



# Now Is A Better Time Than Ever to Start An Online Marketing Campaign

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Websites that have had the prime real estate of being placed on the first page of Google are dropping like flies. Why? Because over the course of a year, Google has been updating their algorithms in effort to weed out what they consider being a spam website or an over optimized website.

For those of you who are not exactly sure what an algorithm is, it is a list of mathematical instructions that tells the search engine database systems how to complete an assigned task. Google sends its Googlebot to every website in effort to record and index your web data. It then uses an algorithm to decide if the data recorded for your website is eligible to be shown when a user is searching for a specific keyword.

In the dark ages of online marketing there were many techniques that could be used to get your website ranking on the first page of Google. I won't bore you with the details of these techniques, but I will take some time to explain to you why you have an advantage if you have yet to jump on the online marketing band wagon.

Google's algorithm used to focus primarily on how many backlinks you had going to your website, so many website owners and online marketing professionals found ways to purchase these backlinks or participated in link exchanges and/or link schemes. Many of the sites that were on the first page



have dropped significantly or completely because they have been penalized for having unnatural backlinks. Now, Google's algorithm is placing more emphasis on having fresh relevant content on your website.

Each backlink into your website leaves a footprint of your online marketing efforts, so it is important to build your online presence naturally. Don't take part in any marketing schemes. It takes much more time and money to repair the damage done than if you make good decisions from the beginning.

For those who have not started marketing your website, you have the advantage of beginning at a time where the rules are more defined. Websites that participated in Link Farms seven years ago, but have since practiced all ethical (white hat) techniques are just now being penalized, which gives you the competitive advantage if you are just getting started.

So what is the golden rule of online marketing? If Google determines that your website is a valuable resource to its viewers, then your website will get the leverage you are aiming for. Here are some important attributes to consider:

## Content

How fresh is your content? When was the last time you updated the content on your website? Does the content on your website



demonstrate that you are an expert in your industry? If you display your products on your website, how well written are your product descriptions? If they are copied from the manufactures website you may be in trouble because duplicate content is one of Google's pet peeves. If no one in your office is up for the task of writing content then you should turn to a professional who will write your information for you.

Creating a company blog is not only a great way to show Google that you are keeping your content fresh and up to date; it is also a perfect way to communicate to your clients and prospects. Giving them the information that they are looking for, information that assists them in their business, will help build up the credibility for your company.



## On-page Optimization

On-page optimization tells the Googlebot what your site is all about. It is the information that you add to your title tags, meta description, header, etc. On-page optimization needs to be carefully planned for each web page within your site. Be careful not to "over optimize" with keyword stuffing or you will get penalized. Make sure you are able to target the keywords in your niche naturally.

The structure of your website is also considered on-page optimization. Google is placing a HUGE emphasis on how fast your page loads. Another new ranking factor is what information is showing above the fold, in other words, what content is showing on your landing page before the viewer has to scroll down. If I go to your website and all I can see is a big banner, then that banner must be more important than your content which shouldn't be the case. Google cannot read Flash, so if you have any flash animation on your website you'll want to scrap it or use it with limitation.

## Off-page Optimization

Off-page optimization refers to the online marketing efforts used outside of your website. In regards to off-page optimization, Google is looking for transparency and

consistency. An example would be if you were to publish an article about how to calculate the amount of ice needed for a party on a website about tips on how to plan a party. If you published it with just your name and a link to your company website Google would probably consider it a backlink with some value. If you published it adding a link to your Google+ profile, which shows that you are employed at the company that is getting the backlink (and have a valid email address with the company) and your Google+ profile also has content about the ice industry, Google is able to track the consistency and validity that you are a professional in your industry, therefore showing the information as having a much higher value.

Not too long ago online marketing companies were creating an article, spinning it into 50 slightly different articles and publishing all over the web under fictitious names. This is why Google is looking at the bigger picture. It helps prevent unnecessary spam or duplicate content. Now all of the websites that used this kind of technique are being hit hard with penalties due to Google's recent updates.

Local directories are also a great form of off-page optimization and with Google focusing on local search it is best to make sure that you are listed on the most commonly used local directories and to ensure that all of your information is correct and up to date. The most commonly used business directories are:

- Google Places
- Bing Business Listing
- Yahoo Local listing
- Yelp
- Yellow Pages
- SuperPages

## Social Media Optimization

Google uses social media mentions as a way to gauge how much people like your website and your company. If people are Tweeting about your website and Liking it on Facebook, then it must be of value, right? It is absolutely necessary to have a company Facebook page, Twitter page, Google+ page and LinkedIn page to engage with your clients, prospects and people in your industry. As mentioned above, it also helps with your credibility.

If you haven't created your company's social media pages yet, I would really recommend turning to a professional. We have come across many clients who have spent many hours setting their accounts up themselves only to have done it wrong. For



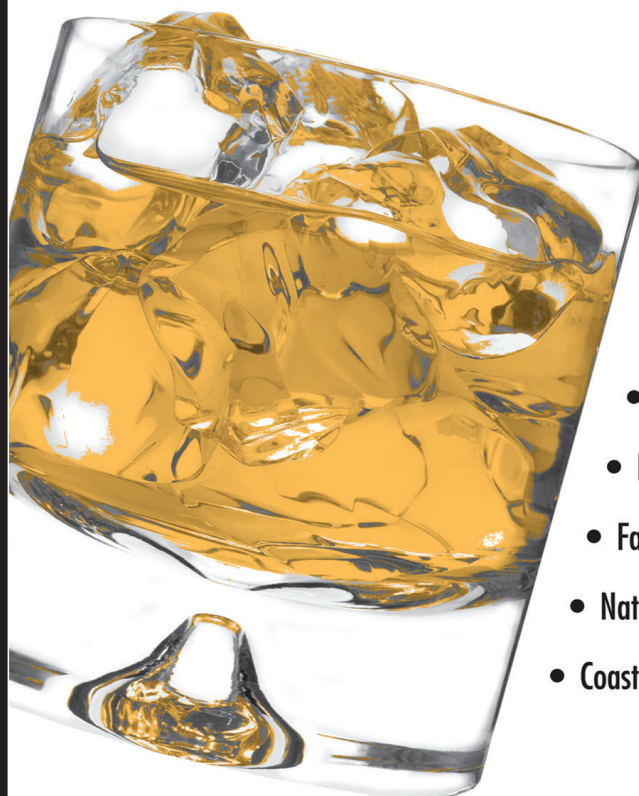
example, one client spent weeks getting over 30 recommendations on his LinkedIn profile page, when they had only three reviews on his Yelp page and two of them were bad. Had he split up his recommendations between his Google Places listing and Yelp listing, his ranking and traffic would be through the roof and those bad Yelp reviews would be drowned with positive reviews. If you go with a professional, just make sure that you maintain all your user login information in case you ever need it in the future. It can be incredibly difficult trying to retrieve this information.

Now back to this online marketing footprint, if you:

- Focus on creating a well structured website that offers unique and relevant content
- Pinpoint a spokesperson that can be the voice of your company to demonstrate its expertise
- Establish an online presence outside of your website through online publications, directories, social media platforms, etc.

...you will be able to out rank your competition. Please keep your footprint clean by staying away from unethical techniques. If you are contemplating signing up for online marketing services and the vendor is offering instant results, walk away. The reality is that it takes a lot of time and hard work to achieve quantifiable results. Learn from the many other website owners that took the easy road and are now paying for it with zero traffic. ■

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