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Introduction to
online marketing

Visit Scotland™

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online marketing

Marketing your business online doesn't stop at getting your website up and running...

It involves engaging customers on the internet through a variety of methods. These include search engine optimisation, social media and advertising.

There are several easy-to-use channels that you can adopt to reach a wide audience at a fraction of the cost of traditional marketing.

One major benefit of online marketing is that you can test and measure activity. This allows you to select the most effective strategies to promote your business online.

This introductory guide aims to help you get found online and provides tips for writing good web copy. It also offers advice on measuring the effects of your online activity and protecting your reputation.

We hope it provides you with the basics you need to get started and gives you some ideas for exploring online marketing further.

Getting found online

Online reviews and ratings are crucial deciding factors when consumers buy a product or service. So, it's essential that you manage and influence the conversations about your business that are taking place on the internet.

More than three in four active travellers claim that reviews and photos are influential when planning a holiday. 49% won't book a property unless they have access to reviews.

However, reviews and feedback are not just for travel sites like TripAdvisor. They are published on blogs, Twitter and Facebook among others, and appear in results when customers search your business online.

Richard Kelly, Senior Digital Marketing Manager at VisitScotland comments:
"Ensuring your business can be found online is the first step in growing your sales from the web and will make a massive difference to your bottom line."

7 tips for getting found online

1. Set up your Google Places listing

What is it?
A Google Places listing lets you display key information about your business and helps customers find your location on Google Maps.

Why sign up?
Potential customers will be able to find you and this will help to convert them into paying guests. Google Places allows you to influence your business description, details, special offers, and reviews. There is no cost involved.

How to sign up?
Sign up at www.google.co.uk/places

What next?
Here is an overview of Google Places listings for the tourism industry:
www.danieledwardcraig.com/2011/08/google-is-going-places-is-your-business-ready-for-the-ride.html

2. Optimise your TripAdvisor listing

What is it?
TripAdvisor is a website that provides travel advice. People can use it to find information about your business and add their reviews.

Why sign up?
Content on review sites can have considerable impact on visitor traffic and conversions. A high number of positive reviews will push your business into TripAdvisor's 'top 10' listings. This will increase the chance of potential customers finding you and becoming paying guests.

How to sign up?
Create your listing at www.tripadvisor.co.uk/pages/getlisted_hotel.html

What next?
For a detailed guide on TripAdvisor for businesses, go to
http://tripadvisor4biz.wordpress.com

3. Create a Facebook fan page

Find us on Facebook

What is it?
A Facebook fan page allows you to connect and interact with people who may be interested in your business. You can also respond to customer feedback.

Why sign up?
Your business can be exposed to a large audience in a viral manner as your fans recommend your page to their friends. You can also drive traffic from your Facebook page to your own company website.

How to sign up?
Create your listing at www.facebook.com/pages/create.php

What next?
For examples of Facebook page ideas for the travel/tourism industry visit: http://mashable.com/2011/05/02/facebook-travel-tourism

4. Promote videos through your own YouTube Channel

What is it?
A YouTube channel allows you to share videos about your business to promote your brand.

Why sign up?
YouTube has tremendous reach. If you produce innovative content, videos can go viral and give your business fast exposure to a global audience at minimal cost.

How to sign up?
Go to www.youtube.com/create_account

What next?
For a beginner's guide (with video tutorials) on how to market your business on YouTube go to: http://mashable.com/2011/07/20/how-to-marketing-youtube

5. Engage with your audience through Twitter

What is it?
Twitter is a social networking website that allows you to post updates, or tweets (limited to 140 characters) as often as you want. When you follow other people on Twitter, you see their tweets. When they follow you, they see your tweets.

Why sign up?
Use it to alert customers about last minute prices, special offers etc. It also allows for a constant stream of communication with potential and current customers.

How to sign up?
Sign up here: https://twitter.com/signup

What next?
For a detailed guide to Twitter basics, visit: http://mashable.com/guidebook/ twitter

6. Submit to directories

What is it?
Online directories link websites by category and subcategory. Owners submit their site to web directories. Editors then review submissions for approval.

Why sign up?
Increasing the number of external websites that link to your website is called link building. It means your business will appear more in search engine results.

How?
Submit your website and contact details to tourism/travel related directories to receive a link to your website.

What next?
For a guide on growing the popularity of your website, which includes building links and submitting your website to directories go to www.seomoz.org/beginners-guide-to-seo/growing-popularity-and-links

7. Market your business through VisitScotland

What is it?
VisitScotland's corporate website provides our partners with information about the marketing opportunities that we offer. If you are looking for new ways to promote your business to visitors or the travel trade you'll find them here.

Why sign up?
VisitScotland can help promote your business through a variety of different mediums. These include our network of websites, guides maps and print, direct mail and eNews, information centres, events and exhibitions and more.

How?
Visit the marketing opportunities website at
http://marketingopps.visitscotland.com

Writing good web copy

Writing good web copy is different from writing good print copy. You need to be clear about your objectives and communicate in the most direct way possible. It's also useful to employ a few tactics to make sure your website appears high up in search engine results.

10 tips for writing good web copy

1. Determine your objective
Establish what each page is about and what you want it to make your visitors do. The copy should clearly communicate your objectives to visitors. Think about how each page relates to other pages on your website.

2. Choose primary and secondary keywords
Decide which keywords you want to use for each page. A keyword is what people are likely to enter as search terms when they're looking for your type of property or activity:
- The primary keyword should sum up the content of the page. For example: 'Pet friendly B&B'
- The secondary keywords are more defined descriptions and complement the primary keywords. Secondary examples could be 'pet friendly accommodation' or 'dog friendly bed and breakfast'. Use the Google keyword tool to find out how effective your keywords are: https://adwords.google.co.uk/select/KeywordToolExternal

3. Include the primary and secondary keywords in the page's title tag and meta description tags
- The title tag is the first line of your listing on a search results page (limit this to 70 characters)
- The meta description is the subsequent two lines of your listing on a search results page (limit this to 155 characters). It is important that your keywords are included in the title tag and meta description. They will be recognised by search engines and will also communicate your message in search rankings.

Include a benefit and call to action in the meta description to entice users to click through to your website. eg: 'view course guides, book tee times and play online game.'

Also, make sure every page features a unique title tag which focuses on a single keyword. This means search engines can summarise and determine the content of each page.
- For a detailed guide on title tags: www.seomoz.org/learn-seo/title-tag
- For a detailed guide on meta descriptions, visit www.seomoz.org/learn-seo/meta-description

4. Place primary and secondary keywords at or near the top of the page

Headline (H1) tags sit at the top of every web page and represent the title of the page. There should only be one H1 tag on each page. Search engines use H1 tags to determine what your page is about and how to categorise and rank it. Use your keyword in the H1 tags too. Also aim to get your keyword(s) into the introductory paragraph. For more information about headline tags see http://searchengineland. com/overlooked-but-beneficial-on-page-seo-elements-38286

5. Don't be too brief

There is no set rule, but the higher the word-count the more opportunities you have to use your keyword. Aim for around 300 words per page if possible and use the keyword at least three times throughout. However, don't overdo it. Your copy should also remain succinct.

6. Include links to similar pages on your website

Where possible link your pages to other relevant content in your website. For example, a page about 'Activities near Loch Lomond' could link to a page about 'Watersports on Loch Lomond' which could link to pages about 'Windsurfing on Loch Lomond' and 'Sailing on Loch Lomond.'

❶ Title tag displayed on a browser window.
❷ Keyword search.
❸ & ❹ Title tag and Meta Description displayed in search engine results.

7. Incorporate primary and/or secondary keywords in your links

Any links on a page should have a keyword in the link. This passes keyword relevance to the page it is linking to. For example: 'find out more about cycling in Scotland' NOT 'click here for more information on cycling in Scotland.'

8. Images

Enhance copy with good quality images to inspire visitors but make sure they complement text rather than replace it. Ensure that the images on your website contain appropriate keywords in the image file name as well as in the alternate text. Alternate text is the text that appears when a user hovers a mouse over the image. It tells search engines what the image is about. Further information on image titles and alternate text:

www.searchenginejournal.com/image-alt-text-vs-image-title-whats-the-difference/6930
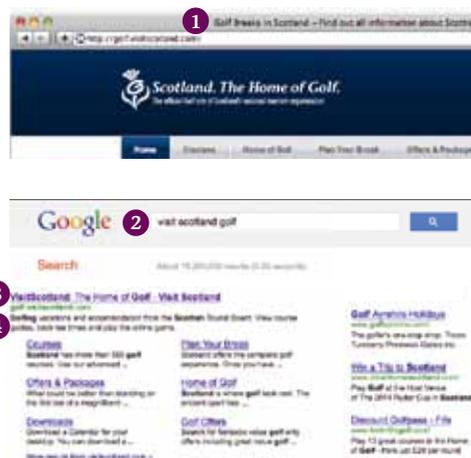
Image Copyright

Using unsafe images is an infringement on copyright law and can carry severe financial penalties. Your images are safe to use if:
• you took them yourself
• you paid a professional photographer to take them for you
• you obtained them from someone else and have written permission to use them

Your images are not safe to use if:
• you downloaded them from the internet without written permission from the owner
• you copied them from a printed publication without permission from the owner

If you have any doubts about whether your image is safe, it's always better to remove it.

9. Refresh content when necessary

Search engines such as Google like to rank websites higher if they promote fresh and up to date content. It is important to regularly review and adjust your copy to reflect recent events or hot topics. For example if you have a page on an annual event, you should update your content at an appropriate moment – perhaps when tickets go on sale. For a detailed beginners' guide on search engine optimisation:

http://guides.seomoz.org/beginners-guide-to-search-engine-optimization

10. Humans first, spiders second

It's important to find a balance between search engine optimisation (SEO) and writing for your customers. While SEO brings users to the page, the written content is what will inspire them. Always incorporate your primary and secondary keywords into persuasive, informative copy that adds value to your website.

Measuring the effectiveness of your website

You might have put a lot of effort into your website, but how do you know if it's working? To make the most of your website, you need to know how visitors are responding to it.

You should ask yourself the following questions:
• What is the purpose of my website?
• How easy is it for a user to find relevant information on my website?
• How can I improve my website so it is as effective as possible?

Understand your website

It's important to see your website from the eyes of your visitors. Try an activity such as making a booking. Follow that through and see how the user journey feels. Browse the site over and over and get a feel for what could be improved.

Google Analytics

To find out what's working and what's not on your website, you should use a good analytics programme. Google Analytics is a free tool you can use to:
• understand how visitors arrive at your website
• find out about what visitors do on your website and how this compares to what you want them to do
• identify the weak points of your website so you can improve them.

Further information on Google Analytics
• For a beginners guide to Google Analytics see: www.google.com/support/analyticshelp/?hl=en_uk
• To sign up and get started visit the Analytics website at www.google.co.uk/analytics
• Google's Conversion University contains various presentations to help you become a more knowledgeable Google Analytics user: www.google.com/support/conversionuniversity/bin/requestpy?hl=en&contact_type=indexSplash&rd=1
• This article discusses measuring online engagement using reports: www.kaushik.net/avinash/measuring-online-engagement-what-role-does-web-analytics-play/

Protecting your reputation

You should be aware of online conversations about your business to ensure that reviews are clean, rant-free, and that at least 90% of them are positive.

Simone Kurtzke, Social Media Manager at VisitScotland comments:
"It is crucial that you know what is being said about your business online so that you can steer and influence your reputation. A positive reputation can have a notable impact on profitability."

There are four aspects to online reputation management:

Monitor conversations

To begin managing your online reputation you should proactively monitor online conversations about your business. A keyword search of your business can quickly reveal the things your customers are talking about.

3 tips

1. Google Alerts – receive an email alert every time Google finds a new mention of your business name (or indeed any word or phrase). Sign up at www.google.com/alerts/create
2. Twitter search – this allows you to view the latest tweets relating to your business. http://twitter.com/#!/search-home

3. Twitter alerts – you can sign up to receive Twitter alerts by email on Twilerts www.twilert.com

Listen to your customers

Classify online conversations according to the type of feedback (e.g. positive / negative) and the degree of influence of the person commenting on you (how big are their social networks?) Being aware of these conversations may help you to gain insight about your business and improve areas of weakness.

3 tips

1. Categorise customer conversations by quality and influence.
2. Keep a list of top influencers and top ranters – know your customer!
3. Be open – listening will give you direct insights into your business and will identify areas for improvement.

Respond to your customers

People complain on social media channels because they are not satisfied, and they are usually hoping for a resolution. Always be sympathetic, and put yourself in the customer's position. This means first analysing what went wrong and then thinking about how you can make it right. You may want to offer an incentive to win the customer back (e.g. offer a free night's stay).

3 tips

1. Devise a response strategy for your business – in what cases do you respond, and how?
2. Respond fast – social media is instant, and you should aim to respond within 24 hours.
3. Be sympathetic, transparent and honest.

Amplify positive conversations

While you can avoid the effects of negative conversations, you can also amplify positive feedback and use it to your benefit. For example you might post good reviews on your website or your Facebook page to promote your business.

3 tips

1. Ask customers to leave feedback on TripAdvisor and other sites.
2. Arrange for VisitScotland to include a link to your TripAdvisor ratings from your VisitScotland listing. You can do this by contacting your local Quality and Tourism Advisor: www.visitscotland.org/business_support/your_business_manager.aspx
3. Find meaningful ways to engage with top positive influencers about your business.

Resources

Free places to publish your business information:
- **Google Places** www.google.co.uk/places
- **Google Alerts** www.google.com/alerts/create
- **TripAdvisor** www.tripadvisor.co.uk/pages/getlisted_hotel.html
- **Facebook** www.facebook.com/pages/create.php
- **YouTube** www.youtube.com/create_account
- **Twitter** https://twitter.com/signup
- **Twitter search** http://twitter.com/#!/search-home
- **Twitter alerts** www.twilert.com
- **Storify** www.storify.com

Google tools
- **Google Keyword tool** https://adwords.google.co.uk/select/KeywordToolExternal
- **Google Analytics beginner's guide** www.google.com/support/analyticshelp/?hl=en_uk
- **Google Analytics create an account** www.google.co.uk/analytics
- **Google's Conversion University** www.google.com/support/conversionuniversity/bin/request.py?hl=en&contact_type=indexSplash&rd=1

Support materials
- SEOmoz provides tools to simplify search engine optimisation www.seomoz.org
- A blog by Avinash Kaushik, self-defined 'digital marketing evangelist' www.kaushik.net
- Search Engine Journal helps companies improve online marketing www.searchenginejournal.com
- Search Engine Land offers expert advice and news on online marketing www.searchengineland.com
- Mashable provides social networks and digital news http://mashable.com
- Blog by Hotel Consultant and author on trends and tools in online marketing www.danieledwardcraig.com
- TripAdvisor blog for businesses http://tripadvisor4biz.wordpress.com

VisitScotland resources
- Market your business with VisitScotland
- Contact your local Quality and Tourism Adviser
- AdviceLink 'Introduction to working with the media'

For all of the above visit:
visitscotland.org/business_support.aspx