

What is web presence optimisation?

Optimising your web presence is the continuous process of honing and adjusting your website and marketing copy to ensure that you are reaching the correct audience, capturing their attention and directing them to carry out the desired action.

Explain... The secret is in the word **continuous**; the dynamic nature of the internet is a revolution in customer communication because it offers immediate learning from your online marketing efforts. This allows you to adjust your web presence in real time to maximise its effectiveness. Gone are the days of launching a campaign and hoping for the best!

What should I do? The IAB has identified the 7 key steps you should be taking to optimise your web presence listed in this guide. The first few steps may sound familiar because before starting any venture you would carry out research, and online is no different in that respect. However, the way in which they are executed has important differences that we've highlighted over these pages.

1 Do you know what influence online has on your sector?

Overview: Online is already influencing your sector in a multitude of ways, such as: one-to-one contact with your customers 24 hours a day; self-service for purchases and post-sales help; a customer led brand; reaching new markets and online communities etc.

Explain... You probably don't need to be told how integral the internet is to marketing. You may be surprised, however, at how important it is to your customers who will be all too eager to click to a competitor's better optimised website.

What should I do? Research your own sector online! Look for your service / product from a customer's perspective in search engines and through media websites with related banner advertising. Also look at what activities other sectors are doing that may cross over to your sector.

Tips: *Set up user groups to see how the customers themselves are using similar online services.*

2 What should your website be doing for you? What's it for?

Overview: Your website is the hub of information and/or sales activity to support or be the focal point of your company's online activities and marketing.

Explain... The site should, among other things; deliver a message, capture customers looking for information relevant to your company in search engines, drive users to a point of action, build brand and relationship, offer direct contact, add value pre and post sale, collect data for direct marketing and customer analysis.

What should I do? Initially carryout market research, then ensure all expected content and functionality is on the site. Copy should be written clearly by an expert in the field and the site structure created by a web expert.

Tips: *User testing is one of the best ways to find out if a website is doing what it should.*

3 How are your competitors using the internet?

Overview: Use competitors and other websites you admire as additional research for your own web presence. See what is and isn't working for them and use this knowledge to help develop your own killer strategy.

Explain... Looking at your competitors' internet presence to see what tools they are using, where they are advertising and how they are attracting and directing customers will give you an invaluable insight into the direction you could be taking.

What should I do? Benchmark your company against competitor sites, see who is leading the sector online and identify the keyphrases being used for content similar to your own.

Tips: *Type the keywords most relevant to your business on google.co.uk, yahoo.co.uk and Microsoft's live.com and see if your competition are advertising on their paid for listings (pay per click programs).*

4 How are you optimising your web presence?

Overview: Web optimisation takes into account the design, build and maintenance of a website, user journeys and any extension of your brand online such as search engine listings and rich media ads. Optimisation of your web presence needs to be done before launch and on a regular basis (daily / weekly / monthly) post-launch, making it essential to have a good strategy.

Explain... Even if your web presence was perfectly optimised when launched, web technology changes rapidly and your competitors will be constantly attempting to out-perform you. Keep them at bay by being informed and staying one step ahead.

What should I do? Research your customer, analysing who they are and how they are interacting with your website using traffic measurement packages like Google Analytics. Also keep up-to-date with new online technologies e.g. video and RSS (content feeds). Then use this knowledge for improvement.

Tips: *Use Google Optimizer to point you in the right direction: www.google.com/weboptimizer/. Use free traffic analytics tools like www.google.com/analytics/ or paid for packages like NetTracker or WebTrends.*

5 How good is your Pay Per Click (PPC) search?

Overview: PPC search is the most instantaneous way to boost external web presence. It is also one of the best ways to tie keyphrases used in your offline advertising into your online presence. It will take a chunk out of your marketing budget, so it's critical to optimise frequently to maximise effectiveness and to make the most of your money.

Explain... Keyphrases and wording of PPC adverts can be monitored and changed while they are live, making it possible to turn a moderately successful campaign into a highly successful one during its lifecycle.

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What should I do? Build an initial list of keyphrases and monitor how they perform, paying particular attention to your top phrases. Tweak or remove those that perform poorly and build on those that perform well.

Tips: Google, Yahoo Search Marketing & Microsoft adCenter all provide online tools to optimise your PPC campaign and there is software available like TouchClarity. Familiarise yourself with what they can do! Again, user testing could also be used to test and optimise wording.

6 How good is your Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)?

Overview: Website SEO should be seen as the search engine friendly aspect of your marketing. With a quality SEO website at the heart of your activity, links to your site will grow naturally and with them, customers.

Explain... A fully optimised website has the potential to generate far more traffic than a PPC campaign of the same cost. Once established, with good maintenance, it can mature over time bringing in customers over an extended period. Like PPC, SEO can be used to capture customers searching for phrases used in your offline marketing.

What should I do? It's all about two words: quality and relevance. Start with quality content, relevant keywording, quality architecture and relevant inbound links, but ensure you know about the many different factors that influence SEO. If you don't have internal SEO knowledge or resource, work with an agency with the aim of building internal knowledge.

Tips: Use Google's Webmaster tools to optimise your site map: www.google.com/webmasters/. Check out Microsoft's adCenter Labs too: <http://adlab.microsoft.com> – It has a number of helpful tools including making predictions of the leading demographics using your keywords or interacting with your brand on search engines. Don't forget to boost traffic to tools like blogs and podcasts by using alternative search engines like Technorati, AOL Podcast Beta Search, Google News.

7 Is your web presence compliant?

Overview: It isn't just ethical to ensure your website is compliant, it's now the law. Luckily all compliancy standards go hand-in-hand with a highly usable, accessible and SEO friendly web presence. It's win – win.

Explain... The Disability Discrimination Act 1994 states that all websites must meet a set of accessibility guidelines known as W3C. Data protection and privacy laws make it vitally important to be careful with user data storage and sharing. SEO standards should also be considered carefully to avoid being blacklisted in search engines – something that will devastate the heart of your web presence.

What should I do? Seek legal advice to ensure your web presence is compliant.

Tips: Use the W3C guideline website to get a rough idea of how compliant your site is: <http://www.w3.org/>

Don't forget... Measurement!

With a slew of measurement tools at your fingertips you can now measure every step of your online campaign instantly and even tie in measurement of traffic from your offline marketing. However, it is important to be selective, only measure what can actually be used to further your campaign – don't overwhelm yourself with stats!

OPTIMISING your web presence

7 steps to optimised
web presence heaven!