THE BEST OF
LEAD GENERATION INSIGHTS

VOLUME 1, THE ART OF INTERNET MARKETING

By Brad Shorr, Director of Content Strategy at Straight North

Strategic and tactical tips for improving the quantity and quality of your online sales leads.

The Best Of Lead Generation Insights
Volume 1, The Art Of Internet Marketing

Table of Contents

About Straight North

Straight North is an Internet marketing agency specializing in SEO, PPC and responsive lead generation websites. We help firms generate high-volume, high-quality sales leads.

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Brad Shorr has more than 30 years of marketing experience. Currently, he is Director of Content Strategy for the Chicago-based Internet marketing firm Straight North, a full-service agency providing PPC, SEO and web design services to businesses nationwide. Brad's marketing articles have been featured on leading online publications including Forbes, Entrepreneur and American Marketing Association.

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PART 1: STRATEGY

THE KEY TO LEAD GENERATION IS THE EASY 'YES'

Sometimes the biggest obstacles to online lead generation are the ones companies put in their way.

The key to online lead generation — inspiring a phone inquiry or a website form submission — is the *easy "yes."* In other words:

- Making it easy for prospects to say yes to giving you information
- Making it easy for prospects to say yes to having a sales rep make contact
- Making it easy for prospects to say yes to trying your product or service

In online marketing, an offer is a value proposition: Website visitors make a mental calculation of whether it is worth their time and energy to take the business relationship to the next level. And, in many cases, *visitors are looking for reasons to say no*. Deep down, they don't want to try something new or talk to a sales rep or give up their email addresses and phone numbers. You have to make it worth their while.

This is why lifeless offers and calls to action are a lead generation death sentence. Saying, "Call now to talk to a sales representative" is OK if the prospect is favorably disposed and ready to buy. However, what if the prospect is thinking, "I don't want to get tied up talking to a pushy salesperson. If I make the request, the person will never leave me alone." It's likely far more prospects will have the latter mindset.

Here are ways to put life into your offers and value proposition:

- Keep required form fields to a minimum. Resist the temptation to make inquiry forms the linchpin of your prospecting database; all you'll accomplish is limiting its size.
- Personalize your sales team with photos, video, customer endorsements. Take the fear out of that sales contact request.
- If trial orders are the hook, then stress guarantees, no long-term commitment required, and other language to reinforce your credibility and the prospect's lack of exposure to risk.
- Give prospects something tangible for phoning in or submitting a form — a T-shirt, coffee mug, pen, discount if they place an order, etc. Will it work? Will it prove to be too expensive? You won't know until you test it, but a freebie could be the way to double or triple your lead generation.
- Design submit forms to be incredibly easy to use on desktops and mobile devices. Test forms on a regular schedule to make sure they are working properly. Here's a good post on contact form UX to jump-start your usability review.
- Put a privacy statement on your contact form to assure prospects you won't give their information to third parties that will spam them to death. ❖

THE CASE AGAINST TAGLINES FOR SMALL BUSINESS

JUST DO IT. YOU'RE IN GOOD HANDS. THE REAL THING.

Taglines can be catchy and captivating — but coming up with one is harder than you think. In fact, creating clever taglines is usually an expensive, difficult and time-consuming process.

Is it worth your time? You might not realize this, but the truth is, not every company needs a tagline. For you, it might not be beneficial. So, before you take on a tagline project, you need to figure out if it's right for your brand.

Here are six important facts about taglines to consider.

1. **Taglines don't equal sales.** Sure, a tagline can up your coolness factor, but if that doesn't translate to more sales, how much is that worth? Many brands spin their wheels trying to look a certain way, forgetting why image matters at all. Here's the truth: If it doesn't equal sales, it shouldn't be your biggest priority.

2. **Most taglines are forgotten.** Look at products in your house or office: When you recognize a brand, do you remember that brand's tagline? Walk through a grocery store: Without reading the packaging, do you remember the taglines for any products? The fact is, while there are many big brands whose taglines are household phrases, most companies' taglines are just forgotten.

3. **Taglines are not set in stone.** Today's taglines change and develop naturally over time — so even after you invest in one, it can turn into something different

as your buyers redefine it for themselves. Why would you want to spend time and money creating something that is likely to change?

4. **Generic taglines can hurt you.** Taglines are a good example of the age-old principle, "If you can't do it well, don't do it at all." A bad tagline is not better than no tagline. In fact, when you use a generic tagline, you run the risk of hurting your company — by either seeming just like everybody else or by discrediting yourself as unbelievable.

5. **Taglines can push away prospects.** Nowadays, prospects don't want to be sold to; they want to be engaged with. And taglines, which often feel like overt advertising, can often make them skeptical.

6. **Creating taglines wastes valuable time.** Especially for small businesses, the time and money that go into creating a tagline would be better spent on strategies that deliver — on parts of your business strategy that contribute to sales.

Consider these points and take another look at your plans for a tagline. Do you need one? Would it be helpful? Or would the time and resources you'd put into creating one be better spent somewhere else? ❖

WHY LOW-BUDGET INTERNET MARKETING CAMPAIGNS FAIL

THE PROBLEM: MILLION-DOLLAR EXPECTATIONS AND HUNDRED-DOLLAR BUDGETS

If a company invests less than $1,000 per month in Internet marketing and expects meaningful results, it will be sorely disappointed. **Guaranteed.**

Low-budget Internet marketing works only if a company has minimal expectations. If your only goal is to have a minimal Internet presence to gain credibility with people who already know about you — by all means, spend pennies. A basic company website, a Facebook page and perhaps a few display ads will give you credibility when someone who knows you is researching your company online.

However, if your Internet marketing goals are more ambitious, rethink your budget, because for most businesses, ambitious goals pay off. Funded appropriately and executed professionally, Internet marketing campaigns generate big results, including:

- Sales lead generation and revenue growth from new channels
- Dramatic increases in qualified website traffic

- Greatly improved brand recognition and brand affinity
- Enhanced position as a thought leader/industry expert

The disappointment comes — and admittedly, bad players in the Internet marketing industry fuel the situation — when companies expect big results on a shoestring budget. Here is why.

WHAT IT TAKES TO GET INTERNET MARKETING RESULTS
An Internet marketing initiative comprised of SEO, PPC, email marketing and/or other campaigns is labor-intensive and requires enormous expertise. Time + Talent = Money = Results. This is the unavoidable equation that drives every Internet marketing campaign.

To give you an idea of the work involved, review this brief list of activities that go into various types of Internet marketing campaigns:

· Discovery
· Keyword research
· Backlink research
· Strategic planning
· Campaign build-out
· Landing page strategy
· Responsive website design
· Content creation: text, infographics, video
· Front-end development
· Back-end development
· Tracking setup
· Content marketing
· Campaign management: task coordination and communication
· Analytics and reporting
· Lead validation and reporting
· Mailing list management
· A/B split testing: text, imagery, offers, navigation
· Website improvements

Let's break it down a bit further.

For SEO, creating off-site articles is virtually indispensable. A typical article requires keyword

research, strategic theming, copywriting, editing, publisher outreach, and frequently, custom imagery. The cost of a single article is almost sure to be in the $500-$1,000 range — and an SEO campaign that gets meaningful results will most likely need a few articles every month. There goes the budget, and we've tackled only one activity, which is not enough to accomplish much of anything.

For PPC, a small media budget means the ad gets clicked perhaps only a handful of times every month. When that's the case, a company should consider itself lucky to obtain a single conversion. Additionally, a small PPC budget also means the campaign manager does not have time to conduct the analysis and testing that go into a continuously improving, dial-moving campaign.

SUCCESS: WHAT HAPPENS WITH THE RIGHT BUDGET
When companies adequately fund Internet marketing campaigns, great things happen. Here are a few examples from our Case Studies portfolio:

· 197% increase in revenue (SEO)
· 324% increase in qualified leads (SEO)
· 162% increase in traffic (SEO)
· 245% increase in conversion rate (PPC)
· 72% decrease in cost per lead (PPC)
· 50% increase in click-through rate (PPC)

These results produced solid ROI — but it didn't happen overnight, and it couldn't have happened for pennies. Savvy companies recognize that Internet marketing is like everything else — you get what you pay for.

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?
If less than $1,000 per month is too small a budget, the obvious question is: How much is enough?

There's no one-size-fits-all answer to the budgeting question. Our approach — one that has served our clients well — is to conduct preliminary research and analysis pertaining to the company's objectives, viable Internet marketing opportunities and competitive landscape.

If competition is strong and goals are aggressive, our budget recommendations are higher. If competition is moderate and goals are less aggressive, our budget recommendations are lower. In some (rare) cases, we conclude that Internet marketing is not a promising avenue at all, regardless of budget.

Bottom line: Don't let a bargain-basement package deal lure you into a dead-end Internet marketing campaign. Your hard-earned profits are far too valuable for that! ❖

THE SECRET TO GETTING GREAT LEADS FROM YOUR WEBSITE

There's one question that every firm doing Internet marketing should be able to answer —but one which very few can. Here it is: **What is our cost per lead on each Internet marketing channel?**

How did you answer? Responses normally fall into two categories:
- Some firms admit they have no idea.
- Some firms think they know, but actually have no idea.

To know your cost per lead, you must first understand the difference between a **website inquiry** and a **website sales lead**. A website inquiry could be a phone call or form submission from someone looking for a job or trying to sell you something, while a website sales lead is a phone call or form submission from someone actually wanting to buy your products or services.

Many firms incorrectly use the term "website lead" when they are really referring to "website inquiries." In reality, website leads are just one type of website inquiry; without proper lead tracking, you don't know whether your website leads represent 5%, 50% or 80% of your total website inquiries.

You must also understand the lead tracking setup that is needed on your website; there are two parts to this. The first is the **inquiry type**; two examples of this are form submissions and phone calls. The second is the

marketing source, which could be direct, referral, SEO, PPC, email, etc.

Without having these two critical pieces of information and being able to correlate them, you will never be able to know your true cost per lead by marketing channel.

With today's sophisticated lead tracking technology, there's no excuse for your business to be in this situation any longer. Here's the way a firm's online lead generation process *should* look.

MAKE YOUR WEBSITE SMART WITH LEAD TRACKING

Step 1: Track your inquiry types
It's worth noting that many firms fail to even *display* contact forms and phone numbers on their sites. Even if lead generation is not the site's primary purpose, it makes no sense to frustrate potential customers (and perhaps existing customers) by giving them no way to initiate a conversation. It's a massive error.

So, if you are displaying contact options on your site and tracking each type, you're already ahead of the curve — but there's still a long way to go.

Step 2: Track your website inquiry marketing sources
When firms fail to tie inquiries to their source, they are really fumbling in the dark when it comes to assessing the productivity of any particular marketing campaign or activity. Some of these firms — the ones that think they know — will increase spending on what are, in fact, low-value campaigns. Other firms — the ones that know they don't know — will pull back on marketing activities across the board and unwittingly punish high-value campaigns.

Step 3: Filter your inquiries into sales leads
·   If you fail to filter, how do you know that what looks like 100 form leads are actually 10?
·   If you fail to filter, how do you know that you got 10 killer leads from your SEO campaign versus 10 so-so leads from your email campaign?

The fact is, because so many firms fail to filter their leads, they operate under the false belief that their Internet marketing campaigns are working, when in fact certain channels are failing. And just as bad — perhaps worse — they may be oblivious to the fact that a modest-looking marketing channel, in terms of raw submissions, is actually generating the highest-quality leads of all.

The point: Accurate lead tracking and filtering improve the quantitative *and* qualitative analyses of your lead generation efforts.

Step 4: Use the data to make more money
·   A firm with vague lead tracking sees 100 PPC campaign form leads (based on numbers from Google Analytics and Google AdWords), associated with a spend of $5,000. It thinks its cost per lead is $50.
·   Once accurate lead tracking and filtering are in place, the firm sees that it actually has only 25 true leads, making its true cost per lead $200.

Once you know the true cost of leads per channel, you are in a position to do something about it:
·   The most obvious step is to spend less on your high-cost lead campaigns and more on the low-cost campaigns.
·   By monitoring lead cost **trends** over time, you quickly identify campaigns that need tweaking and ones that deserve an even bigger share of the budget.

Now, you can allocate your marketing budget more wisely right out of the gate, continue to spend more efficiently, and refine lead generation campaigns every month. Doesn't that beat not knowing which half of your marketing budget you're wasting?

P.S. — DON'T FORGET TO TIE LEADS TO SALES
Knowing your true cost per lead gives you a handle on your marketing ROI. However, marketing is only half of your business acquisition equation. The other half is sales.

Once true leads have been identified, tracking them through the sales process is crucial; otherwise, you won't know your win-loss percentage, and you won't know how much revenue or profit you're earning per true lead.

One reason sales organizations fall short on converting leads into customers is wasting time following up on bad leads. On top of that, when sales reps are inundated with bad leads, they become cynical, which leads them to sour on marketing in general, and only go through the motions when following up on that tiny handful of really great leads.

These are serious, chronic business problems that can cause a firm to wither away. Managing lead generation the right way goes a long way toward eliminating the problems and setting up an environment that is structured for dynamic growth. ❖

WHY THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IS A POOR MARKETING GOAL

Marketing is an endless succession of buzzwords, and one of the most persistent has been "thought leadership."

When companies engage in social media, blogging and content marketing in an effort to establish or further thought leadership, they are wasting their marketing investment in all but the rarest of cases. Here is the argument against thought leadership as a marketing goal. (BTW, these are my views and not necessarily those of Straight North.)

IF YOU HAVE TO PROCLAIM IT, YOU AREN'T A THOUGHT LEADER

Thought leadership — being an original, innovative and influential thinker in your field — is something people recognize without being told or sold. A true thought leader infuses leading thought in everything he/she says. It's not a marketing objective; it's a part of who he, she or an organization is.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IS RARE

Original, innovative and influential thinkers are rare. Saying you are going to establish yourself as a thought leader is like saying you are going to establish yourself as a multibillionaire or a world conqueror. Saying it won't make it so. Most campaigns that pass themselves off as thought leadership amount to half-baked, unoriginal and generally unhelpful ideas.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP SMELLS OF SMUGNESS

Attempts to establish thought leadership through content creation can come off poorly, leading readers and viewers to consider your organization pretentious and locked in an ivory tower. A more effective tone to strike in content is one of engagement, humor and empathy — these are qualities that turn cool prospects into customers.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP DOESN'T SELL
Even if prospects accept you as a thought leader, will they buy from you? Not necessarily. As I alluded to above, a lot depends on the tone of the content.

and customers — are more concerned with how they can address their business challenges now, today. Communicating fuzzy "thought leadership" concepts is nice, but prospects want to know how your products

> A true thought leader infuses leading thought in everything he/she says.

Definitely, the proper voice can make a thought-leading company as appealing as a beloved grade school teacher, but companies with the ability to blend true thought leadership with a heart-winning voice are rarer than pure thought leaders.

BUSINESS IS ACTION, NOT IDEAS
There's no question that real thought leaders (e.g., Peter Drucker, Malcolm Gladwell) have had an enormous, if not incalculable, impact on business strategies and operations. But for the most part, business people — and particularly your prospects

and services can reduce their cost and improve their performance in concrete, measurable terms. Content that converts addresses those issues, specifically, concretely and compellingly.

Granted, there are exceptions to this, particularly in, say, areas of technology where a company's ability to innovate is a core competence, a real difference-maker. In your business and your industry, is this the case? If the answer is anything less than an emphatic yes, your marketing investment will be better spent in other directions. ❖
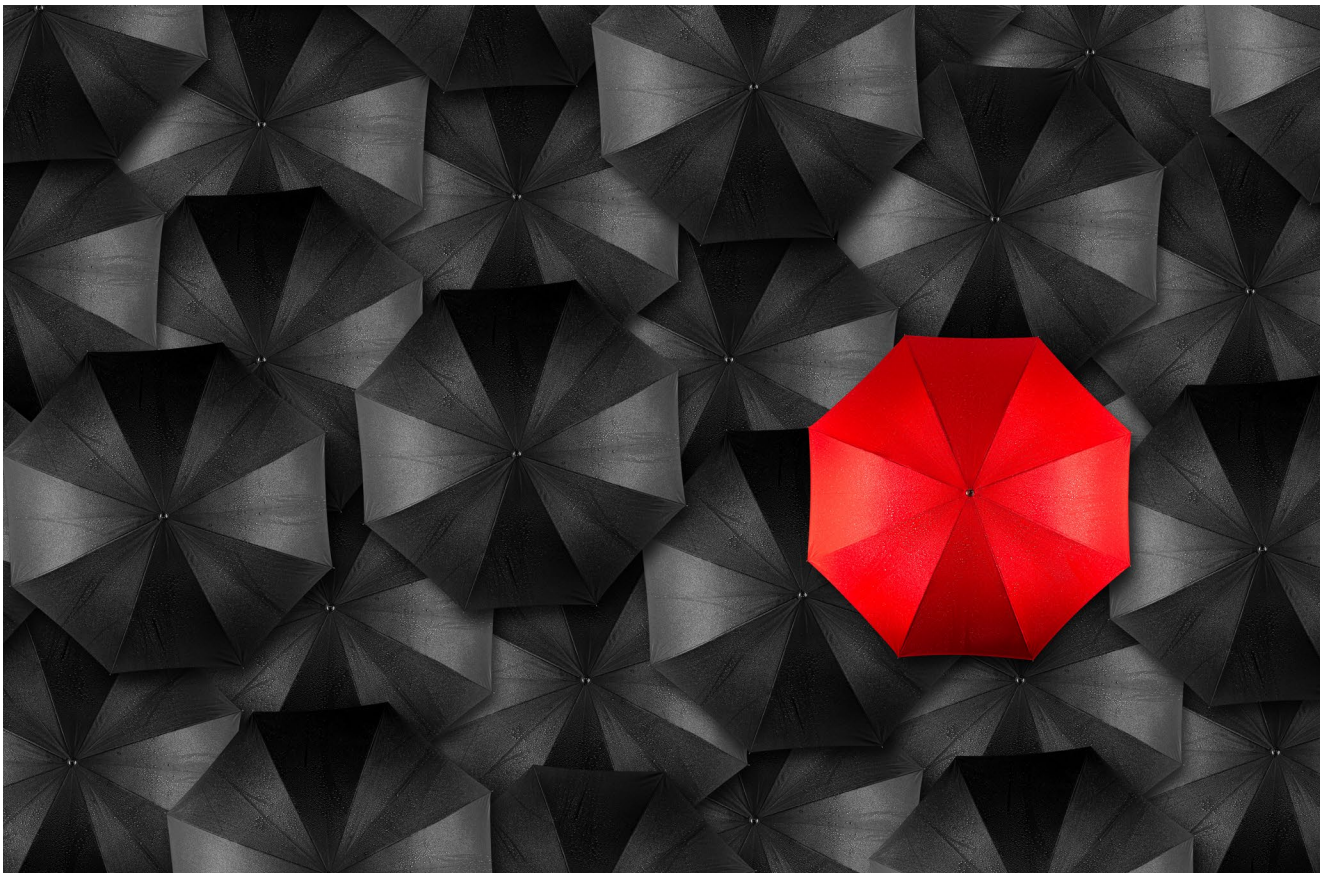
The Best Of Lead Generation Insights
Volume 1, The Art Of Internet Marketing

PART 2: HOW TO ...

HOW TO TURN DULL 'ABOUT US' PAGES INTO PERSUASIVE LEAD GENERATION PAGES

Lead generation websites don't always give About Us pages the attention they deserve. SEO and PPC campaigns tend to focus on product and service pages, but website visitors visit the About Us page for a very important reason — to help them decide whether the company in question is a reputable, competent and trustworthy business partner.

An About Us page can make or break a conversion, and it should be written in a way that persuades visitors to call or submit a form as their next step on the website
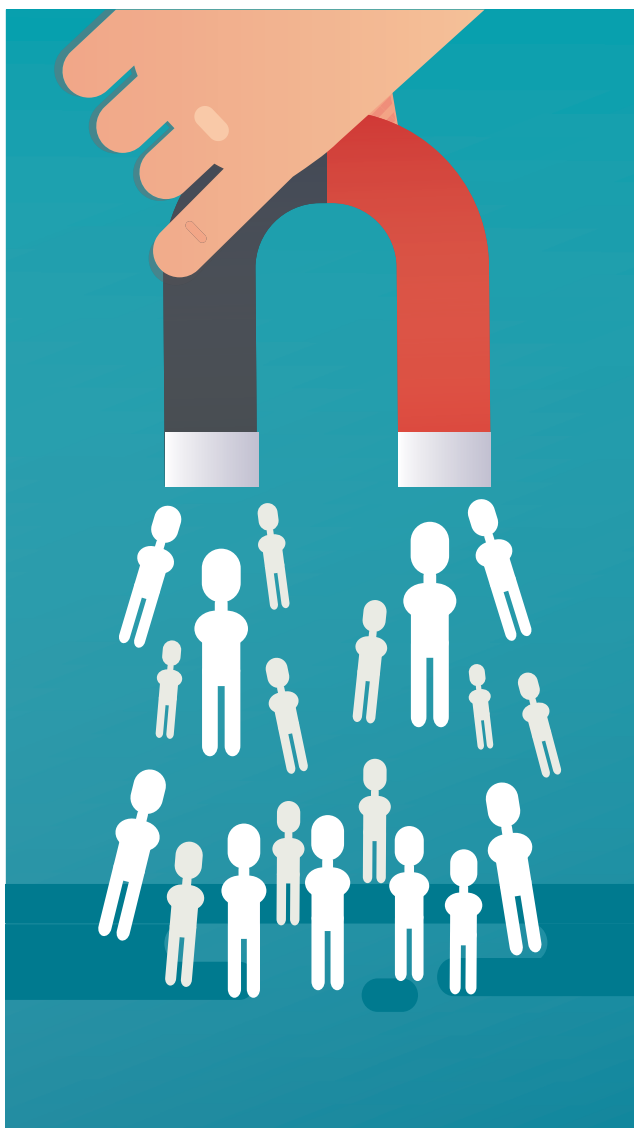
HOW TO WRITE AN 'ABOUT US' PAGE

The No. 1 problem with About Us content: no audience segmentation.

About Us pages often contain information that is interesting to customers/prospects, vendors, investors, job candidates, community and journalists — but it's all mixed together haphazardly (and usually too verbosely), making it difficult for each audience segment to zero in on what they need. In my ideal world, an About Us page would conform to this structure:

- **Elevator speech** — A clear, concise explanation of what the company does, and why customers should care.
- **For customers/prospects** — Cite relevant statistics, such as customer retention rate. Describe geographic area of service. Include a brief but hard-hitting testimonial.
- **For vendors** — Cite relevant statistics, such as "we pay our bills 100 percent on time." Briefly describe vendor selection and review processes.
- **For investors** — Cite relevant financial statistics. Briefly review prior year/five-year performance. Provide brief executive bios or link to them.
- **For job candidates** — Describe the culture. Briefly summarize benefits.
- **For journalists** — Walk through the company history, highlighting mergers, acquisitions, awards, patents owned, etc.
- **For community** — Mention number of employees in each location, community service projects, causes supported, sustainability initiatives, etc.

A few additional points:

First, notice I used the word "briefly" a lot. About Us information is very important, but it must be scannable and digestible. A more detailed page could be written to support each audience segment if so desired; I'm not sure customers would want to read tons of detail, but journalists and investors definitely will.

Second, customers and prospects may have more than a passing interest in information directed to journalists, investors, the community, etc. That's fine. The information is there for them, but it's separated so they don't have to wade through it if they don't want to. This is a big UX plus.

Finally, some companies (such as ours) have a brief, customer-focused About Us page, with separate pages geared to other audiences. This is not a bad thing, especially for a lead generation website, but it does force other audiences to make additional clicks to find what they need. For some businesses, this may be a significant drawback.

CALLS TO ACTION ON THE 'ABOUT US' PAGE

The About Us page should have two prospect-oriented calls to action (CTAs) — one for hot prospects, such as a form to request a consultation, and another for window shoppers, such as a PDF download.

Yet with a segmented audience structure, why stop there? Why not add a CTA for journalists, inviting them to schedule an interview with a top executive? How about adding a form for new vendor inquiries? Most important, what about adding a form for customer referrals? Considering all the audience types that visit the About Us page, a referral CTA placed here casts the widest net possible outside of the Home page.

HOW IS YOUR 'ABOUT US' PAGE DOING?

Taking a look at About Us page statistics provides clues as to whether a content overhaul is in order. A high bounce rate, lots of exits, and short time spent on the page indicate ineffective messaging. In addition, by looking at the pages visitors go to next, and tracking conversions from the About Us page, you will gain insight about the page's conversion power. ❖
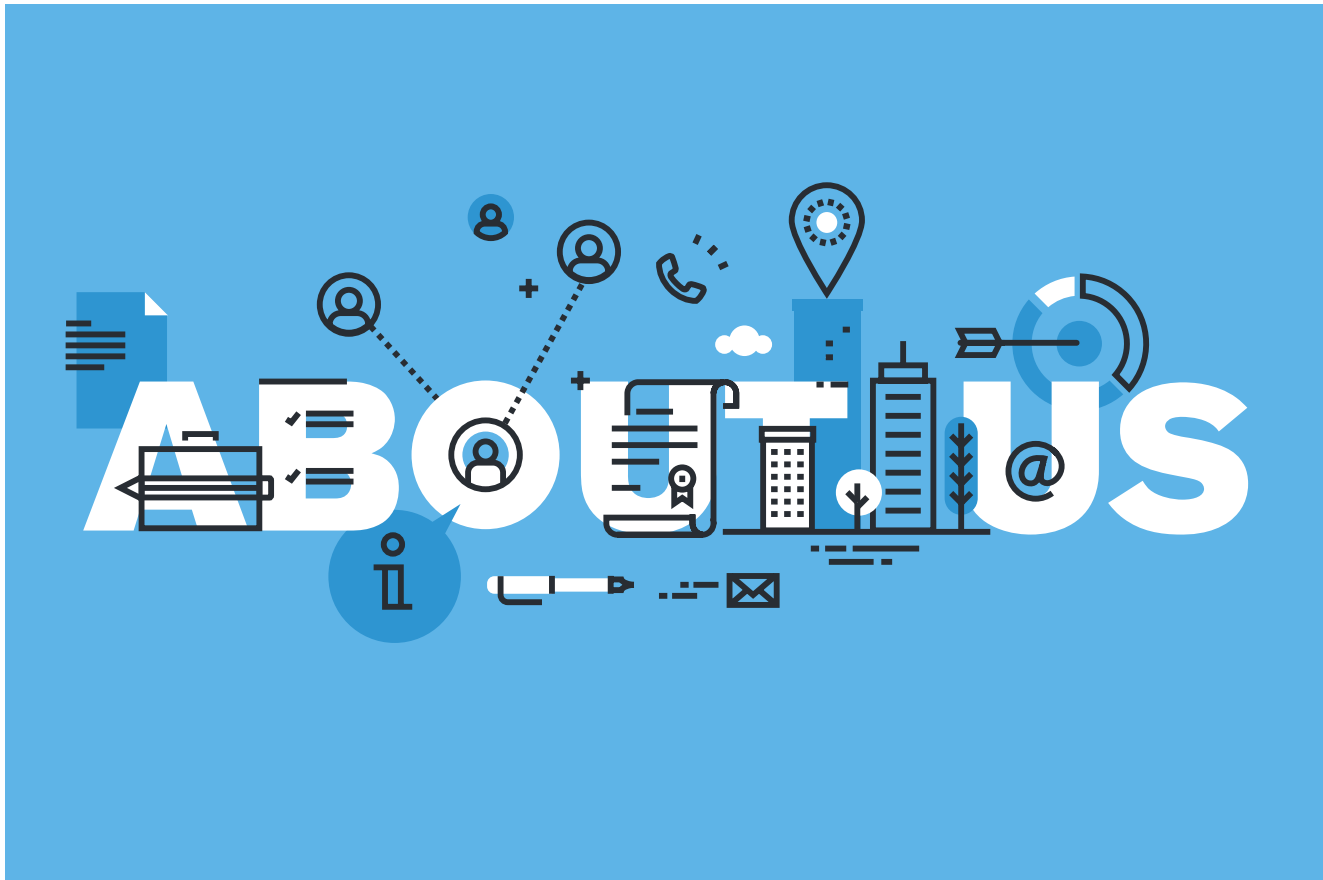
HOW TO EVALUATE THE QUALITY OF YOUR BUSINESS CONTENT

Search engines and people define quality the same way.

"Provide high-quality content on your pages, especially your home page. This is the single most important thing to do." – Google

Why does Google place so much emphasis on quality? Because people using its search engine want high-quality information, not blather manipulated into top-ranking position by exploiting weaknesses in search algorithms. And, as search engines have become more sophisticated in their ability to qualitatively evaluate content, artificially maneuvering low-quality content higher in the rankings is becoming more difficult. Thus, one of the few remaining tools left in the SEO's arsenal is creating quality content.

Search engines want quality. People want quality.

WHAT, THEN, *IS* QUALITY?
This question is harder to answer than you might think. It's like asking, "What is beauty?" or "What is intelligence?" One approach to answering the question is to consider what quality *isn't*. Let's start there. As it applies to business content:

- **Quality isn't originality.** Originality can be good, but it can also be bad. People needing to treat an illness aren't necessarily looking for an original idea; more likely, they're looking for tried-and-true, scientifically validated recommendations.

- **Quality isn't artistry.** Rhetorical flourishes and elegantly composed, complex sentences work well for leisure reading, but business readers need to scan and grasp in a matter of seconds. Compositional flair can be useful when applied selectively, but it can also get very much in the way.

- **Quality isn't brilliance.** Brilliance is a poor descriptor of quality for two reasons. First, brilliant ideas come along rarely and unexpectedly; therefore, you can't build an organized content marketing program around them.

Second, brilliance is low on the totem pole for many types of business content — people looking for information on how to assemble a bicycle want clarity and accuracy, not brilliance.

These three examples suggest that a universal definition of quality, if it could be crafted at all, would be too broad to be useful. The best we can do, perhaps, is to consider various markers of quality. Many articles have been written about quality indicators such as relevance, authoritativeness and storytelling techniques. This article considers three that people don't talk about as much as they should.

1. CLARITY
Whether scanning for high points or doing intense research, business readers want to take the path of least resistance. Clear writing makes the reader's job faster and easier. Enemies of clarity include:
· Buzzwords that have lost their meaning
· Excessive dryness
· Excessive emotion
· Illogical arguments
· Incomplete arguments
· Industry jargon
· Obscure words and references
· Overgeneralization
· Too much detail
· Vagueness

Some of these items are always bad; others are bad by degree. For instance, illogical arguments never serve a business purpose, but a landing page for perfume ought to pack more emotional punch than one for hose clamps. (More detailed article found here.)

2. MEMORABILITY
Content that sticks in people's heads is superior to that which doesn't, all other things being equal. Techniques that make content memorable include:
- **Repetition.** SEOs look forward to the Moz search engine ranking factors of the year. When readers know something is coming, they give it mindshare. (Incidentally, repetition is an example of why originality is overrated or at least overemphasized.)
- **Metaphors.** Used selectively, an apt metaphor is a picture worth 1,000 words. Overused or used clumsily, however, metaphors confuse readers by bringing the fox of obscurity into the henhouse of quality. (Huh?)
- **Acronyms**. One could write 500 forgettable words about the value of simplicity, or just write "KISS." Thus, we see a lot of "FAQ" posts and "DIY" posts that readers are quick to bookmark. But as with

metaphors, overusing acronyms renders content DOA IMHO.
- **Actionable advice.** The best way to learn something is to do it. Content that readers can apply to their business is highly prized and long remembered. Conversely, impractical advice or overly theoretical content is quickly discarded.
- **Dazzling titles.** There is a fine line between dazzling and dumb, between *Why SEO Is Like Chess and Why SEO Is Like Cheese*. Then again, there is no accounting for taste, so some people might actually prefer the second title to the first. Bottom line: Know your readers.

3. STYLE ALIGNMENT
This last point brings us to our third quality marker, alignment. Advice such as *always write conversationally* or *never use humor* is much too simplistic. For instance, a white paper written for PhDs ought to employ a formal style, whereas a blog post written for tax accountants may benefit from a couple of jokes. To determine the best style, content producers must consider:
- **The audience.** Personas are quite useful in this regard, as writing for a real, single individual is easier than writing for a vaguely defined mass of humanity.
- **The content form.** White papers tend to be formal; blog posts tend to be conversational. Landing pages can be "pushy"; social media content gravitates toward the soft sell. Et cetera.
- **The subject matter.** Factual, "how-to" content and news lend themselves to a straightforward, measured approach. Opinion pieces are naturally more edgy and can even be out-and-out rants.

Aligning content with audience, form and subject matter takes considerable editorial talent and trench work. However, firms that have the talent and take the time to do so will consistently produce higher-quality content than those that cut stylistic corners.

SUMMING UP AND OVER TO YOU
Clear, memorable and written for me — three reasons to give content high grades for quality. I've already mentioned relevance, authoritativeness and storytelling technique as three other important markers of quality, but what else is there? What separates good business content from content that is truly great?

Finally, is the goal of creating truly great content too lofty? How should a content marketing group define its quality standards? ❖

HOW TO CREATE EVERGREEN CONTENT FOR YOUR WEBSITE

Evergreen content contains information that remains useful, relevant and sought-after for a long period of time.

Evergreen Content Tips

Showcasing evergreen content on your website has many benefits:

1. Evergreen content reinforces your standing as a thought leader.
2. It drives unbranded search engine traffic year in and year out.
3. It attracts *natural* inbound links, since it's more likely to be cited on other niche sites.
4. It can support your sales effort by supplying persuasive responses to common buyer objections.

TYPES OF EVERGREEN CONTENT

- **"How-to" articles** provide step-by-step instructions for putting something together, accomplishing a task (such as creating evergreen content :)), solving a business problem, etc.
- **Glossary of terms** articles give *authoritative* definitions for a comprehensive set of terms relating to a particular product, industry, academic discipline, etc.
- **"Do's and Don'ts"** articles show readers the right way and the wrong way to do something.
- **Product reviews** give readers detailed insights that help them make a buying decision. Automotive sites such as Edmunds and Car and Driver live on this type of content.

HOW TO FIND TOPICS FOR EVERGREEN CONTENT

- **Quiz your sales and customer service departments.** What questions do they encounter on a regular basis? What terms or ideas do they continually have to explain? What kind of information are they always scrambling to find? The answers to questions like these can be shaped into an evergreen article.
- **Quiz your suppliers and stakeholders.** Your suppliers, accounting firm and attorneys may be aware of critical areas of confusion in your industry — areas you may not be thinking about a great deal.
- **What information are you always looking for?** In 2011, our sales team was having trouble finding articles that explained the differences between mobile sites, mobile apps and mobile display — so we wrote one. It's still being used by our sales team and still draws good traffic.
- **Ask customers directly.** If you have a monthly e-newsletter, why not ask customers what they'd like to see you write an article about? (You may want to provide a list of options to make it easier for them to respond.)
- **Brainstorming sessions can yield terrific results.** Employee A may have the germ of a great idea, Employee B adds a critical piece to it, and

Employee C adds a seemingly minor tweak that transforms the idea into a timeless article.

HOW TO WRITE EVERGREEN CONTENT
It's not enough to come up with a great idea and title. For an article to reach true evergreen status, it must have two characteristics in particular — it must be **authoritative**, and it must be **readable**. If you're not authoritative, nobody will believe you. If you're not readable, nobody will bother to read or share your content no matter how believable it is.

As a side note, notice I did not mention **originality** as a key characteristic of evergreen content. There's nothing wrong with being original, but almost by definition, evergreen content takes on a topic of wide interest and importance. The "secret sauce" of your evergreen content isn't necessarily an original idea, but instead, how clearly and thoroughly you explain the idea, and how well you synthesize or critique different points of view.

TIPS FOR WRITING AUTHORITATIVELY
·   **Attend to the basics.** Use proper grammar and punctuation. Avoid jargon and slang. Misspellings and other errors needlessly undermine your credibility.
·   **Do your research.** Albert Einstein said, "If you can't explain it to a six-year-old, you don't understand it yourself." That's a great standard for evergreen writers to live up to.
·   **Cite your sources.** When you make an important assertion, or state a fact or statistic, link to the source. Readers are more inclined to trust content that demonstrates a high level of research.
·   **Establish author credibility.** If the writer of your evergreen content has an impressive bio that appears in or links to the content, you've gone a long way toward establishing content credibility.

TIPS FOR WRITING READABLY
·   **Keep it simple.** Remember the Einstein quote from the last section. No matter how sophisticated your target reader is, straightforward, plain language is always appreciated. That means simple words, simple sentences, clear meaning. But remember, simple is not easy. It takes talented writers to strip away complexity.
·   **Use web typography best practices.** Bullet points beat long paragraphs. Plain text is easier on the eyes than italics and bold. Descriptive subtitles assist in scanning and helping readers understand the flow of ideas. Looking for an evergreen post on web typography? [Here's a good one from 2009](#) using the "Do's and Don'ts" approach.

·   **Do substantive editing.** Proofreaders edit for punctuation and grammar. Substantive editors edit for clarity, conciseness and accuracy. For content with evergreen aspirations, substantive editing is a must.

WHICH CONTENT FORMAT SHOULD I USE?
·   **Text articles** are appropriate for most any type of evergreen content. From an SEO point of view, text articles (web pages or blog posts) usually draw the most search traffic, and probably appeal to the widest audience.
·   **White papers** make sense for extremely detailed material. If a text article gets to 2,000-2,500 words, you're definitely getting into white paper territory. Don't pad the story just to make it a white paper, though. Readers will see it as a marketing maneuver.
·   **Infographics** are well suited for complex ideas, step-by-step descriptions of a process, and for topics with lots of facts and figures.
·   **Slide presentations** are useful for infographic situations, and also when a storytelling approach is employed.
·   **Video** is powerful for just about any topic, but production costs are high. Video can be used effectively and economically for "quick hit" evergreen ideas. You see this approach frequently in the tech world, with short videos about how to customize your Mac desktop, how to pair a Bluetooth device, etc.

SEO AND MARKETING TIPS
FOR EVERGREEN CONTENT
·   Use relevant keyword phrases in the article's meta title. Write a unique and persuasive meta description — it will help with social sharing.
·   Evergreen content need not be lengthy, but as of this writing, Google favors longer (1,000-plus words) over shorter, so keep that in mind.
·   Share evergreen content on your social media pages on a regular basis (e.g., one or twice a month).
·   Review Google Analytics stats to see trends in how content is performing, especially in terms of page views, length of time on the page and bounce rate.
·   Let bloggers in your niche know about your evergreen content — they may want to mention it on their blogs and link to it.
·   Market your content to your customer and prospect base by featuring it in e-newsletters or on a "featured post" section of your blog's sidebar. ❖

HOW TO CREATE A SALES BROCHURE THAT REALLY WORKS

In the fast-moving world of Internet marketing, sales brochures don't always get the attention they deserve.

This is a big mistake because customers and prospects:

·   Read brochures — if they are engaging
·   Save brochures — if they are useful
·   Act on brochures — if they are persuasive

Let's examine how to make your brochure **engaging, useful** and **persuasive**. If you can do these three things successfully, you'll separate your sales collateral from the mass of material that is boring and useless.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR BROCHURE ENGAGING

·   Speak TO the prospect, not AT the prospect by using informal, second-person voice. Better to say, Here's how we help you than it is to say, *Here is how ABC Corporation helps its customers.*
·   Write short sentences and short paragraphs, and then surround them with a lot of white space. Dense blocks of text scare readers away.
·   Tell a story. Most brochures are dense-packed information dumps; people like reading them about as much as they enjoy root canal. But add a storyline, and people can't resist. A simple but effective formula is: This was the customer's problem, this is how we solved it, this is how the customer's business improved.
·   Include images that convey a message. Imagery should never be filler; instead, it has to make a point. The point may be a "hard" one (such as showing a key feature of a product) or it may be a "soft" one (such as conveying the comfortable atmosphere of the office). Use a *caption* to drive home the significance of the image.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR BROCHURE USEFUL

·   Concentrate on customer problems and customer opportunities. You want the reader of your brochure to take it to his or her boss and say, *Boss! Here's how we can finally solve the problem that's been holding us back all year.*
·   Provide useful details. Customers are interested in facts that provide benchmark data, industry trends, ROI from a given product or service solution, etc. This is also a BIG factor in making your brochure persuasive.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR BROCHURE PERSUASIVE

·   An obvious but all too often overlooked technique is to include a **strong call to action**. Make it absolutely clear **what** you want the reader to do as a next step in establishing a business relationship — and **how** to do it. Call for more information is a weak call to action; *Call xxx-xxx-xxxx to talk to one of our customer service specialists is stronger; Call xxx-xxx-xxxx to talk to one of our customer service specialists and save 15% is stronger still.*
·   Put your brochure where people can find it. Visitors to your site are eager to download brochure PDFs ... if they can find them, and if they are relevant. Brochure download links should be displayed in a prominent place on your site's page templates. Also, the more relevant the brochure is to the product or service page on which the link appears, the more people will want it.
·   Set up lead tracking by using a brochure-specific phone number. If you can determine how many leads are being generated by each brochure, you gain valuable insight into what's working and what's not.
·   Test different messaging. If a brochure is not generating leads, perhaps a change in the messaging or call to action offer will improve it. Sometimes small tweaks can produce significant improvements in lead generation. ❖

HOW TO CREATE SURVEYS THAT DON'T DRIVE AWAY YOUR CUSTOMERS

Being in marketing, I always fill out online customer surveys. Besides giving me ideas for good techniques we can use, surveys are a way to help companies improve customer service and retention.

Or, surveys can drive customers right into the arms of a competitor. Here are major problems I've experienced with customer surveys.

1. **Bad mobile design**
   Don't companies realize people fill out surveys on their mobile phones? When selection buttons and text are microscopic, the odds of a customer completing the survey are similarly small.

2. **Too many questions**
   Recently a company sent me a survey with (no kidding) 20-plus pages of questions about specific product features. In addition to hundreds of repetitive, limited-response selections, the survey wanted free-form comments relating to seven or eight categories of features. I made it to page 10 or 11, and then gave up.

   If a company really wants customers to put in that much effort, it needs to give something of comparable value to make it worth the customers' time.

3. **Response options that stifle communication**
   Suppose you have a problem with a product or service that doesn't fit into the options on the customer survey. Frustrating! Every survey should have a general comments option — "Tell us whatever is on your mind" — to make sure customers can communicate *anything* that's bothering them.

   Marketers sometimes get too fixated on their survey goals and forget that customers don't care about the sender's goals — they care about their own problems.

4. **No follow-up, no follow-through**
   There's a place I do business where the same aggravating issue has been going on for over a year. I've expressed my aggravation in three customer surveys, including a request for a personal response.

If a company doesn't have efficient follow-up and follow-through processes, it shouldn't send out customer surveys, period.

Despite the input, which the company solicited, there has been no response and no change in the situation.

When completed surveys fall on deaf ears, they take a bad situation and make it a hundred times worse. If a company doesn't have efficient follow-up and follow-through processes, it shouldn't send out customer surveys, period.

5. **Asking for too much personal information**
   Surveys that are merely tactical maneuvers to get personal information inspire me to do business elsewhere. Frequently, this type of survey asks for your personal information as the final step before submission — I guess they think if respondents have already gone to the trouble of thoughtfully communicating their opinions, they'll be more inclined to hand over one's mobile phone number, ethnicity, age, shopping habits, personal income, investment goals and credit card numbers. ❖

The Best Of Lead Generation Insights
Volume 1, The Art Of Internet Marketing

PART 3: CONTENT MARKETING

A CEO'S GUIDE TO CONTENT MARKETING

In the world of Internet marketing, content marketing is the hottest thing to come along in a long while. But the ideas behind content marketing and their significance haven't percolated up to the executive suite just yet. As a result, a lot of businesses are **missing the boat.**

CONTENT MARKETING FAQS

What is content marketing?
Content Marketing Institute has a terrific definition:

Content marketing is a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience — with the objective of driving profitable customer action. (CMI)

Why is content marketing important?
Content marketing kills a lot of birds with one stone. Publishing, promoting and sharing high-quality content enhances thought leadership and credibility, generates referrals and leads, extends brand awareness, enhances brand affinity and improves organic search engine visibility (SEO). Pound for pound, it's one of the most efficient and effective marketing techniques available today.

Is content marketing the same as SEO?
No. SEO encompasses a great many activities that take place both on and off the company website. SEOs use content as a way to create links and generate social media sharing and mentions — but content marketing, while serving as an SEO tool, is also bigger than SEO as it

addresses other objectives as noted above. That said, it is almost impossible to succeed in SEO without a vibrant content marketing program.

Is content marketing the same as PR?
No. Public relations is focused on a company's reputation management. Content marketing is focused on a company's products and services. Some of the techniques used by content marketers, such as developing relationships with publishers, are similar to what PR professionals do, which is why these two disciplines are often confused.

We have a website and brochures. Aren't we doing content marketing already?
Possibly, but probably not. Content marketing starts with a strategy that identifies audiences, messaging themes, content formats, production schedules, distribution processes, conversion goals and measurement. A fully functioning content marketing program has a leader, researchers, writers, editors, graphic designers, web designers, outreach specialists who cultivate relationships with publishers, content marketers who promote published content, and data analysts.

What are the biggest challenges in doing content marketing effectively?
Content must be authoritative, relevant, useful and engaging — finding competent writers with an adequate understanding of your business, industry and customers is the first and often biggest challenge. Budgeting is another big issue: It takes a team (as noted above) and a good deal of time to create, publish and promote content.

How do we get started?
Like anything else, content marketing starts with a long-term strategy. One of the services we offer is a content strategy consulting engagement, to help you identify goals, messaging themes, staffing requirements, budget, and all of the other particulars you need to think through before diving in. ❖

FOR INTERNET MARKETING, CLEAR BEATS CLEVER

SIMPLICITY IS THE SECRET OF CONVERSION

For better or worse, ours is a fast-paced world. When people look online for a product or service, they rip through websites at a mile a minute, looking for some clue that a company has what they want. If that clue doesn't turn up quickly and hit them over the head, they're off to the next site.

It would serve small and midsize firms well to keep this in mind when they are designing their websites and marketing content. The simpler the message, the better. The faster people can understand …

- What you do
- Why you do it better

… the faster they will contact you to learn more.

The creative exercise to put yourself through, then, is to figure out how much fat you can chop off your message. But most of us tend to get carried away on the creative side of marketing. We want to pack every cool idea we can come up with into every square inch of a web page. The end result is a marketing message that might be suitable for framing, but not for converting.

10 TELLTALE SIGNS YOUR MARKETING IS TOO CLEVER FOR ITS OWN GOOD

1. Light text on a dark background. Looks cool, hard to read.
2. Highly stylized fonts that look more like a firework display than an alphabet.
3. Cool-sounding taglines that convey no value whatsoever.
4. Web forms with 10 required fields. (Better to collect one or two pieces of data from thousands than 10 pieces from a handful.)
5. Dazzling but huge images that push vital content below the fold.
6. So many sales messages that they drown out each other.

7. Brands that nobody's ever heard of that speak as if they were a household name.
8. Excessive navigation options that make it impossible for visitors to focus.
9. Using big words when small ones will do; using industry jargon when standard English is available.
10. Failure to include a call to action. In other words, getting so caught up in the messaging that you forget its purpose.

WATCH OUT FOR THESE BAD ASSUMPTIONS
Having attended, oh, I don't know, about 5,000 creative meetings, I'm starting to get a rough idea about how these seemingly obvious marketing deficiencies so easily come to life. A lot of it has to do with the assumptions executives and even in-house marketers make about their customers and prospects. Perhaps it will be useful to take a quick look at a few of them. I've already talked about the assumption that site visitors will take the time to decipher an artistically packaged message. You can test this assumption by simplifying your design and tracking how much time people spend on key pages and the entire site — as well as conversions.

Another questionable assumption is thinking that a website needs to tell a long story. Most people don't want to know your whole story; they want enough information to be able to decide whether to do business with you. Any information beyond that is mental clutter.

Finally, it's risky to assume that you need to entertain prospects in order to convert them. Unless you're in the entertainment business, your site will probably score more points by being clear than by being creative. Come to think of it, when you find what you're looking for online very quickly, that in itself is pretty entertaining! ❖

67 BLOG BEST PRACTICES

Here is a list of best practices that apply to business blogs. If you're just starting a blog, these tips may save you a lot of time — and perhaps a little heartache as well.

STRATEGY

1. Define your target audience(s) as precisely as possible.
2. Decide whether a blog will be primarily informational or editorial in nature.
3. Determine a writing style: formal, informal, controversial, etc.
4. Establish broad topic categories.
5. Articulate how your audience will benefit from reading your blog.
6. Determine what action(s) you want visitors to take after reading a post.
7. Define your commenting process: Will comments be allowed, will they be moderated in advance of publishing, etc.
8. Establish a commenting policy to set ground rules for what constitutes appropriate discussion.
9. Ensure that writers and editors understand legal and corporate policy guidelines for issues such as confidentiality, libel, etc.
10. Create an editorial calendar detailing post frequency, the category of each post and a topic.
11. Articulate goals to serve as measurements of success.
12. Identify metrics to associate with each goal.

DESIGN AND FUNCTIONALITY

1. Select either a two-column or magazine style format.
2. Avoid dark background/light text color schemes; too hard to read.
3. Make sure font size is readable for your target audience.
4. Set up RSS subscription feed.
5. Set up email subscription feed.
6. Create a unique email address from which to send email subscription emails.
7. Create a name for your feed that is clear and memorable.
8. Add social media links to company Twitter page, Facebook page, etc., to sidebar or header.
9. Place RSS and email feeds high on the blog sidebar.
10. Set up a post category block on the sidebar.
11. Set up an archive block on the sidebar.
12. Set up a recent post block on the sidebar.
13. Make sure post title links are clickable.
14. Make sure author name(s) appear as desired on blog post home page and permalink page.
15. Set up comment subscription capability if comments are allowed.
16. Do not require readers to log in in order to leave a comment.

17. Add socialization buttons at top and bottom of each post.
18. Important socialization buttons (as of this writing) include Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Pinterest.
19. Display 7-10 recent post excerpts on blog home page.
20. Never assign more than one category to a post.
21. Configure permalink URLs to display the post title.
22. Make sure anchor text color is clearly visible.
23. Check styling of H tags, block quotes and image captions for readability.
24. Thoroughly test design and functionality (in all popular browsers) before going live.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION
1. Train all writers and editors in SEO copywriting.
2. In the editorial calendar, assign at least one keyword phrase to each post.
3. Have an SEO specialist determine optimum word counts for posts.
4. Include primary keyword phrase in the post's meta title and H1 title tag.

> 5. Include keyword phrases in H2 titles and body text up to three times per phrase — if it can be done naturally.

6. Add a related post plugin that displays 4-5 contextually (not randomly) related posts.
7. Make sure blog platform allows for customization of URLs, meta titles and meta descriptions.
8. Always optimize image titles and file names.
9. Seek to optimize image ALT descriptions and captions.
10. Avoid tags and multiple categories assigned to a post, as they create duplicate content issues.
11. If an extensive blogroll is desired, place it on a unique page rather than on the blog sidebar — too many outbound links can dissipate authority.

WRITING TIPS
1. Blog posts can be less formal than business web pages; write as if you are talking to a real person.
2. Keep paragraphs less than six lines whenever possible.
3. Use bullets and numbered lists to break up text.
4. Word counts of 300-500 are sufficient for most editorial and basic informational posts.

5. Word counts of 500+ are fine for detailed informational posts — but the information must be valuable.
6. A high-impact blog post often tackles only one issue or makes only one point; avoid the tendency to say it all.
7. Place images above or at the top right of the post; this positioning flows easily with the reader's eye.
8. Especially for a complex post, have one or two people preview it for clarity.
9. Start with your conclusion and work backward; a good business blog post has a point.

SOCIAL SHARING
1. Use standard social media share buttons so readers can quickly locate them and understand what they do.
2. If comments are moderated in advance of publishing, make sure a system is in place to publish them quickly; slow approval discourages commentators.
3. Respond thoughtfully to every comment (using common sense as a guide).
4. Learn to recognize and do not publish spam comments.
5. Leave posts open-ended enough to encourage readers to expand on or react to key points.
6. Conclude posts with a question or provocative statement.
7. Popular posts most often shed light on complex issues, present a creative point of view and/or consolidate valuable information and resources.
8. Post titles and subheads are read far more often than body text, so they should be written to attract attention and yet remain relevant to the subject matter.

> 9. Soliciting guest bloggers is an effective method of attracting new readers and building a social network.

10. Becoming a guest blogger is also effective for attracting new readers and building a social network.
11. Authenticity is a key trait for building a community; it's OK to say, "I don't know" or "I made a mistake." ❖

65 COMMONLY CONFUSED BUSINESS WORDS AND PHRASES

The English language is full of quirks, traps and pitfalls. A list of tricky words and phrases could run a mile long. The ones I've selected occur frequently in "real life" business writing.

1. **A lot, alot.** There is no such word as *alot*.
2. **A while, awhile.** A *while* is an indeterminate length of time. *Awhile* means "for a while." *The meeting starts in a while. The meeting lasted awhile.*
3. **Accept, except.** *I accept your proposal, except for the fourth clause.*
4. **Adverse, averse.** *I am averse to (against) the adverse (detrimental) effects of the new compensation plan.*
5. **Affect, effect.** In the sense most common in business, *affect* is a verb — to change or influence. *Effect* is a noun — an outcome, result or condition. High energy costs adversely affect profits. *High energy costs have a negative effect on profits.*
6. **Among, between.** *Between* applies to a group of two; *among* applies to a group of three or more: *Between the two of us, but among the three of us.*
7. **Anxious, eager.** *Anxious* suggests apprehension, anxiety. *Eager* suggests excitement, joyful expectation.
8. **Appraise, apprise.** To *appraise* is to set a price or value on something. To *apprise* is to notify or brief someone (of a situation).

9. **Begging the question.** A statement that assumes the point one is trying to prove — *This product is incompetently designed because their R&D department is incompetent. Begging the question does not mean raising the question.*
10. **Better, best.** You can have the *better* of two options, and the *best* of three or more options. What you can't have is the best of two options.
11. **Between, among.** Strictly speaking, *between* applies to two people or things; *among* applies to three or more people or things. *Between the two candidates, Jane is better qualified. Among the three candidates, Jane is best qualified.*
12. **Between you and I.** Never. This is a prepositional phrase, so it's always *between you and me.* (*Me* is the object of the preposition.)
13. **Biannually.** Occurring twice a year. (Something occurring every other year is *biennial*.)
14. **Bimonthly.** Use with care. Strangely, this word describes something occurring either twice a month or every two months.
15. **Borrow, lend.** You borrow *from* someone; you lend *to* someone.

16. **Capital, capitol.** *Capital* refers to money, property and other sources of wealth, AND a city that serves as the seat of government. *Capitol* refers to the government buildings themselves. *Private investors from the capital city raised capital to repair the capitol grounds.*

17. **Compare to, compare with.** When you show how two apparently different things are similar, you *compare to*. When you show how two apparently similar things are different, you *compare with*. *Dying is easy compared to giving a speech. Public education doesn't compare with home schooling.*

18. **Compose, comprise.** A whole is *composed* of parts; parts *comprise* a whole. *The meeting is composed of three one-hour sessions. Three one-hour sessions comprise the meeting.*

19. **Continual, continuous.** *Continual* means ongoing, frequently recurring. *Continuous* means without interruption. *The meeting was continually interrupted by questions. The meeting ran continuously for 8 hours.*

20. **Consul, council, counsel.** A *consul* is a governmental official who resides in a foreign country. A *council* is an administrative group or assembly. To *counsel* is to give advice. *Counsel* can also be a noun when referring to a legal advisor.

21. **Convince, persuade.** When you *convince*, you change someone's way of thinking. When you *persuade*, you motivate someone to act. He convinced me that I was negligent. *He persuaded me to settle out of court.* (Note: It's always convince of/convinced that, and persuaded to.)

22. **Different from, different than.** *Different from* is universally accepted. Stick with it.

23. **Discreet, discrete.** *Discreet* means prudent, diplomatic. *Discrete* means separate and distinct.

24. **Disinterested, uninterested.** *Disinterested* means impartial, unbiased. *Uninterested* means not interested in, apathetic. If you were standing trial, you'd want a disinterested judge, not an uninterested one.

25. **Due to, because of.** Here's an easy way to remember which phrase to use. If the phrase can be replaced by "caused by", use due to. If the phrase can be replaced by "as a result of", use *because of*. *Poor quarterly results were due to rising energy costs. Quarterly earnings decreased because of rising energy costs.*

26. **e.g. and i.e.** *e.g.* means "for example". *i.e.* means "that is to say."

27. **Elder, eldest.** *Jane is the elder daughter (of the two). Jane is the eldest daughter (of the three).*

28. **Ensure, insure.** To *ensure* is to make certain. To *insure* is to protect against loss, especially financial loss.

29. **Euphemisms.** Avoid euphemisms that sugarcoat disagreeable ideas or actions. They tend to annoy people. Examples: *Negative growth* for loss, *vendor rationalization* for "we're dropping you as a supplier," *downsizing* or *streamlining* for "you're fired," *challenge* or *pain point* for problem, pre-owned for used.

30. **Farther, further.** Use *farther* when referring to measurable or spacial distances. Use *further* for abstract distances. *John is further ahead of Jane in his studies. Jane lives farther from Chicago than John.*

31. **Fewer, less.** Use *fewer* when referring to a specific or measurable number. Use less when referring to an abstract or unmeasurable amount. *He owns fewer stocks and has less money than his business partner.*

32. **First, firstly.** Purists object to "firstly, secondly, etc." When enumerating points, it is safer to use "first, second, third, etc." construction.

33. **Flammable, inflammable**. They mean the same thing — easily capable of bursting into flames.

34. **Former, latter.** *Former* is the first of two; *latter* is the second of two. *"Idleness and pride tax with a heavier hand than kings and parliaments. If we can get rid of the former, we may easily bear the latter."* — Benjamin Franklin.

35. **Fortuitous, fortunate.** Strictly speaking, *fortuitous* means happening by accident, having either positive or negative consequences. The word is commonly used as a synonym for *fortunate*, but this usage should be avoided in formal writing.

36. **His, her, their.** Don't mix singular nouns with the plural pronoun *their. Each client has his own file* and *Each client has his or her own file* are correct. *Each client has their own file* is incorrect.

37. **Hopefully.** The word means in a hopeful manner — *John submitted his job application hopefully.* Using the word as a substitute for *I hope that* — *Hopefully, John will get the job* — is frowned upon by grammarians, but widely used nonetheless. Avoid this word in formal writing.

38. **If and when.** Avoid this phrase. Its meaning is unclear even to experts.
39. **Imply, infer.** The speaker implies, the listener infers. *During a staff meeting, John implied that he had lost the ABC account. Jane inferred from John's comments that he had lost the ABC account.*
40. **In lieu of** means in place of, not in light of. *In lieu of cash, Jane payed for dinner with a credit card.*
41. **Internet, Web.** Not synonymous. The Internet is a vast network of networked computers, of which the World Wide Web is one part. People access information on the Web by using browsers to access Web pages. The Internet contains other types of networks; for instance, email.
42. **Irregardless.** Not a word. It's *regardless*.
43. **Its, it's.** *Its* is a possessive pronoun; *it's* is a contraction for it is. *It's amazing how quickly its sales ramped up.*
44. **Lend, loan.** In the U.S., *to loan* or *to lend* is accepted usage. In Great Britain, *to lend* is preferred.
45. **Less, fewer.** If you can count 'em, use *fewer*. *John made fewer sales than Jane in October. John has less sales experience than Jane.*
46. **Literally, figuratively.** A literal statement is actually, physically true. A figurative statement is symbolically, metaphorically true. *Jane literally fell out of her chair and bruised her ankle. Jane figuratively fell out her chair when she heard John's surprising comments.*
47. **May, might.** Something that may happen is more likely than something that might happen. *You may be wondering how to increase your sales. You might be wondering how to sell Canadian bacon.*
48. **Me, myself.** Unless you've already used I in the sentence, use me. *This site design doesn't appeal to me. I myself don't care for the layout of this Web page.*
49. **More important, more importantly.** Once upon a time, *more importantly* was not allowed. Today, both phrases are acceptable.
50. **More than, over.** If you're talking countable numbers, more than is preferred by some. *Mr. Jones has more than 10 years experience in the financial services industry.* However, there are no hard and fast rules, so trust your ear.
51. **Moot point.** A point that is open to debate, questionable.
52. **Most unique.** Not to be used. Something is either unique or it isn't.
53. **Neither is, neither are.** *Neither is* is correct.
54. **None is, none are.** *None is* is technically correct, but this formality is melting away because "none are" often sounds better to the ear.

55. **Notorious.** NOT a synonym for being accomplished, virtuous or highly esteemed. A *notorious* organization or individual is one that is famous for doing or being evil.
56. **People that, people who.** Generally, *who* follows people and *that* follows things: *People who sell insurance; policies that cover theft.*
57. **Practicable, practical.** *Practicable* means feasible; practical means common sensical, realistic rather than theoretical.
58. **Precede, proceed.** *Precede* means to come before. *Proceed* means to go forward or move along.
59. **Prescribe, proscribe.** Opposite meanings. *Prescribe* means to order, as in a rule, law or medical prescription. *Proscribe* means to prohibit, ban or condemn.
60. **Principal, principle.** A high school has a *principal*. Ms. Jennings is a *principal* of ABC Company. The *principal* reason for accepting the proposal was the vendor's experience. Ms. Jennings is a woman of *principle*. The training program explained important business *principles*.
61. **Redundancies.** Unnecessary repetition should always be avoided, but it has a way of creeping into business phrasing. Examples: ATM machine, PIN number, UPC code, VIN number, absolutely sure, brief summary, completely eliminate, current status, end result, firm decision, foreign imports, free gift, future goals, future planning, greater metropolitan area, internal staff, major breakthrough, major disaster, mutual cooperation, new discovery, new innovation, old adage, past experience, past history, same exact, specific details, unexpected surprise.

62. **Tertiary.** As applied to business, *tertiary* refers to the service sector of the economy — distribution, transportation, financial services, etc.

63. **Than I, than me.** Fill in the missing pieces of the sentence to determine which phrase to use. *Ms. Jennings likes Jane better than **she likes** me. Ms. Jennings likes Jane better than I **like Jane**.*
64. **That, which.** If the phrase is essential to the meaning of the sentence, use that. Otherwise, use *which. The order that ABC Company placed was filled yesterday. ABC's order, which was placed yesterday, will be filled today.*
65. **Who, that.** Use *who* when referring to people; *that* when referring to anything else. ❖