporting on email campaigns on such data as open rates, click-through rates, bounces and top links. Reporting on the success of a campaign is a critical component of any ESP.
- Email storage. The amount of disk space that ESPs provide you to store your images, attachments and emails varies. Some ESPs charge for more space.
- Tutorials and customer support. If you are new to email marketing, support and online tutorials are very helpful. All ESPs should provide both services, but many don't. Do your homework and investigate customer support before choosing an ESP.
- Infrastructure. Make sure that your ESP has high-speed internet connections through more than one source to ensure reliable connections all the time. You don't want to have connectivity and server problems when an email needs to be distributed.
- Pricing. Some ESPs are free, some have a monthly fee and some charge per recipient. Think about how many emails you will send now and in 6 months. Choose the plan that meets your current and future needs.
- Free trial without a buy-in. Do not sign up with a provider that doesn't offer a month-to-month subscription. You need the flexibility to change providers if needed without being tied into a contract.
- Easy to use. How tech savvy is the person who will be in charge of email marketing campaigns? Do they know how to write HTML and use PhotoShop? Luckily, there are many ESPs that offer a simple step-by-step process that will make email campaigns painless, which means that you won't have to rely on technical support too much.
- Pause feature. The best ESPs should allow you to pause or terminate a campaign in the middle of the delivery process and continue it at a later stage. As your company grows, so does your database, and this feature will become very important.
- Integrate with other marketing software. The best ESPs will provide the capability of integrating with other marketing applications like Google Analytics (more on Google Analytics in chapter 8).

7.1 Suggested applications

1. MailChimp (www.mailchimp.com). A very user-friendly and free provider (for up to 500 recipients). They have unlimited image hosting, but they don't have conversion tracking. You pay for custom HTML templates, or you can build your own using their simple step-by-step process. They do not have detailed reports but they can integrate with Google Analytics. They have good online customer support and tutorials but no FAQ section.
2. Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com). A long-standing and reliable provider in the ESP industry. You do have to pay to use their service but they offer a 60-day free trial for you to test their features. They offer event, email, survey and social media marketing. Prices start from \$15 per month. Even on the free 60-day trial, you can choose from several graphic templates, customise them with a simple drag-and-drop, click-and-edit template interface. Emails can be designed, written and sent in less than 30 minutes. Their website has a learning centre, online community and offers local seminars. This tool will be used in your assignment. Take a look at your videos for a step-by-step tutorial on how to create an email with Constant Contact.
3. iContact (www.icontact.com). A leading competitor to Constant Contact. Their pricing (starting at \$9.95 per month) is lower than Constant Contact, they offer multiple signup visitor forms, and you can create surveys in the same account, though they do count towards your monthly email sending limitations. Reporting is on par with Constant Contact: you can segment contact lists and create auto-responses.

Refer back to the list of “things to consider” before choosing an ESP, and then have a look at this link, which clearly outlines the differences between the two tools: www.crmreports.com/index.php/constant-contact-vs-icontact.html.

8. Summary

People who are unfamiliar with email marketing may wonder what all the excitement about sending emails to customers is about. Isn't there enough spam in my inbox?

If used correctly, email marketing, combined with other online marketing techniques, is an excellent way to communicate with prospects and customers – most importantly, building relationships and loyalty. By investing time and a little money, email marketing has the potential to deliver successful results. Don't forget its most compelling benefits: it's inexpensive, effective, immediate, easy and (most importantly) measurable.

In this chapter, you:

- Learned what email marketing is and why it is such a valuable tool in your internet marketing repertoire.
- Learned how to create and build your email database.

- Learned how to create and send an email marketing campaign, using the best tools for your purpose.
- Saw what you should avoid doing when email marketing, and what some of the benefits can be when it is done right.

9. References

1. The history and evolution of email: www.focus.com/images/view/7404
2. Zimmerman, J. (2007). *Web Marketing for Dummies*. Wiley Publishing, Inc.
3. Internet 2009 in numbers: royal.pingdom.com/2010/01/22/internet-2009-in-numbers
4. Marketing terms: www.marketingterms.com/dictionary/email_spam
5. MailChimp: How spam filters think: www.mailchimp.com/articles/how_spam_filters_think
6. Smashing Magazine: Email newsletter design guidelines and examples: www.smashingmagazine.com/2010/02/15/email-newsletters-guidelines-and-examples
7. Smashing Magazine: Design and build an email newsletter without losing your mind: www.smashingmagazine.com/2010/01/19/design-and-build-an-email-newsletter-without-losing-your-mind
8. 5 advantages of using a email service provider: www.marissaberger.com/blog/2010/04/20/5-advantages-of-using-an-email-service-provider
9. Taking advantage of email service providers: ezinearticles.com/?Taking-Advantage-of-E-Mail-Service-Providers&id=4676342
10. 10 tips for your first email campaign: www.digital-web.com/articles/ten_tips_for_email_campaigns
11. Why email marketing? Five great ideas: www.businessknowhow.com/internet/whyemail.htm
12. Email marketers say recession continues, and it hurts: www.silverpop.com/news/press/2009/email-marketing-budgets-survey.html
13. Ireland: 2009 email marketing insight: www.newsweaver.co.uk/emailnewsletters/?p=360
14. How to choose the right email service provider: www.simplycast.com/blog/how-choose-right-email-service-provider

CHAPTER 5

ONLINE ADVERTISING AND PPC

Key concepts

Difference between online and offline advertising, free vs paid advertising, online advertising techniques, appropriate use of online advertising techniques, creating a Facebook ad.

CHAPTER 5: ONLINE ADVERTISING AND PPC

1. Introduction

What is advertising? Isn't advertising just another word for marketing? Many people get these terms confused and use them interchangeably. In reality, advertising is just one component of the marketing process. Marketing itself is a mix of activities intended to bring buyers and sellers together in a mutually beneficial environment. In order to bring these two parties together, marketers plan, execute and control a variety of activities, both offline and online. Advertising is a (usually paid) placement or promotion of a product in a public arena to current or prospective customers with the intent to promote and sell. Advertising, accompanied with other marketing initiatives such as direct marketing, PR, sales and promotion strategies, works to drive customers to your product and increase sales.

Traditional advertising includes the placement of an ad or infomercial in media channels like newspapers, television, magazines, radio and cinema. The aim of any ad is to utilise the reach of mass media by broadcasting a single message to a mass market. The advertiser can control the placement, frequency and content of the message as well as the distribution channel.

With the arrival of the internet, marketers have a new medium to spread the word on, through an "integrated communication approach" that achieves increased brand awareness and market reach. This chapter explores the current debate around traditional versus new media and how the internet is changing the advertising arena. With the increase in online advertising, the tools and tactics are evolving rapidly, shifting from impersonal mass messages to more targeted and personal initiatives. Ultimately, advertising (both on and offline) is a relatively affordable marketing tactic that, combined with additional techniques, has the potential to be a very good revenue generator.

In this chapter, you will learn:

- The difference between online and offline advertising (section 2).
- The difference between free and paid advertising (section 3).

- Different online advertising techniques (section 4).
- When to use certain techniques (section 4).
- How to create a Facebook Ad (section 4).

2. New versus old media?

The increasing mass use of computers has provided a new channel for marketers to communicate with consumers, causing media habits to shift from exclusively offline channels to an integrated approach of mixing media. The growing popularity of the internet has changed the way people gather news, communicate, buy and make decisions. Blogs, wikis, social networks and news websites are just a few examples of how the world of information is becoming more of a social experience. Content is fast moving: within minutes, blogs, tweets and Facebook profiles are updated with the latest news, gadgets and gossip.

New media presents the amalgamation of traditional media (film, print, music, images, text) and digital technology, specifically the internet. Concepts like real time, on demand, democratic interaction and relationship building all personify this new media consumer environment. Many traditional media have been forced to “go digital” in order to survive this dramatic shift in creation, publishing, distribution and consumption of new media.

The digital revolution has changed the shape of media for good and those players in old media are slowly coming to terms with the fact that the digital age is not going anywhere, except further down the road of virtual reality. With the shift from old to new, advertisers are embracing new media with open arms.

Advantages of online advertising:

- **No expiration date.** Traditional media has an expiration date. A print ad is only as good as a single print. Newspapers, magazines and even television have specific media placement plans and strategies. Once the publication has expired, so has the message in the ad. Online media is instant, flexible and forever changing. A website is accessible 24/7 and will never expire. People visiting their favourite news website will see the banner every day; the message is reinforced and the content can be updated within minutes.
- **Lead time.** It can take weeks, if not months, before an offline advert can be screened or printed. Online information can be published immediately and changed regularly. There is little to no lead time. There are also no geographical limitations.
- **Quality exposure.** When you drive past a billboard or watch an ad break during your favourite series, you are exposed to an ad but do not necessarily have any interest in the product being sold. Online, viewers only click on a banner or a Google advert if they are interested. Online advertising has the potential to be more targeted.
- **Freedom.** Online users have more control over what they want to see and

when; offline viewers, listeners or readers have no control over whether they want to listen to a radio ad, view a commercial or read a billboard on the highway. Freedom of choice enables the customer to choose whether to interact with the brand or not.

- **Reach.** The internet crosses global boundaries. No matter where in the world you are, one ad has the potential to reach thousands of people with just one click.
- **Cost.** Provided you understand how to manage budgets, set a limit for online ad spend and target visitors accurately, online advertising can be a much more cost effective and measurable medium than traditional advertising. There is nothing cheap about magazine advertising or shooting a 30-second commercial. Production costs can easily run into several hundred thousand rand for one commercial.

3. Online advertising: Free or paid?

There is a mistaken belief that all online advertising is paid. Online advertisement is a public placement or submission with the ultimate goal of promoting a product or service. People immediately associate banner ads with online advertisement and don't think further. Banner ads of all shapes and sizes, whether flashy or not, are one form of online advertisement. But, as internet users become more sophisticated, banner ads are being ignored as clutter rather than viewed as something valuable (click-through rates are averaging below 1%). There are several other means of promoting products online that are much less invasive – like PPC ad campaigns, submitting content to free distributors, submitting your website's URL to search engines and giving sponsorship, to name just a few.

This module explores three very different online advertising arenas: free, paid, and the dying and slightly unethical. It is always good to know about your online options. There is never one overarching solution, so rather consider using an amalgamation of techniques to promote, attract and convert prospects into long-term customers – the nature of online advertising is that you can very quickly see if an ad is performing or not, and change it or move your budget to something that is more effective. Relationships, especially with customers, take time, money and strategy to build. Use these techniques wisely.

4. Which technique should you choose?

4.1. Free

Before banner ads, PPC and sponsorship are discussed, it is important to learn about the free online advertising tools available. Free advertising allows you to increase traffic to your site, inform search engines of your existence, build a network of referral sites and spread your brand virally.

4.1.1 Content distributors

The more places you can find to point (or link) to your website, the better. The internet is like a spider web: the more content that is available to read, click, forward and share, the better – provided the readers find their way back to your website, brand and your bottom line. Writing articles and press releases about your latest products and company news is another way to increase exposure about your company, increase brand awareness and hopefully traffic. Linking back to your website from this content means search engines will see your site as being more credible, and will be more likely to rank it higher up on search results pages for related queries. There are several content distributor websites that are happy to republish content on their websites by adding it to their database of articles for a small fee, or even for free. When searching for content distributors, make sure that they reach your target market, are not sabotaged with banner ads, are free and are legitimate.

Tips when submitting articles:

- Do not submit the same article to multiple sites. Each content distributor should have a different article. Search engines do not trust duplicate content and will not rank your website highly.
- Make sure that you complete all information in the “about the author” section. Include the web address to your website so that people can link back to your website. Search engines such as Google will find your content and index your site.

URL indexing

Indexing is like a filing system. Google will crawl every page of your website, which means it will read all content and index it according to the keywords on each page. When someone searches for a keyword, Google searches its database of websites for the most relevant content. Google excels above all search engines in speed and accuracy of indexing websites.

DMOZ is an interesting open source directory. It is a global community of content that is filed, edited and updated by volunteers regularly. Submitting your website to this directory is another step to optimising your site for search engines. When submitting content to DMOZ, make sure that you do the following:

- The more accurate keywords, listing categories and subcategories you choose, the better your listing in search engines will be.
- Follow the submission guidelines. If you have submitted your site and do not believe that it has been indexed, post a message of their forum (www.resource-zone.com/forum).
- Be wary of multiple submissions of the same website. If you submit too many entries for the same site, editors might flag your site as spam.

Before submitting your URL

Your website needs to be search engine friendly before submitting your site to DMOZ. Chapters 2 and 3 have described the best ways to write for the web and to build a great website. Make sure that all meta-data is added (discussed further in chapter 6), content is well written and the site structure and web address are well thought out before submitting to any directories and search engines.

Here are some examples of content distributors:

- www.ezinearticles.com
- www.spin2submit.co.za
- www.GoArticles.com
- www.dmoz.org

4.1.2 Website indexing: Search engine submission sites

Here are a few ways to index your website and make sure that Google has your website in its database:

- Create a Google sitemap and submit it to Google through their Webmaster Tools interface (www.google.com/webmasters/tools). An XML sitemap is an index of all the pages on your website (www.xml-sitemaps.com).
- Manually submit your URL to search engines like Yahoo and Google (www.google.com/addurl/?continue=/addurl).
- Use a one-stop shop. Add your URL to one website that will submit your URL to multiple search engines (for example, www.addme.com or www.addpro.com).

Note: Indexing your website does not guarantee a high ranking in search results – your website will not necessarily come up on the first page. There are several things you will need to do (that you will learn in chapter 6) that will help you with your search ranking.

4.1.3 Blog indexing

If you are an active blogger or have a corporate blog, make sure it is updated regularly so that the content stays fresh and Google has something to crawl. By having regularly updating content that is interesting to your target market, you are more likely to have people linking to you, increasing your credibility and search engine ranking.

Submit your blog to a blog search engine such as Afrigator (www.afrigator.co.za). Afrigator is a social media search engine and blog directory for anyone interested in blogs, videos, photos and news from Africa. Afrigator only carries African content and is the hub for social media in Africa. Here are a few other ideas on how to increase traffic to your blog:

- Set up a live feed on Yahoo or Google so that your site is crawled regularly.
- Add a link to your blog in your email signature, email marketing campaigns and any other marketing material.
- Add an RSS feed that people can subscribe to. An RSS (rich site summary) is a link with the subject line and date of each blog entry. People can add this feed to their site so that any updates to your blog are automatically updated on their site too. This is an excellent way of generating backlinks to your blog.
- Write comments on other people's blogs and then make sure you add a link back to your website.

4.1.4 Affiliate networks

As with all relationships, it is important to network with the right people in your industry. An affiliate network is essentially an online referral system and a vital mechanism for generating cross-referrals between companies. The more sources of traffic to your website, the better: these are called inbound links or backlinks (backlinks can come from any other related site, not just from affiliate networks). Some affiliate networks such as Amazon and eBay's Partner Network encourage companies to display ads, banners, widgets and online stores on their sites. Every time someone clicks on a banner ad or buys something, the website displaying the ad gets paid. Google also has an affiliate program called AdSense (www.google.com/adsense). If you sign up for AdSense, Google matches the content on your website with relevant Google Ads (AdWords) and every time someone clicks on an Ad on your website, you get paid for that click. With all of these examples, you get paid to promote someone else's website by becoming a lead source.

The reverse also applies for your website. You want as many visits to your site as possible from as many sources as possible. You do not have to be an online retail giant to have an affiliate network; there are other websites where you can pay to have your URL listed as an affiliate. This way, you will benefit from links coming to your site from these affiliate networks. You can even find loyal customers who are willing to have a link to your site on theirs; this is one of the easiest and best ways to create backlinks. A good example of this is a web design agency. Every time a new website is launched, a press release is written about the launch and the news page and social networks spread the word. All these channels help distribute information about the company and its product offerings.

Here are a few local and international examples of affiliate networks you can join to promote your website and generate more inbound links to your site:

- www.freebielist.com
- www.affiliate-program.amazon.com
- www.ebaypartnernetwork.com/files/hub/en-US/index.html
- www.offerforge.com
- www.trafficsynergy.com

Note: The more active you are online, the more search engines will crawl your site or blog and the more favourably you will appear to search engines because you have good-quality content that is always current. Remember that advertising is all about getting the message out to a large audience and informing customers about your products or service. Sometimes the more subtle methods of advertising reap the best rewards.

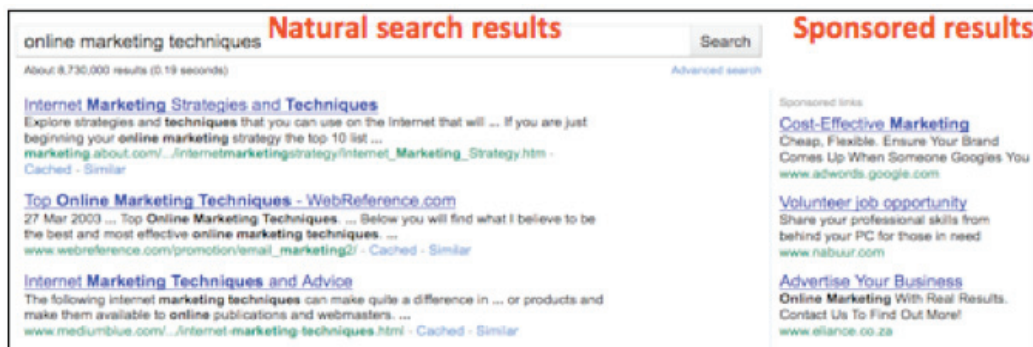
4.1.5 Sponsorship

Sponsorship is not free (there usually is some commission involved), but can provide a good opportunity to increase brand awareness through online affiliation with an organisation like an industry partner or related non-profit, especially in the healthcare industry. Make sure that your customers also trust the organisation you are sponsoring and, through their goodwill, you should receive increased brand exposure. Text links, banners and logos are the most common types of sponsorship. This can be a good way to promote your products or services through another company's websites, newsletters, events and competitions.

4.2. Not so free, but excellent returns

4.2.1 Pay per click (PPC)

Before you begin reading this section, go to www.google.com, type in a search term and click "search". What do you see? Depending on the popularity of your search term, there should be a long list of results. To the right of these, there is a list of "sponsored links" (sometimes above your results as well). These are Google Ads or, in Google terminology, AdWords (www.google.com/adwords). People have paid money for these ads to be displayed when someone searches for a specific search term. This is called "pay-per-click" advertising (PPC), because you only pay for the advert when someone clicks on your sponsored advert in the search results.



PPC campaigns have become a popular advertising technique in recent years for three main reasons:

1. They are targeted to keywords, so only people actively looking for what your business offers will be shown the ads.
2. The return on campaigns (or conversion rate) is easily measurable with

tracking codes that can be added onto URLs included in the ad.

3. They are more cost effective than other advertising techniques like TV commercials, banner ads and print ads, because you're only paying when someone clicks on your ad.

4.2.2 Paid versus organic

Before exploring PPC campaigns in detail, it is important to know the different between organic and paid search results. Organic, or natural, search results are ranked according to Google's algorithm and depend on factors such as the relevancy of a site's copy to a related search and the number of quality links pointing to a site. Rankings on these organic results can be improved through search engine optimisation (discussed in chapter 6). Most importantly, you cannot pay Google or other search engines to rank highly on these organic results. Non-organic, or paid, results are the sponsored links displayed above or to the right of the organic Google search results. People have paid or bid on specific keywords in order to receive a high ranking in these sponsored results.

4.2.3 PPC step by step

Pay-per-click (PPC) adverts are the text ads displayed on search engine results (in Google, these are displayed in the right column of search engine results). Advertisers bid a certain amount that they're willing to pay when someone clicks on that ad, which determines the position in which that listing will show on results pages – the higher an advertiser is willing to bid, the higher up the ad will show. Google is currently the leader in PPC, with Yahoo (formally known as Overture) and Bing (MSN's search engine) following behind. According to The Economist, "PPC advertising is the fastest growing sector of the advertising industry, accounting for more than 40 percent of all online advertising on the US." To enjoy success with PPC, it is important to:

- Set up your campaigns correctly (this will be explained in detail).
- Research what keywords your target audience is using to search for your products and services.
- Set realistic budgets for your campaigns.
- Track all click sources and continually monitor and update your campaigns.
- Watch out for click fraud by keeping a careful eye on competitors and analytics.

Important PPC terms

CPC: Cost per click. The rand value you pay. Best for banner ads and PPC links.

PPC: Pay per click. Method of payment for CPC.

CPM: Cost per thousand impressions (e.g. R50 per 10 000 impressions means a CPM of R5).

CTR: Click-through rate. The number of clicks divided by the number of impressions. Your CTR is usually higher than your CPM.

Conversion rate (CR): The number of actions (or goals) completed divided by the number of clicks received. For example, you set up a goal for “signing up for the newsletter” on the home page of your website. If ten people click your ad to go to the home page and two people sign up for the newsletter, your CR is 20%.

Landing page: The destination page on your website that viewers are sent to once they click on your ad. This does not have to be the homepage. For example, www.news24.com is the home page but www.news24.com/world would be your landing page for a sponsored link promoting world news on News24. You can create a dedicated landing page to send paid advertising to, to make sure those visitors convert or do what you want them to do.

PPA: Pay per action. Payment is only made once someone takes the prescribed action – makes a phone call, completes the contact form or makes a purchase. PPA costs are higher than PPC because you have more prequalified prospects by taking action.

ROI: Return on investment. The profit made divided by the cost of the PPC campaign. It’s best to look at the entire campaign rather than individual products.

4.2.4 Which PPC platform to choose

There are several PPC tools to choose from, but this chapter will discuss Google AdWords and Facebook Ads in detail. If you would like more information from each PPC provider, here are some additional help links to review before setting up a live campaign:

- AdWords help: adwords.google.com/support/aw/?hl=en
- Yahoo Sponsored Search help: help.yahoo.com/l/us/yahoo/ysm/sps/index.html
- Facebook Ads help: www.facebook.com/help/?page=409
- Google quick comparison chart: www.google.com/intl/en_uk/adwords/select/comparison.html
- Comparison chart: Google, Bing and Yahoo: www.websearchguide.ca/research/searcomp2.htm

4.2.5 Setting up a campaign

1. Plan

Before setting up a PPC campaign, answer the following questions:

- What am I selling?
- What are my competitors doing online and where are they advertising?

- How are my customers looking for my product?
- What are my website goals? Sell online? Educate the market? Increase brand awareness? Build the email marketing database through newsletter signups?
- How will PPC fit in to my overall marketing plan?

2. Research

Once you have planned your campaign, the next step is to research your target audience's online behaviour. There are specialists who spent hours researching the right mix of keywords for a PPC campaign, but as a beginner is it important to understand the fundamentals of what makes a well-targeted keyword. The two website references below are excellent tools for this type of research. When selecting keywords for the first time, make a list of all the words that are relevant to your company and your products. Once you have done some research, your list should be reduced to a maximum of 20 keywords or phrases. The key to any PPC campaign is to keep it extremely targeted. AdWords keyword targeting: adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal

CPC versus CPM

Cost per click (CPC) is a common cost model for PPC ads in search results and banner ads. You bid on specific keywords, setting a maximum amount you are willing to pay each time someone clicks on your ad. In general, the person who bids highest for a keyword or phrase appears at the top of "sponsored links" and the rest follow in descending order (Google differs slightly). Premium sponsored links appear above the organic search results (Yahoo provides a separate advertising strategy for premium positions, usually on a monthly basis).

Cost per impression (CPM) is the cost per thousand impressions. An impression in the online world is every time a page that displays your ad is downloaded to someone's computer. Every time an ad is displayed, you are charged, whether someone clicks on it or not. Often, your ad is displayed far below the fold (you have to scroll down to see it). You are only charged for CPC when someone clicks on your advert.

This is an excellent tool to research the competitiveness of keywords in Google searches. Google has its own special algorithm (mathematical formula) to rank keyword popularity. It is important to test your keyword selection before launching a PPC campaign.

First, type in your URL (the web address of your website, like www.computicket.co.za), add a few keywords and search for relevant or similar phrases that relate to your product. Make sure to use the "Advanced Search" function: this helps you narrow your research by country and language. Google will then generate a list of suggested keywords.

Each keyword will have a level of competitiveness and a global and monthly search level. The more competitive the keyword, the more you will probably have to bid (and pay) for a keyword in order to get a high Google ranking in sponsored links. Remember to be specific. "Restaurant" is a much more general term than "Chinese

restaurant Cape Town”. The second keyword phrase identifies location, category (what you are selling) and type. Although there will be lower search volumes for more specific phrases, people searching with these phrases will be more qualified or relevant leads, since they’ll be more closely matched to the product or service you’re offering.

Yahoo has a similar tool for its keyword research:

signup12.marketingsolutions.yahoo.com/signupui/signup/startSignup.do

AdWords preview tool:

adwords.google.com/select/AdTargetingPreviewTool

Once you have selected you keywords and created your AdWords campaign, use the preview tool to see where your ads would rank when someone types in certain phrases. This tool is not 100% accurate, but does give you a good estimate of keyword accuracy.

3. Bids and budget

Knowing how to choose the right keywords, how to bid and how to set a realistic PPC budget takes time and regular adjustment, especially if it’s your first attempt. When dealing with “auction-type bids”, it is important to remember that price fluctuates and usually increases depending on seasonal variations or changing levels of competitiveness for a specific keyword. Your budget will need to accommodate these fluctuations. Start by setting daily or monthly limits to ensure that you stay within a predetermined budget. Without at least a monthly limit, you could spend your entire budget, and more, in a few hours. As soon as your budget limit is reached, the campaign stops running until the next month. Each keyword (or phrase) has its own minimum bid amount depending on its competitiveness amongst bidders. Yahoo search marketing has a minimum click charge of \$0.10 and Google AdWords is set by an average cost per impression rate. Each PPC platform has its own monthly fee charge; Google has no minimum for their AdWords program whereas Overture’s minimum monthly spend is \$20.

The most important of all PPC decisions is your choice of keywords for your campaign. Below is an example of a list of keywords and their current campaign performance statistics:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Keyword	Status ?	Max. CPC	Clicks	Impr.	CTR ?	Avg. CPC ?	Cost
Total - all keywords				1,002	1,283,256	0.08%	£0.17	£169.85
<input type="checkbox"/>	africa	Rarely shown due to low quality score	auto: £0.22	39	6,725	0.58%	£0.20	£7.70
<input type="checkbox"/>	africa safaris	Eligible	auto: £0.22	14	6,161	0.23%	£0.19	£2.68
<input type="checkbox"/>	travel to africa	Eligible	auto: £0.22	11	1,730	0.64%	£0.21	£2.36
<input type="checkbox"/>	kenya safari	Eligible	auto: £0.22	9	2,815	0.32%	£0.23	£2.03
<input type="checkbox"/>	south africa safari	Eligible	auto: £0.22	8	1,770	0.45%	£0.20	£1.64
<input type="checkbox"/>	tanzania safari	Eligible	auto: £0.22	6	1,696	0.35%	£0.22	£1.30
<input type="checkbox"/>	kruger safari	Eligible	auto: £0.22	4	272	1.47%	£0.21	£0.85
<input type="checkbox"/>	singles vacation	Eligible	auto: £0.22	3	355	0.85%	£0.14	£0.41

As discussed, only bid on words that are extremely relevant to your business and product offerings.

- WordTracker – a keyword research tool not specific to any search engine: www.wordtracker.com/find-the-best-keywords

Two examples of PPC budget and ROI calculators to help you plan your budget:

- PPC Budget Calculator: <http://www.ppcbudget.com/ppc-roi-calculator/>
- Web Position Advisor PPC calculator: www.webpositionadvisor.com/tools/ppc_calculator.php

Lastly, here are some bidding tips:

- Don't bid to reach first position. As long as your ad is above the fold (usually in position two to four) you should get qualified clicks. Qualified clicks are clicks from people who are actually interested in your services or products. These clicks qualify to become future customers. The more optimised and targeted your PPC ad, the lower the chance of people clicking on your ad by mistake or assuming you are selling something else.
- Timing is everything. Consider what day of the week and what time of day most of your customers will be online and restrict your ads to be displayed within these time constraints. For example, if you are a take-out restaurant, you want your ad to be displayed at lunchtime when people are most hungry.
- Geographic limits. Make sure you are specific about where the people you want to target are. If your customers are only in South Africa, set South Africa as a geographical limitation. Look at your past sales statistics and see where most of your sales have originated from. Facebook Ads has a very detailed target-selecting process: you can be as specific as gender, age and interests (more on this at the end of the chapter).
- Tracking. If you have a technical or development team who can assist you, ask them to set up basic tracking codes on all major calls to action, such as the newsletter signup thank you page, contact form thank you page and purchase thank you page. By adding a small piece of code, you can track the source of the visitor and identify all click-through visitors. This will help you determine your cost per conversion and overall ROI.
- Be tough. If a keyword does not convert, get rid of it. You will be amazed at how many words you think match your company and product offerings perfectly but do not convert into qualified clicks, especially if you are selling online.
- Do not bid more than the average sale. Do not spend more than 10% of the average sale amount on advertising. If you presume that on average 2% of people who click through to your site will buy and if your average sale is R200, limit advertising to R20. Divide R20 by 50 to get an average bid of 40 cents per click. This does fluctuate depending on your marketing strategy.

- Include negative keywords. Avoid people clicking on your ad when they are looking for irrelevant search terms. Search for terms that you don't want to be associated with your ad. For example, if you are selling "luxury furniture", negative keywords could be "discount furniture", "used furniture", "student living furnishings" or "cheap luxury furniture". Add these negative keywords to your PPC account. This will enable your campaigns to have a more successful CTR by eliminating irrelevant search results.

4. Choose your ad type and write the ad

Once you have chosen your PPC platforms (e.g., Google AdWords, Yahoo search marketing and Facebook ads), create accounts on these platforms. Then, create campaigns to group your ads and outcomes – for example, group ads by geographic location, goal or product. Next you will need to decide on the type of ad you want to create. Most search engine platforms like Google have the following options: text only, image or WAP mobile (more about WAP in chapter 9). For the purpose of this chapter, we will discuss the content of text and image ads. The only difference in layout is that one has an image; the text requirements are the same.

Make sure you have a clear outline of who you want to target and why – factors like location, language, keywords, additional demographics, landing pages and action goals.

Most ads follow the same content formula: headline, two lines of text, visible URL and unseen landing page URL. Each search engine sets its own length for each line but, roughly speaking, keep your heading under 25 characters and each line of text under 30 characters. There are also additional rules governing word use and punctuation, so make sure you read the rules of whichever search engine you are using before you write an ad. Below is an example of a Google text ad for an overland safari company:

New text ad

Headline: Budget African Safari

Description line 1: Overland Adventure treks, camping

Description line 2: Luxury Adventure Travel, ecotourism

Display URL: URL goes here

Destination URL: http:// landing page URL goes here

Ad preview

[Budget African Safari](#)
Overland Adventure treks, camping
Luxury Adventure Travel, ecotourism
[URL goes here](#)

Headline

Writing headlines takes a lot of time, patience and practice. Try a variety of headlines and do some A/B testing (also known as split testing) to see which one works best. The goal is to achieve a high CTR. Google allows you to run multiple ads using the same search term, which makes it easy to A/B test ad variations (only one ad will appear at a time for any one of your keywords).

- Use keywords in your headline
- Always ensure that headlines are attention grabbing and not generic
- Avoid using small words like "the", "in" and "a" as they take up characters and don't mean anything to Google

- Consider using a question in the heading to draw the reader to the ad
- Consider the exact needs of your target market and then offer a solution in the heading

Description lines 1 and 2

- Be very specific and targeted with your words
- Use small groups of keywords
- If you have used a question in the header, answer the question in one of the description lines
- Look at competitors and be unique
- If you have several ads for the same product, focus on different benefits or product offerings. This is a good idea for A/B testing. Different words appeal to different audiences.
- Always use active voice and second person (“you” instead of “we”) and imperative verbs (e.g. absorb, enjoy, fly, buy, relax or satisfy)

Landing pages

Remember that landing pages do not have to be your website’s home page but can be any destination page that will fulfil an action or goal. For example, if the description line offers a “10% discount for African safari tours”, the landing page will be a page that explains the 10% discount in detail and tells visitors how to book. Although your landing pages can differ, your display URL should stay the same. Always choose a landing page that has content that is the most closely related to the content of your ad. For example, if your ad describes a specific product, the corresponding product page on your website would be a better landing page option than your home page, which is much more general. You set an expectation with your advert, so don’t disappoint the potential client by taking them to a page that isn’t completely relevant.

Think about a supermarket: you don’t go to the front of the store for bread and milk, you go straight to the back of the store to the dairy products (landing page), then you visit the bread section (another section of the website) and finally you pay at the cashier (home page – front of the store). Along the way to the cashier, you might pick up a few other goods you had not intended on buying (e.g. sign up for newsletter, buy an extra item online, visit several other pages before you leave the website). The goal of any landing page is to convert a click into a customer and maximise the user experience so that a new customer converts to a return visitor. It is always good to try and think like a customer: where would you expect to land once you clicked on the ad?

- Add the keywords of your PPC ad to the meta-tags of the landing page.
- If you are selling a product, the landing page should always be the product detail page.

- Never mislead the customer. The landing page should be the obvious next step – buy, more information, sign up; whatever the PPC ad is using as a promotion tactic.

5. Delivering results

Building a successful PPC campaign takes both time and money. It does not happen overnight but can be very rewarding. Make sure that you track all campaigns, monitor your budgets, bids and traffic closely and, most importantly, do not use PPC in isolation. Search engine optimisation is essential for generating natural search engine ranking and, in the long term, is more rewarding than paying for sponsored links. Once again, combining PPC with other online advertising techniques such as directories and affiliate networks as well as offline promotional initiatives will provide better results all round. Also don't hold yourself back if you see that your ads are not working, change and modify them until you see results or consider using another tool if this doesn't work for you.

Click fraud

Whether you are a beginner at PPC advertising or someone who has been building successful campaigns for years, it is critical that you understand what click fraud is and what the different types of fraud are so that you know what to look out for and can report any misconduct. Click fraud is when a person (predominantly low-cost workers in China and India) or a computer (online bots and automated software) imitates a legitimate online user and clicks on an ad for the purpose of generating an increase in cost per click. The main incentive with click fraud is to click on rivals' links and increase their advertising spend. Search engines should refund you if you detect and can prove click fraud.

According to ClickForensics' Click Fraud Index, the overall rate of click fraud on PPC in Q1 2010 was 17.4%; this represents an increase from previous results in Q4 and Q3 of 2009. The possible increase in click fraud may be attributed to the increase in sophisticated fraud schemes identified. One of the most prevalent forms of fraud is called a "publisher collision scheme", where a fraudster tries to mimic legitimate users by spreading bots across computers to generate a random pattern of traffic.



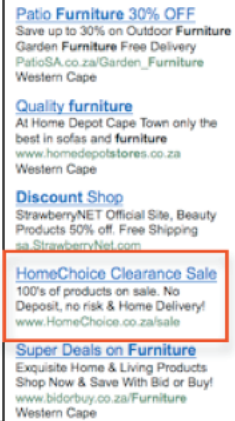
It is as important to be aware of click fraud as it is to know what to do about it if you find that you are being hit by fraudsters. Firstly, report any strange campaign results to the service provider. Secondly, make sure that you have keyword tracking in place so you know exactly where traffic is coming from and which keywords are generating the highest traffic.

Testing the user journey



Test the user journey:

It is always important to test keywords and see what competitors are doing online. Imagine you are searching for “discount furniture store” in www.google.co.za. The following sponsored links appear. Although you may think that your keyword is very specific, three out of five links are irrelevant. HomeChoice Clearance Sale does sound like a good choice as there is a sale and home delivery. The landing page takes you to a sales page that doesn’t list any furniture, but instead shows clothing, curtains and kitchenware. This is an excellent example of a mismatched group of keywords for the PPC ad. Many companies make the same mistake. PPC success takes time, expert advice and many adjustments.



4.2.6 Facebook ads

Facebook ads are the new generation of PPC advertising. Instead of paying for sponsored links, you are advertising to members within a social network. The overall concept of Facebook Ads is the same as other forms of PPC advertising: you are effectively paying for ads to be displayed to a very diverse database of potential customers. There are, however, slight differences in setting up, writing the ad and deciding on a target audience that should be noted.

It is important to remember here that Facebook ads are served (shown) to people on Facebook who have the keywords you have listed on their profile – they are not searching for them but being shown them based on what they have already listed.

Writing the ad

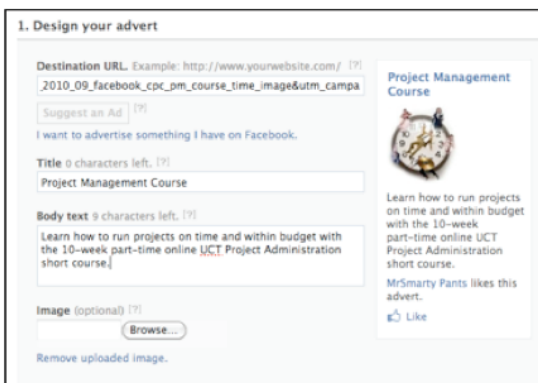
Destination URL: Unlike Google AdWords, your destination URL is your landing page; there is no display URL. Speak to your technical support and ask them to create tracking code to add to your URL so that you can track all clicks in Google Analytics.

Title: Max. 25 characters. Be short, to the point and use keywords that will draw attention to your ad

Body copy: Max. 135 characters.

Image: The cost is the same with or without imagery. Choose branded, inspirational images that will attract visitors to your ad.

GetSmarter example of a Facebook Ad:



Google URL Builder: Use this tracking builder to help create a tracking code for each Facebook ad campaign.

www.google.com/support/analytics/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=55578

Audience demographics

Facebook ads do not work on keywords: instead, they use demographic information based on Facebook profiles. The more specific you are, the more targeted your campaign. If you have a Facebook Page, you may use this as a connection and even link clicks to this page as a sales channel. Make sure you create a corporate Facebook account before creating ads. It looks more professional when ads come from a profession persona.

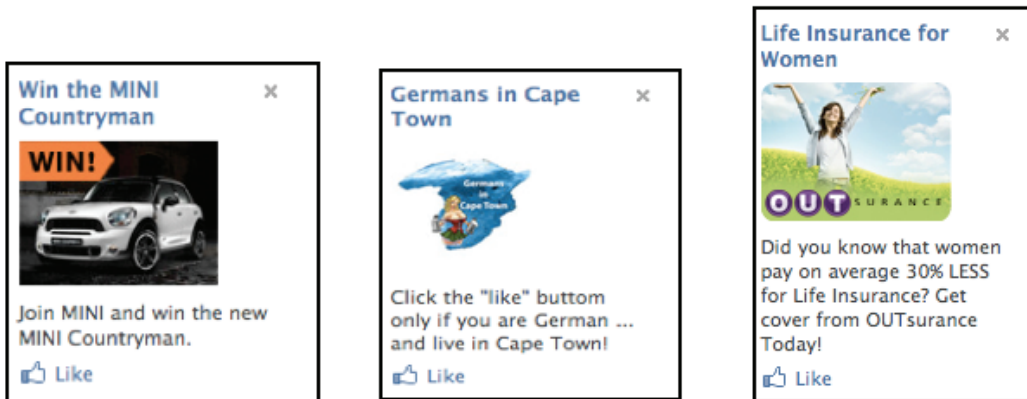
The screenshot shows the Facebook targeting interface. It includes sections for:

- Location:** Country (South Africa)
- Advanced Demographics:** Birthday (Target people on their birthdays), Interested in (All, Men, Women), Relationship (All, Single, In a Relationship, Engaged, Married), Languages (Enter language)
- Education & Work:** Education (All, College Grad, In College, In High School), Workplaces (Enter a company, organization or other workplace)
- Connections on Facebook:** Target users who are connected to, Target users who are not already connected to, Friends of connections (all with input fields for Page, Event, Group or Application)

Bid type

Cost per click (CPC) and cost per thousand impressions (CPM) – a good place to start if you are new to PPC is with CPC, using the suggested bid range. Some keywords are more competitive and therefore have a higher suggested bid range. Note that if your ad has a low CTR and number of impressions, switch to the CPM bid type for a while to ensure that Facebook does display your ad. Once you start getting traffic and impressions increase, change back to CPC.

Examples of Facebook ads:



4.3. Banner ads: The good, the bad and the ugly

Banner ad. A rectangular image that can be placed anywhere on a website. Banners can be one image, image and text, rotating images (.gif files) and even Flash. The goal of any banner ad is to entice people to click through to the website.

In 1994, the first banner ad was placed on HotWired, Wired Magazine’s former website. It was purchased by a cellular network provider AT&T and read, “Have you ever clicked your mouse right HERE? You will.” Many people started clicking on ads more for curiosity rather than incentivised advertising. (You will remember

this banner from chapter 1.)



At first the CTR of banner ads was high, on average 78%, until the market crash in 2000. Google and GoTo.com (now Yahoo Search) then turned banner advertising into a performance-based model; ads started being valued by CTR rather than number of impressions. Creating unique and compelling incentives like playing games and testing your IQ, banner ads did have an element of fascination for the curious mind. Today, the click-through rate of banner ads has dropped to less than 1%. Are they dead? No, but marketers have to become much more original with their banner advertising, delivering ads only to people they really want to reach – almost following the PPC trend of recent years: targeting is everything.

The banner ad (essentially display advertising online) still exists today but has been devalued by the overabundance of publishers' inventory, flogging ad networks. CTR is not as critical as brand exposure since supply eventually completely outgrows demand. eMarketer reported in 2009 that “ad networks slash inventory prices up to 90%.” With the price crashing, the quality of banners has also gone downhill, becoming more distracting to online users. People have even gone so far as to install banner ad, cookie and pop-up blocking software like AdAnnihilator (www.adannihilator.com) to stop banner ads interrupting their online experience. Banner ads are not altogether bad advertising but they do need to become more targeted.

4.3.1 How to improve banner ad conversion rates

Many banner ads get many views but have very low conversion rates; without conversion, no profitable traffic is generated. In order to increase conversion rates, you need to get the attention of the online users within five seconds before they click off the website. Being noticeable with flashy imagery and bright colours does not guarantee conversion. Here are a few tips to get the viewer's attention and motivate them to click:

- **Words.** Choose the right keywords to entice and persuade viewers to click your ad.
- **Position.** Where are you going to position the ad on the page? Think about your target market and their needs. What are you selling? How can you make the most appropriate connection between the content on the page and your banner ad? The more relevant the content on the page is to your ad, the more targeted the traffic is to whatever you are selling. For example, the BizCommunity digital section displays an ad for “The digital edge internet radio show”.

ge prestigious Loerie awards - Cambrient
 id software director and one of the founders of Cambrient,
 ent management company, has been selected as a judge
 ifts panel at the 32nd Loerie Awards. 5 Aug 2010 22:08

Fox! - KRAZYBOYZ
 ds and National Geographic Channels have appointed
 a region Digital Agency for National Geographic, National
 Africa and Fox Retro. 5 Aug 2010 12:52

er or real deal?
 @chrismoerdyk Cell C's rebranding, repositioning and

- **Location.** Choose the right websites to advertise your products. Brand building through association is critical. Think about your target market's online behaviour. What websites do they view regularly for news, social networking and planning weekend activities? If you are going to display ads on a specific website regularly, make sure you make design changes to your banner ad to improve the CTR by keeping the ad fresh for the online users. If you are a car dealer, www.carmag.co.za is a good website to display your ad.
- **Money.** How much are you willing to spend on banner ads? The pricing model also affects this decision. Instead of PPC, try to use CPA (cost per acquisition) instead to place banner ads. CPA directly influences the profit of the site on which the ad is being advertised, so cooperation in providing good results is more likely with CPA than traditional PPC. As with all online advertising, first calculate your overall budget for paid advertising and then decide how you are going to split this across different advertising techniques.

Note: The more trafficked sites, like news websites, sport and entertainment pages, will charge more for banner ads than new portals. Keep an eye out for new advertising platforms: you might be able to get a more affordable rate as they will be looking to build inventory.

- **Tracking.** As with PPC, you cannot track conversion or ROI unless you track all banner ad traffic. Always add a tracking source code to all banner ads. Tracking can become quite complex. Analysing where visitors are coming from and where they click on your ad is valuable user behaviour information. Over time, just studying your customers' online behaviour will provide invaluable information that will help target banner ads more accurately.
- **Frequency.** Keep track of the frequency with which ads are displayed compared to the amount of clicks received in a specific campaign. What would cause a low CTR?
 - o Bad design
 - o Poor call to action
 - o Large image file size – image is slow to load
 - o Banner contains too much information
 - o Bad display position on a page
 - o Bad match between banner ad and the website it's displayed on
- **Conversion.** A banner ad conversion is someone who clicked on your banner ad and then spent some time on your site and took action (e.g., signed up for newsletter, bought something or completed the contact form). The visitor did not just click off your website on arrival. The key to any banner ad is to accumulate as many conversions as possible to build a solid ROI.
- **Splash pages.** Splash pages are like a front door to a house: they are the "welcome" page to a website and are usually very graphic and built in Flash or JavaScript. The problem with splash pages, especially graphic-intensive

pages, is that people with slow internet connections or limited bandwidth will not be able to load the page. Some marketers believe that the use of splash pages is an excellent promotion technique to boost banner ad CTR. This is not correct. Banner ads should always point people to the home page or a landing page that supports the call to action on the ad, and not to other information you want the user to see.

- **Rich media.** The use of Flash or JavaScript to make a banner ad animated with quality images and even sound – this is rich media and is believed to increase the CTR of banner ads. However, this trend has been overused and websites are becoming cluttered with rich media banner ads, often making it hard to read the content on the website.

JavaScript: A programming language used in conjunction with HTML to build complex interfaces. Note: Java (discussed in chapter 2) and JavaScript are not the same.

- **Personal.** A trend that is having increasing success is making more subtle banner ads that look like text that is part of the website instead of a flashy image. Although the banner ad is still an image, it feels more personal and informative by blending into the page's content by being factual and relevant.
- **Size.** There is a variety of banner ad sizes. If you would like to see the most common sizes, have a look at www.theoremcreations.com/ppc/bannersizes.php. Before deciding on a size, visit the websites you would like to display your ads on, see where most of their ads are displayed and the prices associated with each size. Remember that it's more important to make the ad relevant, personal and targeted than big and noticeable. Skyscrapers (120 x 600 pixels) are the most common banner size and are located on the right hand side of the website, but they are also more expensive than square banners (250 x 250 pixels) or small rectangular banners (120 x 60 pixels), which are smaller and can be positioned anywhere on the page.
- **Humour.** People want to be entertained. The web can often feel like information overload. Unique ads with funny calls to action and brand associations may have more success than rotating imagery and flashy execution.

4.3.2 Examples

1. KFC banner ad (animated banner)

KFC “pump the burger” banner in 2008. The goal was to encourage viewers to pump the burger up – every time you buy a supersized meal you would get a discount voucher. Fast food activists were not very happy with this fast food promotion technique.

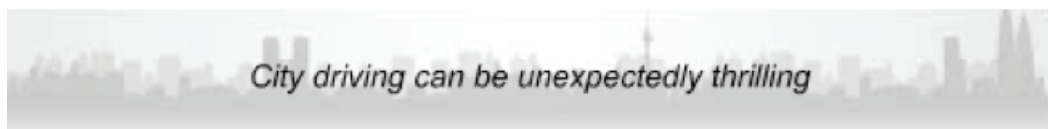




2. Toyota city driving (animated banner)

The Toyota Rush promoted its unexpected thrill, “break free from the mundane city life and drive the Toyota Rush” campaigns through the jungle-like background turning into the city.

Shot 1



Shot 2



3. Mobile Web in Africa 2010 (static banner)

The banner is simple, sticks to the facts and is positioned in the “mobile” section of www.BizCommunity.com.



4.4. Not so ethical techniques of online advertising

There are a few online advertising tactics that have made online users and marketers very angry. Online advertising can be very successful if done ethically, but the last thing you want to do is make your current or potential customers frustrated when they cannot enjoy a positive online experience because they are bombarded with ads. Here are a few examples of unethical advertising techniques to watch out for:

- ISP ads. Internet service providers can insert advertising into their customers' browsers and placing another layer of advertisements on top of the actual ads on the page – essentially two-timing their customers. If this happens to you, switch to a new ISP as soon as possible (for the technically inclined, this technique is called Jaiku conversation). ISP provider RedMoon was recently caught working with NebuAd to insert ads into customer browsers.
- Yahoo SmartAds. Contextual advertising is taken a step further with SmartAds, whereby advertisers can create more complex ads that will change depending on the viewer's location, age, status and browsing history. Matching personal data to advertising does raise major privacy concerns. Facebook has a similar strategy.
- Paid blogger posts. Advertisers sometimes pay bloggers to write content for them to promote products and service. PayPerPost www.payperpost.com and ReviewMe www.reviewme.com are examples of such services. For the blogger, making some additional money on the side may seem like a good idea, but it does raise the question: are all small bloggers becoming cheap advertisers? If this does become an increasing trend, the whole landscape of blogging will change. There is some debate about whether bloggers should disclose which posts are sponsored and which aren't. If you want to read more about this, have a look at this resource: www.waxingunlyrical.com/2011/01/19/sponsored-blogging-a-new-age-ethical-question/.
- YouTube video ads. When you click on a YouTube video, you expect to watch a video, not an advertisement. YouTube is a free video distribution website and some videos are only a few second long, and yet you are often forced to watch an advertisement than is potentially longer than the video itself. This is annoying and does not seem necessary when watching a homemade video about super heroes, even if the advertisement is relevant to the target audience. File-sharing websites even have fake MP3 files filled with advertisements. Online radio stations also do this – for example, KFM online promotes Piggs Peak casino when you sign on, which is annoying but effective.

5. Summary

Online advertising is a multi-dimensional marketing technique with the ultimate goal of converting online visitors into future customers. Free methods of brand promotion do take time rather than money, but the long-term benefits are well worth the effort. Paid advertising can have some immediate results and is deemed to be a very successful marketing technique, provided ads are highly targeted, budgets are managed and PPC is supported by other offline and online marketing initiatives.

In this chapter, you:

- Looked at the differences between online and offline advertising, and between paid and free methods of promoting yourself online.
- Learned many useful tactics for promoting yourself online, both for free and

through paid listings.

- Discovered when best to use which types of online advertising.
- Learned how to create your own Facebook advert.

6. References

1. Marketing vs. advertising: What's the difference? marketing.about.com/cs/advertising/a/marketvsad.htm
2. New media: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_media
3. Free online advertising services versus paid online advertising services: www.pr-interactive.com/web-design-resources/2010/08/free-online-advertising-services-vs-paid-online-advertising-services
4. Stats: Old media's decline, new media's ascent: mashable.com/2009/01/29/stats-old-media-decline
5. Budgeting time and money for PPC campaigns: www.bruceclay.com/ppc/budgeting.htm
6. Salient Marketing: How PPC works: www.salientmarketing.com/marketing/ppc/ppc.html
7. Google AdWords: A brief history of online advertising innovation: publishing2.com/2008/05/27/google-adwords-a-brief-history-of-online-advertising-innovation
8. The ad banner turns 10: www.clickz.com/clickz/column/1717443/the-ad-banner-turns
9. Banner advertising: www.banner-advertising.info/future_of_banneradvertising
10. Introduction to banner advertising: www.web-design.co.za/articles/digiM-intro-to-banner-advertising.htm
11. 5 new online advertising tactics we fear: mashable.com/2007/07/02/5-new-online-advertising-tactics-we-fear

CHAPTER 6

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION

Key concepts

Search engines and how they interact with websites, what is SEO, why is it important for your website, how to optimise your website for search engines, what is your competition doing online, off-page optimisation, tools and applications for optimisation.

CHAPTER 6: SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION

1. Introduction

Imagine this scenario. On Monday morning, you arrive at work and decide to research what shows are currently running in Cape Town. You do not have a newspaper, nor do you subscribe to any “gig guides” on the web. Where to next?

You open your browser and search for “buy tickets for a show Cape Town” in Google. Immediately, search results display, with Computicket appearing at the top of the list.

The screenshot shows a Google search interface with the query "buy tickets for a show Cape Town". The search results are as follows:

- Search bar:** buy tickets for a show Cape Town [Search]
- Results summary:** About 18,400,000 results (0.29 seconds) [Advanced search]
- Sponsored link:** [Tickets Sell Cape Town](http://capetown.gumtree.co.za) capetown.gumtree.co.za Post an ad for free on Gumtree 100,000+ classified ads online! [Sponsored link]
- Organic result 1:** [Computicket - the Ticket you can Trust - Home](http://www.computicket.com/) ☆ - 5 visits - 17 Aug
For the South African music lover, these are the best **tickets in town!** ... QUICK BOOK Western **Cape** - Diemersfontein Wine + Country Estate This ticket includes entrance to The Baby Expo AND THE BARNEY **SHOW** - the world's best loved ...
Rugby - Music - Sport - Soccer
www.computicket.com/ - Cached - Similar
- Organic result 2:** [Cheap flights to Cape Town](http://www.southafrica.to/...Cape-Town/flights-to-Cape-Town.php5) ☆
looking 4 **ticket** from joburg to **capetown** on the 9th of june 2010. Reg. Penfold. Looking for a return flight to CPT from JHB on the 11 th June returning on ...
www.southafrica.to/...Cape-Town/flights-to-Cape-Town.php5 - Cached - Similar
- Organic result 3:** [Cheap Flights to Cape Town, South Africa \(CPT\) - TripAdvisor](http://www.tripadvisor.com/Flights-g312659-Cape_Town_Western_Cape-Cheap_Discount_Airfares.html) ☆
Cape Town: Super Cheap Flights and Airline **Tickets** ... TripAdvisor's **Cape Town** restaurants page **shows** you the best local places to dine. Visit our **Cape Town** ...
www.tripadvisor.com/Flights-g312659-Cape_Town_Western_Cape-Cheap_Discount_Airfares.html - Cached - Similar

Ask yourself the following questions:

- How did Computicket make it to the top of the page, above all other websites?
- Is Computicket what you are looking for?

- Why did cheap flights feature in the results?
- Why are some words bold?
- Where do the website descriptions come from?
- What do you do next?

All of these questions and more will be answered in this chapter. The purpose of any website is to reach existing and current customers. It is your virtual office. When people search for specific keywords, like in the example above, the aim is for your website to be at the top of the page, or somewhere on the first page at the very least. Remember the difference between organic (natural) and paid search results from chapter 5? No paid search tactic will help you achieve a high ranking in a search engines, but there are organic techniques that will help you optimise your website's content and improve your popularity with search engines so that your website will be visible to online users.

In this chapter, you will:

- Learn about search engines and how they interact with websites (section 2).
- Find out what search engine optimisation (SEO) is (section 3).
- Discover why SEO is so important for your website (section 4).
- Learn how to optimise your website for search engines (section 5).
- Learn how to see what your competition is doing online (section 5).
- Learn about off-page optimisation (section 6).
- Discover tools and applications that will help you optimise how search engines interact with your website (section 7).

2. What are search engines?

A search engine, like Google or Yahoo, is a specialised kind of database containing software programs (called spiders or robots) that discover sites on the web and then order them based on relevance to a particular search query. Search engines continuously crawl the web using these spiders to index information in their database. Information is also cross-referenced between websites (created by links) to create a spider web of information in search engine databases.

As search engines crawl websites, they use special mathematical formulas called search algorithms, which help organise, file and rank information in order of relevance to a particular search query. Each search engine uses different search methodologies and will therefore not necessarily return the same search results.

In order for search engines to know where to file websites, they need to be able to access the content of the website. Imagine that there was a system that could

read the text of books in a library (before the emergence of ebooks) and tag each book with relevant keywords. When someone searches the library database for “African cooking books”, all relevant publications appear in the search results. Yes, library databases do add keyword tags to each book in their database, but this is a manual process and takes time to update. Search engines work on the same premise.

The problem with many websites is that they are not search engine “friendly”. Google, for example, may not be able to find the “title” or “description” of your site (which means it doesn’t know what your site is about), links could be broken, pages might not be filed correctly and your navigation may not be optimised for search engine spiders (also known as robots or bots). This is where search engine optimisation plays a role. By making small modifications to parts of your website, your website’s user experience and performance in organic search results may increase dramatically.

Some important SEO lingo

Search engine marketing

Includes paid and natural search engine activities.

Search engine optimisation

A marketing technique used to increase the visibility of your website so that people can see your site at the top of organic search results.

Meta-tags

HTML code that describes the website to a search engine. Search engines use the content of these tags to help them organise websites in order of relevance to a particular query.

Keywords

Specific terms used to search for something on the internet. Some keywords are more popular than others and will generate more search engine results.

Keyword stuffing

Loading a webpage with keywords in an attempt to manipulate a site’s ranking in search engine results. An example of the unethical use of keywords is to mention the same word or variations of it many times in the meta-description for a website or even in hidden places on the page itself.

3. Evolution of search engine optimisation

The term search engine optimisation (SEO) was coined when the concept of search engines emerged in the early 1990s (when search providers like Ask Jeeves and Lycos were started), but has evolved rapidly since the arrival of Google. At its infancy, SEO had no structure; people simply added popular keywords to the meta-tags of a site, even if they were unrelated to the contents of the website. While

adding keywords to meta-data and selecting keywords to optimise content on a website is legal, many people went overboard and abused SEO tactics. Keyword stuffing was rife. Websites were submitted to thousands of search engines so that robots and spiders could crawl and index them. Invisible text and doorway pages (fake hidden pages used purely for search engine spiders) were used. SEO spam – adding more relevant HTML text content on a web page and overload the text with keywords – was also very popular. The human eye can't see these extra keywords, but search engines can and will hopefully rank you higher in search results. There were many HTML tricks to hide text and boost keyword density, but search engines were not sophisticated enough to detect many of these scams and so websites got high rankings very quickly. This is termed black hat SEO (after the evil black-hatted cowboy in classic Western movies): it is the use of illegal means to achieve a short-term high search engine ranking.

Finally, in the early 21st century, Google entered the search market arena and changed the rules of SEO dramatically by introducing the concept of backlinks to rank a website, rather than simply analysing the content on a web page, which is far easier to manipulate. In addition, Google declared war on spammers, and removed websites that used black hat techniques from their index (also known as blacklisting). The concept of analysing a website's backlinks was based on Google's link algorithm called PageRank, which assigns a numeric weighting to sets of documents on the web, measuring their relative importance in terms of the number of external websites that link back to it. PageRank uses the logic of academic citation: an academic paper that is referenced by lots of external sources is likely to be more credible than a paper that is referenced less often. Each page of every website has a PageRanking based on Google's algorithm. This ranking is updated every time Google crawls the web and updates its databases.

Today, SEO has moved to a new era of sophistication. Search engines have come along way in combatting spam, and while black hat SEO still exists, it is not a viable strategy for any legitimate business that wants to gain long-term visibility on search engine results. Today, the SEO process involves processing of large quantities of data, mathematical calculations, analysis and regular monitoring of websites for their relative keywords. It is important that everyone, from a small-business owner to a marketing executive, understands the essential tasks of search engine optimisation. The next few sections in this chapter will provide you with the tools to research keywords, monitor competition and make small modifications to your website that, over time, will increase your search rankings.

Note: If you are serious about optimising your website to improve its search ranking, make sure that your marketers work closely with the IT department as SEO is a very technical skill. You can also speak to a professional SEO service provider, who can give you additional coaching as well as monitor your website on a daily basis and provide monthly reports on your SEO status.

3.1 Benefits of SEO

- 85% of internet users find websites through search engines.
- 90% of internet users do not go past the top 30 search results (10 results per page).

- 75% of internet users have the intention to purchase a product or service by using search engines.

If your website is not on the first page of search results, you are unlikely to get many visitors from any search engine. If you do not rank highly with Google, you will most likely not rank highly with other search engines either, since most other engines use ranking algorithms with similar logic in order to rank websites in results pages.

SEO is a long-term marketing technique that will bear fruits if you approach it with determination and patience. With the right skills, knowledge and resources, SEO could be the simplest and most important marketing tactic for achieving increased traffic and ultimately increasing your return on investment.

- **Non-biased.** SEO only generates natural (organic) listings and is perceived to be non-biased. According to www.seoresearcher.com, natural listings convert 30% more than paid listings and the percentage of clicks on organic search results increase with the level of education of online users.
- **Return on investment (ROI).** SEO has a better ROI than any other marketing medium. The only “cost” spent on SEO is the time spent researching, calculating and analysing data, but the return can be considerable.
- **Less fraud.** There are no bidding wars or click fraud.
- **Brand presence.** SEO helps build an online brand presence and long-term positioning. Search engine rankings are relatively stable compared to PPC and SEO is cheaper and works over a longer term than other marketing strategies.
- **Flexible.** Through an SEO campaign, you can reach a large audience of people. Your organisational strategies can optimise your website to meet the needs and requirements of your choice.
- **Measurable.** By tracking key conversion goals and analysing relevant statistics, SEO success can easily be quantified.
- **Targeted.** Converting visitors into customers is one of the essential goals of SEO. You are able to derive the source of specific traffic through your website and report on which keywords are generating the most traffic. The more targeted traffic equals more sales.

4. Keyword research

Remember that keywords are specific terms used to search for something on the internet. Some keywords are more popular than others and will generate more search engine results. As you will discover in section 6 of this chapter, your keyword list will be used for the written content of your site, page titles, meta-data and the structure of your URL. The initial research process is critical to the success of your SEO campaign.

But how do you start writing a list of keywords for your website?

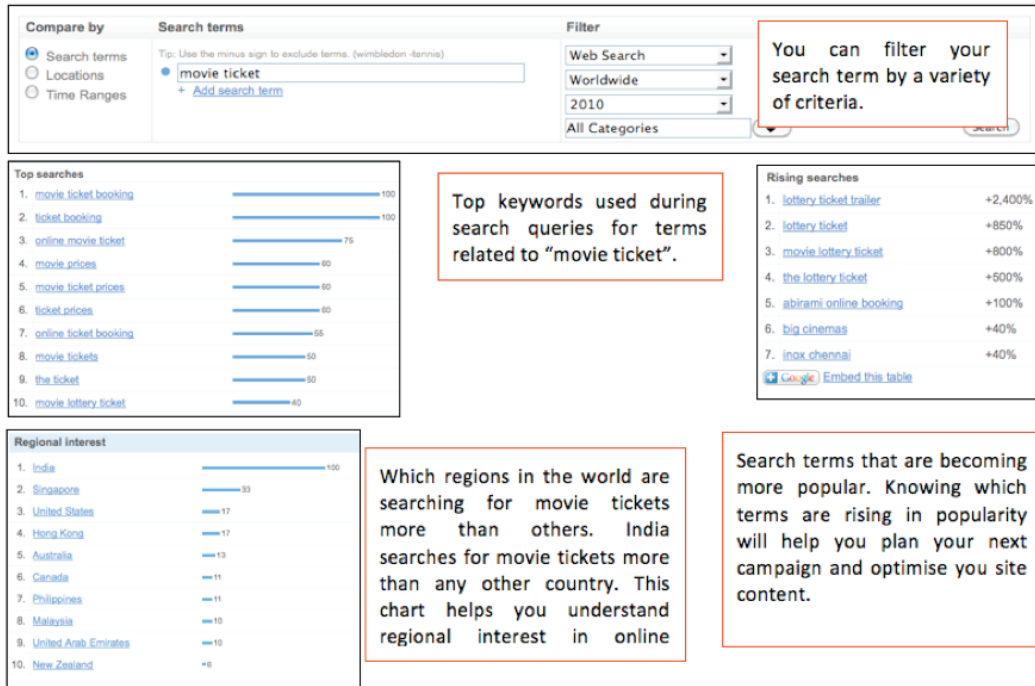
1. **Brainstorm.** Spend a few hours brainstorming keywords relevant to your organisation and your key product offerings. Try to think like a customer. What would someone search for in order to find your product? Take the Computicket example at the beginning of this chapter. Computicket could use the following keyword: events, tickets, packages, book tickets, shows, concerts, sales, Computicket.
2. **Customers.** Send out a survey or ask a few loyal customers to describe your company and your key services or products. People think differently, as does Google. The more targeted your list of keywords, the better. Competition is another place to look for keyword research; more on this in the next section.
3. **Research.** Once you have a preliminary list of keywords, it is time to do research. Every keyword and key phrase has a search volume level which determines its level of competitiveness. Unlike paid listings, where the more competitive keywords cost more, it takes much longer for a new website to gain traction within organic listings if it's competing with only high-traffic keywords. There is a variety of online tools that provide invaluable research on keyword density, competitiveness and keyword variations. Do not get too overwhelmed with terminology and data; SEO is a time-consuming process and poor-ranking keywords will be eliminated over time through further research, analysis, regular monitoring (chapter 8) and trial and error.
4. **Final list.** Once you have compiled a final list of keywords (start with around 20 words and phrases, or one to two phrases per page of content), commit to these words for at least the first six months of your SEO campaign, especially when building a new website. It takes a few months for search engines to crawl new websites and index pages accordingly.

Note: Please see the application section for a list of keyword research tools.

4.1 Things to be aware of when you choose keywords

- Only choose keywords that are relevant to your website's content.
- All keywords used to optimise your website must eventually be integrated into the copy of your website (as discussed in chapter 3). Make sure that you have enough related content in which to incorporate the keywords you've chosen.
- Refrain from choosing someone else's trademark words (for example "super quick" if you are a tyre distributor). You may find yourself in court for abusing intellectual property rights.

Here is an example of keyword research for the phrase "movie ticket" using Google Insight.



From the Google Insight data, you can see that India has a 100% interest in the “movie ticket” as a search term, followed by Singapore. There are also some similar keywords that have equally high traffic – “movie ticket booking” and “ticket booking”. “Movie ticket” falls under a variety of categories and you can also see the top searches for variations of “movie ticket”. As you can see by this example, by using only one research tool, you can gain significant insights about a keyword or keyword group.

Here is a second example using Google’s search-based keyword tool (adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal). Searching for www.getsmarter.co.za, Google provides a list of keywords related to GetSmarter: monthly search level, competitiveness, a suggested bid on each keyword (for PPC) and the web page where the keyword was found. It is important to keep a list of your keywords in a separate spreadsheet, along with their search volumes, competition and the suggested bid for each word.

Keyword	Monthly searches ↓	Competition	Sugg. bid	Ad/Search share	Extracted from webpage
Keywords related to getsmarter.co.za (62)					
<input type="checkbox"/> courses in business	280	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	GBP3.86	--	Getsmarter UCT (Law@Work) Certificate coi
<input type="checkbox"/> small business courses	280	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	GBP2.22	--	Getsmarter UCT (Law@Work) Certificate coi
<input type="checkbox"/> small business course	230	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	GBP1.98	--	Getsmarter UCT (Law@Work) Certificate coi
<input type="checkbox"/> courses for business	230	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	GBP3.04	--	Getsmarter UCT (Law@Work) Certificate coi
<input type="checkbox"/> law course	190	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	GBP1.23	--	Getsmarter UCT (Law@Work) Certificate coi
<input type="checkbox"/> employment law training courses	155	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	GBP1.76	--	Getsmarter UCT (Law@Work) Certificate coi
<input type="checkbox"/> course for business	155	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	GBP0.06	--	Getsmarter UCT (Law@Work) Certificate coi
<input type="checkbox"/> online it training courses	155	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	GBP3.26	--	Getsmarter UCT (Law@Work) Certificate coi
<input type="checkbox"/> it course online	125	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	GBP2.72	--	Getsmarter UCT (Law@Work) Certificate coi

Figure 1: Google search-based keyword tool – keyword results for www.getsmarter.co.za.

Evaluating your competition

It is critical to include your competition in your keyword research, as you will more than likely be committing on the same keywords. Think about the following questions:

- Who are your competitors? List their names and URLs.
- How important are they and how highly do they rank for your chosen keywords?

Right click (with your mouse) on the home page of each competitor and select the “View source” option from the list that appears. You will be able to view their page title, meta-description and keywords. (More on how to create meta-data in the next section.)

- How many websites link to each competitor? You can use a tool like www.linkpopularity.com to find this out.
- How many pages does each competitor have indexed with search engines? Use www.selfseo.com/search_engines_index_report.php to check the number of indexed pages across all major search engines for any URL.

5. On-page optimisation

In Google’s own words, “Search engine optimisation is about putting your site’s best foot forward when it comes to visibility in search engines.” Although Google places an emphasis on the links pointing to your site in order to rank it, there is still a variety of on-page optimisation tactics that can be applied to your site in order to increase search engine rankings and resulting traffic. It is easier to build a search-engine-friendly website from scratch than it is to retroactively apply these changes to an existing site, but either way these principles should be applied to ensure better optimisation.

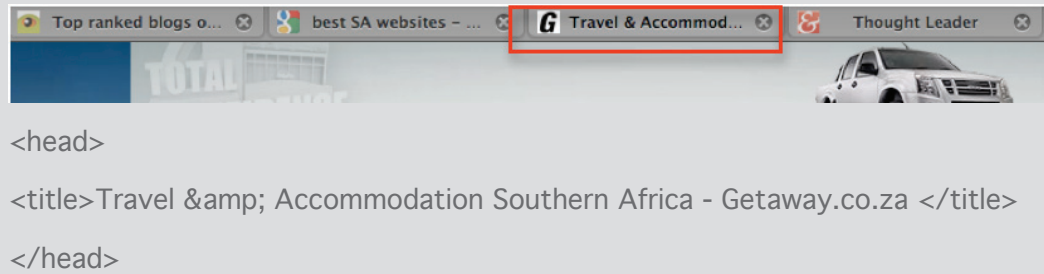
We will use the example of www.getaway.co.za to help explain the principles of on-page optimisation.

5.1 Page titles

A title tag tells both users and search engines what the topic of a particular page is. The title should be placed inside `<title></title>` tags within the header section of the HTML document (the start of the header section is indicated by the `<head>` tag and the end is indicated by the `</head>` tag).

You should always create a unique title for each page on your site that closely matches the contents of that page. Below is a screenshot of the top of the Getaway website. There are four tabs for different websites. The text that you can see in the tab (highlighted by the red box) is the page’s title tag. In HTML, it is between the `<title></title>` tags, which can be seen below the image. The title of the page is “Travel & Accommodation Southern Africa – Getaway.co.za”.

In order to view the HTML information, open the www.getaway.co.za home page and right click with your mouse. Click on “View source” in the dropdown menu. Do not get overwhelmed by the pages of code. Press CTRL and the letter “F” on your keyboard at the same time and a little “find” tool will appear. Search for “title” to find the title tag.



The title of the home page for Getaway’s website tells the search engine who they are, what they do and what geographical location they are relevant to: travel, accommodation and South Africa.

If Getaway appears in a search engine results page, the content of the title tag usually appears as the hyperlinked title in the listing. Words in the title appear in bold if they appear in the user’s search query. This helps users identify the page’s relevance.



Figure 2: A user performs a search query for “south african getaway”.

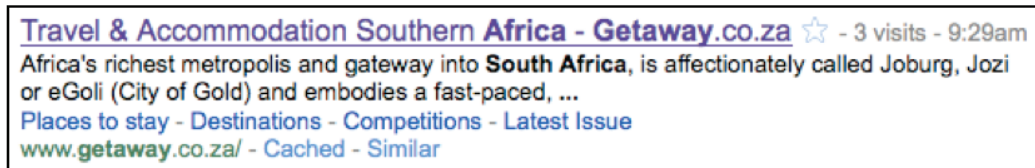


Figure 3: Getaway shows up as the first listing, with the words “Africa” and “Getaway” in bold and the title tag on the first line.

5.1.1 Things to remember when creating title tags

- Always describe the content on the page. Search engines like to find a match between titles and contents. Do not use “untitled” or “new page” as a header.
- Unique titles. Make sure that lower-level pages on your website also have unique title tags to describe the content on those particular pages.
- Get to the point. Google only indexes the first 65 characters (including spaces) of a title tag, so make sure that the title is this length or shorter. Google also assigns more emphasis to words at the beginning of the tag than the end, so place your important keywords towards the beginning.
- Don’t stuff keywords. Make sure your title tag is informative but still readable. Bear in mind that users will also be reading this tag in results pages, so its contents will influence whether they’ll click through on your listing or not.

5.2 Description meta-tag

A page's description meta-tag gives search engines a summary of what the page is about. Descriptions are usually sentences or a short paragraph. Using Google Webmaster tools, you are able to analyse whether your description and title tags are too long, too short or duplicated. Have a look at this Google Webmaster blog for further information on this tool: www.googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2007/12/new-content-analysis-and-sitemap.html. As with title tags, the description tag is placed in the <head> tag of your HTML document.

```
<head>
<title>Travel & Accommodation Southern Africa - Getaway.co.za </title>
<meta name="description" content="The leading travel magazine and
accommodation guide covering South Africa and Africa for over 20 years!" />
</head>
```

Meta-description tags are not used in Google's algorithm to rank a page, but they're still important since they show in search engine results. This snippet is the brief description that appears below the title and above the URL in a search listing. The content of this tag will therefore influence whether a searcher will click on your listing or someone else's. If a meta-description isn't specified on a particular web page, Google may use a snippet of relevant text on the page that is related to the search query. In some cases, Google may also use your description from DMOZ (Open Directory Project) if you have submitted your site there (this was mentioned in module 5). If you would like further information on how to improve your snippets, visit the video section of this module for Matt Cutt's explanation of snippets and see this blog post from Webmaster Tools:

googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2007/09/improve-snippets-with-meta-description.html.

5.2.1 Things to remember when creating description tags

- Summarise the page contents in the description tag.
- As with title tags, always keep description tags relevant to the content on the page.
- Do not fill the description with just keywords; instead, write an informative sentence.
- Google will truncate a meta-description that is longer than 155 characters including spaces (around 25 to 30 short words), so keep your description under this length.
- Try to write a unique description for each page. You can automatically generate meta-tags for each page based on each page's content if you have too many pages to write unique descriptions for.

Keyword meta-tags

You have heard of a keyword meta-tag. This tag also sits in the <head> tag and lists any keywords related to the website. Unfortunately, due to the prevalence of keyword stuffing, search engines do not value this meta-tag anymore as it has been abused by too many websites in the past. Although there is little to no value in keyword tags anymore, it is still good practice to include these tags on every page, along with the title and description tags. The only time this tag will be used is if there is no other content present on the page that tells a search engine what it is about (for example, if the page is only images with no text). Make sure that any keywords in this tag can also be found in the contents of that web page. Search engines will scan the page to see if the keywords match or whether this tag has been abused. Getaway's keyword meta-tags:

```
<meta name="keywords" content="getaway, travel, accommodation, tours,
online booking, south africa, africa" />
```

5.3 URL structure

A URL (uniform resource locator) is like a postal address for you website and all the files, documents and images that make it up. Getaway's global address is www.getaway.co.za and it is vital that this URL is structured and named correctly, not just for the home page but for all lower-level pages as well. Remember that search engines crawl your website looking for valuable information. They need to be able to read a file, page, image or document in order to index it accordingly. In addition, Google will assign a large amount of relevance to a page and a search query if the keyword in that query is present in the URL. For example, below is a fictitious example of URL that is poorly structured for SEO:

- www.getaway.co.za/directories/1356543/x145656/343a.html

Users cannot easily remember this URL and Google cannot pick up any relevant keywords.

Here are two examples of well-structured URLs from Getaway.

- www.getaway.co.za/directories/la-fontaine-guest-house.html
- www.getaway.co.za/directories/type/operators/holiday-services

Users can see where they are in the website and what page they are on ("La Fontaine Guest House" or "holiday services"), and Google knows that the first URL is likely to contain information about "La Fontaine Guest House", while the second is likely to be about "holiday services". When someone searches for that particular guest house, it will therefore have a better chance of appearing in related search results if the URL is well structured and has keywords relevant to the content on the page.

[Guest Houses - Places to Stay - Browse Categories - Getaway ...](#) ☆

La Fontaine Guesthouse Hermanus. Hermanus. **La Fontaine** is a deluxe guest retreat perfect for a rejuvenating break, golf vacation, romantic **getaway** or whale ...

www.getaway.co.za/directories/type/...to.../guest-houses/.../23.html - Cached

A search for “La Fontaine Guest House getaway” produced the result shown above. “Guest houses”, “Getaway” and “La Fontaine” are bolded in the title, description and URL.

5.3.1 Things to remember when creating your URLs

- Use keywords in the URL that are relevant to the content of that particular page.
- Keep URLs short and to the point and do not use generic page names (e.g. destination1.html, destination2.html).
- The structure of your site should be very simple so that users can find their way easily. You learned about this in chapter 2. This structure should be reflected in your URL (e.g. homepage – destination – La Fontaine Guest House).
- Only use one version of a URL to reach a particular page, and not multiple versions (in other words, accessing the same content through multiple URLs).

5.4 Website navigation

Imagine the navigation of a website is a filing system on your computer. Instead of having a thousand pictures under “My Documents”, you could organise your pictures by date (e.g. 2001, 2002, 2003) and place them into folders accordingly. You could also group your photographs by theme (e.g. holidays, work, admin, weekends).

Websites operate in the same way. A well-organised site helps visitors move between pages in a seamless fashion. All websites have a “root” page, which is usually the home page – the starting place for most visitors. Think of your content in terms of hierarchy (remember chapter 2 on web development). The home page should have many “calls to action” linking visitors to lower-level pages with more specific content on a particular topic.

Back to Getaway, the top-level navigation is as follows:

1. Home
www.getaway.co.za
2. Destinations
www.getaway.co.za/page/destinations
3. Travel guide
www.getaway.co.za/directories/index.php
 - 3.1. All
www.getaway.co.za/directories
 - 3.2. Operators

www.getaway.co.za/directories/type/operators/

3.2.1. Activity operators

www.getaway.co.za/directories/type/operators/activity-operators

3.2.2. Holiday services

www.getaway.co.za/directories/type/operators/holiday-services

3.2.3. Tour operators

www.getaway.co.za/directories/type/operators/tour-operators

3.3. Places to stay

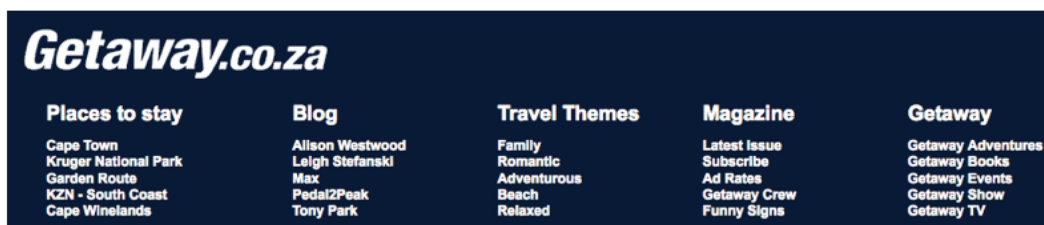
www.getaway.co.za/directories/type/places-to-stay/

4. Travel guide, etc.

From the above example, you can see that the URL structure reflects the navigation of the website. As visitors click deeper into the website, the URL moves deeper into the file structure. Spend a few minutes visiting some of your favourite websites. You will find that not all websites abide by this best practice rule of site navigation. The same principles apply to any filing system: the more organised you are at the outset, the easier it will be to manage when the site increases in pages.

5.4.1 Footer links

Another way for users and search engines to find content is through text links on the site, which are often located in the footer of the website. Footer links are typically “shortcuts” to key content areas that already exist in the site’s main navigation. In terms of SEO, footer links are important because search engines often can’t glean context from navigational menu links, since they’re typically contained within graphics or JavaScript rather than existing in plain text. The footer should be a “global footer” on all pages of a website, which means that it should be static and appear on all pages. Getaway has highlighted their top destinations, themes and key bloggers in their footer and target keywords (e.g. Kruger National Park, Cape Winelands and Allison Westwood). When planning your footer links, make sure they are HTML text and not images. When choosing keywords and lower-level pages, think about what users will search for and which links would be valuable to search engines and include them in the footer.



5.4.2 Sitemap: HTML and XML

A website’s HTML sitemap is a page, usually located at the URL www.URL.com/sitemap, that contains a hierarchical list of all pages on your website (similar to a

“table of contents” in a book). Visitors may use this page if they are looking for a particular page on your site and cannot find it in the navigation. As with footers that contain text links, HTML sitemaps are helpful to search engines, as they can now access all the links on a site as plain text links rather than links within images or JavaScript.

As opposed to HTML sitemaps, XML sitemaps are submitted directly to search engines (in Google’s case, this is done through their Webmaster Tools interface). XML sitemaps are created in a special mark-up language called XML that contains all the URLs of a site in order to help a search engine access all your content. Speak to your technical department about creating an XML sitemap, which you can submit to your targeted search engines. These sitemaps need to be updated dynamically and regularly. The following link is a good guide to building sitemap files with Google:

www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?answer=40318.

5.4.3 Things to remember when planning your URL structure

- **Natural.** Create a user-friendly, naturally flowing hierarchy of information. Users should intuitively be able to find content on your site without searching. Website usability is critical.
- **Text.** Use mainly text when creating navigation as it’s easier for visitors and search engines to find pages and relevant information. Numbers or random letters make no sense and can be confusing.
- **Breadcrumbs and cookie trails.** A breadcrumb (also known as a cookie trail) is a row of text links at the top or bottom of a page that allows visitors to easily navigate back and forth between pages; you saw these in chapter 2. Most breadcrumbs use the home page as the start of the breadcrumb.

Here is an example of a breadcrumb.

Getaway > Travel guide > Activity operator

- Create a dynamic HTML sitemap and put in on your site. Ask your technical team for assistance. Make sure it never becomes out of date or contains broken links.
- Test your URLs. Make sure that if a user removes part of your URL they still land on a page. For example, take www.getaway.co.za/directories/type/operators/: if you remove “operators”, you will have www.getaway.co.za/directories/type/, which doesn’t exist. You will land on a 404 error page and not a page within the website that contains content.
- A 404 page is an error page that appears if the page you are looking for does not exist, if the link is broken or if you made a typo when entering the URL. You can customise the 404 page so that visitors are guided back to your website. This will immediately improve the user’s experience if they happen to land on a non-existent page. Ask your technical team to set up a custom

404 pages and make sure they are not indexed by search engines.

Below is Getaway's generic 404 error page.

Not Found

The requested URL /destinations was not found on this server.

Additionally, a 404 Not Found error was encountered while trying to use an ErrorDocument to handle the request.

5.5 Content

Writing interesting and compelling content is the most important part of your website, especially for visitor retention and search engine crawling. Once you have decided on your keyword list, make sure that you integrate these keywords into the meta-tags, heading and content of each page in a relevant and informative manner. If you have the right keywords, they should appear in your copy naturally without too much effort. Remember that the content is for real people too, so balance your focus between SEO and readability.

Good-quality content spreads from user to user very quickly because people like to share valuable information. This is called word of mouth buzz. Chapter 3 and chapter 7 discuss this concept in detail. When someone, for example a blogger, finds some interesting content on your website, they may write about it and then link to your website. These text links are critical for SEO. Blogs, social networks and email campaigns all point to your website and search engines make the connection between similar types of content, links and keywords. There needs to be consistency in the quality of your writing and keyword density across all marketing initiatives, whether on or offline.

5.5.1 Anchor text

Anchor text is the clickable text that users will see as a result of a link, and is placed within the anchor tag ``. Search engines assign relevance to the keywords contained within the anchor tag to the destination of the page. The words you choose to hyperlink are therefore important from an SEO perspective. Usually, the text is styled in a different colour or underlined so that users can see that links are present. Be as specific as possible with your anchor text; remember that this link takes you to new content on another web page.

Have a look at www.payfast.co.za. The red copy shows anchor links that navigate away from the page.

A few more anchor link tips:

- Try to include keywords that are relevant to the destination page within the content of the link. For example, on the screenshot shown to the right, "Pay using EFT" assigns relevance to the destination page for the keyword "EFT".
- Choose descriptive text so that users know where they will go once they have clicked the link.
- Write text that is concise, simple, and to the point.

- Links should be easy to read and identify.
- Linking internally across your website is highly valuable. Linking from the “destination” page to the “gallery” page, which then links to the “blog”, provides an invaluable user experience and search engines can navigate your site better. Always think “user centric” when creating content; it’s all about user experience. A positive experience will encourage a repeat visit and word-of-mouth buzz.

What is PayFast?

PayFast is a payments processing service for South Africa. We make it safe for buyers to send money and easy for sellers to receive money.

For Buyers

- Shop Online **without disclosing your financial information**
- **Pay using EFT** with the ease and speed of a Credit Card
- **Shop with Confidence** online

For Sellers

- **No monthly fees!** Only per transaction fees
- **Accept EFT payments** with the ease & speed of credit cards
- **No manual reconciliation** required to accept EFT payments
- **Reduced fraud** through effective use of technology

5.5.2 Headings

After the URLs and meta-tags, headings are the third most important content element on a web page. Heading tags (do not confuse these with the <head> HTML tag) usually make the text bigger and have different sizes. <h1> is the biggest and <h8> is the smallest and least important. Search engines read headings in order of importance. All page headings should be <h1>, large and bold, which makes it easier for users to read and lets the content stand out above the body copy. Headings also create a hierarchical structure of content on your site, making it easier for search engines (and human readers) to prioritise content.

What is PayFast?

H1

PayFast is a payments processing service for South Africa. We make it safe for buyers to send money and easy for sellers to receive money.

For Buyers

H2

- Shop Online **without disclosing your financial information**
- **Pay using EFT** with the ease and speed of a Credit Card
- **Shop with Confidence** online

For Sellers

H2

- **No monthly fees!** Only per transaction fees
- **Accept EFT payments** with the ease & speed of credit cards
- **No manual reconciliation** required to accept EFT payments
- **Reduced fraud** through effective use of technology

In the example shown above, the larger bolder text is H1 and the slightly smaller heading is H2. Search engines read the content in this order: H1, H2 and then the rest of the copy.

Another great example is www.vatit.com. This website sells VAT return and refund services across the globe and is highly optimised for search engines. Click through to some lower-level pages. Throughout the website, all dark blue headings are <h1> tags and all light blue headings are <h2> tags. Search engines read these headings in order of priority from big to small. Make sure you have added relevant keywords to all headings (for example, “International VAT Refund & Tax Reclaim Specialists”). You will also notice that all content links contain keywords (e.g. “Learn more about foreign VAT recovery”).

Tips for creating headings:

- Only use one <h1> tag per page, and don't overuse lower-level header tags such as <h2> and <h3> tags.
- Make sure that the text in header tags helps define the structure of the page.
- Be consistent with your heading tag sizes and styles across your website.
- Make sure you use heading tags and not images or image text for headings. Search engines cannot read anything but heading tags (more about images in 5.5.3).
- Do not put all of the page's text in a heading tag.
- Use heading tags for content structure, not just for styling.

5.5.3 Images

Flash and images are fantastic ways to make a website appealing to readers, attractive and compelling. However, search engines have difficulty accessing the content contained within Flash files (though they have made improvements in recent years). Also, from a usability perspective, not everyone is able to download the Flash element (due to low bandwidth and slow internet speed). If you would like to optimise your website, use Flash elements within an HTML page, and do not create a website that is 100% contained within a Flash file.

From an SEO standpoint, images may seem like a straightforward component of your site, but you can optimise your use of them. Remember the analogy of the library: all images can have a distinct file name and an “alt” attribute, both of which you should take advantage of. The “alt” attribute allows you to specify alternative text for the image if it cannot be displayed for any reason. Another reason is that if you're using an image as a link, the alt text for that image helps provide search engines with context about that image. You can also add keywords to your “alt” tags, as long as they are relevant to your image.

However, try not to use too many images as links in your site's navigation when text links could serve the same purpose. Optimising your image file names and alt text makes it easier for image search tools to understand your images.

Note: Make sure that you save all imagery in a separate image folder or directory instead of across multiple subdirectories. This way, the path for all images will be the same (e.g. www.getaway.co.za/images/madibi_resort).

Below is an example of an image that wasn't displayed to the user, but the alt tag is still displayed (in red).



Note: Make sure you use unique file names for all images, and not generic names like `image1.jpg`, `image2.jpg`.

Images can also have title tags – this is an explanation of the image that you will see if you hover over it (only in Opera and Firefox). This tag just allows for additional information for the reader. Ideally you should have both an alt and a title tag. The alt tag allows readers to know what was supposed to load if it doesn't, and it allows Google to see what the image is about (because Google can't "see" images). The title tag allows a description of the image to be included when you hover over it.

5.5.4 Things to remember when writing content

- Think about the words you would use to search for content on your website. If people do not know about the particulars of your website, they will make more general search queries than someone who knows what they are looking for (e.g. "tours in Africa" versus "white water rafting tour, Zimbabwe"). Refer back to your keyword research. Here is another useful tool for researching the top search queries that your site appears for, and the ones that led the most users to your website: www.google.com/webmasters/edu/quickstartguide/sub1guide5.html.
- Do not write duplicate copy. You won't gain search engine visibility by doing this, and you create a bad user experience for your human visitors who will be presented with multiple versions of the same content.
- Write for your readers and not for search engines. Even if you achieve high rankings through optimised copy, if it is stuffed full of keywords, your human visitors will leave your site just as fast as they've arrived. In summary, never sacrifice readability for search engine optimisation.
- The first paragraph of any page is the most critical for SEO. Make sure that the keywords you used for your title and description tags are also in the first paragraph of copy.
- Meta-tags should always be at the very top of the HTML code, inside the head tags, so that they are the first thing search engines read.

- You will probably come across the term keyword density and keyword ratio: this is the amount of keywords as a percentage of the total amount of text on a page. As a rule, try to keep your keyword density between 5% and 10% on a particular page.

6. Off-page optimisation

As discussed earlier in these notes, one of the main ways in which Google assigns value to one web page over another is by analysing the quality and quantity of links pointing into a particular page. There are many ways to increase the amount of good-quality links that point in to your site. These include soliciting links from sites that you already have an existing partnership with (such as your customers or vendors), distributing content that then links back to your site, and submitting your site to related directories. Details on these techniques are given below.

- Partner linking. Contact your business partners, customers, clients, vendors or suppliers and ask them to link back to your site under their “resources section” in order to add value to their own visitors.
- Content distribution. Submit content and articles to distributors who publish or republish content across content networks – include a link back to your site at the end of the piece of content. Content distributors help increase exposure about your company, increase traffic by adding your website URL to all submitted content and increase brand awareness. Inbound links also help to increase the credibility of your website in the eyes of search engines. Here are a few examples: www.ezinearticles.com, www.goarticles.com and www.amazines.com.
- Open source and business directories. Add your website to network directories like DMOZ as well as local business directories like the Yellow Pages and Google’s local business centre: www.google.com/local/add.
- Blog indexing. Submitting your company blog to blog directories creates an inbound link back to your site if your blog is contained on the same domain as your website. In addition, submitting content to other blogs with a link back to your site (as mentioned in the first point above) also helps with inbound linking that then impacts your site’s search engine rankings and visibility.
- Tools and widgets. Creating a useful tool or widget that contains a link back to your site when it’s installed on someone else’s site is a good way of increasing inbound link value for your own website.
- Social media sites. Social media sites such as StumbleUpon, Facebook and My Yahoo enable you to create a profile on their site, post links and add content. You gain brand awareness and links back to your website, plus you can gain a large online following spreading your website and brand virally through the web. While links from publicly accessible pages such as a Facebook Page will have link value, note that many links from social media sites such as Twitter have “no follow” tags attached, which tells search engines not to assign link value to the destination page. Most social bookmarking sites also have “no

follow” attributes assigned to outgoing links, but they can still help drive traffic to your site. Here is a list of social bookmarking sites:

www.kevin.vanzonneveld.net/techblog/article/list_of_social_bookmarking_sites.

Even if sites like Twitter don't assign link value back to your site, they can still help to drive traffic to your site, as well as to promote it by generating buzz around your brand and product offerings. Increased buzz means increased awareness about your brand online, which results in more people talking about you and linking to your website from their own blogs or websites. Creating buzz can be effectively done through social media sites but also through other offline promotional methods, such as flyers, advertorials and business cards.

Overall, combining off- and on-page optimisation will help your business to maximise its visibility on search engines, as well as to drive more traffic to your site through increased exposure of your brand online.

7. Tools and applications

6.1 Google Webmaster Tools

Google Webmasters Tools is a free online tool and has been mentioned several times throughout this chapter and is extremely valuable for measuring and monitoring SEO progress. Chapter 8 will provide added insight into analysing data to ensure that your website is optimised and conversions are high. Each tool is a building block for better understanding your website's capabilities, competitors and opportunities. But before jumping ahead to chapter 8, first you need to understand how to track and maintain your website, keeping search engines and customers happy. Welcome to Google Webmaster Tools.

Using this tool will help you do the following:

- See which web pages on your site are indexed with Google.
- See errors Google encountered when crawling your site.
- View all search engine queries that list your website as a result.
- See all websites that link to your website (incoming links).

The best way to learn about and understand this tool is to try it. There is a video tutorial about it in the video section of this chapter. Below is the step-by-step process for signing in to www.google.com/webmasters/tools.

Once you have watched the video tutorial, you will need to do the following:

1. Log in or create a Google Account.
2. Add your site to Google Webmaster Tools.
3. Verify your site with Google Webmaster Tools.

4. Submit a sitemap to Google Webmaster.

Here is a Yola tutorial on how to verify your website with Webmaster: bit.ly/5FCDtS. This tutorial will also show you how to submit your XML sitemap to Google.

Once you have completed the verification process, the second part of call is the Webmaster Central blog at googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com. There are several noteworthy links to a variety of topics and tools to enhance your understanding of Webmaster Tools. Spend some time testing some of the tools and over time you will see great results.

It is a very simple process to add your website to Google Webmaster Tools. Below is a screenshot of the verification options. Choose the “Add a meta-tag to your site’s home page” option, and then watch the Yola tutorial to complete the verification process.

Verify ownership

Verification status

Not Verified

There are several ways to prove to Google that you own <http://www.capetowntraveltips.com/>. Select the option that is easiest for you.

- Add a DNS record to your domain's configuration**
You can use this option if you can sign in to your domain registrar or hosting provider and add a new DNS record.
- Add a meta tag to your site's home page**
You can choose this option if you can edit your site's HTML.
- Upload an HTML file to your server**
You can choose this option if you can upload new files to your site.
- Link to your Google Analytics account**
You can use this option if your site already has a Google Analytics tracking code that uses the asynchronous snippet. You must be an administrator on the Analytics account.

Instructions:

Google will find all Google Analytics tracking codes that are active on the index page for this site. Ownership of the site is established if you are an administrator for any of the Google Analytics data will be accessed.

Verify Do this later

6.2 Keyword Density

www.keyworddensity.com

This is a simple but very effective tool to check the keyword density of your website. Type in your website's URL and then a keyword or phrase. Then click "Analyze Keyword Density".

Here are the results from the analysis for the keyword "internet marketing":

		http://www.getsmarter.co.za	
HTML		Keywords	Total
Title		0	4
Meta_Description		0	14
Meta_Keywords		0	34
Visible_Text		0	635
Alt_Tags		1	17
Comment_Tags		0	25
Domain_Name		0	1
Image_tags		0	88
Linked_Text		1	67
Option_Tags		0	0
Reference_Tags		1	41
Total		3	926

As you can see, the majority of GetSmarter's keywords are in the visible text of the website.

7.1 Keyword research tools

- Google Insight tool (www.google.com/insights/search) is free and incredible valuable for keyword research. You are able to research keyword search volume patterns across geographical regions, timeframes and categories.
- Google search-based keyword tool provides keyword ideas based on actual Google search queries (adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal).
- Keyword Discovery (www.keyworddiscovery.com) compiles keyword statistics from all major search engines and provides keyword density analysis, search trends and other research tools. There is a free trial version. (There are more keyword tools in the "Articles of interest" section of the Learning website.)

7.2 Yola Wpromote

Yola has its own website promotion tool that you may want to become familiar with if you continue to maintain your website after this course. Wpromote is not free, but is an interesting add-on to your Yola site. Instead of submitting ads to each search engine separately, Yola will help you create a quick list of keywords and then create PPC adverts across different search engines, including Google, Yahoo, MSN and more. If you would like more information about Wpromote, visit the website at yola.wpromote.com.

8. Summary

SEO is a gradual process that takes time, patience and a lot of research. Most sites will gain SEO traction gradually as they add new content to their site, tweak and optimise content over time and as search engines discover, index and understand their content, and as the amount of quality links pointing to their site increases. Always use ethical means to improve SEO and never take any technique to extreme measures -- this may do your site more harm than good.

In this chapter, you:

- Learned what SEO is and how search engines use this data to categorise your website.
- Discovered that SEO is vital for ensuring that users and search engines can find your website easily.
- Learned how to optimise your website for search engines by employing a range of techniques, from title tags to on-page copy.
- Learned the best ways to optimise your website from off your page.
- Discovered some useful tools for helping you optimise your website and improving the way search engines see your page.

9. References

1. Google's Search Engine Optimisation Starter Guide
2. How does a search engine work? websearch.about.com/od/enginesanddirectories/a/searchengine.htm
3. Evolution of the search engine optimisation concept in the world of internet marketing: ezinearticles.com/?Evolution-of-Search-Engine-Optimization-Concept-in-the-World-of-Internet-Marketing&id=4671967
4. Keyword stuffing: www.seo.com/blog/keyword-stuffing
5. Ultimate benefits of SEO: www.nextsbd.com/seo/benefits-of-seo.php
6. Why is search engine marketing so important today? www.virtualsplat.com/search-engine-optimization/benefits-of-seo.asp

CHAPTER 7

SOCIAL MEDIA AND VIRAL MARKETING

Key concepts

What is social networking, types of social media, outlining a social media strategy for your business, building, maintaining and communiting with your social networking community, viral marketing and creating your own viral marketing campaign.

CHAPTER 7: SOCIAL MEDIA AND VIRAL MARKETING

1. Introduction

If any single trend exemplifies the online space of today, it is social media. The entire premise of web 2.0 is based on the ability to network with peers and likeminded communities using technology. The largest and most famous social media community of all, Facebook, has exceeded 750 million subscribers and is still growing steadily; by population, it would be the third largest country in the world. Social communities facilitated by social media platforms have sprung up around hobbies, locations, causes, beliefs, creative works and even brands. They have incredible power to steer opinions and spread messages, making them both extremely valuable and very risky to use. This chapter will provide you with a simple and honest overview of the true benefits of social media, as well as the challenges and problems you may face in marketing your brand across these platforms.

In this chapter, you will:

- Discover what social networking really is (section 2).
- Learn about the many types of online social media used today (section 3).
- Discover how to outline a social media strategy for your business (section 4).
- Learn how to build, maintain and communicate with your social networking community (section 5).
- Learn how viral marketing works, and get tips for creating your own viral campaign (section 6).

2. Types of social media

Not all social media are created equally. Some are general sites for chatting with friends and some are serious and intricate business networks. Others are highly

focused niche community pages. Most are impossible to fully define because they have their own unique combinations of features, tools and uses. In addition, not all are well suited to marketing strategies, or may require radically different approaches.

2.1 Social networks

Social networks are the biggest, most popular and most widely used social media platforms. The leader in this field is Facebook, with over 500 million users (and growing), but others like MySpace, Orkut and LinkedIn boast substantial memberships too. Social networks allow users to create virtual approximations of their real-world social relationships, and facilitate the sharing of news and content. Their focus is usually on immediate, sharing-based casual interactions between acquaintances, though this can vary depending on the platform.

There are online tools available for creating custom social networks. Ning, a paid service, allows anyone to create a customised social network around a cause, business, location or shared interest; the creator can add a variety of features, including advertising and donation applications. Recently, social networks have branched off into niche fields: for example, Meetup (www.meetup.com) is a social network that aims to facilitate meetings in the real world between people who share an interest.

2.1.1 Facebook

Facebook is a great tool for creating an online profile. You can create an official Facebook Page, which is a public profile page that can be created for any brand, cause, hobby or company. Facebook users can “Like” the page if they appreciate the content or the creator. Facebook Pages also allow you to interact with customers by posting photos, chatting in the discussion forum, posting updates on the wall and adding information pertinent to the business.

2.1.2 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is primarily a business-to-business social network, although it is commonly used as a place for professionals across various industries to network online. You can create a profile for your company, join groups and network with related businesses. The company’s page can list your current and past employees, information about your business and contact details. Others can “follow” your profile to get updates about you.

Should you create your own social network?

Since services like Ning and BuddyPress allow you to build your very own social network, you may think this is a better alternative to simply creating a profile on Facebook or MySpace. However, there are some challenges too. Here are the pros and cons of creating your own social network.

Pros:

- Web tools make the process easy and accessible to anyone

- Complete control over the design, content and build of the platform
- Customisable for you and your customers' needs
- Create a unique platform and allow a niche community to grow around it

Cons:

- You often need to pay for the service, unlike other networks that are free to use
- Your community will exist in isolation from the rest of the web
- You can't rely on friends of followers finding your network, since it is isolated
- You are more responsible for upkeep and maintenance of your page

2.2 Forums

Forums are online community message boards where users can post and reply to topics. While forums are not as immediate as instant messaging, they allow conversations to grow as participants discuss a topic publicly. Users can link their accounts to friends' profiles, and can gain credibility based on the number of posts they have written and discussions they have contributed to.

Forums can either stand alone as a community platform, or can be integrated into larger social networks (for example, Facebook Pages have forums). Google Groups allows anyone to create a group around a hobby, organisation, location or other common feature; these groups tend to be forum based. In almost all cases, forums are very tightly focused around a single hobby (or an aspect of one), organisation or interest. This makes them a good place for niche product marketing, though this should be kept separate from the actual discussions themselves as this is considered spam in most forums' terms. Forums also provide a unique opportunity for building a relationship with a brand representative in a social space – MyBroadband (www.mybroadband.co.za) does this very effectively. Most forums are moderated; if a moderator suspects someone of trying to advertise or of not being who they say they are, that person will be reprimanded or even kicked off the forum.

2.3 Blogs

A blog (the contraction of "web log") is an online tool that allows a user to publish articles or posts on any topic; it can also serve as a personal web journal. Good blogs are focused around a clearly defined topic and are updated regularly (though the frequency depends on the nature of the content). Ideally, blog articles are short, easy to read and discuss or explain one central idea. The social part of blogging has two aspects.

First, readers can comment on a post by leaving a short text-like message, and can engage in a discussion with other readers and the blogger.

Second, blogs can form networks around related interests, or can join blogging

communities – an example is BlogHer (www.blogher.com), a large portal that allows blogs to join the network under categories that are interesting to female readers, giving the site interesting content and gaining exposure for the writers.

Of course, besides this, links to articles and blogs make good content for sharing on other social networks. Remember to use trackbacks, which are links to other blog posts that inspired or are related to your post – this builds the blogging community and encourages others to visit your pages. Blogs can be used in marketing by promoting and explaining a company's products and by providing interesting and useful related content to readers.

2.3.1 Microblogs

A recent arrival on the blogging front is the microblog. A microblog takes the idea of a blog – an article discussing a topic or sharing an idea – and shrinks it down exponentially with a strict character limit. Since web users dislike long, complex content, micro-blogging is an excellent tool to use – it keeps messages short and simple. The best-known microblogging service is Twitter, one of the world's largest and most active social platforms. Twitter users can follow others to read their messages, or can be followed themselves. The shortness of the message (no more than 140 characters) means that tweets have to be carefully tailored; URL-shortening services are useful because they condense a web address to preserve characters. Twitter is an excellent way to share news about your brand, and is suitable for companies that have frequent updates that they want to share with a large community. On Twitter, you can create a corporate profile and interact under its name. Your profile includes a very brief description of your business and a link to your website.

Microblogging epitomises immediacy because the messages are so short and because they vanish so quickly from a user's view as more recent ones appear. It is also considered a conversational medium, and users expect timely replies to questions; this makes microblogging a great tool for web PR and brand promotion.

2.3.2 Podcasts

A podcast is the audio-visual equivalent of a written blog: it is a series of sound or video clips that together form a radio-style show. Like blogs, podcasts focus on a specific topic and expand on it by providing a range of multimedia content – however, they must be updated regularly to be valuable. Depending on your brand or product, a podcast could be an excellent way to communicate new information with customers. For example, you could record news, bulletins and editorial content that users can load onto their iPods and listen to when they're on the move.

2.4 Aggregators

An aggregator is a web tool that collects and filters updated online information according to certain parameters. It functions like a tailor-made news stream: it can be set to find all information about a person, a certain piece of technology, a political theory – anything you can think of. This content is gathered and displayed in a single, easy-to-use stream, taking away the hassle of having to source the information manually.

2.4.1 RSS readers

An RSS reader, like Google Reader, is an aggregator that gathers web content from blogs and other types of content-sharing websites. It allows the content to be tagged and organised by category, making it easy for the user to access. The content will either appear in a special stream on a separate web page, or can be added to a customised home page. RSS readers themselves don't have a direct application for marketing, but they are a good way of keeping up with industry news.

2.4.2 Web alerts

Web alerts, like those by Google Alerts, are emails sent to you whenever a specifically defined keyword appears on the web. This is an extremely useful tool for marketers, as it keeps them up to date with any mentions of their brand online and allows them to track both the good and bad comments being made – an important aspect of web PR. Web alerts also gives you a good sense of the amount of media coverage over time, judging by the number and frequency of alerts.

2.5 Social sharing

2.5.1 Social bookmarking

Social bookmarking is the process of sharing web bookmarks online with others. It works just like regular browser-based bookmarking, except that the links can be stored online and shared with anyone who follows you; in addition, the pages with the most bookmarks or recommendations are boosted in search engine rankings.

Creating newsworthy content and getting it bookmarked on social platforms can lead to viral spread and increased awareness of your brand. Some of the most popular services are Delicious, StumbleUpon and Reddit, where the most popular content percolates to the top and attracts new viewers. A front-page appearance on one of these platforms can literally draw tens of thousands of viewers to your content. This tool allows marketers to track user data by seeing who links to their articles and also to see what other content they find interesting. This provides valuable insights into the target market and is a good addition to other analytics strategies.

2.5.2 Video sharing

Video sharing is the process of spreading video content online. Just like any other media sharing (links, articles, music, text and so on), effective video sharing involves sending appropriate, entertaining and useful content to the right people. Creating video, or even plain audio, clips is an effective way to humanise your brand. You can make the content available on your website, on distribution services like iTunes and on video-sharing services like YouTube (www.youtube.com) and Zoopy (www.zoopy.co.za). The combination of sound and audio, often distilled into short clips, makes videos very desirable and can result in viral sharing. Some of the most popular viral videos include the Old Spice campaign (www.youtube.com/watch?v=owGykVbfgUE), the Evolution of Dance – the most watched YouTube

video ever (www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMH0bHeiRNg) and Nike's "Write the Future" World Cup campaign (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISggaxXUS8k>).

2.6 Collaborative creation

The big appeal of the internet is the possibility of working collaboratively on projects with people from all corners of the globe. There are two popular ways of effecting this collaboration.

2.6.1 Wikis

A wiki is a web page on a specific topic that can be edited by anyone. The best-known collection of wikis is Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia that is created and maintained by millions of people from all around the world. It is a great indicator of the power and potential of collaborative knowledge creation. Wiki pages can be created on any topic, and the process of collaborating and sharing is important to building a community. For example, WikiTravel is starting to replace traditional guidebooks because it's completely up to date, written by a wide variety of people and free. Consider the power of a wiki page created around your product, on which you can include new information, improvements and features – and even allow customers to add their own suggestions and feedback.

2.6.2 Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing is the process of sourcing ideas from an online "crowd" of many people at once. It can be an excellent way for brainstorming projects, solving complex problems or getting many people involved in a competition or other brand activity. This teamwork is a valuable social activity and can result in some excellent outcomes, not least new strategies or solutions. However, care should be taken not to exploit contributors because they will hesitate to participate the next time.

2.7 Converging media

Increasingly, social media is being integrated into traditional, static websites to improve the user experience and gain valuable user data; this has become very popular on news sites and other pages that require users to log in. For example, CNN has recently implemented Connect with Facebook, which lets users log in with their Facebook accounts instead of creating new user accounts with CNN. Not only do these websites offer commenting features, they also include Facebook Like buttons, one-click sharing (to Twitter, social bookmarking applications and email), forums and other features. In fact, social media have become so prominent that many sites allow you to log in to their portals using your Facebook account details.

However, despite the ease and user friendliness of this strategy, there are several risks involved. The biggest is the loss of privacy for the user. Many people are not aware that when the log in with a social networking account to another site, that site gets access to their publicly available user data, as well as to the data of all of their friends. This access has some considerable repercussions, including indicating which pages you have visited, contacting your friends, harvesting demographic

data and using the data to target you with adverts and content. While some people have no problem with this, others who are concerned about their privacy may be giving more away than they are comfortable with.

3. What is social networking?

Social networking, one of the most widely used forms of social media, is an online activity in which friends or peers in a social group interact with each other using a central website or application to transmit messages. These messages can contain text, images, videos, links or other sharable media. There are four main characteristics of social networking.

- 1. Connecting.** This is by far the most important part of the entire social networking process. Web users build complex networks of friends, family, colleagues and strangers, and devise ways of communicating with these disparate groups. If you've heard of the "six degrees of separation" idiom (which states that everyone in the world is connected to everyone else by a maximum of six steps along the social ladder), then you understand the premise of building connections online using social networking. Community is the central tenet of social networking.
- 2. Sharing.** The default communication method on a social network is sharing – passing interesting, funny, shocking or otherwise relevant content between people. Social networks are built to make sharing as easy as possible, and media that is passed around is similarly quickly digestible. Sharing good, useful and entertaining content raises users' credibility in the eyes of their peers.
- 3. Engaging.** While sharing is vital, engaging with other users and their shared material is equally so. Whether this engagement is a simple "like" or "retweet", a comment, an in-depth response, a satire or a critique, it is important to take an active role in shaping the message around the content. Also, it is easy to engage directly in conversation with any other individual or group of users, communicating meaningfully with them. Essentially, social media marketing is about building communities.
- 4. Reputation.** Your reputation in your social network is key to being taken seriously and affects the way your shared content is perceived. The messages and content that you share contribute to your online persona and give your profile a specific personality and focus. For a brand, having a good reputation means that your content will be more widely accepted and not viewed through the negative lens of self-promotion. In addition, a good reputation builds trust, which is absolutely crucial in the social sphere.

3.1 A brief history of social networking

In its infancy, social networking was little more than mass emails sent between users over the Bulletin Board System, a virtual and very rudimentary platform started in 1978. In the late 1980s, the CompuServe platform offered the first true online interaction, as users could post on forums and send direct emails to

each other. The early web protocols made it very difficult to build and find social pages, meaning that websites generally existed in isolation. To counteract this, several developers like Angelfire and GeoCities created tools to streamline the website-building process, making the web accessible to non-professionals for the first time. This social networking movement was started, and is dominated, by US-based companies.

Once fan and personal pages began appearing, they were joined together in “web rings” – linked communities of websites on a specific topic. At the same time, online forums and instant messaging chat programs were growing in popularity as people began to explore the possibilities of communicating with anyone around the globe. AOL was an early leader in creating a more social web experience by integrating search, chat, personal profiles and offline tools.

The first prototype social networks were launched in the late 1990s. Classmates.com was the first on the scene in 1995, operating under the premise that people wanted to connect with old friends and schoolmates. The site took off quickly, and was copied by less successful imitations like SixDegrees. Then, in 2002, the new wave of social networks revolutionised the fledgling industry. Friendster was the first modern social network and was an instant and massive success. It was followed a year later by LinkedIn, a more serious business network, and MySpace, a “cooler” site for sharing music and games.

Everything changed in 2006 when Facebook was launched to the general public (it had been available to US students since 2004). It gave users a new degree of immediacy and entertainment, packaged in a simple, minimalist interface. Its functionality quickly grew as applications and tools were added, making it the richest content-sharing platform on the web. Because it was such a generalist site, Facebook opened up the market for niche networks that catered for specific nationalities, groups, hobbies and uses. The final revolution came in 2007 with the arrival of Twitter into the mainstream. The microblogging site allowed users to share thoughts more simply and directly than ever before, and became the web’s first stop for breaking news and information.

3.2 Why do people use it?

There are probably as many reasons for using social networks as there are people using them, but here are some of the most common ones.

- **Socialising.** Human beings are social creatures and thrive on interactions with friends, family and colleagues. Almost everyone likes sharing their thoughts, ideas, hobbies, news and questions with others – especially those who are closest to them.
- **Immediacy.** Social networking is all about what is happening “now”. It is becoming increasingly important to keep up with current news and events, and sites like Twitter and Facebook can keep users on the ball.
- **Keeping in touch.** For those who have friends or family who live abroad, or who they are unable to visit regularly, social networking provides a good alternative. The “any time, anywhere” potential of social networking also

makes it an excellent way to communicate for those who travel often.

- **Planning events.** Many people use services like Facebook to plan their social calendars. If they weren't online, they would miss out on parties, meetings and other events.
- **Sharing media.** Virtually all social networks allow users to share photos, videos, text and links with each other. It's often the quickest and best way to share holiday snaps and funny stories with the largest number of people.
- **Applications.** Some of the big draw cards of social networks are the tools and games that are integrated in the platforms. From tracking birthdays to playing intricate simulation games (FarmVille on Facebook is an excellent example), applications make users' lives easier and give them a reason to keep coming back.
- **Meeting new people.** While friend-based networks rely on existing social relationships, others like Twitter and the business-based LinkedIn are for creating new meaningful connections. In addition, dating and hobby building are large components of this.
- **For business.** Increasingly, people are turning to social networks to get new clients and business contacts, find jobs, network with industry peers, market their brands and share industry advice.
- **Peer pressure.** Everybody is doing it already, and no one wants to be left out. Many people feel they have to be on social networks. Think of all the people you keep in touch with just through a social medium. Would you be willing to sacrifice that connection by logging out of your social network?

3.3 How can it be used as a marketing tool?

As with traditional marketing, the best way to get a product into the public space is to put it somewhere where the right people (your target market) will find it and start a conversation about it. Social networks, with their wealth of personal and preference data, make it that much easier to find, speak to and convert your market. There are three essential components of marketing on social networks.

1. **Advertising.** You have already learned the importance of placing your online adverts in the right places and of targeting the correct keywords and users. Social networking takes this idea a step further because it involves marketing in a social space – where adverts and promotional material are less welcome. This makes it both harder to market (people don't want to have an advertising message forced on them) and more powerful (since the social space is ideal for sharing, recommending and spreading adverts between friends).
2. **Building a brand presence.** This is the “soft sell” part of social network marketing. By building a brand presence on a social network, your company becomes a social actor that can engage with customers. It also becomes a cornerstone in your web PR strategy.

3. **Word of mouth.** This is the riskiest and least controllable aspect of social networking, but one that can reap considerable rewards. Online word of mouth spreads best over social networks and can be harnessed and steered by a clever online marketer. People are more likely to try something new based on what people in their social group have recommended – so your aim with social media is to try to get the right people to speak about your brand and pass on the message.

4. Social media strategy

Now that you have learned a bit about the social media available online, it is time to think about how you can harness them for your purposes. By all accounts, social media marketing has taken off in a big way; for example, advertisers spent 10 times more on Facebook advertising in 2010 than in 2009. At this stage, it is very important to consider your company carefully and to be honest about your needs and resources. In this section, you will find three questions that you should answer for yourself to decide whether to use social media, and which social media strategy is best for you.

4.1 What do you want to achieve?

This question is important to any marketing strategy, but especially to the less-defined online space. What outcomes do you want from the campaign? For example:

- Do you want increased sales of your product or service?
- Do you want to create an improved company image?
- Do you want to connect and engage with your customers?
- Do you want to spread the word about a new product?

Note that there is nothing here about increased traffic to your website; this is a by-product of social media and should not be a goal because you are working with other platforms. Once you have decided on a goal, consider whether it is possible to achieve it online, and which social media platforms you should use to do this. Greater sales will be easy if you have an online store, but less likely if the customer must go to the shops to make the purchase. Your company image can improve if you are online, but what about people who bad-mouth you? Will you be able to spread the word far enough and to the right people?

Spell out your goal clearly and try to include some definite, measurable elements. Even if your goal is quite vague, like improving the image of your brand, try to express the outcome in figures and clear results: for example, you expect at least 20 positive mentions on Twitter each month, or at least 100 Likes on your Facebook Page before a certain date. Transforming your ephemeral goal into clear data will make choosing a social media platform much easier.

4.2 What is appropriate for your business?

This question involves making two decisions. First, and most importantly, is social media appropriate for your business? Consider the questions below:

- How much of your target market is online? And do they use computers or cell phones?
- Does your target market engage with and enjoy using social media?
- Will your target market have sufficient leisure-time access to be able to view your content? Many people are only online at work but cannot access social media sites.
- Is your target market unlikely to respond to social media based on demographic factors? Older people and women tend to be less active online .

Social media marketing looks so affordable and easy that everyone thinks their business should have at least one or two profiles on various social networks. However, this is definitely not the case. Having the wrong social media strategy in place – or sometimes having one at all – can turn out to be harmful: a badly created or outdated page can have a very negative effect on brand perception.

Secondly, ask yourself which type of social media is the most appropriate in order to connect with your target market. Consider the following:

- What are your target market's demographics, especially age group?
- Are you communicating with businesses or the public?
- How tech savvy are your customers? Will they have high-speed connections and will they be able to navigate complex pages?
- How does your market engage with social media already? Are they active or not?

Trying to reach a target market on the wrong platform will at best get you ignored, and at worst suggest that you are out of touch and unprofessional. Older banking clients will not respond well to the youthful and music-based MySpace platform. Facebook is not the best place to communicate with fellow businesses. Use the information in this course (especially the table in section 4.5), and your own judgement and research, to decide which platform works best for your particular brand.

4.3 What resources are available to you?

When starting any project, you must consider whether you have enough money, staff and time to pull it off successfully. Do not think of launching a social media strategy as a quick and simple once-off process: after the initial investment, your profiles, blogs, pages and feeds must be maintained and kept up to date. Here are some important considerations:

- Can you afford to hire a dedicated social media marketer?
- Can you afford to dedicate an existing staff member to social media?
- Will your marketers embrace social media? Are they well versed in it? Do they understand and use it, and will they experiment with it?
- Will your marketer have enough time each day to maintain all of your social media profiles? This includes creating and sharing content, tracking analytics, reading comments and posts, responding to customers and many other tasks.
- Can you afford proper social media advertising?
- Are you willing to commit time, money and personnel to a long-running social media campaign? You won't get results overnight.
- Judging your product and audience, does it make sense to devote resources to social media?

You need the buy-in from not only your marketing team but from everyone, including management. Although social media marketing appears to be free – after all, you don't need to pay to sign up with Facebook or Twitter – running a proper strategy on it can be time consuming. A marketer will have to devote at least an hour each day to maintaining the profiles and campaigns, time that could be spent on other marketing activities. It is up to you to judge whether the time and money spent are worth the results; this will relate back to your audience and product. The tools you will learn about in chapter 8 will help you make these decisions. Also, remember that there will always be new platforms to explore and you may not be able to keep up with trends if you overfill your social media plate initially.

4.4 Benefits and risks

4.4.1 Five benefits of social media marketing

1. You can have personal and immediate contact with your customers. Engaging with people in a relaxed social space is conducive to them accepting and remembering your marketing message.
2. You can create a holistic brand image by combining your marketing message with other useful content, conversations, customer feedback and brand personality. It's also a great way to manage your brand's reputation, and allows you to create a devoted community around your brand.
3. You can target your audience precisely and very specifically, resulting in a much higher return on investment and a higher click-through rate to your website or product pages.
4. Social media tools are relatively easy to use, cheaper than traditional media and don't require specialised technical skills. This means that anyone can learn to use them effectively.

5. Being online is vital in our interconnected world, and social media is one of the quickest and cheapest ways to get your brand onto the internet. Your product will reach new markets and will spread more easily online, increasing your visibility. In addition, peer recommendations are much more effective than pure marketing messages.

4.4.2 Five risks of social media marketing

1. A poorly managed social media presence can make your company look unprofessional, lazy and out of touch. Social media requires considerable time investment to reap rewards – there are no instant results and it takes a long time to generate meaningful interactions. If you cannot afford the investment, it is usually better to go without.
2. Every comment, reply and piece of content you put on your profile is visible for a very long time. If considerable care is not taken, this visibility can act against you – especially if you say something inappropriate by mistake or are misunderstood by your audience.
3. Because customers and critics can engage with your brand openly, you no longer have full control over your marketing message. If you handle the web PR badly, this could result in brand esteem dropping, your brand being ridiculed and sales falling. However, if you are doing something contrary to what your target market needs, then social media opens the channels for them to complain about this – this isn't a bad thing. Since customers are already speaking about you, the faster you can sort out the issues, the better.
4. Your target market may not respond to the social media channels at all, resulting in a lot of wasted time and effort. This could happen either because you applied the wrong strategy to your target market, or you used social networking for a market that is unfamiliar with it.
5. Because social media is a leisure-time activity, your audience may resent pushy or obvious marketing tactics. If you don't work at creating meaningful relationships with your audience, you will be ignored.

4.5 Social media in a nutshell

This table provides some suggestions on the best ways to use the various types of social media. Use it as a guide for your own research when creating your social media marketing plan. The “suitable for” column suggests some target markets that respond well to the medium, while the “maintenance” column indicates what kind of activities and input the medium requires.

PLATFORM	SUITABLE FOR	MAINTENANCE
Facebook (www.facebook.com)	<p>Young, tech-savvy audiences</p> <p>Clothing, fashion and accessories</p> <p>Products focused at university students</p> <p>Popular brands that benefit from word of mouth</p> <p>Entertainment products and media</p> <p>Products with mass-market appeal</p>	<p>Reading user comments, forum posts and direct messages</p> <p>Posting interesting content (found or self-made)</p> <p>Chatting casually with customers</p> <p>Managing Facebook advertising and tracking analytics</p>
Twitter (www.twitter.com)	<p>Niche or alternative products</p> <p>Technology-focused audiences</p> <p>Content or knowledge-focused businesses</p>	<p>Reading tweets by other posters and mentions of your brand or profile</p> <p>Responding instantly to questions or comments</p> <p>Finding and following competitors, industry leaders and influencers</p>
LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com)	<p>Business-to-business communication</p> <p>Highly skilled professionals</p> <p>Business services, including freelance</p>	<p>Finding and accepting contacts</p> <p>Joining and interacting on business-related groups</p>
YouTube (www.youtube.com)	<p>Viral marketing strategies</p> <p>Youthful, edgy and mainstream audiences</p>	<p>Monitoring comments</p> <p>Checking for copyright-infringing copies of your videos and requesting take-downs if necessary</p>
Company blog	<p>Content or knowledge-focused businesses</p> <p>Professional, skilled services</p> <p>Business or commerce audiences</p> <p>Entrepreneurial companies</p> <p>Material that educates and helps readers</p>	<p>Writing and editing articles</p> <p>Posting articles to the blog</p> <p>Distributing articles online</p> <p>Cross-linking with other relevant blogs</p> <p>Replying to comments</p>

PLATFORM	SUITABLE FOR	MAINTENANCE
Company forum	<p>Large, service-based companies</p> <p>Companies that offer support services</p> <p>Technical products</p> <p>Collaborative communities (e.g. open-source software)</p>	<p>Constant checking and responding to feedback, questions and comments</p> <p>Moderating discussions and taking actions against infringing users</p>

5. Communicating on social media

As you have already learned about writing for the web, different online media require different approaches and styles. Social media has its own rules for communicating effectively and appropriately. Web users who frequent social networking platforms are generally quite adept at spotting marketing and expect certain rules of engagement to be respected. In this section, you will learn the best ways to grow and communicate with your social media audience.

5.1 Rules for social media communication

1. Follow, don't lead. Your social media profile is not a platform you control; rather, it is a shared social space that you can use to steer customers towards your marketing message. Be prepared to surrender your voice to your followers and fans, and react to their comments and actions more than you try to lead them. Remember that you are engaging in a dialogue.
2. Listen. One of the most important aspects of communication in general is listening actively and attentively to what someone else has to say. You should spend much more time reading, listening and monitoring discussions than speaking yourself. Paying attention to what customers are saying will give you great insights into how they feel about your products and services. Also, keep in mind that you are just one participant in the overall conversation and should not drown out what others are saying.
3. Respond. Personal and direct communication is essential to social media. If a customer addresses you, respond to them in the same medium and do so as quickly as you can – instant replies are highly appreciated. Thank customers for praise and useful feedback. If somebody complains about a problem, address it by speaking directly and openly to the complainant and emphasise your desire for open dialogue. Never ignore angry comments or calls for clarification. The US company United Airlines learned that ignoring even one vocal customer can be very harmful: after his complaint about a broken guitar was ignored, Dave Carroll wrote a song about it and posted it on YouTube. It went viral and forced the company to reconsider its customer complaint policy. You can view the video here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YGc4zOqozo.
4. Be honest. Truth and frankness are not negotiable on social media. Whenever you respond to anyone on a social media platform, be completely honest

about what you say – and have no doubt that you will be found out if you bend the truth. Also, make sure that your claims are not vague and misleading, and never make big promises that you are unable to follow through on. If your product has a flaw or you have made a mistake, apologise directly and be honest about the reason for the problem. It also helps to offer compensation. Any dishonesty or misrepresentation will be severely criticised by the community.

5. Stay relevant. Only post the newest, most interesting and most customer-appropriate content. If what you share is relevant and useful to your readers, they will help you spread it. Keep an eye on current trends and find ways to link them back to your company or product. For example, since people are currently very environmentally conscious, highlight how your product or service could help conserve the environment (but only use this spin if it is relevant and true).
6. Find a balance. While it is important to stay relevant and current, you must also find a balance between relevance and how often you post content. Consider both your own time constraints and the nature of the platform. In general, the shorter or quicker the contribution, the more often you should use it, and vice versa. For example, feel free to post tweets a few times a day, but don't write more than a few short blog posts a week. After all, your customers can only absorb so much before they feel overloaded and venture elsewhere. And don't underestimate the time it takes to craft meaningful contributions.

5.2 Building your community

Once you have chosen one or several social media platforms and have created your brand's profile or page, you need to start the challenging and ongoing task of building a community. Here are some good ways for encouraging new and existing customers to interact with you on social media platforms.

1. Recruit your current clients. If you have an existing database of contact details, let your customers know about your new venture and encourage them to sign up. Add links to your social media presences (such as your company Facebook and Twitter accounts) on your website.
2. Incentivise. Make it worth your customers' whiles to sign up on your social network: for example, you can offer exclusive deals to them, give them the latest updates first or give them discounts on products. Time-based promotional offers (e.g. bonuses that apply before a certain cut-off date) work best.
3. Run competitions. One of the best ways to encourage your current followers to invite their friends is to run competitions where the best recruiters win a prize, or where everyone will receive a prize if the number of followers reaches a certain number before the time runs out.
4. Make new friends. If you are using social media properly, you will be making new contacts every day as you follow and converse with others. Join their

conversations and spread their links. Then get them to return the favour.

5. Spread the word. Get your message out far and wide – write blog articles, tweet about it, email industry contacts and friends, advertise in traditional media, attend conferences to chat to people in person and so on. This may sometimes require courage and audacity, but don't be afraid to put your brand out there.

5.3 Maintaining your community

Getting followers is simply the first step of your community-building process. What you really want is for them to return often, engage in discussions and share your content. To achieve that, you need to create relevant content and an engaging community.

5.3.1 Content-based value

Some types of social media lend themselves to creating loyal followers around new and useful content. These generally include blogs, microblog feeds like Twitter, wiki pages, video-sharing sites and content aggregators. Their biggest draw card is the large amount of useful, community-filtered content; users create a custom “news stream” by following others who have similar interests to them and who provide excellent links and recommendations. To succeed in creating this value, you must position yourself both as a creator and a sharer of this desired content.

5.3.2 Community-based value

Other types of social media aim to create communities that are themselves valuable for their closeness, interaction, support, entertainment or other social engagement. Examples of these are social networks like Facebook and Orkut, forums and some kinds of collaborative work, like crowdsourcing. Customers return to these platforms for the enjoyable and stimulating discussions and for the community atmosphere. Creating a valuable community is much harder than finding and sharing good content because the value of a community is less definite and measurable and takes a much longer time to realise. To succeed in building a community, you must spend a lot of time encouraging discussions, monitoring users' behaviour and fostering community spirit by creating joint experiences, like events and competitions.

5.3.3 Repeat customers count

Three of the main reasons people turn into repeat customers are because they received good service, their complaints and concerns were resolved, and they felt their service provider cared. By now, you should be well aware of how easy it can be to achieve these outcomes on social media. By creating a content or community-based platform that users can return to, they are absorbing your marketing messages and are more likely to make repeat purchases because your business is at the forefront of their minds. Consider these benefits: repeat customers spend 67% more than new customers and it costs six times less to sell something to a repeat customer.

Repeat customers also play an important role in the community because they can broadcast their satisfaction both actively and passively. Of course, somebody singing your praises is very valuable, but seeing the same person contributing often to a Facebook page or blog comment thread also instils confidence in the brand. Encourage community members to become repeat customers by offering incentives or loyalty programs, and keep the community engaged on your chosen media so that they are more exposed to your brand. Make the benefits of sticking around very clear; don't let customers drift away after their initial contact with your brand.

5.3.4 What do people want?

It is vital to monitor how your community responds to various types of content. Do they enjoy advice articles, competitions, polls or calls for suggestions? Keeping track of the most viewed content means that you can produce more of the things that people like and save resources by cutting out the content that is unpopular. Monitor the conversations that are happening around your brand and add to them meaningfully. Also, feel free to experiment with new approaches and to ask for suggestions and user-generated media.

5.3.5 Social networking personalities

People on social networks can be divided into several personality types, each of which requires a specific approach. Here are some of the most common ones.

- **The influencer.** An influencer is a social media linchpin, a hub of knowledge, a person who others look to for advice, content and trends. Ideally, you want to become an influencer yourself, since the role is extremely powerful and steers public perception. Treat influencers with respect, provide them exclusive material and do everything to get them on your side.
- **The lurker.** A lurker is someone who views and takes part in social media but never openly participates or speaks up. For example, a forum lurker may read the posts and conversations but will never add comments. The majority of your social media community are likely to be lurkers, since only about 10% of people take steps to comment or engage actively. The one place lurkers will show up is in your analytics data, since their activities leave trails there.
- **The brand prophet.** A prophet is someone who is so enthused by your product that they spread the message far and wide, even if they are not influencers. Prophets are useful because they spread your content to their social networks, increasing your exposure. If somebody is truly enthusiastic about your brand, consider offering them a special deal or referral fee – or even simply thank them for their vocal support.
- **The complainer.** A complainer is someone who will only speak up if they have a problem or issue to resolve. Complainers may seem negative, but they are generally otherwise-happy customers who are looking for help. One of the best social marketing moves is to address the problems of complainers openly and quickly, demonstrating the lengths you will go to to make a customer happy.

- **The troll.** A troll is someone who has nothing good to say about your brand and who will complain constantly and vocally about your product. Trolls are not looking for resolution, so there is little you can do for them. If ignoring them doesn't work, try challenging them to substantiate their points, or see if you can remove them from the community if the situation spirals out of control. Just make sure that you try to keep this offline.

Maintaining a community means dealing with all manner of people and remaining sensitive to individual issues as well as to group concerns. Ideally, once your community is launched, you should have very little to do as your customers will create the engagement. In reality, however, you will need to keep a close eye and monitor how conversations are evolving.

5.4 Brand personality

Since your brand must be part of the conversation around it, it is vital to create a “personality” for it. The personality can either be a general tone and feel or a specific character who embodies the brand. The aspects you need to consider are:

- **Your tone.** Is your brand serious and professional, or fun and casual? Suit your tone to your brand and target market, and keep it consistent. Also consider the words you use and create a brand lexicon to include them (which can tie in to your SEO strategy).
- **Your voice.** Is your brand taking the role of the helpful expert, a friend or a peer? Decide what role you want to play in the community and speak through that voice.
- **Your look.** Aside from tailoring your social media to your current brand identity (logo, colours and motifs), think of other ways you can bring the brand's personality across visually.

A brand with a defined personality is easier to relate to. If your brand has a mascot (think of Ronald McDonald or Tony the Tiger), it can take the role of brand ambassador on your social networks. However, make sure the character is humanised and addresses customers personally – they need to feel that there is a real person behind the façade.

5.4.1 Example: Mr Smarty Pants

Mr Smarty Pants is GetSmarter's own brand mascot. The black stick person with the distinctive pink cap appears on Facebook (where he can become a “friend”) and on the newsletter. To date, he has over 700 friends who engage occasionally with him on the Facebook profile. Mr Smarty Pants posts photos and links to company blog articles and responds to comments. His tone and voice are very fun, casual and informal, and he takes part in discussions “in character”. One of his biggest draw cards is his humorous name, which people enjoy using and find easier to relate to than a company name. Judging by feedback given and overall user engagement, Mr Smarty Pants has been a big success and continues to act as the centre around which the social community can grow.

5.5 Steps of community building

1. Observe. See what is happening online before you launch your own efforts, and keep an eye on social trends.
2. Pick platforms. Study the available social media and pick those platforms that are suited to your needs.
3. Recruit. Find influencers and current customers who will be willing to join your brand community.
4. Engage. Get the conversation started. Encourage the community to get involved and to generate their own content.
5. Measure. This is vital: use the correct web analytics to track what works and what doesn't.
6. Promote. Once your community is up and running, think of ways to get more people involved: advertising, competitions, special offers and so on.
7. Improve. Implement the lessons learned and metrics that you've measured to improve your community. This is an ongoing process.

6. Viral marketing

Viral marketing is an extremely popular concept of late and ties inextricably into social media. Essentially, viral marketing is the online equivalent of traditional word-of-mouth marketing, which means that a message spreads from person to person, reaching an exponentially growing number of people as the message is passed along to acquaintances. Viral marketing has itself become a bit of a viral concept and everyone is eager to launch their own campaigns. However, though it may seem random and effortless, viral marketing is actually a very intricate, challenging and planned process; it will not happen overnight. This section provides an overview of the topic and gives some advice on attempting to launch a campaign. For a quick introduction, watch this short video called “How to sell soap”: (www.youtube.com/watch?v=vj29qmLnBiE).

6.1 Organic versus controlled viral marketing

A media message can go viral in one of two ways. First, this can happen organically, when the message is picked up by chance by many people and is spread rapidly without any preplanning or intention. This is what happens when internet memes, like funny images or videos, become massively popular. For example, a recent video clip of a man who was overcome by the beauty of a double rainbow received over 10 million views and turned the phrase “double rainbow” into a synonym for something incredible or awesome. You can view the clip here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQSNhk5ICTI. Organic viral media has no agenda or hidden purpose because it is driven by normal people rather than marketers; it simply spreads because of its entertainment value.

Controlled viral marketing is the opposite of this. It involves a very carefully planned, prepared and tailored message that is sent out through managed channels and monitored as much as possible. It has a distinct marketing spin, though this may not be immediately obvious, and is built to be an optimal viral message. An example is Quicksilver's "dynamite surfing" video, available here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xfBNxNds0Q. Even though it depicts an obviously staged event, the video was so entertaining that it received 10 million views and had a massive marketing impact on the brand. Controlled viral marketing is part of a brand strategy and has defined, measurable goals. In general, the branded nature of the message has no effect on whether it will spread virally.

6.1.1 Alternate reality games

A recent trend in controlled viral marketing is the alternate reality game, or ARG. An ARG is a fictional, staged narrative that crosses many media and engages participants to take part and involve themselves in the story. An ARG can have many fictional characters, complex stories, difficult puzzles and mysteries, which require the combined input of many thousands (or even millions) of players to solve. They can also include real-world or offline-media components, such as physical clues hidden in real locations or real phone numbers that can be called to reveal a message. ARGs are extremely engaging and exciting for players when done right because players feel they are part of an exclusive group, especially when the game's nature is hidden and people believe they are solving real mysteries.

ARGs can either be obvious and branded, or can be subversive and abstract. An example of the former is the Lost Experience, a long-running and very complex ARG held between seasons 2 and 3 of Lost, a popular science fiction TV series. It initially involved several websites for fictional companies mentioned in the show that were filled with hidden conspiracy messages, and branched out to include real world websites for companies like Sprite, physical hidden clues, a novel, a phone line, TV commercials and other elements. Players were fully aware that the game was tied to the show, and pooled their considerable resources to solve extremely complex programming, physics, science and cultural mysteries.

An example of a subversive ARG is "I Love Bees", a 2004 campaign for the video game Halo 2. The story revolved around an artificial intelligence that took over control of a bee-keeping website and directed players to solve all manner of puzzles and questions. The link to the page was hidden in a trailer for Halo 2, but the game was not mentioned in any way throughout the experience, focusing instead on revealing the complex back-story of the ARG narrative. Both of these examples were massive successes and drew attention to the product they were promoting.

ARGs require an immense amount of time and effort to implement, and require everything from scriptwriters and actors to websites, physical clues and a large support staff. We do not recommend that you try to implement one; they are included here for interest.

6.1.2 Astroturfing

While controlled viral marketing is a viable and effective strategy, be careful to avoid astroturfing. Astroturfing is the creation of a planned, controlled viral

campaign that is disguised to look like an organic and spontaneous one. Since it relies on deceit and subversion, and is often eventually revealed to be a planned campaign, it is a very bad idea to use this strategy since the public will feel cheated.

Arguably, Cell C's 2010 campaign involving Trevor Noah is an example of astroturfing. Noah posted a video online in which he disparaged cellular networks in South Africa, and Cell C in particular. Although the video only received a small number of views, Cell C took out a full-page advert in two Sunday newspapers and published an apparently spontaneous apology to Noah and the public at large. The company was praised for its honest and realistic stance. However, only a few days later, Cell C launched a large campaign to promote its rebranding and its new focus on customer service – all of which starred Noah in his new role as “customer experience officer” (or CEO). This immediately cast doubt on Noah's initial clip and the supposedly sincere apology letter. Though opinions differ, it seems clear that Cell C attempted to capitalise of the viral appeal of the video and the letter. You can read a bit more about this here: memeburn.com/2010/08/cell-c-is-astroturfing-what-a-joke.

6.1.3 Success story: Old Spice

The Old Spice viral marketing campaign is arguably the most effective and successful use of social and viral media for marketing in recent years. Advertising agency WK sought to remedy Old Spice's unfashionable image by creating a series of viral adverts featuring Mustafa, an engaging and immensely popular character intended to be the ultimate male role model. The adverts not only used humour and self-referential gags, but also tapped into social insights around men and women, making them ideal for sharing. The campaign spanned a variety of social networks and was also shown on TV; the team even created over 180 personalised video responses to fan questions, taking the idea of an engaging and personalised social campaign to its furthest extent. Have a look at this video for an overview of the campaign's successes: www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=6685928n. Some of the facts are also summarised below.

Old Spice by numbers

6 million views on day 1

8 out of 11 of the top online videos on day 2

20 million views by day 3

40 million views total in week 1

Oldspice.com traffic up 300%

1.4 billion impressions in 6 months

Sales up by 107% in the last month

6.2 Creating a viral campaign

6.2.1 Is it worth the effort?

A controlled viral campaign requires a lot of planning and research, and an equal measure of luck. Even if you carefully craft a media message that taps into the preferences of your target audience and distribute it to the correct influencers, you are not guaranteed success. As with any social media, consider carefully whether the strategy is appropriate to your brand and whether the risk is worth the considerable effort and resources required. Viral marketing is best suited to popular, mainstream products aimed at young, connected audiences. If your product doesn't fall in this category, it is unlikely that viral marketing will work well for you.

6.2.2 Are the requirements in place?

Aside from the content itself, there are three important requirements that must be in place before you start your viral marketing campaign. First, you need an active, well-maintained and engaged core audience that is already engaging with your brand on a variety of social networks. Second, you need to have a much larger potential online target market to which the message can be spread. Third, assuming that your message will spread virally, you must have the physical capacity to deal with the large number of new visitors to your website (meaning that you must have backup servers) and must have ample stock of your product.

6.2.3 What content do you share?

The content that you intend to share has to have three essential characteristics: it must be easy to share, it must engage the viewer and there must be some payoff for the person who shares it. Let us look at these characteristics in more detail.

Easy sharing in a digital world is almost a given, because online messages are, by their very natures, easy to duplicate. Therefore, every single barrier that you put in place – like forced registration, delays in access or long download times – will slow your campaign significantly; people will become impatient and will move on to something else. There are several factors that make content easy to share.

First, viewing the message should not involve any lengthy sign-up or registration processes; ideally, none at all.

Second, it should be available in the most popular formats and on the most widely used platforms: for example, a video clip should be available on YouTube, Vimeo and at least one local site, like Zoopy or MyVideo; a text-based document is best created in Microsoft Word or PDF.

Third, tailor it to the technological circumstances of your customers: people with limited data and slow connections will not download a 20MB file or video.

Lastly, facilitate sharing by embedding the content on your page and including one-click sharing links to Facebook, Twitter and the most popular news aggregators.

One-click sharing

To enable simple and quick sharing of your content, you can add a tool like AddThis (www.addthis.com) to your page. Simply visit the link, select the type of buttons you want to include, click “Get your button” and follow the instructions for adding the tool on the next page. AddThis even allows you to add analytics, which is highly recommended for tracking clicks. Be aware that you will need to know the basics of HTML code to insert the tool yourself; if you are uncomfortable with this, speak to your web developer or IT department.



Examples of one-click sharing tools. Every icon is a button that lets you share content instantly.

Engaging content is hard to define because it depends so much on your target market and your marketing context. However, there are some general principles that you can apply. The best viral content is always entertaining, authentic and original – whether this means funny, educational, astonishing, unusual or just beautiful (though, overwhelmingly, humour is the most effective option). The most successful campaigns involve enjoyable interaction on the part of the viewer; the reason games are such a popular marketing tool is because they keep the person engaged for an extended period of time and often involve a competitive scoring mechanism. To see an example, have a look at the simple “Nom 4 Fud” game (n4fcats.lolrusgames.com) to examine how WalMart and IAMS have co-branded a viral, score-based experience.

Finally, the viewer must be motivated to share the campaign message by some personal benefit. This can be as minor as entertaining some friends or increasing their social capital by sharing new, interesting material or as significant as receiving a special offer, discount or winning a prize. People are motivated by the need to be popular and cool, by greed, competition and urgency. If your viral campaign can take advantage of these human traits, it will have an added chance at success.

6.2.4 Steps of a viral campaign

1. Having a well-established and active community is vital before you can start thinking about launching a viral campaign. Monitor your community for a long time to discover the trends in their preferences and to see when users are the most active. This will be your “seed”, or source, community.
2. Start planning your campaign by deciding what you want to achieve and how you will measure your success. Make sure that your infrastructure is in place (for example, that your website is ready or that you have your advertised product in stock) and that you are ready to handle a potentially large increase in visitors.

3. Develop a sharable message that will appeal to your community. This can be a video, game, text, image or any other media.
4. Spread the message to your seed community and encourage everyone to share it further. If the message has been well crafted, your community should be more than happy to pass it on. Make the message available through as many channels as possible, but especially the most popular and accessible ones.
5. Measure, measure, measure. Keep a close watch on your web analytics and use other tools, like Google Alerts, to monitor the spread of your message.
6. React to the results of the campaign. If it is a success, follow up with your newly interested customers. If the campaign is flagging, try getting more exposure for it by publishing it again in new places. Unfortunately, it is very hard to revive a failing viral campaign, since there are usually good reasons why it didn't succeed.
7. Analyse the results of your campaign. Return to your original goals and see whether you managed to achieve them, and assess what successes and failures you experienced. Take these into account for your next campaign.

6.2.5 Benefits

- A successful viral marketing campaign can bring in large numbers of customers and create valuable exposure from your brand. It is also an indicator that you understand your target market.
- Once you've made the initial investment, your message spreads without any effort on your part, meaning that you are getting essentially free advertising.
- You can experience both short-term and long-term gains as people visit your site to find out more, become customers or recall your memorable campaign down the line.

6.2.6 Risks and challenges

- Viral marketing is incredibly uncertain, and you can never be sure that a campaign will spread as intended; there is no guarantee that you will get returns on your investment.
- You have no control over your content once it is released, meaning that anyone could distort or modify it. Similarly, negative content may spread without your control.
- If your target market is not responsive to the message, the campaign will fail and may generate negative publicity. In addition, if you attempt to disguise your campaign as an organic and spontaneous one by using astroturfing, the backlash from your audience will likely be severe.

7. Summary

This chapter taught you the ins and out of planning and executing a successful social media campaign. To achieve this, you learned that you must:

1. Decide on the budget, personnel and time expenditure you want to commit to social media marketing.
2. Analyse your target audience and pick the appropriate platforms to reach them on.
3. Create your social networking profiles and populate them with useful, informative and positive content.
4. Invite your existing contacts to participate, and make new ones.
5. In an ongoing process, update your profiles with new material, media and campaigns. Also, listen to what is being said about your brand and monitor the sentiment of users. Use web analytics tools to help you with both of these factors.
6. Monitor and reassess your strategy and platforms frequently. If something is going wrong, change your approach. If everything is going well, consider increasing your reach or expanding your strategy.
7. Once you have established a large core community, try your hand at creating viral content.

8. References

1. The history of social networking: www.digitaltrends.com/features/the-history-of-social-networking/
2. Facebook advertising revenue increase: econsultancy.com/blog/6383-facebook-expects-its-advertising-revenue-to-explode-this-year
3. The pros and cons of social media marketing: www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/internet/page7935.cfm
4. Social marketing: www.slideshare.net/media_reveries/social-bookmarking-1112699
5. United Airlines viral video response: www.destinationcrmblog.com/2009/07/09/united-airlines-gets-the-viral-video-treatment-it-never-wanted/
6. Social network marketing strategy: www.briansolis.com/2007/06/future-of-communications-manifesto-for/
7. The potential risks of social media: www.clickz.com/clickz/column/1699858/

social-network-marketing-know-what-youre-getting-into

8. How to build loyal customers with social media marketing: www.studio1c.com/email-marketing-blog/253-build-more-loyal-customers-with-email-marketing.html
9. Viral marketing strategies: www.isitebuild.com/viral-marketing-strategies.htm
10. E-Marketing (5th edition). Strauss, J. and Frost, R. (2009). Prentice Hall.
11. Vital marketing bible: www.squidoo.com/viralmarkeing
12. Top viral campaign videos: www.blogstorm.co.uk/the-top-10-viral-marketing-campaigns-of-all-time/
13. Halo's I Love Bees ARG: xbox.ign.com/articles/558/558097p1.html
14. Old Spice social media campaign: www.digitalbuzzblog.com/old-spice-social-campaign-case-study-video/

CHAPTER 8

WEB ANALYTICS AND CONVERSION OPTIMISATION

Key concepts

Evaluating your online marketing efforts, return on investment (ROI), using feedback from current marketing efforts to inform future decisions on budgeting and strategy, converting web visitors into customers, click through rate.

CHAPTER 8: WEB ANALYTICS AND CONVERSION OPTIMISATION

1. Introduction

In the last seven chapters, you have learned how to execute an email campaign, set up social and viral strategies, create PPC ad campaigns, write for the web, optimise your website for search engines and build a well-structured, user-friendly website.

But can you answer the following questions?

- How successful were your online marketing efforts?
- What is your return on investment?
- How can your current marketing efforts change the way you make future decisions regarding budgets and strategies?
- Did you convert web visitors into customers? If yes, what is your click-through rate?

All costs, online behaviours and goal conversion rates need to be measured.

There's an old adage in the advertising industry – 50% of your ad spend works and the other 50% doesn't. The problem is that nobody can pinpoint exactly where that money is well spent, and where it is wasted. The beauty of the online environment is that you can see exactly what your ad spend is doing for you. Online returns are no different from offline returns in that they need to be measured; online is just much more measureable. In order to be measured, campaigns, websites and online activity needs to be tracked. Without measuring your marketing activity, there is no way of calculating whether your marketing efforts were successful, whether goals were achieved, and how much each goal cost. Welcome to web analytics.

Web analytics is the attempt to understand online user behaviour by using key tools that track, measure, analyse and report on web usage. The objective is firstly to learn more about how your existing online users interact with your brand online,

and secondly to learn from this data in order to improve your website optimisation, attract new online visitors to your website and increase your conversion rate. Conversion optimisation is the process of maximising the percentage of website visitors who complete a desired action, thus increasing the conversion rate of visitor to customer.

In this chapter, you will:

- Learn about the evolution of web analytics (section 2).
- Understand the benefits of web analytics (section 3).
- Understand the key principles of web analytics (section 4).
- Learn what tools to use to measure and analyse online behaviour (sections 4 and 5).
- Learn to identify and apply key analytics statistics (section 4).
- Learn how to interpret analytics reports (section 4).

2. Evolution of web analytics

The official definition of web analytics, written by the Web Analytics Association (www.webanalyticsassociation.org/?page=membership), is “the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of Internet data for the purpose of understanding and optimising web usage”. This definition was only written in 2006, which is evidence of the youthfulness of this industry – and it is still evolving. In the early 1990s, people started saving data in log files from web servers (computers that deliver content over the internet) and commercial web analytics only started in 1993 by WebTrends in Oregon, USA (who only started selling software from 1995). Log files are files that enable one to analyse the popularity of a website by the number of “hits” it gets (how many times client requests are made to the web server, for example every time someone clicks on a link). Page views (requests made to a web server) and visits (sequence of requests by the same client that expire after a certain amount of time of inactivity) became the two main variables of measurement that gauged human activity online.

However, with the emergence of search engine spiders, dynamically assigned IP address and web proxies, it became harder to identify unique human activity. A dynamic IP address is like a shared mailbox: computers can use the same IP address to send and receive data across the web, making it more difficult to detect who is using a specific IP address at a given time. Web caching (web documents saved in a web browser to reduce the bandwidth usage, server load and perceived lag time) also became a problem. “Hits” were not recorded if requests were retrieved from a browser’s cache instead of the web server. Concerns about the accuracy of log files led to the second data collection method: page tagging.

By 2000, JavaScript tags replaced log files. JavaScript is a scripting language. When you embed a small line of JavaScript into every page of a website, you are able to track very detailed data on your website visitors – this is commonly called

page tagging. Page tagging is the most popular way of collecting web analytics data today. Every time a page of a website is requested (e.g. when someone clicks on a link that takes them to that page), this JavaScript code is automatically run in the web browser and sends information to a remote server. The data is saved, processed and displayed as website activity. Website owners are able to view charts and reports to measure the success of their online business.

Google reshaped web analytics in 2005 when it purchased Urchin and released its free analytics tool, Google Analytics.

Today, more and more marketers have discovered the value of online data. Their thinking has shifted from “How many hits did our website get?” to “How many visitors did we convert to buyers?” As reports become more sophisticated and user friendly, marketers are able to analyse the behaviour of individual visitors, make both qualitative and quantitative hypotheses, assess patterns and take action to improve sales and marketing initiatives. Understanding the psychology behind online behaviour takes time, specialist input, lengthy data analysis and reporting. It is very easy for people who are new to online marketing to get overwhelmed by the amount of statistics available.

Web analysis will continue to evolve with innovative new tools such as Crazy Egg (www.crazyegg.com), which uses heat maps to display the clusters and density of clicks on a web page (discussed in section 5.3). Google Analytics (www.google.com/analytics) is still the trendsetter, but the amount of data may feel overwhelming at first. Remember: it’s not the data that counts, but rather the interpretation and action taken as a result of it – for example, analysing the top keywords used to search for your website and deciding what changes should be made to your PPC campaign, SEO and meta data. Avinash Kaushik, a well-respected online marketing expert, says it’s important to remember that data does not amount to insight by itself. The problem is not the amount of data you have. Analysing clicks is only the “what”, but you need to know the “why” – the intent of online users when they are searching, browsing and interacting with your website.

Using Google Analytics in conjunction with other analytics tools like Woopra (www.woopra.com), which provides a more engaging experience with real-time data, will put you in a good position to track trends and gain insight into your customers’ online behaviour. This module will outline the fundamentals of web analytics, which tools to use, how to start tracking user behaviour and what key statistics to focus on.

3. Benefits of web analytics

Before adopting any new tool, it is important to understand the value and outcomes. Here are a few benefits of web analytics.

It can help you to:

- Monitor your visitors and users. Web analytics can provide key metrics and statistics such as visits, unique visits, bounce rates, top content, top keywords, referrer sites and traffic source. (These terms will be explained in

detail in section 4.)

- Optimise your website. Remember chapter 6 on search engine optimisation? Once you have identified trends in user behaviour, you will have sufficient information to take actions like changing the content on top landing pages, changing or adding to the navigation, adding additional calls to action on the home page or restructuring URLs.
- Formulate a sales and internet marketing plan. After analysing the web data, key insights can be drawn from reports, which can have a direct effect on marketing plans. Customer trends online may help marketers leverage a specific product or target a certain geographical location merely by analysing data to see the top traffic sources. PPC campaigns may change keyword bids or email campaigns may highlight different products due to seasonal consumer trends. Even the frequency and time of day affect the success of a marketing campaign.
- Measure the profit contribution from online marketing initiatives. All businesses that have an online presence should use web analytics to calculate their internet marketing profit contributions. Using tools such as Google Analytics also enables you to create goals with specific values. Completing these goals helps monitor goal conversion and site optimisation. More on this later in this chapter.
- Predict future trends. Over time you will start to see trends in online behaviour: when traffic to your site is high, which pages are more popular, what causes an increase in traffic and where the majority of visitors come from (visitor source). These trends help predict future behaviour, making it easier to plan and execute future marketing campaigns based on past experience.
- Keep track of competition. It is critical to analyse and follow your competition. How much traffic do they get? Where does the traffic come from and where is it going? Is it possible to intercept this traffic and guide online users to your site instead? For example, perform a search for terms that you would like to find your website with. Take note of which competitors appear on the first page of search results and in sponsored links. Visit each competitor's website and view their source code. Here, you will be able to see their meta-data: title, description and keyword. This is just one small example of how you can study your competitors' SEO and online marketing techniques.
- See real-time data about online users. Being able to see your number of visitors within seconds of sending out an email campaign or posting a viral video on your site is invaluable information. Real-time data enables you to act and react in real time. See the detailed discussion on Woopra later on in this chapter for more detail about real-time data analysis.
- Monitor social media activity. Keeping up to date with social media activity and with what your customers are saying, sharing and writing about your brand is critical. saidWot (www.saidwot.com), Trackur (www.trackur.com), Sentiment Metric (www.sentimentmetrics.com) and Social Mention (www.socialmention.com) are just a few examples of key analytics tools that

provide real-time data analysis on blogs, social networks, video sharing and other media-driven platforms (more about this in section 5). These tools will enable you to analyse key brand influences, manage your brand's online reputation and gain more insight into your consumers' online activity.

4. Principles of web analytics – Google Analytics

Now that you understand what web analytics is and what the major benefits of it are, it is time to learn how to identify what parameters you need to measure and how to read analytics reports, set up conversion goals and gain valuable insights from data. For the purpose of practical illustration, we will use Google Analytics (www.google.com/analytics), a free web-based application, to demonstrate web analysis tools and techniques. In section 5, you will explore additional industry tools like Woopra, Google Insight, Crazy Egg and semantic monitoring.

4.1 Track, analyse, report

In order to analyse data, you first have to gather data. The first step to setting up any analytics tool is to generate a piece of JavaScript code and add it to all pages of your website. JavaScript is a special type of code that creates page tags and tracks data every time a human clicks on a link that is connected to your website. Most website-building tools will have “HTML widgets” that you can use to copy and paste this code into on each page. If your company website is hosted by a separate digital agency, they will have to add this code on your behalf. If you have a static footer (see chapter 2), this is a good place to add this JavaScript tracking code as it will only have to be added once. If you don't have a static element that goes across all pages, you will have to add this code manually to every page.

Follow these steps to generate the tracking code required for Google Analytics, a free solution provided by Google. Open a web browser, go to www.google.com/analytics and log in to your Google Account. Once logged in, click on the “Access Analytics” button.

1. New Account Signup. There are four steps to the account creation process. First, you will need to add your URL, create an account name and choose a time zone and country.

2. Contact information. Next, you will need to add your last and first name as well as your country or territory.

3. Accept User Agreement. You will need to agree to Google's terms of service and accept the user agreement.

4. Add tracking. Below is an example of a Google tracking code. The number highlighted in yellow is your unique account ID and is used to track all activity on your website. This is the code that needs to be copied and pasted before the closing `</head>` tag. Make sure your technical team completes this task so that your data can start being tracked and your account verified.

2 Paste this code on your site

Copy the following code, then paste it onto every page you want to track immediately before the closing `</head>` tag. [Learn more](#)

```
<script type="text/javascript">
  var _gaq = _gaq || [];
  _gaq.push(['_setAccount', 'UA-18159883-1']);
  _gaq.push(['_trackPageview']);

  (function() {
    var ga = document.createElement('script'); ga.type = 'text/javascript'; ga.async = true;
    ga.src = ('https:' == document.location.protocol ? 'https://ssl' : 'http://www') + '.google-analytics.com/ga.js';
    var s = document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(ga, s);
  })();
</script>
```

Once you have completed this four-step process, you have successfully added your website to Google Analytics. Wait 24 hours before checking for data in your account. It is important to note that data is only captured from the day the tracking is added, so it is best to add tracking before a new website goes live so that you have data from inception.

Once you have successfully created a Google Analytics account and Google is tracking your website's data, you will see a screen similar to the one below. There will also be a link to "view report" which will take you to the "dashboard" of your account.

Accounts						+ Add new account	
Name↑	Visits	Avg. Time on Site	Bounce Rate	Completed Goals	Visits % Change	Actions	
name of Account	0	00:00:00	0.00%	0	N/A	Edit	

4.2 What parameters to measure

When you first view your Google Analytics dashboard, you might feel overwhelmed

by all the statistics, metrics and parameters. Don't be. There are a few key statistics that every marketer should know and – depending on your industry, marketing objectives and tactics – you will need to analyse some additional statistics. When you start to feel more comfortable with Google Analytics, you can explore more complex statistics that will help you understand online user behavioural trends.



Visits. The number of unique sessions initiated by a reader. This statistic counts every time someone visits your site. If a visitor is inactive on your site for 30 minutes or more, it is counted as additional visits but not as an additional visitor. It is important to understand the difference between clicks and visits. Clicks (in an AdWords report) are the number of times your advertisement was clicked on by visitors.

Page views. The number of pages that were viewed during these visits. Page views are tracked by Google Analytics. If a visitor hits reload after reaching a page, this will be counted as an additional page view. If a user navigates to a different page and then returns to the original page, this is counted as a page view as well.

Unique page views. This statistic aggregates page views by the same user during the same session. Unique page views are therefore the number of sessions during which that page was viewed one or more times by the same visitor.

Pages/visit. The average number of pages viewed during each visit.

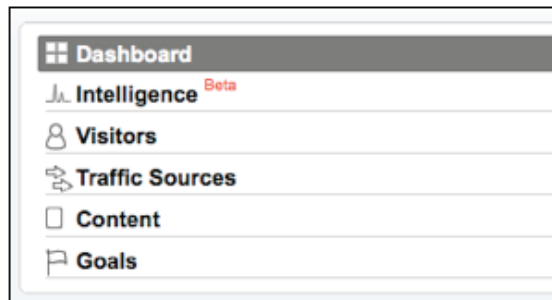
Bounce rate. The percentage of visits in which the person instantly leaves your site within seconds of arriving.

Average time on site. The average length of time people stay on your site.

Percentage of new visits. Percentage of people visiting your site for the first time.

Top content. A list of pages ranked by the amount of traffic they get. These are the key pages that you want to use to direct visitors to other pages on your site, as they get the most traffic. Use strong calls to action so that visitors are encouraged to download a document, buy something, complete a form or sign up for something.

Above is a screenshot of GetSmarter's Google Analytics dashboard. You can see the date range (top right), which can be altered depending on what time frame you want to review.



On the left hand side of the Google Analytics dashboard, you will see a number of options. Each one will be discussed in detail (except Intelligence beta).

4.2.1 Visitors

It is important to note that, depending on your industry, sales cycle and product, each statistic may have a unique significance. For example, take new versus returning visitors. If you are trying to build up a long-term relationship with customers and would like visitors to return to your site regularly, you will need to provide fresh content to incentivise people to return and therefore returning visitors should be high (e.g. on a news website). If you are selling something with a short sales cycle, you want visitors to land on your site and purchase something in the same session. All information about that product needs to be available and accessible and the product must be easy to purchase. If visitors cannot find what they are looking for in three clicks, they will be sure to click off your website and not return.

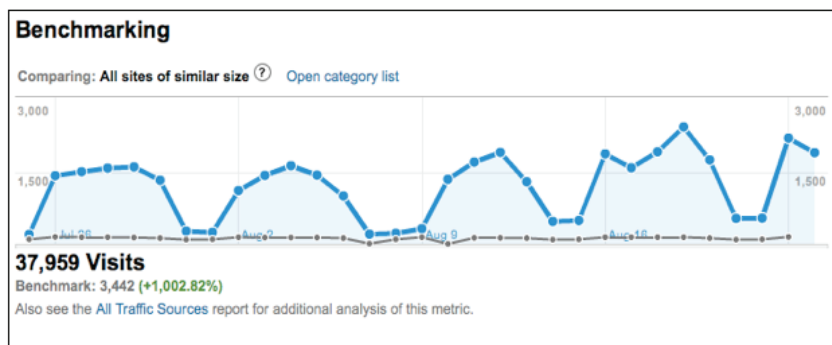


Key visitor statistics:

- **Absolute unique visitors.** This is a difficult term. Imagine you visit the same website three times in one week from the same computer using the same

browser. You will be counted as one new unique visitor with three visits.

- **Bounce rate.** Each industry has different bounce rate averages, and your marketing strategy can have a significant effect on your bounce rate. For example, if you set up a PPC campaign with general keywords and a high bid, your ad will appear more frequently in search engines but your ad campaign is not targeted. People are clicking on your ad but will immediately leave if the site’s content is not relevant to their search query.
- **Benchmarking.** Google has a new industry benchmarking tool. It assigns your site to an industry and then provides benchmark statistics. You are able to change the industry category list and compare you stats to multiple industries. Remember, it is vital to measure your success against your competition. Some industries have a higher bounce rate but a lower pages/visit score.



Take a look at GetSmarter’s benchmark against all sites of a similar size: its visits are 1,002% higher than the industry average.

- **Map overlay.** The map overlay is very interesting as you can see where in the world the majority of your visitors come from. In the case of GetSmarter, most visits are from South Africa, followed by the United Kingdom and then the United States. You can even filter by city, sub-continent region and continent.

Visits		Pages/Visit	Avg. Time on Site
37,959		1.94	00:02:05
% of Site Total: 100.00%		Site Avg: 1.94 (0.00%)	Site Avg: 00:02:05 (0.00%)
Detail Level: City			Visits ↓
1.	Ndabeni		2,656
2.	Sandton		2,219
3.	Claremont		2,040
4.	(not set)		1,926
5.	Pretoria		1,851
6.	(not set)		1,726
7.	Cape Town		1,587
8.	Rosebank		1,104
9.	Johannesburg		1,012

Above is GetSmarter’s map overlay filtered by city. Ndabeni, Sandton and Claremont are the cities with the most visits. All cities in the top ten are in South

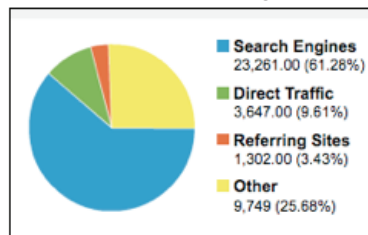
Africa. Unfortunately, unlike the United Kingdom, it is difficult to tell the user's suburb based on their IP address. Telkom's IP address blocks are badly managed. The best scenario is usually to pinpoint the city. The above table does mix cities and suburbs, which can be confusing.

4.2.2 Traffic sources

Where is your traffic coming from: search engines, referral websites or PPC ads? This is one of the most important areas of analytics as it reveals which marketing efforts are working and where most of your traffic comes from. This will help you plan future campaigns.

Traffic sources:

1. Direct traffic. Online users can type your web address straight into the web browser or can click on bookmark. For example, if I open my browser and type www.bloomberg.com straight into the browser address bar, not the search bar, this visit is counted as direct traffic.
2. Referring sites. This traffic source is visitors coming from other websites that send traffic to your site. This is where affiliate networks, content distributors, banner ads on other sites and link building comes into play.



3. Search engines. Traffic coming from PPC campaigns and organic search results. In this pie chart, the majority of traffic (61.28%) comes from search engines, while only 3.43% comes from referring sites. GetSmarter uses PPC campaigns extensively for marketing purposes, which dramatically increases the search engine traffic. You can also click on “search engine traffic” and see which search engine is generating the most traffic.
4. Other. Any traffic coming from other sources, for example email campaigns.

Keywords. Top search terms within a given date range for your website – in other words, which keywords people used to find your website. Keyword visits, pages/visit, bounce rate and average time on site statistics are available for each keyword. This information can help you review your existing keyword list for SEO and online advertising. If you notice a high-traffic keyword that is not currently optimised, you might want to optimise your website accordingly. Remember to separate branded from non-branded keywords when doing research. Branded keywords are names of companies and brands (e.g. GetSmarter) whereas non-branded keywords are words like “marketing”, “how to write a proposal” and so on.

An online user will only type in a branded keyword if they know the brand; most users know what they are looking for (e.g. “online education”) but do not know where to look.

Campaigns. When sending email campaigns, posting banners on affiliate websites or running PPC campaigns, it is extremely valuable to tag these incoming links to your website by creating custom tracking information for each link. Google Analytics will track these clicks as “Campaigns event tracking”; as long as a link is tracked, it will be there. For example, say you want to send a newsletter to existing customers in November 2011. The name of the Newsletter is “Nov 2011 newsletter”. Below is an example of a link builder for a newsletter. Please note that no additional technical work is required. As long as you have set up a Google Analytics account and know which incoming links you want to track, follow the steps below to learn how to build custom link tracking.

Google Analytics URL builder:

www.google.com/support/googleanalytics/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=55578


1. Tracking. Fill in your information in the provided fields. Make sure that, when you complete each field in the link builder, you use an underscore (_) between each word so that it’s easier to read the tracking.

Google Analytics URL Builder

Fill in the form information and click the **Generate URL** button below. If you’re new to tagging links or this is your first time using this tool, read [How do I tag my links?](#)

If your Google Analytics account has been linked to an active AdWords account, there’s no need to tag your AdWords links - [auto-tagging](#) will do it for you automatically.

Step 1: Enter the URL of your website. This is the incoming link you want to track

Website URL: * 
(e.g. <http://www.urchin.com/download.html>)

Step 2: Fill in the fields below. **Campaign Source**, **Campaign Medium** and **Campaign Name** should always be used.

Campaign Source: * (referrer: google, citysearch, newsletter4)

Campaign Medium: * (marketing medium: cpc, banner, email)

Campaign Term: (identify the paid keywords)

Campaign Content: (use to differentiate ads)

Campaign Name: * (product, promo code, or slogan)

2. Generate the URL code:

www.getsmarter.co.za/?utm_source=newsletter_Oct_2011&utm_medium=email&utm_term=holiday_specials&utm_campaign=Oct_2011_newsletter

Step 3

Below is a list of campaign definitions. Make sure you include at least the original URL, source, medium and name of the campaign in order to track the link.

Campaign Source (utm_source)	Required. Use utm_source to identify a search engine, newsletter name, or other source. <i>Example: utm_source=google</i>
Campaign Medium (utm_medium)	Required. Use utm_medium to identify a medium such as email or cost-per-click. <i>Example: utm_medium=cpc</i>
Campaign Term (utm_term)	Used for paid search. Use utm_term to note the keywords for this ad. <i>Example: utm_term=running+shoes</i>
Campaign Content (utm_content)	Used for A/B testing and content-targeted ads. Use utm_content to differentiate ads or links that point to the same URL. <i>Examples: utm_content=logolink or utm_content=textlink</i>
Campaign Name (utm_campaign)	Used for keyword analysis. Use utm_campaign to identify a specific product promotion or strategic campaign. <i>Example: utm_campaign=spring_sale</i>

3. Check Google Analytics for your campaign statistics. In the traffic source section, you will see a “Campaigns” section. Here, you will find a list of your campaigns. Each campaign will have statistics on visits, pages/visit, average time on site, percentage of new visits and bounce rate.

4.2.3 Content

Content is an exciting area of data to analyse because often what the marketer assumes will be the most popular page on the site or the top landing page is not necessarily the case. Online users do not think the same way and neither do search engines. Once you have analysed the data, make sure that you take that insight and action it, make changes to your content, add links and calls to action to your top landing pages and make changes to your top exit pages to ensure that people stay on your site longer. Always think of ways to improve the user experience.

Top content. The pages with the highest traffic.

Top landing pages. Landing pages are those pages that people land on when they first arrive at your site. In theory, your online advertising efforts such as PPC campaigns, viral campaigns, email and banners should have a strong influence in deciding which pages should be your top landing pages. If your analytics data does not reflect this, you need to find where this traffic is coming from and why.

Top exit pages. The last page a visitor was on before they left the website. These top exit pages provide critical insight. If your website goals are to convert visitors into online buyers, then you want the “Thank you – purchase confirmation” page to be high on the list of exit pages instead of the product detail page. Think about the user journey of your customers. Why are people on your site and what are they looking for? No two customers are the same; you need to guide your visitors around the site and encourage them to follow a specific user journey.

For example, imagine you are an African volunteer company. If someone lands on your home page, you may want them to do the following:

1. Research volunteer programs
2. Choose a volunteer program
3. Complete an enquiry form

If the majority of people are leaving on your home page, then you know that your content, calls to action and messages are not compelling enough to motivate someone to click deeper into your site.

Site overlay. Google Analytics has a fascinating tool that allows you see a visual overlay of the entire home page of your website, and for each link you can see the number of “clicks” and the goal conversion (more on this in 4.2.5). It’s interesting to see, for example, that project management has the most clicks, followed by financial management and internet marketing. The site overlay is a great tool to gain some insight into online behaviour. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Why do some people click on more links than others?
- Does location on the page affect the clicks?
- Do content and images affect the number of clicks?
- What will happen to the click-through rate when I change an image or the position of some content on the page?



(Source: Google Analytics)

4.2.4 Event tracking

This is another type of tracking in Google Analytics. Event tracking is very useful for tracking specific links on your site. It is complex, so do not worry about it at first, but it is nice to know that there are some detailed tracking tools available when you are ready to use them.

A perfect example of how this type of tracking can be utilised is for banner ads, downloaded documents and videos on your website. For example, say you are travel agency and you have a video on your home page. When someone clicks play, you can track this as an event in Google Analytics. If you would like more information on how to set up event tracking, visit

code.google.com/apis/analytics/docs/tracking/eventtrackerguide.html.

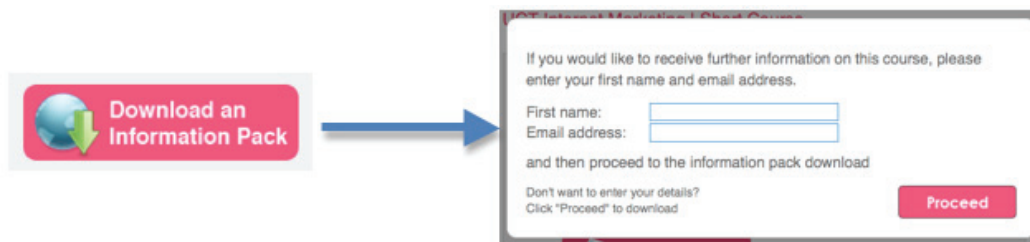
4.2.5 Conversion goals

The last component of analytics that is of great value, even for a beginner, is conversion goals. A goal is a desired visitor action on your website. You want to convert a visitor to participate in some action item on your website. For example:

- Complete the contact form
- Download a brochure
- Sign up to the newsletter

Google Analytics allows you to create 20 conversion goals per profile. Goals are really page views: you essentially tell Google to remember every time someone views a particular page or completes a specific action. There are three types of goals: URL destination, time on site and pages/visit. Only URL destination will be discussed in detail.

For example, you want to know how many people have downloaded the brochure for the internet marketing course. Think about the user experience. A visitor goes to GetSmarter’s website and decides to download the internet marketing course information pack. When they click on the button to download the brochure, a lightbox appears. Once they fill in their first name and email address and hit “proceed”, this event is tracked in Google. The visitor can now download the information pack and you both have the visitor’s email address and have counted the download.



You may be familiar with KPIs (key performance indicators) – a measurement of performance. This term is typically used to refer to long-term organisational goals. Think of conversion goals as the KPIs of your website. How would you define the success of your website? And how are these goals going to be measured?

How to set up a goal

1. Log in to Google Analytics. Click the “edit” link on the Google Analytics website profile page.
 2. Click the “edit” link on the settings column for the first goal.
 3. Enter the page that, when viewed, constitutes the completion of the goal (e.g. www.nameofwebsite.com/thank_you.html).
- Active goal. If you want the goal to be active, leave it marked “on” or it won’t be tracked.

- Match type. This is slightly technical setting. Leave it on “head match” if you are not a programmer.
- Goal name. Name your goal. Make sure you will be able to identify it in the Google Analytics dashboard.

Leave the rest of the form blank and click “save”. After a few days, go to the dashboard in Google Analytics and click on the “Goals” tab. You will now see your goals and their conversion rates.

Enter Goal Information

Goal Name:
Goal name will appear in conversion reports.

Active Goal: On Off

Goal Position:
Changing goal position will not move historical data for this goal

Please select a goal type

Goal Type: URL Destination
 Time on Site
 Pages/Visit

Goal Details

Match Type ^(?):
(e.g. For the goal page "http://www.mysite.com/thankyou.html" enter "/thankyou.html")
To help you verify that your goal URL is set up correctly, please see the tips [here](#).

Case Sensitive: URLs entered above must exactly match the capitalization of visited URLs.

Goal Value optional

Goal Funnel optional
A funnel is a series of pages leading up to the goal URL. For example, the funnel may include steps in your checkout process that lead you to the thank you page (goal).

+ Yes, create a funnel for this goal

Goal funnel

At the bottom of the goal creation form there is a “Goal Funnel” option. You will not learn how to create a funnel in this course, but for those who would like to take analytics further in the future, it is valuable to know that a funnel is a series of pages leading up to the goal URL. For example, the funnel may include steps in your checkout process that lead you to the thank you page (goal). To create a funnel, you would list all the pages that you want a user to click through in order to achieve a particular goal. For example, someone coming to the home page will click on “Project Management course” and then on “Registration”. These are two steps in a funnel to complete the registration “conversion goal”.

Google Analytics has been the leader in web analytics for several years and has a growing following. As your understanding of analytics grows, so does your desire to take web analytics to the next step. Here are a few links that will be useful as you grow and develop your understanding of Google Analytics:

- Google Analytics checklist overview: www.google.com/analytics/discover_

analytics.html

- How to add tracking code: www.google.com/support/googleanalytics/bin/answer.py?answer=55488&utm_source=DiscoverList&utm_medium=et&utm_campaign=en_us&hl=en
- Getting started guide: www.google.com/support/analytics/bin/static.py?page=guide.cs&guide=19779&utm_source=DiscoverList&utm_medium=et&utm_campaign=en_us&hl=en
- Setting up goals: www.google.com/support/googleanalytics/bin/answer.py?answer=55515&utm_source=DiscoverList&utm_medium=et&utm_campaign=en_us&hl=en

5. Additional analytics tools

We have now touched on some of the key principles, statistics and functionality of web analytics, but there are still more interesting ways to analyse data and gain further customer insight – which will in turn boost your profits and aid in delivering more relevant content to your online customers. This section explores additional research tools and desktop applications that can be used in conjunction with Google Analytics.

5.1 Woopra

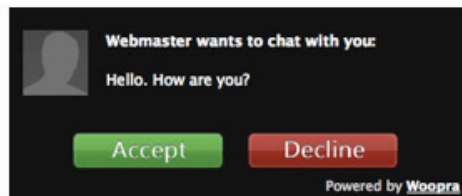
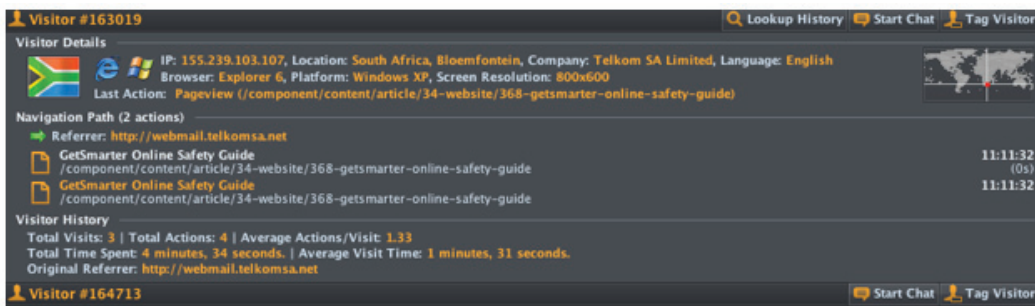
There are many web analytics tools available. Though the most popular is Google Analytics, a new competitor recently entered the market and has made quite a stir: Woopra (www.woopra.com), a real-time, desktop web analytics application. Do not compare Woopra with the market leading Google Analytics, but rather enjoy the benefit of both applications.

5.2.1 Key differences between Google Analytics and Woopra

- **Display.** Woopra is a desktop application (you have to download a file to your computer) whereas Google Analytics is purely web based (accessible anywhere from any computer).
- **Cost.** Woopra does have a free online version (trial for 3 months with major limitations on features and functionality). Ads are displayed at the bottom of the page, page views are restricted to 30,000 per month and data is only saved for three months. Their desktop application packages range from \$4.95 to \$179.95 per month. Google Analytics is free.
- **Registration.** Woopra takes several days to approve your site registration. Google Analytics starts tracking data within 24 hours of adding tracking code to your site.
- **Real time.** Woopra is a more attractive interface and data is displayed in real

time: it's instant. This does mean you're using more bandwidth and possibly that your website loading time will slow. Make sure you have an adequate internet connection and enough bandwidth. Google Analytics is web-based (no bandwidth issues) but data is not displayed in real time and is only updated every few hours.

- **Desktop.** Woopra's desktop is dedicated to live visitor statistics, displaying anything from geographical location and page views to what pages they are currently on (live data stream), which ones they have visited, top keywords, operating systems, browser, top referrers and more. Google Analytics does not have this live data stream feature.
- **Live chat.** You can tag and chat to live visitors while they are on your website. That's correct. In the "live stream view", you can see the visitors' personal details, how they got to your website, their location and their visitor history. When you click "start chat", the visitor will get a lightbox with a message from you asking their permission to chat to them.



- **User interface.** Woopra's interface is far less intimidating and more user friendly, but it does not have as many features as Google Analytics. Everything in Woopra is one click away, quick and simple. Google Analytics does have a customisable dashboard but is not user friendly for beginners. It does however offer some incredibly complex and valuable tracking features.
- **Conversion goals.** Google Analytics wins hands down here. Woopra does not have a goal function in their program.
- **Ecommerce and action-based reporting.** Google Analytics has the ability to interface with AdWords and AdSense, show which pages are earning the most money and reveal what the expensive AdWords visitors are doing on your site. Woopra does not have this functionality.

In a nutshell, Woopra wins over Google Analytics for its interface's "wow" factor: it is simple to use and easy for beginners to really engage with their visitors and get excited about web analytics. Google Analytics is not real time but it does

have more bells and whistles, plus the integration with other Google services like AdWords. There is no one perfect web analytics tool; just remember that it's the insight you get from the data that is important – make sure you take action and don't just accumulate interesting statistics.

Here are a few more web analytics tools you may want to investigate:

- Mint: www.haveamint.com
- Yahoo Analytics: www.web.analytics.yahoo.com
- Omniture: www.omniture.com

5.2.2 Quick tour around the Woopra interface

Woopra dashboard



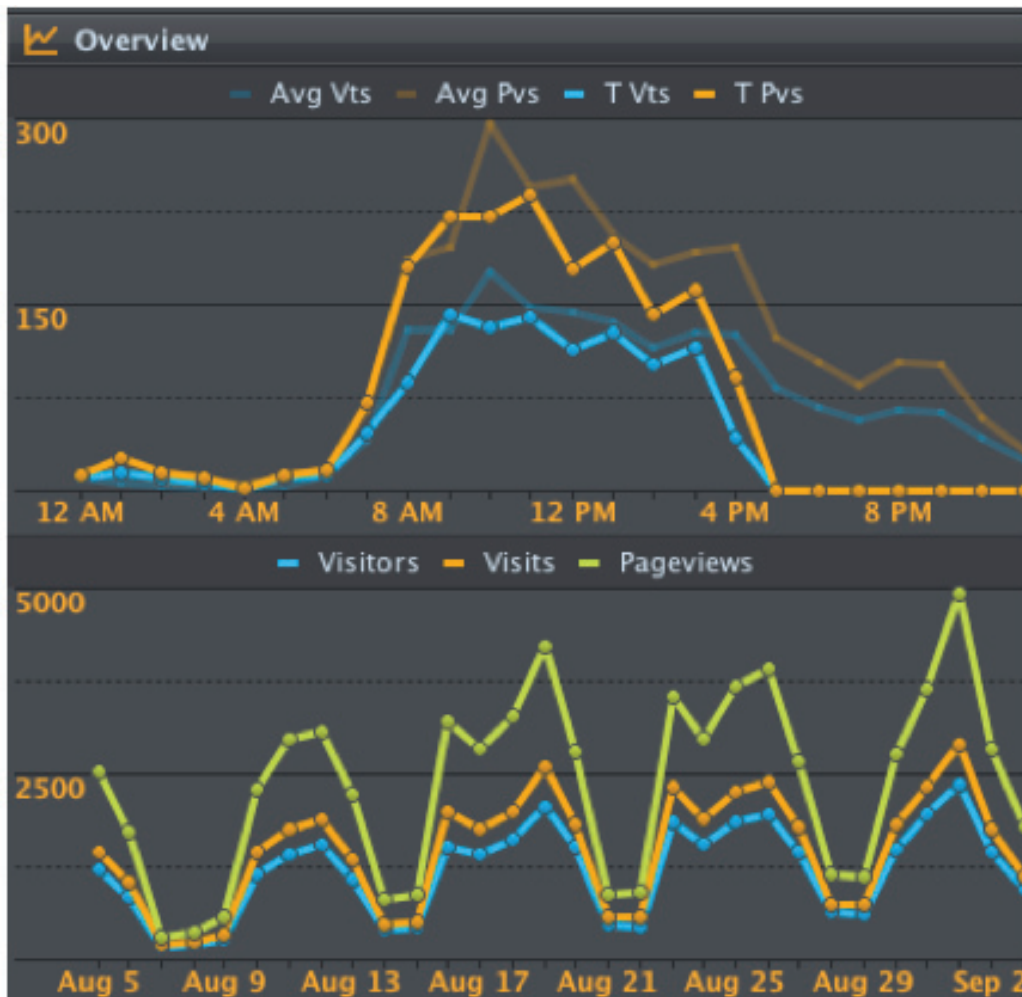
Referrers: Which websites are most people coming from?

Referrer	Top Types	Top Hosts
facebook.com	155	209
googleads.g.doubleclick.net	22	32
apps.facebook.com	20	24
mail.yahoo.com	9	10
imod.co.za	7	8
search.conduit.com	6	7
itweb.co.za	5	9
fr.webmail.co.za	4	4
b.ss35.on9mail.com	3	7
campaign.r20.constantcontact.com	3	6
fr.teenmail.co.za	3	5
mail.live.com	3	5
ezonearticles.com	3	4
c.ss36.on9mail.com	2	4
ideate.co.za	2	4
sem.mylogomail.com	2	4

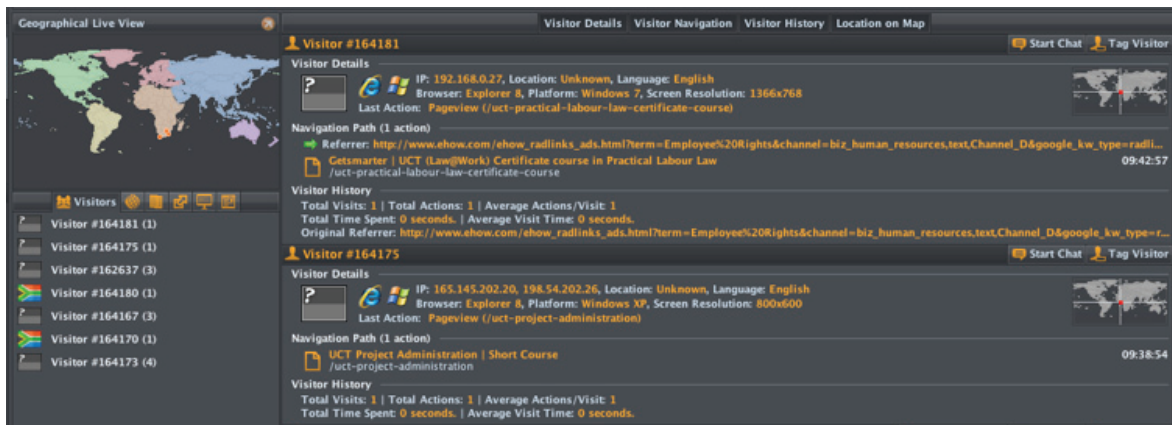
Geography: Which countries is most of the traffic coming from?



Overview: Analyse the visitors, visits and page views for the month and per hour every day.



Visitors – live data stream



5.2 Google Optimiser

Google Optimiser is an advanced tool that can be used in conjunction with Google AdWords (PPC campaigns) and Google Analytics to set up experiments: A/B split test experiments (comparing the performance of entirely different versions of a page) and multivariate experiments (comparing the performance content variations in multiple locations on a page). This tool will not be discussed in detail, but it is important to know about available tools for when you ready to take web analytics and testing to the next level. If you are interesting in learning more, have a look at these links.

Google Optimiser: www.google.com/analytics/siteopt/exptlist?account=10110877

Quick-start guide: services.google.com/training/websiteoptimizeruserguide (Flash)

Google Optimiser help: www.google.com/support/websiteoptimizer/?hl=en_us&ctx=gwo-sal-%2Fsiteopt%2Fnew_expt

5.3 Crazy Egg

Crazy Egg (www.crazyegg.com) is an incredibly attractive visualisation tool and a step up from the Google Analytics Site Overlay feature; it helps you discover new trends and behavioural patterns of your website traffic. Crazy Egg generates heat maps to view your website's analytics. You can see exactly where the majority of visitors are clicking so you can easily see which areas of each web page are most popular.

By analysing each page of your website, you can see which opportunities are being missed and which calls to action, images, copy and images are not working effectively. By using Crazy Egg in conjunction with your analytics solutions, you can improve your website's content and layout and hopefully increase your conversion rate of visitors to customers.

The cost is a minimum of R70 per month (max. R700 p/m), tracking up to 10,000 visits per month on a maximum of 10 pages. If you do have a large website with

There is none, so you will need to work out for yourself what keywords are of most value and what retweets, Facebook comments and social trends to monitor. Measuring social media is not an exact science. Twenty retweets will not automatically convert into a new sale, 30 comments of a viral video will not guarantee 10 new customers. Your social media strategy should always support your overall marketing strategy and ultimately point people back to your website and complete a conversion goal.

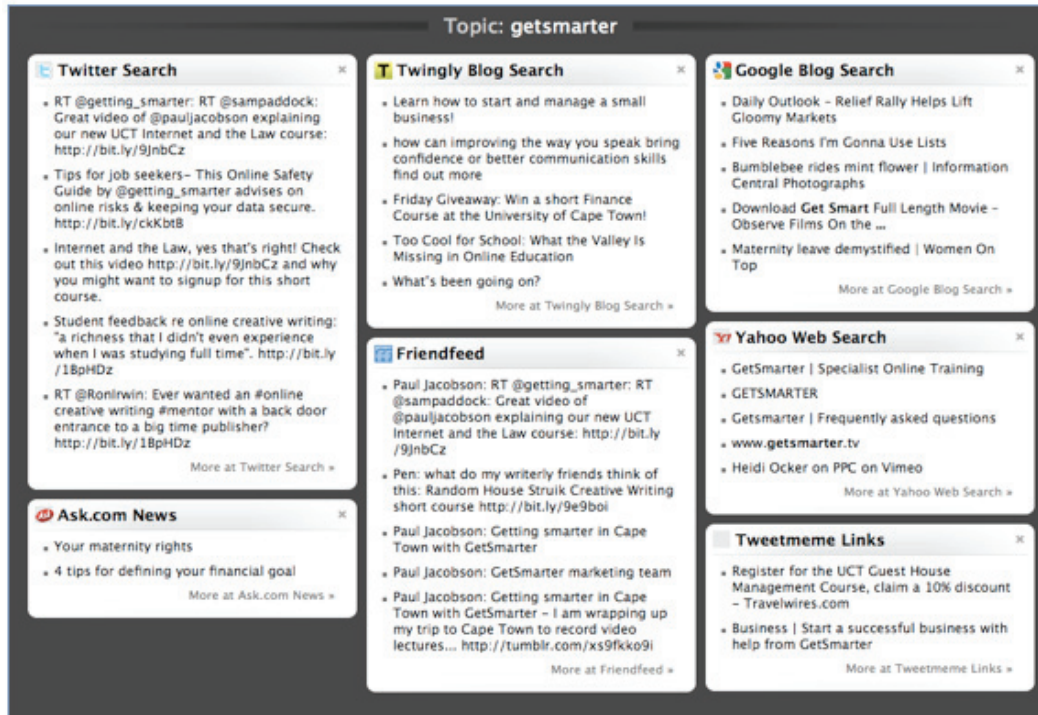
Now, how to tackle the monitoring of social media? There are many tools to choose from. If you have the money and time, you can opt for a specialist service like Radian6, Sysomos, Sentiment Metrics (some offer free trials so you can test before you buy), but most of these tools have little value in the South African social market.

There are also several free tools, either platform specific or general, which combine platform statistics together.

Make sure you use more than one tool to compare social trends across platforms. It's often good to dedicate one person on your marketing team to monitor and manage your social platforms on a daily basis. Make sure you also follow your competition with these tools to ensure that you see every move they make. If you are promoting products, competitions, specials and news updates on social platforms, they will most probably be doing the same.

Here are a few social media monitoring platforms to get you started:

1. Twitter search (search.twitter.com): Search Twitter for keywords and competitors. There are numerous tools to track Twitter feeds – www.tweetdeck.com, www.seesmic.com or www.hootsuite.com – or you can use a comprehensive solution such as cotweet.com, which lets you turn tweets into tasks and see multiple people respond to your tweets at the same time. Find the one that suits your needs.
2. Trackur (www.trackur.com) allows you to monitor brand and keyword traffic from Twitter and Facebook. It has a free basic plan and allows you to monitor one keyword. It has some nice features like semantic tracking (assigning a positive or negative tag to comments, which helps in reputation management), tracking trends, easy alerts and detailed reports.
3. Google Trends (www.google.com/trends): You can search for keywords across regions, cities, languages and news result. This tool is more valuable if your target market is outside South Africa.
4. Google Alerts (www.google.com/alerts) allows you to get email updates on the latest Google results (news and web) based on a keyword query. This is a great tool to monitor competition, news and social buzz around keywords and phrases. You learned about this in chapter 3.
5. Addictomatic (addictomatic.com): You can search for keywords or brands and results will display all mentions in Flickr, YouTube, Digg, Twitter, Google blogs, Yahoo, Friendfeed and more. See the screenshot for GetSmarter's Addictomatic results.



6. Summary

Web analytics is not an option; it is requirement. All businesses, big or small, need some way to objectively track, measure and analyse online user behaviour in order to draw effective insights and optimise their websites, increase traffic, grow their customer databases and increase sales. The key to web analytics is first to define what you want to achieve. Make sure you have answered the following questions before you start signing up for multiple analytics tools.

- What are your website conversion goals? Do you want your visitors to complete a contact form, download an information pack, buy a product, watch a promotional video or request more information?
- Have you mapped out the user journey for each goal? What is the ideal path a user should take to complete each goal? An online user sees a tweet about a competition to win a weekend away > clicks on the link which takes them to a competition entry page > submits the entry > arrives on a "thank you" page with a list of tours > clicks on a tour > views the tour detail page > completes a "request for more information" form. The goal is complete.
- Have you researched the competitiveness of keywords and their estimated traffic?
- Have you completed on-page and off-page optimisation?
- What social media networks are you and your competitors using?
- Have you set targets? What are your expected traffic, conversion rate, downloads, enquiries and sales?

Remember that web analytics is a research technique and is only as valuable as the insight gained from analysing relevant and up-to-date data. Using a combination of tools can provide a comprehensive analysis of what your online users are reading, clicking on, interested in and, more importantly, what key online behavioural trends you can leverage to succeed in future marketing campaigns. Most importantly, web analytics is a time-consuming and long-term strategy for increasing your conversion rate of visitors to customer.

7. References

1. Google Analytics: www.google.com/analytics
2. Woopra: www.woopra.com
3. Page tagging: www.buydomains.com/domain-resources/domain-analytics/page-tagging.jsp
4. Web analytics and page tagging: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_analytics#Page_tagging
5. Rethink web analytics: Introducing web analytics: www.kaushik.net/avinash/2007/09/rethink-web-analytics-introducing-web-analytics-20.html
6. Benefits of web analytics: ezinearticles.com/?3-Benefits-of-Web-Analytics&id=541362
7. Web analytics showdown – Woopra vs. Google Analytics: royal.pingdom.com/2009/10/30/web-analytics-showdown-woopra-vs-google-analytics/
8. Woopra vs. Google Analytics: www.blogsdna.com/11/woopra-vs-google-analytics.htm
9. Twitter is the only social media monitoring software you need: bettercloser.com/twitter-is-the-only-social-media-monitoring-software-you-need/
10. Roundup of social media monitoring tools: webworkerdaily.com/2010/03/11/roundup-social-media-monitoring-tools/

CHAPTER 9

MOBILE MARKETING

Key concepts

Defining mobile marketing, mobile technology in South Africa, key benefits of mobile marketing, identifying and applying mobile marketing techniques, leading applications and services, mobile codes of conduct and risks, consumer behaviour of Generation Z.

CHAPTER 9: MOBILE MARKETING

1. Introduction

Can you imagine what the world was like without mobile phones? Say ten years ago? How did you communicate with friends, make appointments, wake up in the morning, manage your calendar or remember telephone numbers? Just about everyone has a cellphone today. The purpose of this device is no longer to just make a phone call, but instead to be a means of gaining access to information, different channels of communication, payment and more. As mobile device penetration grows, so do the marketing opportunities.

In this chapter, you will:

- Learn how to define mobile marketing (section 2).
- Understand the prevalence of mobile technology in South Africa (section 3).
- Identify the key benefits of mobile marketing (section 4).
- Learn to identify and apply mobile marketing techniques (section 5).
- Be exposed to the industry leaders in mobile marketing applications and services (section 6).
- Learn about mobile codes of conduct and potential risks (sections 7 and 8).
- Begin to understand the consumer behaviour of Generation Z (section 9).

2. A brief history of mobile devices and marketing

Mobile marketing is the marketing communication between a brand and its customers using a mobile device. Marketers use mobile devices as an additional channel to communicate a message, sell, promote, build and maintain customer relationships. A mobile device (cellphone) is any handheld, battery-operated,

portable, pocket-sized electronic device that allows people to make phone calls and send data (voice, images, text).

For the purpose of this course, you do not need to understand the technology used to build a cellphone, and terms like GSM, CDMA and TDMA are not important. However, what is important to understand is the history of cellphone technology, for two reasons. Firstly, different marketing techniques require certain levels of mobile sophistication, both from the handset and user. Secondly, depending on your target market's demographics and communication trends, you may want to choose a different mobile tactic (e.g. send an SMS campaign or use barcodes, coupons or augmented reality). Each tactic relies on your target market having access to a specific mobile device or tool and a certain level of mobile usage sophistication.

2.1 A brief mobile history

2.1.1 1G

Cellphone technology has developed extensively since the first basic analogue phone in 1973 (built by Motorola), which acted almost like a radio, sending and receiving calls by using analogue signals. These are the first-generation (1G) cellphones.

2.1.2 2G

Along came second-generation (2G) cellular technology – digital cellphones in the 1990s. Digital transmissions were used instead of analogue signals and were much more efficient as more calls could be made at the same time. This was also the start of SMS (short message service), also known as a “text messaging”: a short message exchanged between cellphones or between fixed lines (like your home Telkom phone line) and cellphones.

Back in 1998, Finland and Sweden were already using cellphones to pay for vending machines and car parking. Commercial launches followed in 1999 in Norway. The first commercial payment system to mimic banks and credit cards was launched in the Philippines in 1999 simultaneously by mobile operators Globe and Smart.

2.1.3 3G

However, for most societies, cellphones only became part of everyday life in the mid 2000s. Third-generation (3G) phones emerged with the demand for increased data services – welcome smartphones. Smartphones like the Apple iPhone (like an iPod except you can make phone calls and connect to the internet), BlackBerry and Android phones (Google-owned open source version of the iPhone) are used for any online task that a desktop computer can perform. You can make calls, SMS, MMS (send a multimedia message), take photos and connect to the web using Wi-Fi (Wireless Fidelity). Wi-Fi is a system that allows wireless communication between mobile devices and the web. You can also use most 3G phones as a Wi-Fi router to connect your laptop to the internet. Suddenly, a phone is no longer a device for making phone calls, but rather a device that can be used to communicate across multiple platforms, share information and even make purchases.

Interesting fact: Vodacom introduced 3G services in 2004 (internet speeds were initially 384kbps but now go up to 21Mbps).

Note: Do not get smartphones confused with PDAs (personal digital assistants). PDAs are electronic organisers of daily information and activities and are capable of syncing and sharing information with your PC. It is not a PC replacement but rather an extension.

2.1.4 4G and beyond

Welcome to the world of true mobility. This is the future of cellphone technology and is still emerging. Apple recently released its 4G iPhone with enhanced features such as improved microphone quality, front camera, Flash capabilities, better usability, battery life and exterior design. As the speed of technology development is increasing, so the borders between digital devices are becoming blurred. Cellphones can never again be considered a device to make a phone call, but rather have become a seamless multimedia experience with a three-dimensional device that enables people to fulfil their need to communicate, stay informed, transact and be entertained – a perfect environment for marketers to sell, promote, communicate and advertise right to a customer’s handset.

3. Prevalence in South Africa

One of the most significant trends in internet technology today is the growth of the “mobile web” – the practice of accessing the World Wide Web through a handheld device such as a cellphone. Accessing the web through a phone has opened up whole areas of possibility for internet users.

The mobile web is relatively new, and there are still many challenges. For example, many websites are not “phone ready” – they are difficult to view and navigate on the much smaller screen of a cellphone. It is difficult to input information with the small phone keypad. Connections can be slow and unreliable.

Today, mobile capabilities have grown extensively: for example, the number of people using cellphones to connect to Facebook has grown from 20 million to 65 million in less than a year. The mobile web is particularly popular in countries in which the traditional wired infrastructure is lagging: in Africa, the cellphone is by far the most popular method of getting online. To give an indication of this, research done in 2009 revealed that 85% of small businesses run by black people in South Africa rely solely on cellphones, and 97% of people in Tanzania have access to a cellphone compared to 28% for fixed phone lines. Google has also revealed that one sixth of all Google searches in South Africa are done on cellphones – the highest ratio in the world.

Today, South Africa has a 100% cellphone penetration rate (reached in the last quarter of 2008). This means that although only about 70% of the population owns a cellphone, everyone at least has access to one. With a population of 49 million, that’s a lot of people. As a continent, Africa’s growth rate in mobile is climbing quickly too. Between 2002 and 2009, Africa saw the number of cellphone subscribers climb at an annual rate of 49.3% compared to that of 27.5% in Brazil

and Asia, according to Ernst & Young. By 2012, market penetration in Africa can be expected to climb to more than 60%. It is evident from these statistics that the majority of people in Africa have bypassed the fixed-line telephone and gone straight to mobile technology. South Africa only reached 6.8 million internet users by March 2011 (13% internet penetration), which does not compare to 100% mobile penetration.

Marketers in South Africa can therefore not ignore the mobile space. As smartphone prices go down, Africans are becoming a new segment of internet users. Mobile technology has enabled a new way of life by providing affordable and flexible access to communications, multimedia, mobile banking and web browsing for millions of people. Marketers also have a new marketing segment to communicate with on multiple platforms.

A few interesting statistics from Purple Cow (www.purplecow.co.za):

- According to Admob, the world's biggest mobile advertising marketplace, South Africa is ranked as the fifth-largest mobile market in the world.
- As of May 2011, South Africa has been serving more than 850 million mobile ad impressions each month.

4. Benefits of mobile marketing

- **Immediacy.** You do not have to wait for a customer to respond to a message once they are at their desks, on their computer or away from the office. No matter where a consumer is, if they have their cellphone with them (and chances are, they do), mobile marketing will reach them. All they have to do is click and read.
- **Personal.** Cellphones have become an extension of daily life, an extra limb so to speak. Some people go so far as to state that "they will not be able to live without their mobile". Reaching a consumer in their personal space requires tact, intelligence and good timing. Wherever intimacy is involved, trust and respect are essential. An unobtrusive, custom and highly targeted message may be very successful.
- **Highly targeted.** One phone, one number, one customer. However, note that in South Africa, people do share SIM cards and phones and there is no data available about pay-as-you-go customers. With opt-in marketing, you at least know who you are communicating with before sending out the campaign.
- **Two-way dialogue.** You can communicate between customer and brand very easily using mobile web, SMS, email, phone calls and more. Customers are not just there to sell to, but also to build a relationship with.
- **Instantaneous.** Sending bulk SMS campaigns, for example, is very quick – if not immediate.
- **Affordable.** Compared to many traditional marketing tactics, mobile marketing is very affordable as costs start at 30 cents.

5. Mobile marketing techniques

5.1 SMS marketing

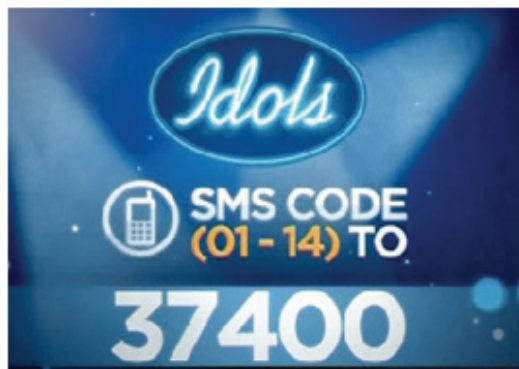
“Mobile advertising revenue is projected to reach \$3.3 billion globally in 2011.”
(Gartner Newsroom)

SMS marketing is the communication between brand, marketer and customer using a cellphone’s short message service (SMS). One can also think of SMS marketing as a portable billboard, magazine, TV or radio: the message is carried around with the customer, it’s personal, location sensitive, potentially invasive and deliberate. MMS (multimedia message service) marketing is the next level of SMS marketing. Most modern phones and all smartphones have colour screens and can accept images, video and audio clips in their wireless messages. This enables marketers to send colour messages to customers.

SMS messages have a maximum of 160 characters, whereas MMS messages allow the transmission of 300KB of data. There are around 30 million handsets that are MMS-capable in South Africa and that number increases every day (www.bmi-t.co.za).

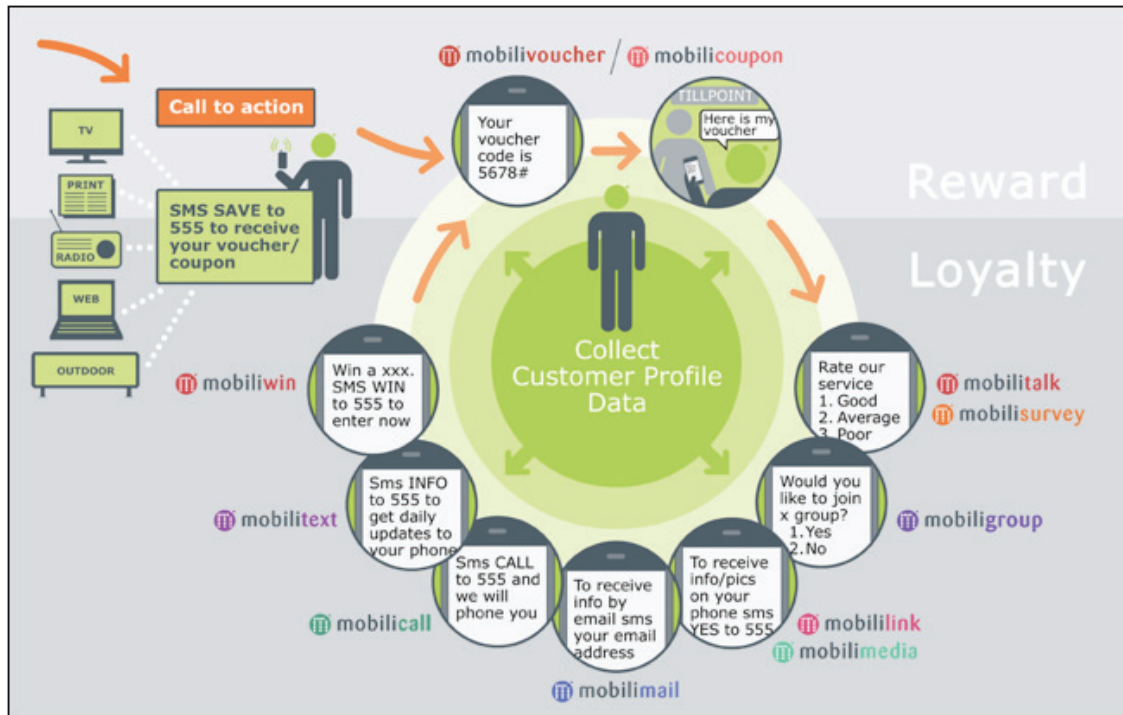
Sending SMS and MMS messages is the first step to making cellphones a personal channel of communication. It offers an opportunity not just to push a message to consumers but also to pull a response. By including a common short code (CSC) – a short telephone number, usually 5 digits long – into an MMS or SMS message, marketers are able to get customers to participate in polling, voting, making a donation, ordering ring tones and signing up for services.

A good example of CSC in use is M-Net’s Idols television show. Viewers can vote for singers by messaging a CSC.



In order to send SMS and MMS campaigns, you have to use a service provider. Clickatell (www.clickatell.com) and Mobilitrix (www.mobilitrix.com) are two excellent providers of mobile marketing. Before you sign up for a service provider, make sure you compare prices, products and distribution options first.

Mobilitrix has a very good illustration of how mobile marketing fits into the bigger picture of an integrated marketing strategy:



(Source: Mobilitrix)

5.1.1 Mobile CRM

Customer relationship management (CRM) is critical for any business, especially if it is service related, because of the need to maintain a healthy level of communication with customers. A good example of mobile CRM is Virgin Active gym – it sends its customers regular updates on their gym activities, discounts, promotions, schedule changes and competitions. Banks use SMS to send updates on account information to customers (e.g. payment confirmation, overdraft limits, secure PINs and so on). Cellphones are the most personal piece of technology to a customer and provide a perfect platform for keeping in touch and building long-term relationships through personal, customised and relevant communication.

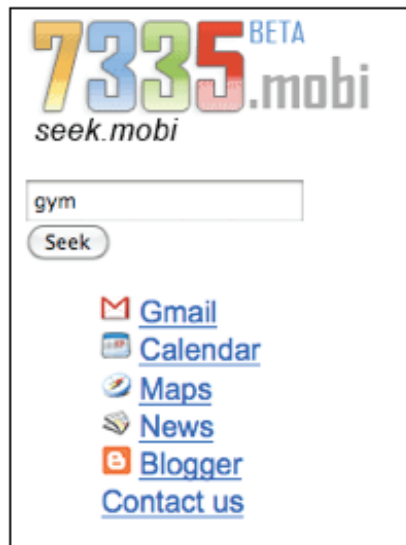
5.2 Mobile browsing

Mobile browsers are mini web browsers specifically design for cellphones, smartphones and PDAs. The content needs to be displayed effectively for small screens and portable devices. Mobile browser software must accommodate for the low-bandwidth and low-memory capacity of mobile devices. There is a variety of mobile browsers to choose from, each with their own features and preferred operating systems. Depending on the type of phone, you will have different options for web browsers – for example, Opera Mobile and Opera Mini are Windows based, Safari is for iPhones, Google Android free is for Android phones and Firefox Mobile is for Nokia. View this link to see a complete list of web browser options available: webtrends.about.com/od/mobileweb20/tp/list_of_mobile_web_browsers.htm.

5.2.1 Mobi sites

A mobile site, commonly known as “mobi”, is a custom website designed specifically for accessing online information on mobile devices. As of 26 September 2006, you can now register your dotmobi domain name.

When creating a mobi version of your website, make sure that you keep the branding, look and feel consistent with your main website so that customers have a smooth transition from PC to mobile. Think about what sort of information customers would want on their mobile devices. As mobile web browsers become more sophisticated, the demand for relevant, real-time information such as sports results, flight times, immediate weather updates and the latest news grows.



Once you have designed and developed your mobi site, go to ready.mobi and check the mobile-readiness of your site. MobiReady gives you a score out of 5. If you are new to mobi sites and would like to see what sites are available in mobile format, visit 7335.mobi and search for a site of interest.

5.2.2 Mobile search

Mobile search is the same as normal search, in theory. You use your cellphone keypad to type in your search query in a web browser and you get a list of organic and paid search results. Yes, that is correct: paid search also exist on mobile search.

Visit www.google.com/mobile/search for more information about Google mobile search.

Visit Mobile AdWords for more information on promoting your business using mobi sites: adwords.google.com/support/aw/bin/static.py?hl=en&page=guide.cs&guide=23634&topic=23638.

Google has taken it a step further: in 2010, Google introduced geo-targeted mobile display ads for iPhone and Android websites. When mobile users view “businesses

in their area”, advertisers can now include their location and phone number in the display ads.

5.2.3 WAP push

WAP (wireless application protocol) is an open international standard for network communication in a wireless communication environment. The most common use of WAP is for mobile web on a cellphone or PDA. A WAP push message is a message sent to a cellphone that directs the user to a WAP address where data, audio or images may be stored, ready for download. The purpose of WAP push messages is to encourage mobile device users to visit a mobi site. Note: WAP push is not the same as an SMS.



5.3 Proximity marketing: Bluetooth and infrared

Bluetooth is an open wireless technology for the exchange of information over a short distance between cellphones. Most modern cellphones have this connectivity feature. By turning on your Bluetooth transmitter, you can search for other phones nearby that also have Bluetooth turned on, request access from the user and then transfer a message or data between devices for free.

Infrared marketing is one of the oldest forms of mobile marketing. By sending free infrared waves within a range of one metre, you can transfer information from one device to another (e.g. from a shop window to a consumer standing in front of it). Unfortunately, due to the limited range, infrared marketing has not had much success.

Bluetooth technology has been very successful in densely populated areas, such as shopping centres, that are frequented by your target market – this is proximity marketing. A broadcasting station is set up in a highly frequented location; if a device that has an active Bluetooth connection comes in close contact with the “hotspot” (broadcasting station), it is sent a message which it can choose to accept or reject. These messages usually contain text, video or audio.

Proximity marketing can be very successful as it is highly targeted (within 10 to

30 feet) and a relatively new application. It is also free for marketer and consumer. However, there is a debate as to whether Bluetooth is yet another high-tech form of spam, since you are sending unsolicited messages. That being said, due to the very small transmission radius and the need for users to accept the message download, this is very much an “opt in” means of advertising.

Case study

In 2007, WCIT with Blip Systems in Denmark tested the use of Bluetooth technology as a marketing strategy in South African shopping malls. In the larger malls, they set up information desks with an electric reader that read the unique IP address of the Bluetooth-enabled phones. Customers had to choose to participate in this voluntary database by transmitting their address and shopping interests over Bluetooth. Marketers were then able to send targeted messages to interested parties. WCIT also set up foot-count systems in malls (to track mall traffic). By 2008, fifty malls had these information desks. Today, 11 malls use proximity marketing but 20 malls use a foot-count system. Bluetooth has been very helpful in tracking customer movements.

5.4 Coupons, vouchers and barcodes

A mobile coupon is an electronic ticket delivered to a customer’s mobile phone. The coupon comes in the form of either a unique number sent by SMS or a barcode, which needs to be scanned at the point of sale to be redeemed. Coupons are used as a reward to customers. Here are the most common types:

- A discount off a specific item
- A free item
- A buy-one-get-one-free deal
- Multiple purchases. If you buy a specific product, you get a something else for free.

Mobile vouchers are similar to coupons except instead of offering a discount, the voucher acts as the equivalent to cash and is not restricted to a specific item. There are usually restrictions on the use of the voucher (e.g. one per customer with a validity period).

2D barcodes are graphical images that store information horizontally and vertically. Barcodes are also known as quick response codes because they enable quick database access. Barcodes can either be sent to a customer by SMS (see the Target example above) or be used as part of an outdoor marketing campaign. Barcodes can easily be read with smartphones (equipped with a barcode reader) by taking a picture of the barcode. Have a look at the “How easy it is to read 2D barcodes” video to understand just how simple this process is with a smartphone.

Examples of 2D barcodes being used in mobile campaigns:

- Nike used a 2D barcode on posters along the route of an extreme sports

competition. Spectators could scan the barcodes and download videos, data and pictures.

- Newspapers can add 2D barcodes on stories that link mobile users to developing coverage.



(Source: Mobilatrix)

Above are two examples of coupons with unique numbers you either need to SMS, call or redeem at point of sale. To the right is an example of a barcode coupon used by US retail clothing giant Target. Messages are sent by SMS, delivered monthly to customers. The SMS contains a link to the mobile web page where the customer can find other coupons for more products. In order to sign up for a monthly SMS, customers can SMS the word COUPON to 827438 or go to their mobile website.



(Source: NPR www.npr.org)

5.4.1 Best time to use mobile vouchers and coupons

- When introducing a new product into the market, vouchers and coupons help encourage sampling.
- To clear out some stock and encourage bulk purchases.
- To test a new target market.
- To build or grow your customer database.

5.4.2 Case study: Spur

Spur, South Africa's leading family steakhouse restaurant, wanted to test mobile vouchers with their consumers to better understand customer preferences. Spur targeted the youth market using visually rich WAP-based mobile vouchers, chosen over just text-based vouchers. They chose mobile-specific keywords, which they integrated into print and radio media spend. After a two-week media campaign, print media generated 90% of requests using radio keywords. There was a 33% conversion rate of total vouchers issued.



5.4.3 Case Study: KLM mobile check-in

Air France KLM is now using mobile air tickets as an option for all travellers flying within several European countries. Customers can use their mobile phones to access KLM's mobile website (www.mobile.klm.com) to check in. After entering their e-ticket code, they view their flight details on their phone. Once checked in, you can receive your boarding pass by email, MMS or SMS. All passengers will receive a 2D barcode on their smartphone or PDA, which is scanned by cabin crew using a handheld device when boarding. Mobile check-in is simple, paper free and most importantly portable – no more forgetting your tickets at home.

5.5 Mobile payment and financial services

According to World Wide Worx statistics released in November 2009, the number of people accessing their bank accounts via mobile overtook those that access their accounts on a PC.

“Our research shows that South Africans are becoming comfortable with cellphone banking, but precisely half of general banking customers are still nervous of it, citing trust as their major concern,” said Arthur Goldstuck, MD of World Wide Worx.

“We have seen this rapid adoption driven by our menu service, although I believe that WAP will start to play a more important role in future,” said FNB mCommerce CEO Len Pienaar.

Every major bank in South Africa offers cellphone banking. The principle behind cellphone banking is exactly the same as online banking: making banking as accessible, easy and immediate as possible. Cellphone banking allows you to view bank statements and balances, transfer money between accounts, purchase airtime and make payments. It's important to note that although the penetration of mobile banking is higher than internet banking, the former is predominantly used for basic transactions (checking bank statements and account balances and buying more airtime).

You can find out more about the services that individual banks offer here:

- ABSA: www.absa.co.za/Absacoza/Individual/Ways-to-Bank/Anytime,-Anywhere/Cellphone-Banking
- FNB: www.fnb.co.za/cellphone-banking/cellphone-banking-faq.html
- Nedbank: www.nedbank.co.za/website/content/Products/product_detail.asp?SubSubcatid=%201865&Subcatid=501&ProductID=102
- Standard Bank: www.standardbank.co.ls/SBIC/Frontdoor_02_02/0,2454,3447_27200558_0,00.html

5.5.1 Mowaly

Mowaly is a service that calls itself a “virtual mobile wallet” and works in conjunction with Standard Bank’s MiMoney service. Users pay for and load MiMoney credits into Mowaly “wallets” on their cellphones, and can spend these credits at Mowaly-approved vendors. Here is how you can get connected to Mowaly.

1. Sign up for a Mowaly account at mowaly.co.za. You can use any web-enabled cellphone with Mowaly.
2. Purchase MiMoney credits to put into your Mowaly account. You can do this with an EFT (electronic fund transfer), a debit card or you can transfer MiMoney from another Mowaly wallet for a small fee.
3. Visit a vendor that accepts Mowaly payments and choose a product. You can find a list of vendors on the Mowaly website.
4. At checkout, go to Mowaly on your cellphone and choose the “Pay Now” option. Enter the correct amount to generate a MiMoney voucher.
5. Give the cashier your MiMoney voucher. This completes payment.

5.5.2 Fundamo

Fundamo (www.fundamo.com) is the world leader in mobile financial services offering both mobile wallets and banking to 20 countries. In 2009, Fundamo partnered with MTN to provide a mobile wallet solution to their cellphone customer. Many Africans do not have a bank account. “MT MobileMoney” is a SIM-based version of Fundamo’s mobile wallet specifically for MTN customers. You do not need a bank account. MTN MobileMoney customers can use their phones for all money-related services like:

- Performing a money transfer
- Making mobile payments
- Balancing checking of mobile purchase
- Buying airtime

- Withdrawing money from an ATM with a MTN-branded debit card

Note: MTN first tried to introduce mobile banking in 2005, ahead of the pack, and did not succeed. Lack of consumer education and onerous FICA requirements went against their potential success.

On 31 August 2010, Vodacom and Nedbank announced the official launch of M-Pesa (Safaricom's mobile money transfer service) in South Africa. Vodacom customers will now be able to enjoy the same mobile banking services as MTN's MobileMoney partnership with Fundamo.

5.5.3 Wizzit

Founded in 2004, WIZZIT Bank offers secure, low-cost, transactional bank accounts to unbanked and under-banked South Africans through cellphones. WIZZIT is a branchless banking business, so its customers can generally conduct transactions without the need to visit bank branches, and they're not required to have an existing bank account in order to join. Unlike competitors such as FNB and MTN, WIZZIT is compatible with early-generation cellphones that are popular in low-income communities, and also caters to customers who use pay-as-you-go cellphones.

WIZZIT's core product offering includes:

- Cellphone functionality for person-to-person payments, airtime top-ups, electricity vouchers and account payments
- A Maestro debit card for purchases in the formal retail sector
- Full banking functionality, including debit orders, transfers and access to all point-of-sale devices and ATMs
- Internet banking

As of mid 2010, WIZZIT had over 300,000 customers in South Africa.

5.6 Mobile social networks, entertainment, education

5.6.1 Facebook mobile

There are a several ways to interact with Facebook from your cellphone.

Email:

You can use email from your phone or from your computer to update your status or upload images, text and videos to Facebook. The uploaded content will appear in your "Mobile Uploads" album. Of course, to use this service from your phone, you will need to be able to send email from your phone. Facebook will send you a personalised email address to use. To find out what your personal upload email address is, visit the Facebook mobile page at www.facebook.com/mobile.

Mobile web:

You can browse the mobile version of the Facebook website with your phone. To

interact with Facebook using its mobile website, you need a phone with a web browser that is set up to go online. Point your phone's browser at m.facebook.com. The site will look different depending on what type of phone you are using – some mobile browsers cannot display the full Facebook site.

Applications: `

There are several mobile applications that allow you to interact with Facebook from your phone. Some examples:

- iPhone application: www.facebook.com/iphone.
- Android: Comes with a pre-installed Facebook application.
- Nokia: An example from the Ovi store: store.ovi.com/content/7907.

5.6.2 Twitter mobile

You can interact with Twitter on your cellphone in two ways:

Through an application:

This is the most popular and user-friendly way of using Twitter on a cellphone. There are many applications available. Some examples:

- Fring: www.fring.com/default.php.
- Twitter for iPhone is available from Apple's app store.
- Twitter for BlackBerry is available from BlackBerry's App World.
- Twidroyd (for Android phones): twidroyd.com.

These applications streamline the process of creating new tweets, replying to messages and reading your tweet stream.

Through the Twitter mobile website:

You can access Twitter through your phone's browser. There are several mobile sites for Twitter that offer different levels of functionality.

Some mobile versions of the Twitter site:

- m.twitter.com: The original mobile site, a stripped-down version with limited functionality (for example, you cannot see @replies).
- mobile.twitter.com: A better-looking and more user-friendly version of the Twitter mobile site.
- twittme.mobi: Another full-featured mobile version of Twitter.

5.6.3 MXit

MXit (www.mxit.com) is a free mobile application for cellphones and is very popular

in the South African youth market. It has a registered user base over 19 million, about 20 million logins per day and over 250 million messages sent and received every day. Originating in South Africa, MXit is now being used by 120 countries daily. There are numerous services offered by MXit, from instant messaging to mobile banking with MXit Moola (in conjunction with Standard Bank's Beyond Payments payment solution, MiMoney). MXit even has its own financial advisor, JoeBanker, who handles your Moola. Many MXit users do not have bank accounts but they do have mobile phones; MXit provides both a trendy lifestyle solution and mobile banking.

In 2009, HDI Youth Marketers did a study on South African teens' social media usage, polling 5,300 urban youth between the ages of 8 and 22. For the third year in a row, MXit won in the Coolest Website and Social Network categories. Teenagers choose MXit over all other applications including Facebook and Google. MXit is continually expanding its services as well as advertising programs for marketers. Visit this link to find out how you can get involved: www.mxit.com/content/ap/en/advertisers.

5.6.4 WWSA

Cellphones have become a point of social interaction on a professional level. "Who's who SA" (www.whoswhosa.co.za) is a South African-based iPhone application for professionals. You are familiar with LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com), the web-based professional social network, from chapter 7. WWSA is the South African mobile version: its objective is to bring like-minded people together. It has also introduced a location-based service, which will allow you to find companies around you, view their profiles and connect with them.

5.6.5 Yoza

Mobile technology has expanded far beyond just text and voice calls into the realm of ebooks and elearning. Yoza (www.Yoza.mobi) is a mobile website started by M4Lit, one of the Shuttleworth Foundation's projects, and offers short stories on cellphones for free. Yoza is also available on MXit and its objective is to promote reading and writing in the teen market. Initiatives such as Yoza could be perfect sponsorship, partnership and marketing opportunities for companies that want to leverage the ever-growing mobile market.

6. Applications

There are numerous mobile marketing applications, many of which have already been mentioned earlier in this chapter. Below are four suggested mobile marketing service providers.

- Mobilitrix (www.mobilitrix.com) and Clickatell (www.clickatell.com) are the two leading South African mobile marketing agencies, offering a full-service product.
- Cellsmart (www.cellsmart.co.za) is a full-service mobile marketing agency offering the following:

- o SMS and MMS marketing messenger campaigns
- o Mobile CRM
- o Mobi site manager
- o Mobile content system
- o WAP push messages
- My Beat Interactive (www.mybeat.squarespace.com) provides both mobile and social marketing services. Its primary clients are advertisers, marketers, media companies and broadcasters. It will assist you with building, executing and reporting on your mobile and social campaigns. More specifically, it can provide:
 - o Ad platforms on mobile sites like Google, Admob and Yahoo, as well as other advertising networks
 - o A variety of SMS and MMS campaign options
 - o A branded Facebook page, news feeds and competitions

7. Code of conduct

When considering mobile marketing as a marketing technique, it is important to be aware of the legislative environment of this tactic. It is very important to abide by the code of conduct within the region in which you intend to send campaigns. Mobile content providers, for example ExactMobile (www.exactmobile.co.za) in South Africa, have also climbed on the mobile bandwagon with the sale of ring tones, wallpapers, games and images for mobile devices. The ethical issues around these providers are extremely pertinent, especially since they deal with a very youthful and impressionable target market. Marketers are having a field day as technology and marketing techniques have grown so quickly that legislation is still trying to catch up. User privacy is an increasing concern and the protection of consumer privacy rights by legislation is quickly developing in an attempt to protect consumer personal information and privacy.

As the mobile marketing industry grows, consumer trust is a prerequisite for this form of communication and persuasive marketing. To gain consumers' confidence, their privacy must be protected. Here are a few examples of threats to a consumer's privacy:

1. Exposure of consumer's identity
2. Determining a cellphone user's location using geographic positioning systems
3. Information theft from cellular devices
4. Sending unsolicited messages

All of these threats are personal and could lead to serious consequences. If they

are not taken care of with utmost sincerity, consumers will lose confidence in mobile marketing. Local legislation should help service providers to ensure that consumer privacy rights are protected.

In South Africa, the Wireless Applications Service Providers Association (WASPA) organisation started in 2004 and is supported by MTN, Vodacom and Cell C. “In order to uphold public perception of these services and to protect against bad practices, it was decided that a strong industry body was needed, with an appropriate Code of Conduct, representing the interests of its members and consumers, by enforcing the good practices established by this Code” – WASPA. If you would like to view the WASPA SMS and MMS Code of Conduct, you will find it in the articles of interest of this chapter.

8. Five mistakes to avoid in mobile marketing

1. **Customer.** Failing to target your customer will result in a failed campaign. Make sure that you send the right message to the right person. Do not use mobile marketing as a mass marketing tool.
2. **Push focused.** If you’re using SMS as a push-focused selling tool, you are unlikely to maintain an engaged audience. Do not send a marketing message to a mass audience without adding any value or attempt to build a relationship between the customer and your brand. Remember to consider the content and timing of mobile campaigns very carefully.
3. **Isolation.** Don’t use mobile marketing in isolation. As with all online marketing tactics we have learned in this course, mobile marketing is no exception to the rule. Integrated with traditional techniques like radio, outdoor and print, this technique will help support and incentivise customers to engage with your mobile strategy (e.g. a poster placed in a store window with a number to SMS to enter a competition).
4. **Spam.** Not complying with anti-spam legislation. Avoid being accused of sending unsolicited messages. Make sure that you have complied with opt-in consent and local legislation when sending campaigns. Also make sure that your SMS service provider understands the legislation and is compliant with these issues too.
5. **One way.** Using SMS marketing as a one-way communication tool. Use mobile marketing as an interactive communication tool and not a one-way message like print ads, which promote the brand but don’t encourage a response. Make sure your message is action orientated. Think about timing – when is the best time to send a message so that customers are more likely to engage and respond?

9. Understanding the buying behaviour of the future – Generation Z

Where you born before the birth on the internet? Imagine growing up in a world where you have never lived a day without the web, cellphones and MP3 players. Welcome to Generation Z: the current 12 to 20 year olds, born between the early 1990s and late 2000s, and who will be driving consumer trends and media consumption in the future. With the growth of mobile and online marketing over the last 15 years in mind, consider the following media habits and trends of this futurist generation.

- No newspaper. Generation Z do not read newspapers. They visit a few news websites or buy specialist magazines; media is becoming so consolidated that you can go to one location to find all information.
- Television on demand. Why watch TV on a schedule when you can DVR shows and watch in your own time?
- Mobile, mobile, mobile. They have never owned a landline and never will. Some of them probably don't even own a watch: it's all on their phone.
- Trust. Teenagers are very trusting of friends and even strangers on social networks, their new virtual reality.
- Willing to pay for content. Until 2005, no one wanted to pay for content online, but times are changing. Generation Z expect to have to pay for online content; if you want to watch a movie or download music or podcasts, you pay. On the other hand, teenagers want to be able to choose to watch advertising instead of paying and don't mind watching advertising if the content is free.
- Community. Social networks are part of their daily lives; they don't know how to stay in contact with friends without being permanently connected online. Communicating with friends is their number one activity – almost like a virtual nightclub, you go there to hang out without parental supervision.
- Brands. Subconsciously, teenagers are more aware of brands than older generations, although they would not admit to brands having a high impact on their lives.
- Trans-platform content. Multiplatform life is normality for teenagers. Moving content from one application to another is the norm – your digital content never leaves your side.
- IM. Email to teenagers is like writing with pen and paper to Generation X. Instant messenger is the only form of communication among teens; acronyms and short hand have become the norm for IM communication.
- Sharing. Sharing the most menial, inconsequential and mundane parts of their lives with friends is commonplace. This is the content of their IMs, tweets and Facebook status updates.

10. Summary

It is evident that mobile marketing is a new and exciting marketing platform that cannot be ignored, especially in South Africa where the prevalence is so high. That being said, mobile devices are becoming the most personal device a consumer owns and have more value than only for marketing. Banking, mobile books, even networking and education are growing fast on mobile. Make sure that, if you do consider this marketing tactic, you do so with caution and respect for consumer privacy. Cellphones should be seen as a new opportunity for marketers to build closer relationships with customers and gain insight into mobile customer behaviour, and not as a new form of mass broadcasting to gain access to the most personal area of consumers' lives.

The future of mobile marketing is mind blowing, with augmented reality (AR) at the top of the list – location-based search where your phone will know where you are and will display ads and content based on your location. For now, one can only speculate on what AR will do for mobile marketing and the mobile industry as a whole, but it will undoubtedly be a game changer.

In this chapter, you:

- Learned where mobile connectivity started and how it has grown rapidly in South Africa.
- Discovered the main benefits of using mobile marketing in a country with such a high mobile penetration rate.
- Learned several effective techniques for marketing on mobile.
- Learned about the risks and things to avoid when using mobile media for marketing.
- Learned how Generation Z behaves and uses mobile devices, to enhance your marketing plan.

11. References

1. History of mobile phones: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_mobile_phones
2. How stuff works: Cellphones: electronics.howstuffworks.com
3. Africa's high mobile penetration sets the stage for internet revolution: www.itnewsafrika.com/?p=2839
4. South Africa mobile penetration levels break the 100% mark: www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/newslog/South+Africa+Mobile+Penetration+Level+Breaks+The+100+Mark.aspx
5. Advantages of mobile marketing as a business promotion strategy: www.articlesbase.com/networking-articles/advantages-of-mobile-marketing-as-a-

business-promotion-strategy-1011349.html

6. Five mistakes you must avoid in your mobile marketing campaign: ezinearticles.com/?Five-Mistakes-You-Must-Avoid-in-Your-Mobile-Marketing-Campaign&id=3831231
7. MMS: mobile multimedia advertising: www.ambientmedia.co.za/mms.htm
8. Search mobile computing definitions: Common short code: searchmobilecomputing.techtarget.com/definition/common-short-code
9. Proximity marketing delivers the right ads at the right time: www.bluetooth.com/English/Products/Pages/Proximity_Marketing_Delivers.aspx
10. Target starts mobile coupon program: www.npr.org/blogs/alltechconsidered/2010/03/target_starts_mobile_coupon_pr.html
11. Introduction to mobile coupons: www.mmaglobal.com
12. Search mobile computing definitions: 2D barcode: searchmobilecomputing.techtarget.com/definition/2D-barcode
13. KLM website mobile check-in: www.klm.com/travel/nl_en/prepare_for_travel/checkin_options/mobile/index.htm
14. Venture Beat: Google mobile display ads: mobile.venturebeat.com/2010/07/29/google-mobile-display-ads
15. Mobile banking on the increase: www.southafrica.info/business/trends/newbusiness/cell-171109.htm
16. Studying the digital future: A new set of rules for mobile marketing: www.mobiadnews.com/?p=3703
17. Digital will overtake traditional media spend by 2014 study: www.themediamanager.com/3/post/2010/8/digital-will-overtake-traditional-media-spending-by-2014-study.html
18. Legal issues regarding mobile marketing: ezinearticles.com/?Legal-Issues-Regarding-Mobile-Marketing&id=4345872
19. The future of mobile marketing: www.mobilemarketingwatch.com/the-future-of-mobile-augmented-reality-4612

CHAPTER 10

INTERNET MARKETING STRATEGY

Key concepts

Taking a holistic approach to internet marketing, techniques for creating an integrated and effective internet marketing strategy, start with the basic and expand your campaign, tools and resources for continuing your internet marketing education.

CHAPTER 10: INTERNET MARKETING STRATEGY

1. Introduction

During this course, you have learned about many useful, effective and exciting marketing strategies. This final chapter is all about putting them together into a coherent whole – to get the maximum benefit out of your effort, time and money. You will also learn how to further your education by keeping up with emerging internet marketing trends.

In this chapter, you will:

- Learn how to take a holistic approach to internet marketing (section 2).
- Learn the best techniques for creating an integrated and effective internet marketing strategy (section 3).
- See how to start with the basics and expand your online campaign (section 3).
- Get tools and resources for continuing your internet marketing education in the ever-changing online world (section 4).

2. Holistic approach

A single internet marketing tool on its own is never as effective as a well-planned campaign. Unlike most of traditional marketing, where an advert or promotion will expire after a certain amount of time, internet marketing is all about long-term, ongoing projects. A website and social community requires more planning and will remain active much longer than a traditional marketing campaign. At the same time, internet marketing also includes one-off projects like online adverts and promotional content. This means that internet marketing requires a unique and distinct approach.

As you learned in chapter 2, your website is the centre of your internet marketing strategy, because it is your home on the web and the first place that your customers will look for you – and also because it is the space that you can control and analyse most completely. Your goal is to link all your marketing strategies to your website, so that anyone who encounters your branding will end up in the same place: your optimised, tailored and monitored company website.

Here's an image from chapter 2 that shows just some of these relationships:



Holistic internet marketing involves four steps:

1. Attraction – driving traffic to your website
2. Retention – keeping visitors on your site, and getting them to return
3. Conversion – getting visitors to respond to your call to action, ultimately making a purchase
4. Measurement – tracking and analysing user data so that you can improve your page

Often, one tool or avenue can have repercussions for more than one marketing platform – especially copywriting and social media. The ideal holistic internet marketing approach capitalises on the key features and strengths of each individual element – the more you use, the greater the combined effect. For example:

- PPC and other types of advertising are ideal for driving interested customers to your website.
- Your email newsletter will encourage regular customers to repeatedly visit your website.
- SEO will generate general web traffic for your website.
- Excellent web design makes the user experience enjoyable, which can assist in conversions.
- Good web copywriting and blogging will encourage visitors to stay on your web page, and to return for new content. They also play a big factor in converting your visitors into customers.

- Social media builds a community that either refers back to, or is located on, your website, meaning that participants are constantly and subtly exposed to your marketing message.
- Viral marketing drives a large number of new people to your website.
- Mobile marketing reaches your customers on the go, allowing instant communication and engagement with your brand.
- Web analytics lets you measure, analyse and refine your strategy, making you more effective with less effort.

However, keep in mind that you should not necessarily use all of these tactics at once, since you may not have the resources to run them effectively or they may simply not be appropriate to your business and goals.

2.1 Linking strategies

Consider the following scenario:

Helen is a homeowner who is looking for a good gardening service for her large garden. She searches Google for “landscaping and gardening cape town” and finds your website, www.alphagardening.co.za, in one of the sponsored adverts at the top of the page. She clicks on it and spends some time browsing your page. Helen is especially drawn in by your blog, which provides regular, seasonal gardening tips; therefore, she enters her email address to sign up for the weekly email newsletter.

She also notices that you have a Facebook Page and clicks the link on your website to access it. There, she finds an active community of local gardeners, each one passionate about their plants and full of questions and good advice. Some of them even praise your business, saying that your service is punctual, neat and thorough. Helen chats to your community members about gardening issues and invites some of her friends to take part.

After a bit of socialising, Helen goes back to your website, reads through the service offerings and submits a quote request by using your online form. A few hours later, impressed by the promptness of your reply, she agrees to sign up for your monthly gardening service. She is delighted to get an SMS confirmation of the appointment, with a special discount because she recommended your service to her friends – a fact that you noticed in your web analytics data.

This scenario highlights just some of the ways that your marketing strategies can overlap and support each other. On the outside, this crossover looks seamless – from the perspective of the user, every part of the strategy is just one aspect of the whole.

In module 2, we discussed the concept of the user experience, which is the way that users perceive and interact with your website. Creating a holistic marketing strategy means extending that user experience to other avenues, like your email newsletter and social networks. This highlights the absolute importance of

consistency and uniformity in your branding approach across all platforms. Your customers should never have the jarring experience of questioning the identity of one of your branded communications: it should all feel like branches on the same tree.

3. Creating your internet marketing strategy

An internet marketing strategy takes considerable time to conceptualise, effect and monitor – and it is an ongoing process that requires quick thinking and considerable resources. When you create yours, be sure to work through the following four steps carefully, and take time at each stage to make sure you have covered all your bases.

3.1 Step 1: Planning

As the adage goes, if you fail to plan, you're planning to fail. There is absolutely no substitute or shortcut for this part of your internet marketing strategy. You have to know exactly what you want to achieve, how you want to achieve it and what budget, resources and time you can allocate before you set out. Try to use some of the following project management techniques to help you plan your internet marketing campaign.

- Define exactly what you want to achieve and be as specific as possible. Do you want to increase your Facebook community by 30%? Do you want to increase sales by 10%? Do some research before you settle on your goals, so that they are realistic and appropriate to your needs. Once you have defined this, brainstorm all the tools and techniques you can use to achieve your goal. This decision will influence the rest of your strategy, so make sure you are happy with it, and that it is realistic.
- Think about all the potential risks and problems that could affect your campaign. Delayed web development? Negative PR about your brand online? Develop a strategy for handling each problem if it were to come up, or think of ways that you can prevent the problem from arising at all.
- Make sure that you comply with the new Consumer Protection Act, which protects the consumer from unsolicited communication. Read through the CPA primer and the accompanying Act carefully to make sure that you are not breaking any laws. If you follow ethical marketing practices and consider how your marketing messages will affect the end consumer, you should be fine.
- Create a realistic schedule and timeline for each part of the project – and don't forget to include ongoing activities like monitoring and moderating. At the same time, allocate a budget to each project task and work out your total budget at the end.
- Build the team that is going to help you create your strategy – find the freelancers, staff members or colleagues who will be working on the project

and include them in the planning process. If you are working on your own, consider finding some just-in-case contacts if you find yourself stuck or too busy. Make sure that you communicate frequently and effectively with your team.

- **Get to work!** Measure your progress through the project by crossing off tasks when they are complete and amending schedules and budgets as necessary. Your plan will probably have to change a few times in this process, but that is all right as long as you make the necessary adjustments.

3.1.1 Budget and time

These two limited resources should inform the scale and complexity of any internet marketing project. The internet has enabled the creation of a wide variety of excellent free tools for everything from building your website to sending emails and tracking data. These tools make it possible for anyone to create a perfectly adequate and effective internet marketing campaign.

However, it is unlikely that you will get an exceptional one completely for free; to create something truly professional, you will need the assistance of experts and the features available on the more advanced paid-for web tools. You will also have running costs like PPC budgets, domain registration fees and server costs. Factor all of these in, decide how much you are willing to spend and then find the best ways to maximise your budget. Don't spend R20,000 on an overly sophisticated website when you can spend your money better on subscriptions to analytics and email services.

Time is also an important consideration. First, you will spend a lot of time upfront planning, building and filling your platforms with the right content. Second, you will spend time every day monitoring, engaging and adding to your platforms. Most marketers and entrepreneurs who run straightforward internet marketing campaigns spend at least two to three hours a day on responding to feedback, monitoring social media discussions, reading up on mentions of the brand, creating new content and analysing tracking data on the fly. This is a considerable time commitment, but extremely valuable if you optimise what you do. It is also a good caution against trying to do too many things at once.

3.2 Step 2: The basics

The second step in your marketing campaign is to set up the basic tools and resources that you will use. Always remember to stick to the essentials at first to keep the campaign manageable. You can always add elements later, but removing them or letting them stagnate is much harder and worse for your brand image.

3.2.1 Internet marketing essentials

There are two essential elements for any online marketing campaign.

1. **Your website.** As discussed in chapter 2, your website is the centre and the most vital component of your online marketing strategy. It is the online hub that you control and that your customers will gravitate to. Your website

should be optimised for search engines to find.

2. **Web analytics.** Like you learned in chapter 8, no marketing campaign can succeed if you do not track and analyse the effect of its strategies. Data, and the information you can glean from it, are essential.

These two elements are vital, but they will not succeed in isolation. In addition, you need to include at least one traffic-generating strategy. The following two are the most effective.

1. **Email newsletter.** Setting up a regular email communication is easy and quick, and ensures that you keep current and prospective customers thinking about your brand.
2. **Online adverts.** Targeted online advertising, both in search engines and on social networks, is an extremely cost-effective and successful way to drive just the right kind of traffic to your website.

Finally, there are several extra tools you can add once your campaign is running and you feel you have the capacity to expand.

1. **A blog.** Blogs are a great way of improving your SEO and of providing interesting content that will make your visitors return to your website.
2. **Social networks.** If you choose, you can place your brand on a social network like Facebook or LinkedIn. Be careful which platforms you choose – think of what is most appropriate for your target market.
3. **Mobile marketing.** You can add contact by cellphone to your strategy, to reach your customers wherever they are.

3.2.2 Choose your platforms carefully

When you choose the elements of your internet marketing strategy, make sure that you are using the best platforms and tools for your brand and target audience. Here are some considerations for the major elements of your campaign.

- **Free versus paid.** There are many free online tools and services that you can use in your marketing campaign; there are also many inexpensive paid services that give added value and better features. Choosing which to use depends on your budget, technical skill and what you want to achieve with your brand. For example, consider your website. If your page is small, purely informational and very simple, you can use one of the free website builders introduced in chapter 2. However, if you want more control, a more professional image and better possibilities for optimising your page, invest in a properly developed website.
- **Social networks.** Social networks come in many guises and there are dozens available online. Many marketers see social networking as a buzz concept that they feel compelled to employ, but there are risks involved too. Not every brand is suited to every social network, and not all brands have target markets that use these networks. Before you sign up and devote time to

social networking, research your market carefully to make sure they are using the tools you want to reach them on.

3.2.3 Limitations and risks

The online space is faced with its own risks and limitations. South Africa is in the unfortunate situation of having low connectivity rates and generally slow, unreliable connections. This is an important consideration when you launch your brand online – will your customers be able to access it easily?

Here are some pointers for negotiating these issues.

- Make sure your server is reliable. Your server is the computer that your website is saved on so that it can be accessed online. Your hosting service is responsible for storing your website on their servers and for making sure it is always available. If you find your website is down often, speak to your hosting service or change to a more reliable service provider.
- Make backups. If you have ever had your computer hard drive crash, then you know the value of good and frequent backups – copies of your data that are stored in a different place to the originals. Your website is also at risk of being changed or deleted if the server it is on is damaged. Therefore, you should have – or your host should make – regular website backups.
- Consider data limits. Most people in South Africa have a limited amount of bandwidth that they can use each month – this is the amount of internet data that they can load on their computers, including websites. It is important that your page has as small a file size as possible (which will also give it a better SEO ranking). Don't use large, high-resolution images, complex animations, embedded music or videos that load automatically.
- Consider your own data limits. It is important to remember that bandwidth is a two-way street – not only do your viewers have to load the page, your server has to send the data, which counts against your own internet cap. This is an important consideration if your social media campaign goes viral and the demand for your content increases dramatically. Will your server be able to handle the increased traffic?

3.3 Step 3: Reacting and analysing

Internet marketing is always a fluid process – the web is never stagnant or happy to remain as it is. Once you have your basic elements in place, you must start the ongoing process of updating, maintaining, adapting and analysing your strategy.

3.3.1 Keeping up to date

The quicker you react to changing online trends, opinions, customer comments and media exposure, the better your brand will be perceived. The best internet marketing campaigns are updated every day – a far cry from the static marketing inherent to traditional media. However, some aspects of your campaign will need to be updated more frequently than others.

Social media requires the most constant attention, instantaneous responses and frequent updates to keep the community interested. Moderated media like forums, chat rooms and comment sections need to be watched constantly for inappropriate behaviour and for messages that need to be responded to.

Published media – blogs and email newsletters – are less intensive but must still be updated regularly according to a preset schedule. Evaluate the amount of time you have and plan your publishing around it. It is much better to publish less frequently but regularly than to fail to stick to an overly ambitious schedule. Also consider how much time your audience has to read all your content – don't waste time blogging three times a day if they're only checking in once a week. One or two blog posts a week is manageable for most marketers (unless you have an in-house copywriter or outsource the service), and an email newsletter shouldn't be sent more often than fortnightly or, better, monthly. You don't want to strain yourself or overload your customers.

More static content, like your website, can be modified as needed, though remember to keep your SEO up to date. If you do add new website content, perform ad hoc keyword research and optimise the text and meta-data for keywords when you include it on your site. If you have submitted your details to online directories, check them every so often to make sure that the details are still correct. Your online adverts should be adapted as frequently as necessary to make sure they are performing at their peak – this could be once a day, or every few months (depending on the nature of your business and the maturity of your campaign).

Keep in mind that content online behaves in two seemingly contradictory ways. On one hand, current content quickly becomes replaced by the never-ending wave of newer material. On the other, anything posted to the web will be around for a long time, saved on servers and caches around the world – and completely deleting something is impossible. Whenever you post any content, ask yourself if you are comfortable with it being seen by many people and available for a long time. This is a vital consideration for your online reputation management.

An important aspect of reacting quickly is being flexible and thinking on your feet. Since you sometimes have to respond on the fly, you must be creative and confident enough to get the right message across to your audience. If you always remain frank, approachable and open, you should have no trouble communicating quickly and effectively.

3.3.2 Monitor and adapt

Keeping up to date is one thing, but knowing what to change to make your online marketing more effective is much more valuable. At this stage of your strategy, you must monitor and analyse all of your platforms. Every time you add or modify content, see what effects this has on your page views and conversion. Also monitor which strategies are not effective at all, and either change them or stop them altogether.

As you learned in chapter 8, analysing your analytics data means more than just adding up the numbers. You must really try to understand why visitors behave in certain ways. Why are more people on Facebook in the morning than at any other time of the day? Why does your blog get the most comments at 1pm? Why

does no one click on your search engine advert even though there are several impressions every day? Try to come up with logical answers and a new plan, or consider doing some direct research by approaching customers to discuss this. Then implement it and see what effects, if any, the changes have.

In the first three months, you should keep a close eye on your analytics data, especially as you are adding and changing many things at once – you should be checking your analytics programs once or twice a week. Later on, when your strategies are established, you can reduce this to a few times a month.

3.4 Step 4: Expanding the strategy

A few months after the launch of your campaign, your website is running smoothly and you've mastered your email newsletter. Where to from here?

3.4.1 Adding elements

It is very easy to add new elements to a thriving marketing campaign because you already have a large audience and it will be easier to convert them to use your new platforms than it was to get them onto your website in the first place. Use marketing approaches like promotions and competitions to entice your visitors to join your new venture. For example, if you are starting a new Facebook page, put the link prominently on your website and give your customers a 10% discount if they become a fan of your page; or offer a special giveaway if your page gets 500 new fans by a certain due date. Ensure that your new addition has been carefully planned and researched beforehand, and that it is completely ready for your customers before you announce it. It should also fit into your brand image coherently, and should be something your target market would be interested in pursuing.

3.4.2 Integrating with your offline marketing

Online and offline marketing can really complement each other. Here are some tips for crossing over between the two.

- Put your web address on everything. Decide which is your most prominent online touch point – generally your website or social networking profile – and add that URL to everything you publish or advertise. You can put the URL into print and TV adverts, on your packaging, on leaflets and billboards – wherever people will see it.
- Incentivise the website. Include a special code on your printed media that allows visitors to your website to get bonus content or a special discount. Announce a competition that is web based only. This will drive people to visit your web platforms and will help with tracking too.
- Double up your content. Post your TV advert on your website. Upload your flier as an image. Present your radio advert as streaming audio. Once you have created any of these offline media, you can use your website to host and promote them so that they are always available for viewing. If you make a particularly funny advert and your customers actually want to share it, this

can even be the beginning of a viral campaign.

- Open up the discussion. Use your offline media to promote the interactive elements of your online tools. Let users submit their own comments, media and questions – and make sure you respond effectively. Cell C is doing this with their “Tell Trevor” (www.telltrevor.co.za) campaign.
- Use online to promote offline. Use your online platforms to let your followers know about offline events, deals and promotions.
- Use your online lessons. Take the lessons you have learned from successful online strategies (which can be precisely measured and analysed) and incorporate them into your offline advertising to make it that much more effective.

4. Learning for the future

Well done – you’ve almost completed your internet marketing education! But what now? The internet is such a rapidly changing place that much of this material will seem outdated in a year’s time. To truly capitalise on your new learning, you have to make an active effort to continue your own education. Here are some tools and suggestions to keep you on the cutting edge.

4.1 South Africa is advancing

By all indications, South African companies are starting to embrace internet marketing in a considerable way. Consider the recent wave of new online initiatives started by the following companies:

- Cell C: the Tell Trevor campaign (www.cellc.co.za/tell-trevor/topic)
- Vodacom: the Player 23 campaign (www.player23.co.za) for local rugby fans
- Kalahari.net: a long-time online retailer that is expanding its social media presence
- Exclusive Books: a physical retailer that has launched an online store
- MXit: a South African cellphone messaging application that has taken the youth market by storm
- Woolworths: the retailer has a strong social media presence on Twitter (twitter.com/woolworths_sa) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/WoolworthsSA)

In addition to traditional offline companies moving into the online space, a number of online-only South African companies are achieving success too:

- Travelstart (www.travelstart.co.za): a travel search engine
- The Daily Maverick (www.thedailymaverick.co.za): an online-only South

African news and analysis website

- Yuppiefchef (www.yuppiefchef.co.za): an online store selling premium kitchen tools
- 2OceansVibe (www.2oceansvibe.com): an irreverent blog about local and international popular culture that is currently the most popular blog in South Africa. The blog has recently branched out into internet radio with the launch of 2OceansVibe Radio (www.2oceansviberadio.com)

The best way to succeed at internet marketing in South Africa is to watch these players, study their moves and learn from their successes and failures. You need to recognise the uniqueness of the local online space and capitalise on its qualities.

4.2 Coming trends

It is impossible to predict exactly how the internet, and internet marketing, will evolve in the next few years, but here are some indicators of coming trends.

- **The semantic web.** As you learned in chapter 1, web 3.0, or the semantic web, is about creating information that is human-readable rather than just machine-readable. Internet marketing will have to mirror this trend to make sure that its content is easily found and organised by people rather than just search engines and online aggregators.
- **New tools and networks.** Every day, new online tools and places appear – many fail, but some survive and start to grow significantly. The landscape is bound to change significantly. For example, Twitter was virtually unknown in 2007, but today is one of the top social networks; in five years, it may be obsolete already. By the time you read these notes, a new network called Diaspora will have been launched – it is billed as the Facebook alternative for those who want a more secure, customisable social network. What effect has it had already?
- **Applications.** Since the launch of iTunes' App Store, online applications – little programs that perform a specific function – have taken the web by storm. Virtually all mobile and desktop devices can run a huge selection of apps – everything from checking the weather and stock markets to playing games and performing analytics. Will you develop a unique app for your brand – a store locator for your franchise, a fun game for your law firm, an interactive menu for your restaurant?
- **More refinement.** Data-gathering techniques are becoming ever more detailed and effective, which means you can learn more about your target audience than ever before. Your adverts will become more targeted, your material more tailored and your participation more intense. How will you leverage this new information? And how will you deal with the challenge of using this information in line with mounting privacy and consumer protection laws?
- **Changing customers.** Your audience is evolving and becoming more aware of the way the internet works. Not only do they know that they have an equal

voice, but they are starting to see through techniques like advert placements and SEO. How will you speak to this savvy, expert and cynical audience?

4.3 Follow the leaders

The best way to keep up your learning is to keep up to date with current trends. Here is a wide selection of blogs and websites, all written by industry experts, that you can browse through. Pick your favourites and make sure that you check in regularly for news and updates. In addition, refer to the readings and resources in earlier chapters for information on specific topics.

Internet marketing – international

- Mashable (www.mashable.com) – highly respected industry-leading social media and marketing blog
- HubSpot (blog.hubspot.com) – short, concise and relevant internet marketing posts with good images
- Seth Godin’s blog (sethgodin.typepad.com) – short and inspirational daily posts that you can apply to everyday issues
- Copyblogger (www.copyblogger.com) – online marketing tips and tricks in a nutshell
- Springwise (springwise.com) – fresh and innovative ideas, weekly newsletter

Internet marketing – local

- MarketingWeb (www.marketingweb.co.za) – local marketing news site with articles and insights
- Memeburn (memeburn.com) – insightful and relevant articles on the latest technology and marketing trends
- BizCommunity (www.bizcommunity.com) – good industry-relevant articles and weekly or daily email newsletters, always up to date

Technology, trends and media news

- TechCentral (www.techcentral.co.za) – technology news from South Africa and globally
- Trendwatching (www.trendwatching.com) – up-to-date media briefs about technology and marketing trends from around the world
- Media Update (www.mediaupdate.co.za) – local media and entertainment news
- Butterscotch (www.butterscotch.com/tutorials.html) – online tutorials on a wide range of topics and skills

- Venture Beat (www.venturebeat.com) – the international career hub for technology and innovations

5. Summary: Keep experimenting

The best way to learn something new is simply to do it, and see how it works and can be improved. In any case, experimentation is the cornerstone of marketing – nobody can fully predict how people will respond to an advert or campaign. If a strategy fizzles or backfires, handle it by employing good online reputation management techniques. If it succeeds, try to understand its winning aspects and build on them. The internet will surprise you: a small, sideline project may go viral and attract thousands of users, while your carefully executed marketing push will leave customers cold. This unpredictability makes working with the web so dynamic and exciting. Never be afraid to try new strategies or to experiment with new technological platforms – as long as you do enough research and planning beforehand, you are bound to succeed. Your only limit is your creativity.

In this chapter, you:

- Learned why the holistic approach to internet marketing is so important.
- Learned how to make all the parts of your internet marketing strategy work together.
- Learned how to take your strategy from the bare basics and expand it to include many diverse elements.
- Were shown the tools for continuing your own internet marketing education.

6. References

1. Advice on holistic web marketing: www.flyte.biz/resources/newsletters/07/03-holistic-web-marketing.php