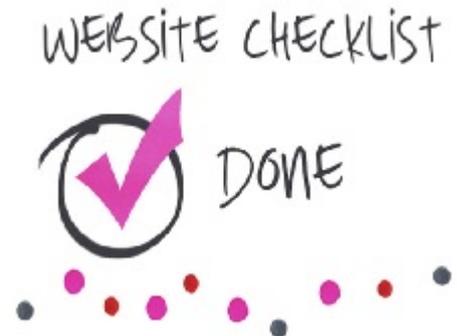


Tips to Make Your Website Accessible

Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy



Accessibility is about improving the web experience for everyone. Accessibility barriers make it difficult or impossible for visitors who are blind, deaf, hard of hearing, or disabled to use your site.

WebAIM analyzed one million homepages for accessibility issues and found that 98% of websites had at least one Web Content Accessibility Guidelines failure on their homepage. Common issues are:

- Low-contrast text
- Missing image alt text
- Empty links

Audit Your Site

The first step in ensuring your site is accessible is an audit. The WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool will identify errors on your site.

Tips for Improvement

Make sure all images have alt text, starting with your logo. Alt tags will show when images are not displayed. Think

of your site without any images, and make sure the alt text will help the user to make sense of the site in that mode.

Structure your content with appropriate headings. Make sure your page has one H1 heading and that subheads follow a logical descending structure.

Select fonts and colors for legibility. Avoid font styles and sizes and color palettes that make your site difficult to read. Pay attention to contrast, or the difference between the darkness of your text and the lightness of your background.

Clearly describe your links. When linking to another page or post on the web, make sure your linked text is descriptive. “Click here” is not as effective as “learn how to fix accessibility errors.”

Give clickable elements space. Make buttons, icons and clickable elements wide-enough so they are easy to click or tap from different devices.

Include captions or transcripts for multimedia content. If your site includes videos, add captions or transcripts. It’s best if video and audio content do not auto-play, but if that’s not possible, options to pause or adjust the volume should be obvious on the page.

How Small Businesses Compete with the Big Guys in Search

Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

The local search landscape has changed a lot. You no longer need to have the biggest ad budget to get to the top of search

results. In fact, these days, many tools exist to let local, small businesses out-compete big businesses.

Google Knows Where Searchers Are

Google has always tried to provide searchers with the 'best' result for a given query. Part of that answer is that, in most cases, people are looking for results that are close to where they are. This can give local businesses an edge.

With a search like "coffee shop", Google can have pretty high confidence that searchers are looking for a local place. Businesses with a nearby address will rise to the top of the results.

Service providers have to work a little harder. If you offer services to help get more Instagram followers, for example, you'll compete with providers who are everywhere unless you make your local service area clear.

Place-Based Results

New features that Google has added to search results can also play in favor of small businesses.

Google generally shows more place-based results for local queries and fewer webpage results. Even the webpage results that show up beneath place results on local intent searches favor local business websites.

How to Rank Well Locally

How do you make sure your business ranks well for local searches? While no one knows exactly how the algorithms work, there are known factors that help Google to rank you properly.

Google My Business

Google My Business is an online tool where you can tell Google about your business – the kind of business you are, where you're located, the hours you're open and more.

On-Page SEO

It's important to structure your website in a way that reinforces what you've told Google in your My Business listing. Use the same words, hours, name, address and phone, and repeat the service area on your website.

Links

Link to relevant businesses and information, especially local resources. This affirms the community that you are part of.

Citations

Citations refer to online mentions of your business that may or may not include a link. Ask relevant websites to mention and link to you.

Reviews

Customer reviews are one of the easiest and most sustainable practices you can implement to improve your SEO. Include reviews on your website and ask people to leave reviews at Google as well.

Social Signals

Be active on social media with the same information and details you share on Google My Business and your website. The more Google "sees" you online, the stronger the signal it gets about what you do and who you serve.

Thank You For Helping CommPRO.biz Reach its 12-Year Anniversary!



Twelve years ago, we launched **CommPRO.biz** as an educational resource for communications professionals. I could have never imagined how far we've come. Working with the C-Suite, the contributed content comes from corporate executives, investors, and public relations specialists. Over the years, we expanded into a wide variety of industry sectors, including, marketing, social media, financial communications, public affairs, and events.

Hats off to our incredible community of content partners, speakers, and subscribers. Your articles, podcasts and events are newsworthy, educational, thought-provoking, and inspiring. Thank you for being a part of the CommPRO family.

Much love. Fay

With much gratitude to the members of the CommPRO community including, but not limited to...

- Michael Shuler (our COO)
- Digital Pomegranate
- Greta Movsesyan (our webmaster)
- Paul Kontonis
- Helio Fred Garcia
- Wendy Glavin
- Patrice Tanaka (our first contributor & sponsor)
- The Museum of Public Relations
- Art Stevens & The Stevens Group (PR Masters Series Podcast)
- Michael Zeldin (That Said with Michael Zeldin Podcast)
- Mark Weiner (our first channel partner)
- Aaron Kwittken
- PRophet
- Larry Weber
- Racepoint Global
- Renee Edelman
- Edelman
- Richard Levick
- Peter Finn
- Finn Partners
- Helen Shelton
- Diane Schwartz
- Ragan Communications
- Sabrina George
- Onstream Media
- Grace Leong
- Hunter:

- Fred Cook
- GOLIN
- Amazing Workplace
- Sally Falkow
- Danny Selnick
- Lightbox Search
- Larry Moskowitz
- Marie Raperto (The Hiring Hub)
- Samir Husini (Mr. Magazine)
- Simon Locke & Communications Match
- Linda Descano
- Red Havas
- Marian Salzman
- Silvia Davi
- Raymond Kahn
- Raoul Davis
- Ty Cobb
- Andrew Meranus
- Peter Himler
- Mike Paul
- PR Newswire
- Cision
- Notified
- GWU
- Leslie Grossman
- Ben Chodor
- Tom Madden
- David Hagenbuch
- APCO Worldwide
- J. Mark Riggs
- Pemberton
- Carol Kinsey Goman, Ph.D.
- CME Group
- Jill Kurtz
- Critical Mention
- Neil Foote
- Andrew Bowins

- Tom Beckett
 - Barri Rafferty
 - Mike Paffman
 - Weber Shandwick
 - Ketchum
 - Ken Jacobs
 - Don Bates
 - Brian Wallace
 - Hot Paper Lantern
-

Increase Your Online Reach with Links



Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

Often we focus our online marketing efforts on things we publish online. That's great, but we also need to expand our audience to optimize on the impact of our content. Links increase our audience and help with search engine optimization (SEO).

Here are the steps to follow for a successful link building strategy.

Good Links Defined

Good links help get more traffic to your site. Good links are at sites that generate traffic to your own site.

To get good links:

1. Get to know your audience
2. Make a list of websites which appeal to your desired audience
3. Write amazing content
4. Match content to websites
5. Reach out to site owners
6. Use social media to amplify your content

Focus on Your Audience

You need to know your audience well to build effective links. What do they care about? What places do they go online? The answers give you a sense of the links that will get attention, and where they need to be.

Develop a List of Valuable Websites

List the websites that could help you reach more people in your target audience. Find the websites that already appeal to them. You can do your research on Google and also look at the websites that people in your audience share on social media.

Focus on Great Content

You knew I would get to this, right? It's always all about great content. In order to get other websites to link to your content, your content has to be a worthy addition to the site's content.

Ask

Now that you have target sites AND great content, you need to ask for links. Take time to find one or more places at the site where a link would make sense.

Don't bother making a general ask like "please link to me." Be specific: please link this page and this content to this page at my website. The more specific you are, the easier you make it for the receiving website to act.

Assess Results

Use your web metrics to determine which links drive traffic to your website and the behaviors of the users. This can help you determine the most effective links and give you insight into your ongoing link building efforts.

A successful link building strategy should always be aimed to bring new valuable visitors to your website who engage with your content and your brand.

SEO Tips for eCommerce Sites



Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

The goal of your eCommerce website is to sell, right? One way to increase sales is by driving organic traffic to your site. This is why search engine optimization (SEO) is an important consideration. Here are 3 eCommerce website SEO tips that can help grow your business.

Keep it Simple

Make sure your site structure is clear, mobile-optimized and fairly easy to use. Customers should be able to easily search for and locate the products they want. Make sure the shopping cart and check out process is as simple as possible.

If visitors are liking and using your site, search engines will respond with positive rankings.

Pay Attention to Keywords

Relevant keywords are essential for your site. Make sure you know the words and phrases people use when looking for a site

like yours. Don't rely on how you would search or how you think people will search. Take time to research using Google Keyword Planner or another tool. What people actually search is what matters most.

Use these keywords in website content and product descriptions. Help people and search engines find you by using the right words!

Optimize Product Images

Images frequently appear in Google search results, presenting you with a great opportunity to get your products noticed. Use high-quality JPEG images that are optimized for website access. When possible give the images a name that is relevant to what they depict. Include an alt tag for every image. Use those keywords!

Find the Right Influencer for Your Campaign



Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

When used effectively, influencer marketing can produce incredible results for brands. The idea is to tap into the engaged communities to share your brand message with a wider

audience.

It can be hard to find authentic influencers. Research shows up to 24 percent of influencers have falsely manipulated their engagement numbers!

You don't want to associate yourself with fake influencers or waste your money on them. You need to know how to look properly for real influencers.

Spotting Fake Influencers

The simplest way to spot a fake influencer is to go into their follower list. Look for profiles without a display photo, few to no followers and/or following, and no posts. Another marker is if followers have clearly made up names, particularly if their handles contain lots of numbers. Also look at engagement. How many people are commenting on posts?

A legitimate influencer account should have plenty of followers and a few hundred authentic comments on posts.

Screening Influencers

One of the best ways to determine if an influencer is right for your marketing is by asking for screenshots of their audience insights. Ask for their latest engagement statistics for both their account and their latest posts. This information can help determine if they influence demographics that align with your marketing.

Ask for references from brands, companies and businesses that have worked with. You can also ask for specific information about the collaboration and the results.

Spend some time monitoring any potential influencer partner. Connect with their account. See what gets posted and who reacts. A little time spent lurking can tell you a lot about

the authenticity of a community.

Proceed with Caution

Like all business decisions, approach your influencer strategy with care and caution. If it looks too good to be true, it probably is. Be careful before you commit to anything.

How to Use YouTube for Marketing



Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

YouTube is increasingly gaining importance as a social network. Why? YouTube is the second-most-visited website and has the second highest volume of online searches. Those stats alone are worthy of the attention of any marketer.

YouTube has over 2 billion monthly active users. They watch a

lot of content, and spend more time there than with video on other social channels.

Pew Research Center found that 73% of U.S. adults say they use YouTube, 90% of 18- to 24-year olds. The only other social media platform that approaches YouTube in terms of its reach among Americans is Facebook, which was used by 69% of U.S. adults as of early 2021.

Google data shows that 68% of people use YouTube to answer questions.

Think Quality Over Quantity

YouTube is different from other social media platforms because it isn't a content feed. As a content library, people are able to access information easily that was posted weeks, months or years ago.

Videos that offer valuable content have the opportunity to rank in search and be viewed for a much longer period than Facebook or Twitter. YouTube marketing requires a quality over quantity strategy. Create content that will be interesting for a longer period.

To post a video for sustained access:

- Reduce the number of uploads into one or two high-quality videos
- Use effective thumbnail images
- Optimize content for search

Capitalize on Relationship Marketing

YouTube is a great place to build your brand – the look and feel, the tone and the voice. Users will be able to see the body of your work in one place. You have a great opportunity

to establish a lasting impression.

Use videos to establish your subject matter expertise. Create value in your brand for your target market. Using a visual platform to accomplish these goals will increase brand recognition. Use the platform to build trust in your brand over time, and be less focused on short-term marketing metrics.

Focus on Your Niche

YouTube recommends additional videos to users based on what they watch. YouTube promotes videos to only some of your subscribers first, then to more of your subscribers, then to non-subscribers whom YouTube has identified as having similar viewing behavior as your subscribers.

If your market is clear, YouTube will do the work of finding new people for you. This won't work if your messaging – and therefore your target viewer – is too broad or not clear.

Have a clear value proposition and consistently deliver on that. This doesn't mean that you should never try something new or get stuck in a rut. The key is to have a focused message.

Monitor Metrics

YouTube Studio offers metrics that will help you gauge the impact of your effort there.

- Click-Through Rate, how many people click to watch your video
- View Velocity, how fast your video gets views once you make it public
- Average View Duration, over 50% is ideal
- Watch time, how much time people spend watching your videos overall

5 Easy Ways to Gain Social Media Followers



Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

Brands use social media platforms to connect with their audience. So, you want to have as many of the right followers as possible.

You want to connect with people who will actively engage with your content, share it with their networks, and be customers. Here are 5 tactics to consider to grow your social media

following.

Post Content Your Audience Cares About

Give both prospective and current fans a reason to follow you on multiple platforms. Don't just share links, share your perspective. Create content that people won't see elsewhere. Provide value and entice followers to stay tuned in.

Tailor your content for each channel's users. Use Twitter to share the latest news and real-time alerts and Facebook to tell longer stories about the people who are part of your brand. Use Instagram to share awesome images that illustrate who you are.

Respond to Your Community

When a follower takes time to comment or send you a question, respond. Quickly. Let them know they matter.

When you make your online community feel heard and acknowledged, they're more likely to become engaged and serve as your most loyal social media ambassadors.

Include a Visual with Every Post

Include an eye-catching, colorful image or graphic with each post. The data shows that content with relevant images gets more views than content without images.

Video gets the most engagement on all social platforms, so use video if you can. Be sure to upload your video directly to your platform of choice, rather than posting a link to an outside website (like YouTube). This way, your video will auto-play as people land on it while scrolling through their feeds, grabbing more attention. There is also evidence that

most platforms give higher visibility to videos that are not external links.

Change Your Page Photos

Keep your presence fresh and new by updating your profile photo and banner. Use them to showcase your latest developments and demonstrate that you are active.

Be Personable

The most successful brands on social media establish a personality. They create content that makes people smile and even laugh. (We all need to laugh!) Find a way to connect with your followers that injects some fun into the experience.

Reviews and Testimonials Are Marketing Gold



Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

Testimonials and reviews are a great way to showcase your great work. They are more powerful than anything you say about yourself because they come from clients. Most people say they rely on recommendations from people they know to make purchasing decisions, so your testimonials and reviews have tremendous marketing value.

Ask for Reviews

Have a plan to ask for reviews from every customer. Good reviews are great for your marketing. All reviews help you to be better at what you do.

No matter when you ask, provide clients with easy step-by-step instructions for providing a review. Be clear about where the review may be used.

Consider these approaches:

- Ask for a review when you issue the final invoice.
- Once a week/month/quarter follow-up with a past client to check in and ask for a review.
- Use your email marketing program to maintain a list of clients who have not done reviews and send periodic reminders.

Make Reviews Visible

Once you have reviews, make them visible in several places.

On your website: A testimonials page is good, but it is even better to feed reviews into every page. Better yet, provide reviews that are relevant to the particular service covered on the page.

Email signature: Link to your reviews in your email signature.

Marketing collateral: Tout your average rating in your offline and online marketing.

Social media: Make note of new reviews on your social media. Thank the person providing the review and highlight a feature of the project or service provided. Use a related image along with the review

SEO Done Right



Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

Want to show up well in major search engines? You will hear a lot of things that make it sound hard. But, really, SEO is all about paying attention to the basics of having a good web presence.

Provide Excellent Content

Create the best quality content that you can, and consistently review and improve on it. Your content should demonstrate your expertise.

- Say something worth reading
- Be current
- Answer the questions your audience is asking
- Use the words your audience uses (not insider or corporate jargon)

Speak to Your Audience

Focus on what your audience wants and needs. If you offer the content that your audience is searching for, you will come up well in searches.

Make sure your website offers the things your audience needs in a straightforward manner. Don't hide the good stuff in a lot of paragraphs and words. Straight up, offer the info that people are looking for. Make it about your user, not yourself!

Be Authentic

You may be tempted by offers to quickly get you to the top of search results, to sell you leads, to manage your Adwords campaign and more. Don't.

Search engines have a very fine tuned radar for anything that does not appear to be authentic to the site. If your content or activity gets flagged you are worse off than when you started. It can take weeks or months to get back on track. Your reputation may suffer irreversible damage.

Give your visitors high-quality content, a great user experience and a secure, technically superior website. It may take more time, but it will build you the right base.

Optimize Site Speed

As far as search engines are concerned, the fastest websites are the best websites. This is because people expect content to be served to them quickly. Nobody waits.

- Install a caching plugin
- Optimize image sizes
- Check Google's page speed tool for issues and fix them

Build Links

Make sure that related content within your site is interlinked. Don't rely on navigation or your site search to do this for you. If content is related, link it.

Likewise, link to external sites that will help your audience. The better you are at completely serving their interests, the more valuable you become.

When you have great content, it also puts you in a great position to earn links from other sites. Reach out to places

that make sense and ask for links. Be sure to be specific about what page and where your content is a good fit. Make it as easy as possible for the webmaster to act on your request.

Stay Fresh

Search engines love new content because people do, too. This means removing content that is out of date or no longer relevant. You can move it to draft if you think you may need it someday. Just don't keep it live on your site to clutter out the newest, best content.

Also, keep track of your content and the topics it covers helps to avoid keyword cannibalization. Offering too much similar, competing content can actually harm your SEO.

Do a site search for one of your most important keywords and see what comes up. Do articles overlap, and do you still need to keep everything? How are pages performing? Merge or delete content as warranted.

Location and Your Local Business Marketing Plan



Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

Localizing your marketing efforts will build brand recognition within your community and foster brand loyalty from consumers who support local businesses.

Why you need a local marketing strategy

What's the first thing you do when you need your car repaired, want to find some local entertainment or want to plan a date night?

If you're like most people, you turn to Google. "Near me" searches have grown consistently since 2013, according to Google. In fact, these searches are so common that Google's algorithm routinely provides localized results for most searches.

A local marketing strategy increases your visibility in these local searches. Whether users start with a search query, use Google maps, or go directly to their preferred third-party review site, you want your company to be listed among the options.

How to use digital channels to support local marketing

Getting listed takes specific focus on local marketing strategy. Here are a few tactics that are essential.

Claim your business page on third-party review sites

Google Business, Yelp, Angie's List, and TripAdvisor are just a few of many sites that people turn to when they want to find a local resource. Claim your business page on these sites to make sure the information is accurate and that you can respond

or react to comments, questions and reviews.

Create targeted advertising campaigns

Digital ads offer you an excellent opportunity to target your audience using various parameters, including location. You can leverage posts within Google maps, ads on social media, and ads within review and other sites to make sure your business is seen.

Have a SEO strategy

When creating content for your website, it's important to factor in search engine optimization (SEO). Understand what your customers search to find a business like yours and use those words and phrases on pages and posts. Make sure that your meta description field highlights keywords as well as information that will make someone click on your search result.

Structure your website for local users

Local users often search for the same information, and it is best to highlight those things on your website. Have your name, address and phone in the header and footer of every page. On your contact page, be sure to include those details along with a map and driving directions from central locations.

Also be sure to mention the areas you serve. Most often, you'll best serve the needs of people and search engine crawlers by naming specific towns and cities.

It's good to be local

It wasn't too long ago that local businesses could not compete online with national organizations with large budgets. All that has changed as search engines react to the trend of users

looking for and preferring local business results. This creates terrific digital marketing for those businesses that take time to apply a local marketing strategy to their online efforts.

Market Your Business from Home



Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

We're all figuring out new ways to get our work done, including our business marketing. Whether you are back in the office full time, working from home or taking a hybrid approach. your marketing effort can continue.

Here are some tips for how to pivot and achieve your marketing goals without ever leaving your home!

First, stay on top of the latest guidance and news.

Your efforts need to be in sync with current events. Asking people to "stop by" when there is a stay at home order or rising community cases may fall flat and make you seem out of touch.

Make sure your messaging reflects an understanding of the current circumstances of your target audience. As much as we'd like it to be over, COVID is still with us.

That varies widely now, from people heavily impacted by loss of income to people who need products and services delivered in different ways.

As always, you need to know your target audience and what matters to them. Your marketing needs to address their needs.

Create creative space and time.

I have worked from home for many years. I have found that it is easier for some people than others. Here are tips I can offer for creating the time and space to market your business from home, as well as your other work.

- Define work time and space. You can't focus unless you do.
- If there are other people in your house, let them in on the plan. Your kids and spouse want you to be happy, so just tell them how they can support you.
- Set aside time for active work as well as research and planning. Getting tasks done is usually top priority, but you also need time to learn new things. Build that into your work plan.
- Connect with resources. Use online meeting tools or pick up the phone. Working from home does not need to mean working alone.

Use new ways to meet your business marketing goals.

Getting people into your store may not work right now. Neither will visiting their offices in most cases. What can you offer curbside? Do Virtually? Now is the time to think of new ways to offer your products and services.

You need to market in new ways too. The good news is that there are many online tools, many are even free. Find the “right” tools to use based on your target audience. Your established email list may be the ideal or tapping into a community like a focused Facebook group or Quora topic. Figure out where you can reach your target and be there!

Online posts and email may feel instantaneous, but you still need to build in lead time. For example, you can't announce your takeout sandwich special at 11 and expect orders to pour in. You probably want to announce it the day before to give everyone time to see your message.

This can be a great time to try new ways to market your business. Who knows, your new methods learned as you market your business from home may prove effective even without a pandemic!

Best Practices to Use Social Media in Online Marketing

*Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz
Digital Strategy*



Is social media part of your online marketing for your brand? There are many reasons it should be. Most Americans use one or more social channels, so it is a great way to connect with your audience. Further, the cost to use social channels offer some of the best marketing ROI.

Success takes more than signing up. Many small businesses struggle to achieve marketing success on social media. You need an intentional strategy that follows best practices.

How to Use Social Media in Online Marketing

Have a Social Media Marketing Plan

Define your goals and the platforms that are best suited to help you achieve them. Further, define exactly what you need to do on each channel you select.

Pick the Best Social Media Channels

You do not need to be everywhere on social media. I repeat, don't sign up for every channel you hear about. Use only the channels that your target customer uses. How do you know? Pew

has some great national data on social media use. You can also start by asking customers and others who represent your target audience what they use.

Focus on Building the Right Social Communities

Don't focus on amassing the most followers, focus on connecting with the *right* followers. You want to use social media to connect with your target audience. Know who your target is and focus on making those connections. Quality trumps quantity every time.

Pay Attention to the Competition

Watching what your competitors do on social media isn't unethical. It's smart. Pay attention to what works and what doesn't. Create value by giving your social communities the best value by using best practices you glean as well as ideas unique to your brand.

Listen as Much (or More) than You "Talk"

Social media should be, well, social! That means a two way interaction. Your posts are the equivalent to your part of the conversation. Engagement from your community in the forms of comments, posts, and reactions are their part. Make sure you invite a balance! No one likes people (or brands) who only talk about themselves and doesn't let others share.

Measure Social Media Marketing Often

Take time to measure the effectiveness of your social media efforts. Your great ideas may be getting you to your goal or they may be falling flat. You won't know unless you take time to assess. Pay attention to short term data, like the interactions on your most recent post, as well as longer term trends. Don't be afraid to change your plan to make the most

of what's working!

Social Media Measurements that Matter



Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

“Doing” social media is not enough. We need to know what we want to achieve and whether we are getting there. That’s where social media measurement comes into play. Be sure your marketing strategy includes social media measurements that matter.

Know Your Social Media Marketing Goal

First, you need to know your business goal. If you’re not working towards achieving a specific outcome, you’re not marketing. You’re just using up resources of time, and often, money.

The very first step in getting business value from social media marketing is understanding exactly what you want to achieve. More website traffic? Generate leads? Brand awareness? Etc.

Measurement begins with setting a specific goal.

Pay Attention to the Data

Every social platform and most social media tools give you data. You need to take time to look at the information against your goals. Aggregating data isn't enough. You need to analyze and extract insight from that data.

Understand Value Beyond Direct Purchases

Be sure you are setting realistic expectations from social media. Not every post will lead to a direct purchase or a phone call, and that's okay.

Data shows that people are more positively inclined to brands that they follow on social media. You are building a relationship. That connection has long term value.

Not only are consumers more likely to buy from brands they follow, they statistically spend more too. Perceptions are enhanced when people they know interact with your content.

Measure by Listening, Too

When it comes to a social media content strategy, many brands are quick to think about what they want to tell people. Too often, they ignore what people have to say about the brand.

Listening online means paying attention to the conversations that are relevant to you, even if you did not start or directly engage in the content. There is valuable measurement in understanding sentiment and interests, even if the conversations are not on your channels.

Avoid These SEO Mistakes



Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

Search Engine Optimization is nuanced, with best practices being influenced by your industry and your target customers. However, there are best practices every brand should follow. Common SEO mistakes that I see: slow site speed, content not optimized for keywords, lack of metadata, and no attention to the mobile experience.

Fast Sites Win

Search engines give the best rankings to fast websites. Why? Because people expect fast websites. Slow sites don't meet expectations, no matter how great the content may be.

The faster your site, the better. Google has a free tool to check your site speed: Google PageSpeed Insights. This tool gives you a speed rating as well as suggestions on how to boost your speed.

A common recommendation is to optimize your images. Large images take a lot of time to load. Resizing your images can speed up the loading time. If you have a WordPress site, you can do this easily by installing a plugin that does that for you.

Speaking of WordPress, the activated plugins can also impact speed. Less is more. The fewer plugins that are activated, the faster your WordPress website will be.

Incorporate Keywords in Content

Put simply, keywords are the words and phrases that your target customer is using when looking for a business like yours. Use those words! If you aren't using the words that people actually use when searching, you aren't going to be found.

Make your keywords as specific as possible. For small businesses, you need to look beyond your business area (such as real estate, plumbing, recruiting, etc) and find more specific phrases that reflect your business. Otherwise, you're competing with similar businesses all over the world, which is impossible to do!

The longer and more specific the keywords are, the higher your chances of ranking. Search volume will be less, but since the keyword is accurate for your site, click through rate will likely be high. Your site will eventually gain more traffic for your keywords, than it ever would if you optimized for one broad keyword.

Provide Content People Need

Your website needs to provide the content people need. Your website is actually not about what you want to say, it is about what your target audience needs and wants.

Every page of your site that you want searchers to find needs at least 300 words. Google won't rank a page highly for a topic unless there is sufficient content about that topic.

Write for your visitors and not for Google. Google seeks to provide the best answers possible to every search query.

Therefore, writing quality content for your audience will lead to good search rank.

Provide Useful Metadata

Meta data is still important for search rank. When the meta keyword field was abused and set aside as a ranking factor, many people mistakenly assumed that no metadata mattered. The meta page title and meta description are important search rank factors.

The page title is still one of the most important ranking factors for Google, so you have to make sure it's optimized correctly for every page. This means adding the relevant keyword to each particular page and making sure that your page title isn't too long. If your page title is too long it will get cut off in Google. You don't want potential visitors to be unable to read the full title in the search results.

The meta description is not a ranking factor, but it does play an important part in your click through rate (CTR). Meta descriptions that are optimized with clear and attractive extracts on what potential visitors will find on your page, increases the likelihood they will click your result. If searchers think your site will provide an answer to their search query, the more traffic your page will get.

Tell Visitors What to Do Next

Once visitors are on your site, you want to keep them on your site. The best way to encourage visitors to click further into your site is to create call-to-actions (CTA). These are usually presented as a button. "Read more," "Buy now," and "Visit xxx" are common CTAs.

Make sure that every page has one call-to-action. If you have multiple buttons, you lose the focus of the page and your

visitors won't get where you want them to go. Know the goal of every page, and include a call to action that achieves that goal.

Make sure that the CTA stands out from your design and is clearly visible. If the button blends into the design of your page too much, it will get fewer clicks.

Pay Attention to Mobile

Google looks at the mobile version of your site to decide how high you should rank. So if the desktop version of your site is awesome, but your mobile site is jumbled or spans off the side of the screen you won't rank well at all.

Google offers a mobile test to give you an indication if your site is fit for displaying on mobile devices. Also, be sure to visit your site on your mobile phone and have others with different devices do the same.

Next Steps

Many SEO best practices are easy to implement once you know what they are. However, sometimes site structures are outdated as compared with the expectations of search engine crawlers. And, there are often specific requirements based on the type and scope of a business. If your SEO efforts aren't getting the results you want, it may be time to get some professional SEO support.

Optimize Your Website for Voice Search



Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

The number of web searches that are done by voice continues to rise. Optimizing your website for these types of searches isn't hard.

Here are the factors to consider as you optimize your website for the growing trend of voice search.

Question-Based Content

People ask questions when they do voice searches. Your site needs to ask and answer the most common questions. You can beef up your FAQ page or sprinkle these throughout your content. The important thing is to include the phrases most often asked and have a clear answer to those questions.

Be Local

By default, search engines assume that people doing searches on their phones are looking for local results. If yours is a local business, be sure to make that clear. Mention location and places that make it clear where you are and who you serve.

Embrace Mobile

Make sure your site is easy to use on mobile once a voice searcher arrives there. Keep navigation and other clicks to a minimum. Make text easy to scan. Group all related content together on a scrollable page.

Don't Panic!

The rise of voice search isn't a reason to scrap your website. Don't hire anyone just for voice search. This is really just the latest iteration of making sure your site serves the needs of your target customer. You may need to tweak to evolve your site, but the effort will likely benefit all of your visitors.

5 Email Mistakes that Hurt Your Marketing



Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

You spend a lot of time composing email marketing. It's painful when people unsubscribe and even more so when they flag your messages as spam. If that happens too often, you may not be able to send any messages to anyone. That would kill your email marketing strategy.

You need to avoid doing things that can lead you to being labeled as a spammer. Here are some common mistakes that can result in your emails being marked as spam:

Mistake 1: Not asking for permission to add people to your list

No one wants to be added to email lists without their permission. You need to ask people if you can add them to your list. You can do this at the time you get their email, or send an invitation email that lets them make the choice.

Mistake 2: Taking control away from subscribers

You want to keep people on your list, but you can't hold subscribers hostage. You need to make it easy for them to change subscription preferences and even opt-out completely. People who feel trapped will lash out by reporting your messages as unwanted spam.

Mistake 3: Sending irrelevant content

Make every message valuable to the reader! That's perhaps the most critical part of keeping your subscribers happy. Great content makes people want more.

Mistake 4: Breaking promises

Make sure you respect the rules you create for your list. Did you promise to only send messages once a month? Then don't send more. Did you promise not to share emails with others? Then don't. Set expectations and stick to them.

Mistake 5: Overwhelming your audience

Don't jam your subscribers' inboxes. We all struggle to keep up with email messages. If turning off your messages will make a big dent, people will likely unsubscribe. Be judicious in what you sent and make every message valuable to recipients. Be sure all messages are targeted to the right portion of your audience.

Writing for SEO



Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

Most of us want our online content to be found, and the most common gateway between you and your readers is a search engine. To get search engines to find and connect people to your content, you need to write with search engine optimization (SEO) in mind.

Start with Keyword Research

Writing for SEO starts with keyword research. If your content is not optimized to rank for search terms that people actually use, it may live in obscurity. Take time to think about the terms you want to be found for and do research to confirm how people are searching for that type of content. Using the same vocabulary as your target audience is critical to SEO success.

Understand Intent

As you determine the right keywords, you need to be sure that when people are using the words and phrases you find, they are actually looking for what you offer. This is referred to as search intent.

You want to optimize with the words and phrases used by

searchers who are looking for what you offer. Tricking people to get to you will not lead to success. If you don't meet the searchers needs they will move on.

As you're doing keyword research, analyze the search engine result pages (SERP) for the keywords so you have an idea of the intent behind the keyphrases you're targeting.

Don't Get too Creative

Search engines are not your high school English teacher. They are not wowed by your creative vocabulary. They don't give extra credit for finding new ways to say things. Instead, they get confused.

Search engines *do* understand that some words can have the same or similar meanings. Use that to your advantage! Don't stuff your text with contrived occurrences of your exact focus key phrase. Instead, make sure you use synonyms of your key phrase.

Write from the User Perspective

When you write, put yourself in your reader's shoes. Speak to their interests and questions. In short, write about the things they care about.

Readers don't care about your internal structures, product jargon and preferred way of looking at things. They want to know what problem of theirs you will solve or what they will get out of reading your content.

Make your content about your user, not yourself!

Big Digital Marketing with a Small Budget



Jill Kurtz, Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

You can have effective marketing with a small budget. Here are five great – and inexpensive – marketing options you want to try.

Offer Great Content

The best marketing happens with great content. That means providing information that your target audience needs on your website, on social media and everywhere you are online.

Content can come in the form of videos, blog posts, social media posts, white papers, etc. The best content is about helping your customers and not selling. Share useful information that's relevant to your customers and you'll earn their trust and create a positive impression of your brand.

Use the customer service queries that you've received in the past as a way to get some content ideas. Pay attention to metrics to determine what content works best. Do more of that!

Optimize for Search Engine Visibility

You can spend a lot for SEO. In fact, many businesses do. However, search engine optimization doesn't have to cost you anything except time. Optimize your website for search engines

by researching which keywords customers use when they're looking for products or services like yours. Once you determine your keywords, use them in your website content. Use your selected keywords in headlines, content, alt tags on images and meta descriptions.

Use Social Media

Social media platforms are great for getting attention for your content. Your business pages on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter etc. are a great place to share your content. They should reflect your branding and always link to your website.

Make connections with your customers and target customers. Interact with them to learn what they care about and where you fit in.

List Yourself in Local and Industry Directories

Local search directories are typically free or low cost. Create business pages in search engines like Google and Bing! Claim your business listing in local search directories, such as Google My Business, Yelp and Bing Places for Business. Also pay attention to local community websites that feature business listings. Most industry professional associations also have directories. Get listed!

Get Reviews

More than eight in 10 American adults say they read reviews at least some of the time before making a purchase. Make sure your business is listed on important review sites for your industry and that your profile on these sites is complete and detailed.

Encourage your customers to review your business by including

links to your review sites on your website and in your social media. Be sure to acknowledge all reviews that you receive.

5 SEO Boosters to Do Daily



Jill Kurtz,

Owner, Kurtz Digital Strategy

Here are five easy-to-do items to keep your website search engine optimization (SEO) on track.

1. **Keep content fresh**

Regularly add new content (blog!) and keep existing content up to date. Develop a schedule to help you to publish new content regularly as well as check existing pages.

2. **Add links**

There are two types of links. Internal links interconnect content at your website. External links point to sites other than your own and/or point from those sites to yours. Search engines love links, as they

tell them what content is related to other content. Take time to create both types of links everywhere that makes sense.

3. Remove old content

Remove any pages and images that are no longer relevant. This guarantees that any outdated materials cannot be found by search crawlers or site visitors.

4. Keep software updated

Outdated content can harm SEO and leave you vulnerable to hacks and other security risks. Always keep your software updated to the latest versions.

5. Check your analytics

Take a look at your most popular pages. Make sure they reflect your latest content and keywords. These are also great pages to add links. Likewise, look for pages that have low time on page and/or high exit rates. If you think that the page warrants more time from users and/or should lead them to other places at the site, make sure the content is compelling and that the path to more related content is clear.