



FIVE SPARROWS, LLC

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E-Book Series

# Simple Strategies for Web Site Success

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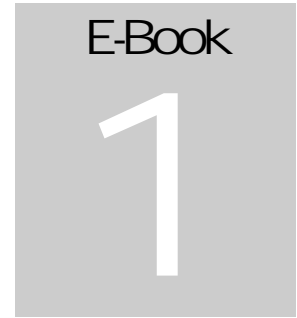
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# 1. Building a Great Web Site

*With millions of web sites competing for traffic, make sure yours is memorable.*

**L**et's face it; the web is made up of millions and millions of web sites all trying to get your attention - or better yet, to get you to remember them and revisit their site. So with the crowded nature of the web, how can you make your visitors remember your site after they leave?

According to traditional research, we know that people tend to remember the first and last things that they see in a sequence, and don't remember much about what was in the middle. Translate that into building your web site, and it means that your home page should be fun, interesting, attractive, or in some way memorable. (Visitors can jump off your site at any point, so there's no way to tell what the "last" impression will be.)

People also tend to process information in small "segments," typically three or four segments at a time. For example, a catchy slogan or a great web address will be memorable long after the visitor has left your site. The web address **[www.ford.com](http://www.ford.com)** or **[www.makeup.com](http://www.makeup.com)** kind of sums it all up, right?

Slogans and jingles are also good ways to include memorable segments on your web site. How many of you know what product is "good to the last drop"? Do you know which company encourages us to "just do it"?

Information seems to stay with us when the items are repeated, using clever ways to say the same thing by using your logo, graphics, headlines, etc. Information re-circulates through our short-term memory when we see it over and over. The more your web visitors see the information, the more they will remember it. Just be sure to vary how you present the information so the message is consistent but not annoying.

So when thinking about what type of an impression your web site makes on your visitors, be sure to make it memorable in some way. Do the thinking ahead of time for your visitors, so all they notice is a great, memorable web site.

### What Makes People Buy?

When companies try to figure out “what makes people buy,” they often begin with a set of assumptions. Unfortunately, these assumptions usually come from the viewpoint of the business, and not from the perspective of the customer. Thinking like your customers can help you communicate effectively with them, and can help you deliver your message in a way that will resonate with them. The closer you can come to really connecting with your customers, the closer you will be to discovering what makes them buy.

Here are five basic questions to help you identify how your company communicates with its potential customers:

- 1. Are our web site visitors satisfied enough with what we present that they actually make a purchase (or contact us for information)?** Paying close attention to your web site statistics and log files should answer this question for you.
- 2. Does our web site present an image of professionalism and credibility?** Pay attention to the way your competitors present their web sites, and make sure yours is at least of the same or better quality. An amateurish or outdated web site will send all the wrong messages about your company, and will give customers a bad impression of your business.
- 3. Do we provide the right type of information so that customers who are not ready to buy will eventually return to make a purchase when they are ready to buy?** Your web site statistics will show you how many visitors are repeat visitors and how many are unique. You may also want to consider offering web specials or coupons as an incentive for visitors to return to your site.
- 4. Do our marketing priorities match up with the way in which we spend our time and marketing dollars?** If you are serious about achieving your marketing goals, then you must be committed with your time and budget as well.
- 5. Are our marketing messages and value proposition consistent, or are we confusing our customers?** Consistency is key if you want your customers to understand the value that you provide, and what differentiates your company from the competition.

The way in which you market and present your company is important, and if done well, can motivate people to buy from you instead of your competitors. When you truly communicate with customers and address their needs, your overall marketing efforts will be more successful.

## 2. Consider This...

There are many factors to take into consideration when you build a web site for your business; things like site design, navigation, usability, maintainability, marketing message, and value proposition, just to name a few.

### Got Navigation?

If you're like most people, you typically need some sort of guidance or instruction before you can be successful in performing a task. The same is true for visitors looking for information on your web site – you must provide them with appropriate directions and navigation in order for them to use your web site effectively.

Jakob Nielsen, an authority on web site usability, design strategy, and user-centered methodology, has said that "Most sites have miserable information architectures that mirror the way the company internally thinks about the content and not the way users think about the content. Predictably, users ignore such unhelpful structure."

Most of the time, users not only ignore bad navigation, they click off the site and move on to the next one, in hopes of finding whatever it is they are looking for.

#### Follow the Leader

It's up to you to make sure that your web site leads visitors down the right path. Whether the goal is to make a sale, subscribe to something, fill out an inquiry form, or simply provide information, you need to guide your visitors by giving them intuitive, clear, and consistent navigation.

Good navigation should make it impossible for visitors to get lost. To help orient users, always provide them with a point of reference, and make it clear where they are in the site and how to get back. Avoid putting information more than 2 or 3 levels deep – you don't want users to get buried 4 or 5 levels down in your site, since they may become frustrated or disoriented and just move on.

Consistency is also key in good navigation; don't confuse your users by changing the navigation links on every page. Instead, consider using an overall menu structure, then adding sub-categories and links on individual web pages as necessary.

## Think Like A User

The best way to design an effective navigation system is to think the way your users think, and anticipate the ways that they want to go. Users are typically very goal-driven; they are pretty focused on finding what they're interested in, and tend to ignore the things that don't apply to them. Give them a clear navigation system that lets them find what they're looking for first – once they know they're in the right place, they can look at the rest of the information on your site in more detail.

Designing a navigation system that looks really cool to you but ultimately sends your visitors clicking away in frustration is not good navigation. Good navigation accommodates the searching patterns and behaviors of your visitors, making it more likely that they will find what they want, and more likely that they will make a purchase.

## Web Site Effectiveness

How effective is your web site? Does it really help bring in business? How can you tell if it's time for a web site clean-up, tune-up, or makeover?

Well, you can start by doing a little do-it-yourself web site analysis. First, take an honest look at your web site. Is the information outdated? Have you added anything new to give visitors a reason to come back? Are all the links still working?

Your web site is the face of your business, and the impression it gives to your visitors matters very much. You may have already lost customers due to poor usability, awkward design, unclear navigation, or outdated information.

When analyzing your web site, consider questions such as:

- **Is your web site purpose-built?** At Five Sparrows, we talk a lot about purpose-built sites, and that's where we start when developing new web projects for our clients. You really must know and understand the purpose of your web site before you create it. Make sure you are clear about your ultimate goals.
- **Is the information useful to a visitor?** One of the mistakes small businesses often make is to put every piece of company information they have up on their web site. Do your visitors really need to know your staff vacation schedule? If it doesn't contribute to the site's purpose, don't publish it.
- **What is the message you're communicating?** Broken links, old information, non-functioning web forms, or missing images communicate the wrong message to your visitors. Make sure your site is a positive reflection on your business, and that it communicates competence and professionalism.
- **Does your web site look good?** Studies show that visitors take less than seven seconds to decide if they are interested in your site, and much of that decision is based on the site's visual appeal. Of course your site should provide functional page layout and navigation, but the design elements should also be appealing and purposeful. The site design should match your existing corporate branding, yet enhance your distinctive "look" and business personality.

If you have been honest with yourself in analyzing your web site, you should have a pretty good idea about whether you have a successful web site, or one that isn't performing as well as it should. An effective web site is an invaluable business tool, so make sure your site is ready to work for you.

## Conversion Rates – Pay Attention!

Getting traffic to your site can be a complicated endeavor, so why not make the most of the traffic that's already coming your way? Here are some tips you can use to capture visitors' attention and help turn browsers into buyers!

- 1. Write great headlines.** Changes to a headline can produce huge increases in conversion rates, since it is the single most-read element of your page. If you don't capture a visitor's attention with the headline, they probably won't keep reading the content, and may never make it to the order button.
- 2. Use color effectively.** Some experts suggest that color may be responsible for up to 60% of a person's acceptance or rejection of a product or service. Color communicates messages to your users, and sets the overall tone of your web site. For instance, dark blue typically conveys stability, trust, and strength. Reds and oranges are exciting and attract attention. The better you know your audience, the better you'll be able to choose colors that will appeal to them and motivate them to take action.
- 3. Use bulleted lists.** Studies have shown that web users like to scan the page for headlines and other easy-to-digest information, like bulleted lists. Keep them short and simple, and leave enough white space between the bullets to make reading easier. Numbered lists also work well for the same reason.
- 4. Include photos of your products.** Buyers like to see what they are buying, and it can be difficult to adequately describe your products using only words. If you don't have professional photographs of your products, consider hiring a pro. Amateur snapshots can make even the best products look second-rate and risky.
- 5. P.S. - use a P.S.** Yes, it's true, the second most-read part of a sales letter is a P.S.! Using this on your web site can have a similar effect, since readers can't help but be drawn to it. Use a P.S. to ask users to take action now, remind them of a promotion's ending date, or to re-state your product guarantee.

## 3. Promoting Your Web Site

In most cases, the success of any web site depends on the amount of traffic it receives, and the number of sales it generates. Many web sites seek visitors by pouring most of their time and budget into a single method of advertising: Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

While SEO is necessary for your web site, it should only be one part of your overall advertising program. Search engine rankings are pretty unstable and change all the time, but they are not the only source of bringing visitors to your web site.

What's the best way to bring new traffic to your site? Links. Links are the way that people travel around the Internet. Links can come from all sorts of sites, not just Google or Yahoo or MSN. Consider listing your company in web directories, placing banner ads on other sites, or advertising in industry newsletters and publications. Any site that has a link to yours can bring new visitors and traffic. Yes, these inbound links may also help you with your search engine rankings, but the best links are those that are relevant and get clicked on!

Building steady traffic to your web site takes work, and not just in web site optimization. Be sure to use every advertising option available to you, such as using a pay per click ad campaign, entering your site into relevant competitions, participating in link exchanges, writing articles, case studies, white papers, etc. Don't just depend on search engines to send web site traffic your way; get out there and take advantage of as many ways as you can think of to promote your site!

### SEO – What You Need to Know

A diamond might be “forever”, but your search engine rankings certainly are not! With advancing technology, algorithm updates, and new web sites appearing every day, it can be challenge to keep your web site visible on the search results pages. So if you've noticed your rankings aren't what they used to be, here are some tips you can use to give them a boost:

#### **1. Fresh Content**

Search engine “spiders” love fresh content. Adding new content to your web site attracts search engine spiders (or “bots”) and gives them new material to add to their databases. Even small updates matter – adding new FAQs, press releases, product updates, or even pricing updates will trigger the search engine spiders to pay a visit to your site.

## **2. RSS Feeds**

Speaking of fresh content (above), RSS feeds are a great way to keep fresh content flowing to your web site every day. If you haven't heard of RSS feeds, these are "Really Simple Syndication" feeds from other web sites that you can display on your own web site, usually for free. RSS feeds can contain information on just about any topic of interest to your visitors. News feeds, current industry information, or relevant publications are all good candidates for RSS feed topics.

## **3. Directory Submission**

One of the quickest ways to gain visibility on the web is to add your site to top-performing online directories. The benefits are two-fold; first, your business gets listed and is exposed to more web users, and two, directory listings also serve as "inbound links" that can help your web site rank better in the search engines.

## **4. Local Search**

It's often easier for your business to get good rankings in local search results since they are focused on a specific geographic area (instead of competing with all web sites across the entire web). You get a two-fold benefit here as well; your business is more visible to web users, and the local listings create inbound links that help your placement in the larger search engines.

## **5. Blog Posts**

If you don't already have a blog or use a blog, you really should consider giving it a try! Try visiting blogs that are relevant to your business or industry, or that you think your visitors would be interested in. You can add posts, pass along links, or even advertise on some blogs. Blogs are typically very niche-focused, so by participating in a blog you are interacting with other bloggers who are already pre-qualified!

## Promotion Tips

Many small businesses are pretty comfortable with standard, conventional marketing methods like newspaper ads, industry publication ads, or even radio and TV ads. But promoting your business on the internet can offer many advantages that will not only get your business noticed, but save you money as well.

Web sites are the most obvious internet marketing method, since virtually all businesses large and small have a web site for providing information to their customers. If your business doesn't currently have a web site (even a small one), you are losing out on an enormous marketing opportunity and could be giving an unfavorable impression to customers who have become accustomed to accessing web sites 24/7. Customers are also becoming more comfortable with shopping online from company web sites. Recent studies show that more than 55% of all shoppers during the 2005 Christmas season made purchases online, making online shopping one of the fastest growing benefits a company can offer from its web site.

Web-based advertising is another promotion strategy that can be cost-effective and produce great results. Ads placed on sites that are compatible or related to your business are a good place to start, or search engines like Google and Yahoo offer click-ad programs that can be very inexpensive yet quite effective. Also consider listing your company in reliable internet directories (both paid and unpaid), as well as optimizing your web site for good search engine rankings.

E-Newsletters are another great way to communicate regularly with your customers. Repetition is key here; sending out a single email or newsletter issue cannot deliver

effective results. Consistency builds your credibility and also keeps your company's name and message in front of your customers on a regular basis.

Promoting your business on the internet can be much less expensive than the more traditional methods companies have used in the past. More and more, customers are looking for you on the internet, and having an internet presence that uses a variety of internet promotion strategies can be a valuable tool for your business.

## Press Releases

With the popularity of the Internet, it appears that many of the "old-school" marketing rules are evolving, and mostly for the better. One example of this is the way news releases (more commonly known as press releases) are sent, distributed, and read by consumers.

The most positive change for small businesses is that there are so many ways to distribute press releases on the web, it has leveled the playing field between small businesses and their larger competitors. In the past, press releases were expensive to distribute, and companies had to pay a wire service to send the release to various news outlets. Then, it was up to the media journalists to decide whether they would publish your company's news or not. If the media didn't write about your press release, then nobody saw it.

Today, press releases can be distributed via the web in any number of ways, including many low-cost or free methods available to anyone. Once it's out there on the web, your press release can be viewed directly by anyone with an internet connection and access to search engines, RSS feeds, news sites, etc.

Also, you don't need to wait for some big company milestone to write a press release; you can write about any type of interesting company news - such as a new customer win or a new product feature. Since press releases can be viewed by anyone, though, you need to make sure you are speaking the language of your target audience. Think about who your readers are, what motivates them, what problems your company can help solve, and how you can convince them to become your customer. All of these things will help you write effective press releases that potential customers will be interested in reading.

It's important to note that traditional news wire services and other PR services are always a valuable part of any marketing program, especially if these types of services are in your budget. But for smaller businesses that cannot afford it, the web is a great way to get press releases out to the world without spending a lot of money.

## SEO Is Not So Easy

In the "good 'ol days", (like maybe the late 1990s) SEO used to be a fairly simple exercise that would ensure your web site would not only be listed in the major search engines, but also be listed on the first three pages, where it seems to matter the most. But as with most technologies, things change quickly, and SEO is no exception.

It used to be that if you added Meta tags such as description, title, and keywords, you were all set with your SEO strategy. Today, it takes so much more for the search engines to notice you, and it takes several strategies all used together to give your site

a fighting chance. Being listed on the first three pages of search results is also the goal of the millions of other web pages out there, and competition can be stiff.

Of course, the best way to get your site ready for the search engines is to hire a professional. But the reality is that small businesses don't always have the budget for this. So if you really want to improve your rankings in the search engines, learn as much as you can about the following techniques and implement the ones that make sense for your business. Then, track your results over several weeks to see if your efforts are working.

## **Techniques to Learn**

### **1. Search Engine Optimization**

True optimization of a web site combines creative use of keywords, creative writing, and measuring effectiveness through density statistics and lots of good, quality content. Research your keywords (there are several free or low-cost tools on the web that you can use) before plopping them into your page. Often, the keywords you think make the most sense for your site yield the worst results.

### **2. Link Popularity**

Link popularity is important to search engines, and the theory goes something like this: the more web sites that link to your web site, the more popular your site must be. But...you can't have just any site out there linking to yours. The sites that link to yours must relate to your business in some way. They should be similar in theme or subject matter, and be well-established, authoritative sites with high rankings of their own. Not easy to do, but well worth it if you take the time to establish this type of linking. The biggest mistake you can make with link popularity is to add your site to "link farms" or free-for-all listing sites. Many of these sites are already banned from the search engines, and your site could be penalized for being listed on these sites.

### **3. Articles**

You know your business better than anyone, so why not share your insight and expertise? Writing articles is a great way to get links to your site, and also establish your company as an "expert" in your field! Write an article about an interesting area of your business, a current event relevant to your business, or anything that would interest your target audience. Then, submit your articles to sites like [www.content-articles.com](http://www.content-articles.com) and [www.ezinearticles.com](http://www.ezinearticles.com). One of the most important things to remember when submitting articles is to ALWAYS add your business information in the "resource box," the few lines at the end of the article that identifies the author, including a text link back to your web site.

### **4. RSS**

RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. It's a way to use a special kind of web address, called an "RSS feed," to see news headlines and stories, or read information about virtually any subject matter that you choose. All you have to do is import one of these feeds into your web site, and you can instantly display any type of information that you think would be interesting to your web visitors. The benefit from a SEO perspective is that by using an RSS feed on your site, you are constantly providing fresh content for the search engines to index, which will have a positive impact on your rankings (search engines LOVE new, fresh content on a web site!).

## **5. Blogs**

Blogs are really very much like an online journal where people can post comments, experiences, and diary entries. There are blogs on virtually every subject from personal to business, so visitors have a wide variety of blogs that they can read and/or post comments to.

Businesses often create their own blogs to establish expertise for their companies, use in-house experts to post useful or helpful information for customers, or showcase products or concepts in a way that educates readers. As long as they keep posting interesting information, visitors will keep showing up.

When you post to a blog, include your "signature" containing your web address. Each time you do this, it creates another inbound link to your web site, which raises your search engine ranking. If your company "owns" the blog, that also means there is more new, fresh content for the search engines to gobble up to boost your position, too.

## **6. Diversification**

By using a search engine strategy that includes all of these SEO techniques (Search Engine Optimization, Link Popularity, Articles, RSS feeds, and Blogs), your search engine position will be strong, even if the search engines change an algorithm or two, which they do on a regular basis. Of course, there are many other effective techniques not covered in this article ( e.g., press releases, online directories, etc.). But if your only search engine strategy is optimizing your web pages, then you are missing out on other effective methods that not only boost your search engine positions, but also promote your business in other ways on the internet.

So if anyone tries to tell you that SEO is quick and easy, then he or she is probably not talking about the techniques that truly get results. It takes time and effort to design a comprehensive search engine strategy, and it must include more than just optimizing your web pages. By using a combination of strategies, you can improve your chances of getting good search engine positions, and keeping them regardless of the inevitable changes that the search engines routinely make.

## 4. Keep it Interesting

Small businesses sometimes find it difficult to keep their web sites updated with fresh, relevant information, because they either don't have the time or don't have the content (or a combination of both). But in order to keep traffic flowing, visitors interested, and sales increasing, you simply must keep your site updated with great content.

Studies show that visitors will spend approximately seven seconds to decide if your web site is worth their time, or if they should click away to another site to find whatever it is they are looking for. What differentiates your web site from your competitors? After all, if you have products or services that are similar to what the competition offers, you may not be perceived as being very different at all. But your web site can be the differentiator! Give your visitors lots of interesting content that is useful to them, and they just might stick around long enough to turn into customers.

One of your site's goals should be to give visitors enough information about your company, products, and services that they feel comfortable doing business with you. If you don't have enough content on your site (or if your web site is outdated), visitors will simply move on to other web sites until they find the information they need. If a visitor leaves your web site without finding sufficient content, it's unlikely that they will return – ever.

Another important reason to keep your site loaded with good content is because search engines evaluate your web site and rank it based largely on the site's content. It's true that things constantly change with search engine algorithms, but one thing that stays the same is the importance of fresh, relevant content.

So don't underestimate the value of keeping your site up to date and adding fresh content on a regular basis. It's well worth the effort!

### Give Them a Better Experience

One of the smartest moves for any small business is to clearly differentiate itself from the competition. Since actions speak louder than words, you should look for ways to be creative and “cutting-edge” when it comes to customer service and the overall user experience. Try to be *THE* company that is so great to work with that customers buy from you every time because they feel so positive about the experience. Here are a few ideas you can put into action to add value and benefit to your customers' experiences:

1. **Watch the Trends.** Retailers that apply innovative thinking to emerging trends can generate significant growth and financial reward. For example, tailor your thinking toward aging baby-boomers, create gender-specific campaigns, or take advantage of the popularity of the healthy lifestyle trend.
2. **Solve Their Problem.** Add useful services, provide information, and help your customers fix their specific problem or situation. Bundle your products and services into complete solution packages that provide extra value to your clients.
3. **Do It for Them.** In a hurried, time-crunched society, consumers really appreciate any extra convenience you can provide to them. Offer fast shipping, home delivery, installation services, at-home consultations, etc.
4. **Help Them Choose.** With so much information and massive product choices, it's a perfect opportunity for you to make things easier for your customers. Let them sample the products before purchasing, provide on-demand computer kiosks for them to look up information, or create blogs and online communities to provide clients with the help and information they are seeking.
5. **Go Where They Go.** New technologies are allowing retailers to connect with customers almost anywhere -- at home, at work or in the car. As busy consumers look for greater convenience, there is a growing demand for mobile retailing and target marketing that goes everywhere your customers go. Think about using Podcasting, Text Messaging, or any number of innovative ways to reach your customers 24/7.
6. **Make It Easy.** Innovative processes, great customer service, and design solutions that are simple, intuitive and meet shoppers' needs can save consumers valuable time and effort. Retailers that embrace new technology tools that provide easier and more rewarding customer experiences will increase their sales and also the loyalty of their customers.
7. **Do It Their Way.** Be creative and find ways to provide unexpected rewards or enjoyment for shoppers. Offer customization of items, free gift wrapping, personal shopping assistance, etc.

## Don't Get Left Behind

In today's world, new technologies are being developed at a very rapid pace and are being adapted by the public very quickly. A year ago, did you use an iPod or any other MP3 player? Do you use one now? Have you heard about blogs, podcasts, and networking sites such as MySpace.com? Have you used them? Many consumers have already changed the way in which they get and use information from the web, which means you may want to take a closer look at your company's web site.

Although your company may not need to implement blogs and podcasts, you should at least be aware of the new technologies that are available today, and what kind of impact they are having on your customers and potential customers.

For instance, some of the newer technologies might not have existed when you first launched your web site. But today's users are often already comfortable with them, and ignoring technologies like RSS feeds or interactivity on your web site can give

customers a negative impression. New companies and web sites entering your market today are taking advantage of what's popular with consumers, and are developing web sites with new tools and products that may not have been available when you built your web site.

If your competitors have new technology features on their web sites, you should consider what impact this has on your business. Web sites that provide RSS feeds, blogs, podcasts, or other interactivity are often perceived as having more value than sites that do not. If your competition has a more up-to-date, feature-rich web site, will you still be able to attract new customers? Or even keep the interest of your current customers?

Try to evaluate these new technologies to see if your web site could benefit from implementing any of them. Not a blog user? Go find a blog you're interested in and check it out! (A good place to start is [www.blog-search.com](http://www.blog-search.com).) Consider adding news headlines from a RSS feed in your industry. Think about adding interactive features such as a dynamic calendar of events, maps, articles, how-to-guides, or even a site-search feature to your web site. Show your customers that your company is progressive by keeping your web site in step with technology, and the impression you make will be a good one.

## New Technologies are Good for Small Business

Doesn't it seem like every day there is some new technology affecting the way people communicate with each other? Blogs, Text Messaging, RSS Feeds, Podcasts, and other emerging technologies are coming at us fast and furiously, which can be overwhelming at first glance. But upon further inspection, all of these new technologies are really good news for small businesses!

For the first time ever, consumers are shaping how they want to hear messages from companies large and small. In the past, companies have relied on tried-and-true advertising methods such as TV ads, newspaper and magazine print ads, radio ads, and billboards, all of which are expensive and beyond the budgets of most small businesses. Studies are now reporting that these traditional forms of advertising are increasingly ineffective with today's consumers, who are already empowered by technology. They often prefer newer ways of receiving content such as the web, wireless devices, cell phones, etc.

So how is this good news for small businesses? Because using new technology to reach a small business audience is not only effective, it is also quite inexpensive compared with more traditional forms of advertising. Today's consumers are typically comfortable with technology, and have an expectation that information will be molded and delivered to fit their needs and preferences.

Small businesses can take advantage of this trend by using web marketing, online shopping, blogs, text messaging, or any combination of new methods currently available for delivering content to customers and potential customers. Using emerging technologies is effective, it's inexpensive, and after all -- that's good news for small businesses!

## Promote Your Site With a Blog

You may find it a bit surprising, but blogs are turning out to be a very effective method of promoting your business on the web! Not too long ago, lots of people thought of blogs as little more than a tool for teenagers to journal every mood swing online. But today blogs have become quite mainstream, and people from all walks of life are embracing the technology and finding value in using blogs, especially for business purposes.

So what exactly is a blog, anyway? A blog (short for “web log”) is basically a simple web site with an interactive format that allows users to “post” comments and add new information (entries) to the site. This interactivity is really what differentiates blogs from other web sites. Blog entries are typically posted in reverse chronological order, with the oldest information appearing at the bottom of the page and the most recent information at the top.

There are blogs on almost every topic imaginable, and businesses are finding that having a company blog helps them communicate with customers, get better search engine rankings, and attract a much larger customer base. Here are a few highlights of how a blog can help promote your business online:

- **Search engines LOVE blogs** because the content is being updated constantly, resulting in higher search engine rankings for your business.
- **Niche visitors are more likely to discover your business** because blog entries can be very specific, often containing words that might not otherwise be in your web site text. This will attract customers that would not have otherwise found your business!
- **Blogs can be organized by topic**, making it easy for readers to find topics that interest them.
- **Blog entries continue to bring in web traffic 24/7.** Like many other forms of marketing on the web, blogs provide content and links that act like ripples in a pond – they continue to be shared, indexed, and published all over the web long after you have finished doing the work.
- **Information on your blog can be easily distributed directly to your readers with an RSS newsfeed.** RSS feeds automatically notify your readers whenever new content has been posted to your blog.
- **You can differentiate yourself from your competitors with your blog.** You may even find that your competitors don’t offer this type of interactive communication with customers, which gives you an excellent opportunity to stand out.

So if you’re looking for a low-cost marketing strategy that can help extend your reach, improve your search engine rankings, and give your business an edge with customers, then you may want to consider a blog!