



Websites & SEO Overview for Small Business

Version 4.0

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DOCUMENT UPDATE

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The way that search engines rate, rank and index websites is always changing. There have been many changes recently to the Google search algorithm model. This document has been updated to cover topics you need to understand with regard to marketing and search engine optimization. Although there are many search engines and search directories, this document focuses primarily on Google, Bing, YAHOO and Ask which comprise about 87% of all user activity.

WEBSITE BASICS

1) Search for and register your domain name

A domain name will represent your online brand and be used as part of your email address. When evaluating available domain names, try to choose a descriptive one--- either your company name or a name that represents the business you're in. It should be short and easy to spell.

There are many extensions available (.com, .net, .org, .tv, .info, .me, .tech, etc.), but in almost all cases, you should register the .com version of the domain for your business. Most people automatically think of .com when going to any website.

There are many registrars available, but they all have different price points for the annual registration fee.

MyDomain.com and GoDaddy.com are two that are reasonable in price and actually have a customer service department. The cost is about \$12.00 per year. You may register a domain name for up to 5 years at a time.

2) Choosing a hosting company

After you register your domain name, you will need to choose a hosting company. A hosting company provides a folder to host the files that comprise your website and they provide email services.

Most hosting companies have different packages available depending on how much space is needed for file storage, how many email addresses are needed and the estimated bandwidth needed throughout the month. Hosting packages typically range from \$100 to \$250 per year. GoDaddy and Media Temple are good companies to use.

Notes on email:

a) Many hosting companies will offer some type of spam reduction service (like MX Logic). This is a real help in controlling the amount of SPAM email you receive and often cost only a couple dollars per month, per email account.

b) Many hosting companies now limit the number of emails you can send and the size of attachments that can be sent. Limiting the number of emails is done to keep the "black list" servers from deeming you or your server a "spammer". Once listed on a black list, your email address (or server IP address) will be refused by receiving email servers. Dealing with blacklist problems can take a week or more to resolve and be very costly. You can get more information here: <http://www.spamhaus.org/xbl>

c) Always use your new domain name for your email. For business purposes, get rid of Gmail, Hotmail, AOL, etc. Use your new domain name to *brand your business*.

3) **Choosing a website development company**

Choose a website development company just like you would any vendor. Ask for references from friends and associates and search the internet for local providers. Look at Google Business listing reviews. Spend some time on the developer's website and look for a portfolio section. You can tell how professional a developer is by how their projects "look" and navigate.

Technically you can do business with any vendor in the world! Shinn Technology provides services for clients in the Americas, United Kingdom and Austria--- many we have never met in person. If this is your first website project though, it would be easier to communicate with someone you can sit across the table from.

Ask for proposals and try to compare apples to apples. If you talk to 5 different website developers, you will probably have many different uses of technology proposed—from standard HTML to a full Adobe Flash websites (like www.Sensisoft.com).

Shinn Technology focuses on small businesses, so we are always trying to match the technology and services to the budget of the small business. Many times we will develop the initial website and a marketing plan for the website. From there, we will act as a WebCoach to help the client with questions along the way and make periodic updates to allow better search engine indexing. Some clients even purchase the development tools and learn how to make their own content updates.

Note: Make sure all registrar accounts, hosting accounts and license ownership is in your company name and that you have the master username and password for the account! Many times a web developer will go out of business and the client company will have NO ACCESS to their domain name or hosting account. Recovering these accounts will require that they all be in your name and your contact info.

4) **Topics to be aware of and questions to ask the developer...**

Who owns the website?

That may sound like a funny question since you are paying the bill, but after reviewing the develop agreements for many prospective new clients, we have found that the developer retains the ownership rights in many cases. This means that if you decide to leave the developer for another, you may be doing a new website from the ground up. You should always have ownership rights!

Content Development

Content development is very important in today's world. Attention to using content rich text helps the search engines index your site based on topic relevancy and importance. Do not leave the text development to your web developer.....at minimum, work with them to write the content.

You can also hire a company to help write your content. Many of them are professional writers and are experienced in composing content rich text for use on websites. They are often referred to as "copyrighters". Make sure that you get a full release to use the developed content. Ask for a release letter or ask that a note be made on their invoice that "the right to use and ownership transfers to client upon payment of invoice".

Image and music licensing/copyright

This is one of the most important topics I see in business marketing today. There is nothing free on the internet. Repeat that three times. Ok, maybe a few more times.

You may search the internet looking for images to use on your website, newsletters or even printed publications. You can find hundreds and thousands of them, but they are not free. You must purchase a license to use them. Many image/music houses have found a new revenue generator in this trying economic market..... find images and music that have been obtained without proper licensing and threaten to sue the website owner for illegal use of a copyrighted work. I have seen clients pay up to \$3500 for an image that would have been priced at \$20 if you purchased a license (\$3500 is still cheaper than a lawsuit fought in a federal copyright court). Getty Images is the most active in this type of revenue generation (more about Getty at: www.ExtortionLetterINFO.com). Shinn Technology does not promote using any content without paying for proper licensing, but we also do not agree with the borderline ethics of distributing images to the internet and baiting people that are not aware of copyright laws.

Always purchase images from reputable sources and get a written statement of “the right to use the image for a specific purpose”. Shinn Technology uses www.Fotolia.com for images. You setup an account... setup a credit card... purchase credits and go shopping. You have choices of image use (web or print) and size. Many good quality web images can be purchased for a few dollars each. In addition, Fotolia has a customer service phone and are very helpful in answering questions on licensing and how to use their service.

We purchase music loops from many sources and do not have a favorite to refer at this point.

Note on royalty types: always look for royalty-free licensing. This means that you pay a licensing fee once and can use it forever. For royalty based licenses, you pay a use fee up front and additional royalty fees based on time of use.

Ask your website developer for proof of licensing for images and music. Note: Many developers will not accept images from clients unless the client can prove creation (the client took the photo or created the graphic image) or provide licensing for each image/photo.

A note on content from the government. Under terms of Title 17 – Section 105 of United States code, works created by U.S. Government departments (brochures, websites, etc) do not have copyright protection. You may use text content word-for-word and not worry about licensing.

5) Website submission service

After your website is complete, you will need to broadcast your web address to the search engines and any local geographic resources available. As a minimum service in marketing your site, we suggest using a search engine submission service (not to be confused with Search Engine Marketing or Optimization). Shinn Technology has an exclusive program for clients that include submission, hack security, Google and Bing Tools setup and setup of Google Business listing. You can get more information on the WebTools program here: www.shinntechology.com/WebServices.html

See the following SEO section for more info on marketing and submissions.

BUILDING YOUR WEBSITE

There are a couple different base types of websites in today's world--- Static and Responsive Design.

Below is an overview. This is not meant to explain all the technology involved in developing a website. We just want you to have the basics so you can talk to developers and understand the options and terms they will bring to the table.

Static Design

A Static website is a fixed pixel width (say 990 pixels wide) and it does not change based on the device that is viewing the site. The website will look the same on all devices. A mobile device may require the user to zoom in a bit to see all the content and options.

This is the oldest method of web development. Most Static websites are built using standard HTML and they view well in all browsers to include Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome and Safari. There are many software products on the market to develop a website, but the Adobe Creative Suite is probably the most well-known.

Responsive Design

A Responsive Design website adapts to the device you are using-- desktop/laptop, iPad or a mobile device. It will automatically adjust itself to best fit on the viewing device--- photos can be reduced in size (or removed on a mobile phone) and the text margins can change. It takes a lot of experience and planning to get the wanted display result on all devices.

A majority of new sites now use Responsive Design, which has been made easier for less experienced designers and developers, thanks to the availability of themes and skins accessible through CMS systems such as WordPress, Joomla and Wix. There are some limitations to using the named resources, but we will not get into that depth of discussion here.

You can achieve a more customized experience with responsive design. However, it does require expertise, proper planning, and a larger budget.

How to tell the difference

If you are on a computer, you can tell if a site is responsive by reducing your browser's window size from full screen down to very small. If the appearance of the text, images and menu change as you get smaller, the site is responsive.

Conclusion

Many of our clients come to us with a very limited budget for the development of their web presence. Because of this fact, we feel the best method is a Static website. Responsive design is a fine method, but requires more labor to get to an operational final product.

We feel it is very important to develop an overall web presence... this includes a professional looking website as well as social media resources to best support your website. These resources include Facebook Business, Google Business and LinkedIn profiles. Spending your entire budget on just a website falls short of a good overall web presence.

Shopping Carts / Credit Cards

What if I want to use a shopping cart and take credit cards? There are many options today for both services. Like anything, there are expensive choices and low cost choices. We would suggest looking to www.SquareUp.com and www.PayPal.com and see if they might meet your needs. Both have credit card processing and some form of shopping cart for sales of products and services.

MARKETING YOUR WEBSITE AND BUSINESS

In addition to a base submission service, there are many ways to get the word out for your new website.

Print advertising

Make sure you add your website address to all existing avenues of print advertising--- business cards, magazine ads, church ads----- anywhere you advertise. Vinyl decals for your vehicle too! Always capitalize the first letter of each word to help the words stand out (ie: www.ShinnTechnology.com).

Social Networking

There are many social networking sites, but the following are the most popular and are business related if you use them as such.

LinkedIn (www.Linkedin.com)

LinkedIn is free to setup and provides a medium to post information about your business, yourself, your work experience, website address, etc. The idea behind this tool is to setup your profile.... then spend time inviting your personal and business sphere to “connect” with you. As your connection list grows, you can post information that will be shared with your online sphere. LinkedIn accounts are actively indexed in Google.

Facebook Business Page (www.Facebook.com)

Facebook is also free to setup. We advise having one profile for your personal use and one for your business use. Setup your personal profile page and then find your friends, family, clients and business associates to become your “friends”.

Facebook also has an additional feature of being able to create sub-pages. These are called “Business Pages”. Once you setup a business page for your business, you invite all your friends to “like” your page and ask them to invite their friends. Your sphere can grow very quickly in Facebookland. You can post business information to your “wall” that will be immediately shared with all your friends and associates.

Blogging

A blog (a blend of the term web log) is a tool for communication with others. Blogs are usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material of a special interest nature (ie: your business, or product/service offering). Most blogs are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other. Search engines will visit your blog and index the individual articles to display as users search for related content/topics. Note: Make sure you autograph each post with your contact information and website address so the search engines can find their way back to your main website.

A free blog to try out is: www.Blogger.com.

Get Well Linked

Get as many websites as possible to link back to your website. Friends, vendors and current web advertising (all web based advertising should link back to your website). Always use your entire website address with the “http://” too. ie: <http://www.ShinnTechnology.com>

In some cases it may be worth creating many micro-sites (see the following SEO section for more info on micro-sites) to link back to your main website. A micro-site would be a separate domain name, hosting account and website that has content optimized for search engine indexing and a link back to your main site.

Create “linkbait”. Linkbait is something on your site that people WANT to link to. Something fun, something useful—exciting—weird. Be creative.

Find sites that link to your competition and get them to link to you.

A couple neat sites for reference are: www.LinkPopularity.com and www.ZetaImpact.com

Free Resources to list your website

1) **Google Local Business Listing**

Click the link below to setup a local business center listing. It is free. At the end choose “confirm by phone” and enter your mobile number. Google will give you a setup of numbers to enter when they call your phone and you will be setup immediately. You can also request a postcard to be mailed.
<http://www.google.com/local/add>

2) **Google Submission**

Click the link below to setup a free listing on Google.
<https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/submit-url> Login to Google

3) **YAHOO Local Listings**

Click the link below to setup a free listing on YAHOO’s local resource.
<https://search.yahoo.com/info/submit.html>

4) **Hot Frog**

<http://www.hotfrog.com> Add your business profile

5) **YAHOO Directory Listing**

Click the link below to setup a free listing on YAHOO’s directory.
<http://search.yahoo.com/info/submit.html>

6) **BING Local Search**

Click the link below to setup a free listing on Bing’s local resource.
<http://www.bing.com/toolbox/submit-site-url>

7) **Yelp Business Page**

Click the link below to setup a free listing on Mojo Pages.
<https://biz.yelp.com>

9) **Open Directory Project**

Click the link below to setup a free listing on DMOZ.
<http://www.dmoz.org/docs/en/add.html>

SEO- SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

SEO is a huge buzzword that many people do not understand. Search Engine Optimization refers to “optimizing” websites and web pages to rank well in the search engines. An average service agreement range for SEO is \$600 to \$1100 per month. The reason for the price is the huge amount of time it takes to manage, modify settings and monitor ranking on almost a daily basis. If your service agreement includes management of social networking, content development for blogging and pay per click program management, it can almost be a full time job.

Because of the time requirements of a dedicated SEO program, Shinn Technology does not offer a full SEO marketing service. Again, we focus on helping small business make best use of their modest budget. We use all avenues to best facilitate indexing in Google, Bing, YAHOO and Ask at the time of site development. We also promote use of a very cost effective annual submission program as a minimum marketing service.

We are in the process of developing an eWebCoach service. This service will initially help get our clients up to date on current requirements/configuration for best indexing..... and then help and advise with ongoing questions and techniques for clients to manage their own efforts in SEO Marketing. We can also refer you to a SEO focused company to develop a full marketing program for you (usually with an annual service agreement).

The link below will take you to a great article on SEO

<http://www.cio.com/article/3104104/search/top-6-seo-ranking-factors-of-2016.html>

Here we go...

In the next few pages, we will overview SEO Marketing so that you have a good understanding of terms and basic methods.

Where do the people search?

There are millions and millions of searches done each and every day. Here is the breakdown of where people go to search: Google 64.2%, Bing 20.2% , Yahoo 12.7%, Ask 1.8% and AOL 1.1%. When approaching SEO, the top three is all we care about..... and Google is the focus. Plus, many of the other search engines and search directories use Google as their data search engine.

The Quick Basics

There are basic items that need to be accomplished with all websites regardless of your intent for SEO services. Using Meta tags, using content rich text, setting up a sitemap and configuring the website in Google / Bing Tools are the basics. The basics done right can help get you a good Organic position (without paying for position or trying to trick the index).

Meta Tags

TITLE

The title is what you see in the top line of your browser window. It is important to plan the contents of the title for best search engine indexing.

(ie: Fishers | Indianapolis Computer Service & Support | Website Design -Shinn Technology Services)

KEYWORDS

The keywords meta tag is hidden from a user, but tells the robot what terms to use to index your website in their search engine. You can see this tag when you choose View, then Source from your Internet Explorer menu.

(ie: Indianapolis, Fishers, Noblesville, computer service, computer support, Microsoft, HP, Apple, Dell, mobile phone support, technology consultant, technical author, computer repair, website design)

Notes: Use common misspellings of words here to your benefit and limit the number of key words (12-20).

There is a website called WordTracker.com. This site will help your drill down to a concise list of optimum keywords to use. Google AdWords also has a free keyword generator at:

adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal.

DESCRIPTION

The description meta tag is hidden from a user, but tells the robot what business description to use to index your website. You can see this tag when you choose View, then Source from your Internet Explorer menu.

(ie: Shinn Technology Services Corporation provides computer service and computer support in the Indianapolis, Fishers and Noblesville areas. We specialize in small business technology consulting to include office networks, repair and support of Windows based workstations, malware / virus removal, remote data backup archive and website design and web coaching.)

Other tools and concepts

Sitemap.xml ***(www.xml-sitemaps.com)***

An XML sitemap is a file that contains information about one or more URLs on your Web site--- an inventory if you will of web pages and the navigation of your site. You can submit a sitemap.xml through your Internet Browser by typing in: www.google.com/ping?sitemap=http://www.DomainName.com/sitemap.xml

Robots.txt File

A robots.txt is a configuration file used to control which web pages of a website a search engine indexes. The file must be located in the root directory of the website folder for a search engine spider or robot to find. Often times the only line in the file points the robot to the sitemap file.

Test example: Sitemap: <http://www.ShinnTechnology.com/sitemap.xml>

Content Rich Text

This is the concept of developing text that includes keywords that you want the search engines to index. It needs to be "english" and easy for a user to read, but packed with keywords and geographic location information.

Note: Have you every seen a website that has a ton of words replicated at the bottom of the page. This is an attempt of tricking the search engine to index the site based on those replicated words. This is not content rich text and will most often get your site completely removed from the index.

What is Flash?

Flash enabled designers and developers deliver rich content over the browsers, creating motion, interactivity and an impressive visual experience. Good Flash-sites do not require too much bandwidth, load fast and allow for a smooth interaction; besides, beautiful Flash-based sites are Photoshop masterpieces, transporting some kind of reality and fantasy to the Flash movie. Flash is invisible to a search index.

Microsite

A microsite refers to an individual web page or cluster of pages which are meant to function as an auxiliary supplement to your primary website. The microsite's main landing page will have its own domain name and hosting account.

With the prevalence of keyword advertising, (such as Pay per click or PPC), microsites may be created specifically to carry such contextual advertising. Or along a similar tactic, they're created in order to specifically carry topic specific, keyword / content rich content with the goal of having search engines rank them highly when search engine users seek such content topics. They normally always link back to your main business website (making it rank higher as well).

What is Google looking for?

There are many variables that Google looks at with regard to your website. How useful is it to the searching user based on the keywords and content rich text? How many links to your site have been found (a sense of importance). How many pages does your website have filled with text content?

How does Google work? www.google.com/insidesearch/howsearchworks/thestory

Design with SEO in mind

The majority of your website must be text. Adobe Flash and total graphic based sites are invisible to Google and can not be indexed.... only text can be indexed. If you like the look of a graphic based main page (perhaps you want a certain font), make sure you have a paragraph of content rich text at the bottom of the page along with a tags section with a keyword listing.

Note: The tag section is not considered pushing keywords as long as you don't replicate many words and the text is legible (and not the same color as the background).

The basic rule of web design: Make your site **useful** as a resource and then tell everyone about it.

I'm listed in Google now and what is my ranking?

The first part is easy to check. Go to Google and type "Site:YourDomainName.com" and press Google Search. Google will show you every page indexed under your domain name.

Calculating a website's Page Rank and Page Value is a very complex task.... For a great resources on the topic of Page Ranking visit: www.webworkshop.net/pagerank.html In a nutshell, Google assigns a ranking of 0 to 10 to each website as it is indexed. As a user searches for a topic, Google calculates this Page Rank based on a number of variables of the keywords used in the search.

You can download the Google Toolbar which has a site ranking resource built in. You can also go to this website and type in your domain name. www.prchecker.info

Remember: Design the text of each page to be content rich text with keywords and geographical in nature.... make it readable to the user..... make it a useful page. Google will reward you by indexing it.

What can I do to make by site better optimized

Anchor link thinking

When creating text links on your website, make them informative and use keywords. Don't just say "Click here" say "Learn more about Computer Support in Fishers, Indiana".

Use Image ALT tags and descriptive filenames

Each image you use has an attribute called the Alt Tag (this is in the HTML page setup). This is a text tag that describes the image. This is a great place to use keywords. Also make sure your image filenames are descriptive. Use "Shinn-Technology-Corporation-logo.jpg" rather than "logo.jpg".

Text content

Again, use content rich text with strategic keywords. Use the "H1" header in the HTML code. This tells the search engines the header is important. Also use bold and italic words. This also tells the search engines "this is important text". The more relevant content rich text pages the better. Some sites have thousands of pages of useful text for search engines to index. Be as detailed as possible in developing text for your website.

Geo-Targeting in mind

When defining your keywords and service area, build your location into the equation. Shinn Technology for example, comes up much higher when Fishers or Noblesville is used (ie: Fishers Computer Service)..... rather than Indianapolis that has a ba-gillion computer service companies.

Use local business center listings in Google and Bing to create a profile (create more than one profile to cover different cities). These often are displayed separately than your main listings (giving you multiple listings on a search result).

Link Farming = Bad Mojo

Link farming is the process of exchanging reciprocal links with websites in order to increase search engine optimization. The idea behind link farming is to increase the number of sites that link to yours because search engines rank sites according to the quality and quantity of sites that link to yours. In theory, the more sites that link to yours, the higher your ranking in the search engine results will be because the more links indicate a higher level of popularity among users of the Internet. However, search engines such as Google consider link farming as a form of spam and have implemented procedures to remove sites that participate.

Top 5 things to avoid with regard to search engines

Do not use frames. It is difficult for a search engine to index individual pages when a frame may display numerous HTML pages from within a frame.

Do not use Adobe Flash. Flash is a great way to make a page look cool..... it is also totally invisible to search engines.

Do not use JavaScript menus. These are easy to setup from within some HTML editor tools.... The navigation of the site pages is totally invisible to the search engines.

Don't require cookies to be set to use your website. Google will not index the page.

Do not get involved in Link Farming. These services stuff your web address and business information on many blogs and forums to give false readings to the search engines. If Google finds that you are involved in Link Farming, they will remove your listing from the index.

GENERAL INFORMATION / OVERVIEW

Beware of the Marketing Blacklist

You can get more information here: www.spamhaus.org/xbl.

When setting up an email marketing program, be careful of adhering to the ethics of internet email. Someone that is known as a spammer / marketer can be placed on a "blacklist" because of a fraudulent operation or because they attempt to exploit browser vulnerabilities to send malware and other unwanted software to the user.

Most hosting companies now have a limit on how many emails can be send out per user, per day. The hosting company may "turn off" your email capability for a 24 hours period. The worst case is that you (your domain name, your server IP address, your internal server) is listed on the black list. Many spam prevention services (like MX Logic) use the blacklist to compare email addresses--- if your address is on the blacklist, the receiving email server with simply delete your email.

The best way to get around this problem, is to use Exact Target, Constant Contact or MailChimp for your email marketing program. They work closely with the black list servers to make sure they adhere to all the internet rules.

If you send email from your own Outlook system, make sure you include an Opt-Out. This allows the user to have their email removed from your marketing system.

Pay Per Check Marketing

A Pay per click (PPC) program is a marketing program where you are charged each time a user “clicks” on your link and visits your website. When you create your account, you setup keywords that are relevant to your target market. As the user searches for “Fishers Computer Service”, my ad would appear in the sponsored links section. There are two ways to be charged: some systems have a fixed rate per click.... others, you actually compete by bidding on how much you will pay per click—moving you above a competitor if you pay more. Most programs allow you to set a monthly budget.

Setting up your add

I always suggest having your telephone number on the top line of your ad. Each time your ad appears in the sponsored links section you have what is considered, “an impression”. A user can see your add. It is not until they click on it to visit your site that you are charged. My hope is that the user will call me rather than click through to my website.... saving me \$2.25 or so.

Top PPC program

Google AdWords:

adwords.google.com

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Banner Ad Marketing

As you surf the internet, you will see banner ads everywhere. These rectangular advertisements appear on all sorts of websites and vary in appearance and subject matter, but they all share a basic function: if you click on them, your Internet browser will take you to the advertiser's website. Although there are many sizes, the most standard sizes are 468x60 pixels and 125x125 pixels. Fees for placement of your ad often depend on the page placement (main page costs more), size and length of time (often monthly or quarterly contracts).

Evaluating a website to place your banner ad is difficult. It depends on the type of site and the fee charged. Ask for a traffic report which will give you an indication of how many visitors the site has per month. A site charging \$50 per month with 100 visitors would probably not be a good choice. Your local Chamber of Commerce might be a good place to start. Most of them charge a fair rate and have a higher rate of traffic from their members and businesses in the community. Other options might be a trade association, local networking group or local news website.

I would say that the average cost for a standard banner is \$40 per month. Many sites will ask that you provide them a JPG formatted image for your ad..... some sites will create the ad for you.

Over the years Shinn Technology has had hundreds of banner ads on school athletic sites, school band sites, scout group sites, community and religious event sites, etc. We consider these donations to support the community—they provide little or no prospective business. So, when you're really looking to generate leads and prospective business, do some homework on the banner ad program and make sure you get a good return for the money invested.

