



Nash Networks Inc
IT Consulting

Serious about technology. Serious about your business.

Make Your Website Earn Its Keep!

**A Non-Technical Introduction to
Internet Marketing for Your Small
Business Website**

"Making every IT dollar count!"

Part 9, September 2009

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Executive Summary

Your Website could be the most critical tool in your marketing arsenal.

- Clarify your Website's job – its main purpose and function.
- Most small business Websites are intended to establish credibility, provide information, sell a product or service, build a brand, build a client base and/or build a following.
- Set clear goals for your site, based on its purpose.

Has Your Website Been Optimized?

- **If nobody can find you, they can't take any desired action.** To be an effective marketing tool, every Website must be optimized (set up so that it shows up high on a Google search)
- The article provides 3 quick and easy tests to check if your site is optimized: Keywords, Title and Description, and Visits per Month.

Getting Help: Researching Web Resources

- Which of your Website's goals can they help with?
- What Websites have they built or worked on?
- Can you can develop a good long-term working relationship with this company or person?
- Expect ongoing expenses, particularly for search engine optimization.

Monitoring Your Site's Performance

- Be patient and realistic. Get your Web professional to help you set realistic timelines and expectations.
- Record baseline metrics for your main goals, and monitor at regular intervals.

Why You Should Read This Article

Your Website could be the most critical tool in your marketing arsenal.

“With research showing that **nine out of ten** ... purchasers start their buying process not by picking up the phone or consulting a supplier's catalog **but by searching the Internet**, your Website could easily be the most critical tool in your marketing arsenal.”

(How to measure your Website's return on investment
<http://websolutions.thomasnet.com/html/howtomeasureyourwebsite.html>)

Why You Should Read This Article

I've spent the last few weeks giving myself a crash course in small business Website marketing and promotion. I was tired of our Website's lazy ways and wanted it to get moving and start doing some work for me.

This is the article I wish I'd found when I started out on my DIY crash Internet marketing course.

The reason? Most information about Website marketing and promotion is written by technical or marketing people, who overlook the fact that most of us don't have the time, technical expertise or inclination to micromanage the company Website. You drown in endless lists and technical jargon, and then give up and let the Website gather more dust.

This is a **“how-to-get-it-done”** article, not a **“how-to-do-it”** article. It's aimed at non-technical or non-Web people who want a small business Website that's an effective Internet marketing tool.

First, Understand Your Website's Job

"Would you tell me, please," [said Alice] "which way I ought to go from here?"
"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.
"I don't much care where – " said Alice.
"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.
" – so long as I get somewhere," Alice added as an explanation.
"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."

(Alice's Adventures in Wonderland - Lewis Carroll)

Many business owners never stop to think about their Website's job description. Big mistake. It's really important to clarify the site's function, set clear goals and monitor effectiveness.

Most small business Websites' functions will be one or more of the following:

- Provide credibility
- Provide information
- Sell a product or service
- Build a brand
- Build a client base
- Build a following

A site might start off with one main function and develop others later. For example, we initially developed the Nash Networks site purely to reassure prospective clients that we were legit. More recently, though, we've given our site more responsibilities: It now publishes articles, builds our brand and is required to "convert" visitors into prospects. As a result, our Website improvement goals and strategies have changed.

Only once you have clarified your goals can you reasonably decide what to focus on improving. This is important, because any Website critique will likely find a number of problem areas, but you only have to fix the problems that are getting between you and your goals.

Website function or goal	Possible Focus Area(s)
Provide credibility	General appearance Visual and aesthetic factors Web copy (text)
Provide information	Web copy (text)
Sell a product or service	Getting more visitors from your target market Converting visits to sales
Build a brand	General appearance Visual and aesthetic factors Getting more visitors from your target market Web copy (text)
Build a client base	Getting more visitors from your target market Making the site "sticky" so that visitors convert to prospects
Build a following	Getting more visitors from your target market Converting visitors into subscribers

Clearly, there's a lot of overlap. The main point is that you don't want to spend thousands of dollars improving your site's aesthetics when the problem is that your shopping cart is cumbersome, so visitors aren't buying widgets; and so on.

Examples:

We've been successful in increasing the number of visitors to Nash Networks. Our current goal is to convert more of those new visitors into prospective clients. We're currently working with a designer to improve the home page aesthetics and appeal, to make the site more "sticky".

For Findanapp, our iPhone applications site, we want a lot more visitors, so our Website marketing pro is working on increasing our rankings and traffic.

How Do You Know If Your Site is Even in the Game?

In terms of Internet marketing, the starting point is to establish whether the site has been optimized, and how successfully. This is very easy!

Optimization, search engine optimization or SEO means setting up the site so that Google and other search engines will rank it as high as possible for a particular set of keywords. The ideal is for your Website to be the first search result on Page 1.

If nobody can find you, they can't take any desired action. It's as simple as that. Every Website has to be optimized to be an effective marketing tool.

If your site is typical, it's never been optimized or if it has, there's never been any follow-up.

"Rotten Tomatoes" versus "Preview Online"

Quick & Easy Test #1: Keywords

Keyword optimization means embedding keywords in the right places on a Website, so that when someone searches for those keywords on Google, there's a good chance they'll find your site.

I used to think Google magically matched the keywords to the Website, and to some extent it does – but you need active keyword optimization to even have a chance of featuring high on a Google search.

So how do you tell if a Website is keyword-optimized, and for which keywords? It's ridiculously easy. Just go to any Website, right-click on a blank section of the page and select "View Page Source". A window of gobbledegook will open – that's the code. Look for "**keywords**" right near the top (see examples in the boxes below).

I searched for "movie reviews" on Google and compared the #1 site on Page 1, Rotten Tomatoes (www.rottentomatoes.com), with a site on page 10, #96, Preview Online (www.previewonline.org).

I went to these sites, right-clicked, selected "View Page Source" and found the code. I've copied the bit of code that shows the keywords:

ROTTEN TOMATOES CODE:

```
<meta name="keywords" content="rotten tomatoes, movie, movies, new movie, new movie releases, movie trailers, movie reviews, movie previews" />
```

Rotten Tomatoes has optimized for several strong keywords - ones it knows people are likely to type in when they are looking for a site like this.

PREVIEW ONLINE CODE:

```
<meta name="keywords" content="previews, Entertainment, Entertainment - General, previewonline.com" />
```

Preview Online, on the other hand, has very general, not very useful, keywords, that might have been put there automatically during the page development.

Try Test #1 on your own site!

Go to your Website and right-click on a blank section of the page. Select "View Page Source" and look at what's in the keyword field. It's on one of the first few lines, near the top.

Quick & Easy Test #2: Title and Description

If you look at the Google search results for our two "movie previews" sites, you'll see that the Title (purple top line) and Description (the two lines below that) are very different.

ROTTEN TOMATOES: Movies - New Movie Reviews and Previews!

Movie Trailers, Movie Reviews and New Movie Previews from Rotten Tomatoes - The Ultimate Movie Reaction Site!

[Movies - In Theaters - On DVD - Opening](#)

www.rottentomatoes.com/ - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#) -   

#1 |

Rotten Tomatoes has a title that's optimized for the main keywords it expects will bring viewers to the site – Movies, Movie Reviews, Movie Previews. The Description is buzzy, specific and full of good keywords.

Welcome to Preview!

Click in the **movie's** link on the resulting page to read the **review**. NOTE: if the RETURN or ENTER key on your browser will not provide results, ...

www.previewonline.org/ - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#) -   

#96 |

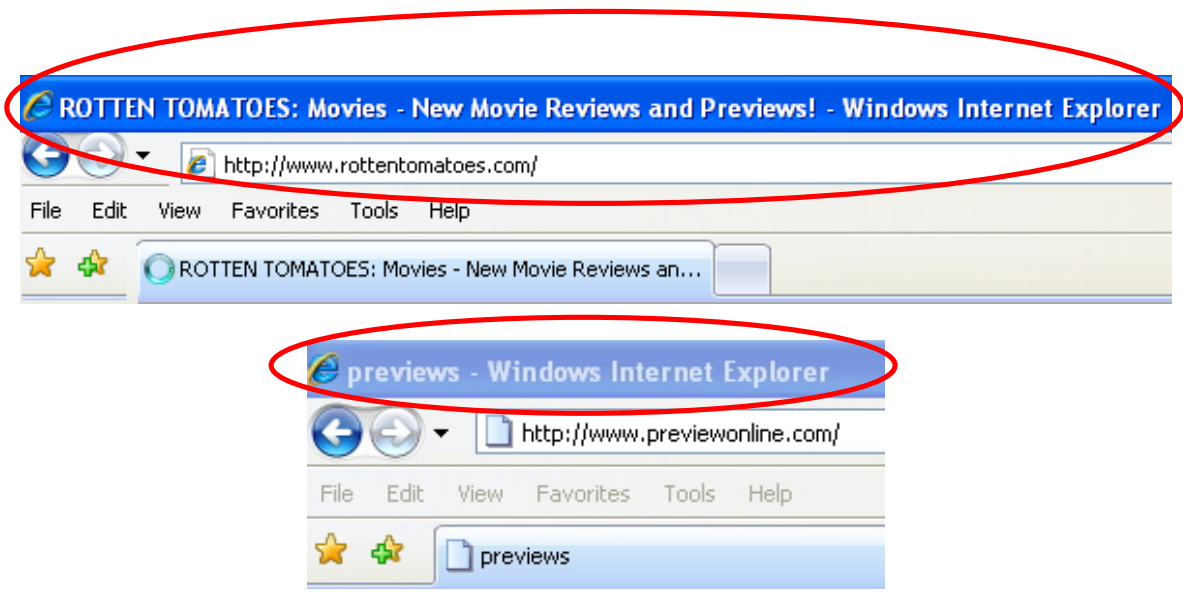
Preview Online has the ultimate giveaway Title, "Welcome to Preview!", which shows that it's never been optimized. There are no keywords in the title and very poor keywords in the Description. The Description is largely meaningless, because it's never been actively entered, but has instead been guessed at by Google's automated tools.

Try Test #2 on your own site!

Search for your own site by putting its URL (www.mywebsite.com) in the Google search box, and see how the Title and Description are displayed.

Short-cut

The title also shows in the very top of a browser window when a Website is opened, so that's an even quicker way to get a sense of whether a Website has been optimized or not. Nothing or "Welcome to X" – not. Useful-looking keywords – yes.



Quick & Easy Test #3: Number of Visits to the Site Per Month

A high number of visits shows that the site is being found frequently and hence that its SEO is very good.

ww.rottentomatoes.com

Estimate **4,545,700** visits in the previous
30 days.

Rotten tomatoes gets a phenomenal 4.5 million hits per month. That kind of volume never happens by accident. Clearly these folk have put an enormous amount of money and effort into SEO.

ww.previewonline.org

Sorry, cannot estimate number of visits to
that site at this time

Preview Online, by contrast gets too few hits to register (probably under 5,000).

Try Test #3 on your own site!

You can search for your own site using this tool: <http://www.trafficestimate.com>. Congratulations if you show up, but don't worry if you don't; you need several thousand visits a month to show up, and not every small business Website needs that many to be successful. Analytics tools like Google Analytics (see below) provide more accurate statistics and register even tiny numbers of visits.

Finding the Right Web Professional

By now you might be convinced that your site needs help. You can do what I did and spend weeks learning about Internet marketing, but you'll likely discover – as I did – that while this can take you some of the way, you'll need more specialized resources to go further.

Many (most?) Web professionals are primarily technical or design people who view Websites through a technical or aesthetic lens. There's a good chance you'll be the only one in the room with a business focus, so you have to make your goals and expectations very clear.

I used to think you just found a Web developer and the rest followed. Well, it's not quite that simple. It turns out that a "Web developer" focuses on the technical part of the site. A "Web designer" concentrates on visuals and aesthetics. An "SEO or Internet marketing consultant" does the marketing. And while you'll see "content is King" wherever you look, I've never met a Web pro who was interested in Web copywriting.

You might need to work with more than one person or company – perhaps one to improve the site's visuals and navigation, another to concentrate on SEO and other marketing strategies and a third to improve the writing style. Or you could be lucky and find a company that does all of these things.

Vetting a Web pro or company

These are some important areas to research:

- Which of your Website's goals can they help with? What are their specialty areas? What areas aren't they comfortable with?
- What Websites have they built or worked on? It's easy to check out their existing sites in terms of visual appeal, target market and position on Google searches. See how effective they are (Google search rankings) and whether their experience can easily be applied to your target market.
- Do you get the sense that you can develop a good long-term working relationship with this company or person? This is important!
- Can they make changes to your existing site? If they're not the original developer, they will need to find out whether they can modify the existing content.

What will this cost?

Pricing can vary hugely depending on the provider and on the complexity of your needs. Most Web pros we work with employ fewer than 10 staff and charge between \$60 and \$100 per hour for Web development and design work, but it may be reasonable to pay a lot more than that for a high return on investment.

SEO can cost a considerable amount, and it's an ongoing process, so you'll be in for a monthly fee. One of the main reasons that it's never a one-off is that dishonest Internet players constantly abuse Google's processes, so those processes keep changing, and SEO consultants have to play constant catch-up. Another reason is that good pros will regularly monitor the site's key metrics and tweak their strategy to improve them as needed.

Measuring Your Site's Performance

Once you've spent time and money improving your site, you need to find out if it's earning its keep, and keep monitoring to ensure it doesn't slack off again.

Be patient

It can take months for certain changes to have any effect. Other changes can have an immediate impact – for example, when I optimized the Nash Networks site for local search, Canadian traffic overtook US traffic within a couple of weeks. Ask your Web pro what you can expect in terms of timing of results.

Be reasonable

It might not be realistic to expect to get to the number 1 Google search position (and no responsible SEO pro should promise this), but it certainly is realistic to improve your position from 100th to 30th, say. You won't be able to go from 500 visits per month to 100,000 in a few weeks, but you should be able to go from 500 to 5,000 over 3-6 months. Set clear expectations like these with your Web pro before starting.

Establish metrics, record baseline measurements and monitor at sensible intervals

Before any work starts, ensure that the correct tools are in place. Then record baseline measurements for key metrics. You need to ensure that your Web pro is effective and that you are getting a decent return on your investment, and regular measurement is how you do that.

Measurement of some performance objectives will take time and thought. Others are very simple.

The e-commerce sites have the easiest performance assessments. Duh. How much money do they cost? How much money do they make?

If you want viewers to take a specific action, like fill in a form or subscribe to an email list, that's easy to measure too, but the Web professional may need to put specific code on your site to record this.

It's more difficult when you're trying to build brand awareness or credibility. The more specific the goals, though, the more easily you can work out what to measure, and how.

The quick and easy part of monitoring site performance is Google Analytics. This is a free Google tool that gives you important information, such as:

How many people visit your site?

Is that number increasing or decreasing over time?

How do your site stats compare with benchmarks for similar sites?

How do people find your site?

Which pages do they visit most?

How long do they stay on the site?

What desired actions did they take?

Where are they?

Other methods of measuring are low-tech. For example, we monitor how many calls we get from visitors who find us through Web search or Google AdWords.

Whatever methods you use, establish a baseline and goals, and monitor at sensible intervals. Try to monitor a few important metrics, rather than many minor ones.

Glossary of Terminology

Analytics	Taking traffic data and other information about your Website, analyzing it, and then providing insight.
Conversion Rate	Percentage of visitors who buy a product or perform another desired action (e.g. fill in a form giving their contact information).
Internet Marketing (Web Marketing, E-Marketing)	Any action taken to market a Website or company online. Includes Website optimization, search engine submission, pay-per-click advertising and traffic analysis.
Keywords, Keyphrases	Words or phrases people use to search in search engines.

Local Search Optimization	Optimizing your Website to target viewers in your immediate geographic area.
Optimization	Adding elements to a Website so that search engines will rank it higher for a particular set of keywords. The goal is to appear (rank) on the front page of the search results.
Rank, Ranking	Position of a particular Web page or Website in the search engine results when you search for a keyword.
Search Engine	Google, Yahoo, Bing, MSN
Search Engine Optimization, SEO	Adding elements to a Website so that search engines will rank it higher for a particular set of keywords.
Search Engine Results Page, SERP	The Web pages displayed by a search engine for any given search.
Targeting	Shaping Internet marketing campaigns to attract certain specific groups of prospective clients.
Traffic	The number of visitors to your site, usually measured over a time period.
Unique Visitor	Any one visitor coming to your site any number of times in a given time period.
Web Copywriting	Writing text for a Web page. The Web copy is the text on the Website.
Web Developer	A Web Developer does the technical work on a Website. The developer creates the functional parts of the Website, which can be visible or work in the background.
Web Designer	A Web Designer puts together the look of the Website and helps to design the look of the Website in terms of both aesthetics and user-friendliness.

Web Marketing	See Internet marketing
Website Promotion	The continuing process of promoting a Website to bring more visitors to the site. Promotion includes techniques such as Web content development and search engine optimization.

Sources

7 More Useful Tips To Help Your Site Convert

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Create a small business Website on a small budget

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The Three Marketers

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How to measure your Website's return on investment

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Internet Marketing Terms

Direct Online Marketing

<http://www.directom.com/online-marketing/Internet-marketing.php>

Make Your Website More Profitable - Starting Today!

<http://www.smallbusinesswebsite.com/>

ROI: How Hard is Your Website Working?

Troy Janisch

<http://www.evolt.org/roi-how-hard-is-your-Web-site-working>

Web Definitions

<http://www.jianway.co.uk/articles/web-definitions-20081020.html>

Website Return on Investment (ROI)

MJ Penner Consulting

<http://www.michaelpenner.com/Web-marketing-roi.html>

Website ROI

<http://www.webpagemistakes.ca/Website-roi/>

About Nash Networks

What we do

Our core business is managing and maintaining IT networks for small businesses.

Philosophy

We understand that every business is unique, with unique technology needs. We provide and support the mix of technology that's right for each client.

We aren't a one-solution shop. There's no such thing as one-size-fits-all in technology (or socks).

Skills

We know a lot about a lot: Windows, Unix, Macintosh, programming, connectivity, VoIP, virtualization, security, disaster prevention ... and much more.

People

Our consultants are all university-educated, experienced, highly skilled and excellent problem-solvers.

Vendors & subcontractors

We recommend and use only quality vendors whom we know and trust.

Technology

We use state-of-the-art monitoring, remote support and backup tools.

We constantly update and upgrade our tools and capabilities - but where it makes sense, we continue to use tried and trusted, older technologies. We're not driven by fads.

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