



Untangling the Web

**Basic steps to improve your website and
your online marketing results**

by
Andrew Shedden

INTRODUCTION

1. What is your marketing purpose?

Many company owners have an entirely unrealistic view of the Web. This is largely the result a tremendous amount of misinformation disseminated by the media. Many businesspeople who have paid good money for their websites feel that they were the victims of an enormous con. For some business owners this feeling isn't very far from the truth.

The simple fact is that the Web didn't fail business - business failed the Web. Any seasoned and realistic businessperson knows there's no free lunch out there. There are few sayings truer than "Success comes when preparation meets opportunity." Success seldom arrives by chance, and is generally the result of hard work.

Presumably you're reading this report because you have an interest in increasing your company's effectiveness on the Web. If you're waiting to read about the magic solution we are afraid we've got some bad news for you: there is no magic solution. The truth is that success on the Web comes from planning, execution, analysis, and refinement.

Whether you've had your company on the Web for years, or you're considering taking the plunge, you'll benefit from reading this report and will avoid making costly mistakes.

If your existing website has been a great disappointment you will benefit greatly from reading this report and revisiting the fundamentals. There may be some key information you're missing, or perhaps there are some simple things you can do to revitalize your site.

"Untangling the Web" is a process of preparing and executing some fairly basic preparatory steps - in the correct order. The last and most crucial step is to analyze and refine your online marketing tactics, repeatedly.

What's your MWR?

As you already know, your company must have a website. You need to be able to clearly articulate why. If the sole reason for being on the Web is to provide site visitors with an online brochure (the dreaded "brochure ware"), then don't expect that your online results will be any better than those of your printed versions. If you just want a company presence on the Web, make sure that your expectations don't outstrip your site's ability to deliver.

Prior to going on the Web you need to determine what response you'd like as a result of people viewing your website. This is known as your Most Wanted Response, aptly referred to "in the biz" as your MWR. Your MWR should also have a backup response.

Generally speaking, unless your company is selling the simplest product or service, your prospects will require more information.

If you visit our company web site at www.broadfieldcommunications.com you'll see that we have a MWR and a backup response.

A certain percentage of people visiting our website are ready to act now. The odds that any one of them will e-mail us and say they want a website in 5 days are pretty slim, (although we would be happy to do this and, believe it or not, it does happen).

Our MWR is that our site visitors go to www.broadfieldcommunications.com/contact-us/ and complete our online form or give us a call and request a free 10 minute over the phone Strategy Session Telephone Meeting.

This online form identifies an immediate sales lead and helps us in:

- Qualifying prospects from suspects
- Classifying prospects by area of interest
- Scheduling staff time based on demand for our services

Our backup response is that they'll go to www.broadfieldcommunications.com/resources/ and download any of our free content.

This process creates a longer-term potential sales lead. A certain percentage of people visiting our site may not be ready to act now. We use our free content as a way of:

- Providing my prospects with a solid information that helps them make informed decisions
- Establishing and gaining credibility and trust with our prospects
- Maintaining top-of-the-mind awareness with fact-filled content

Be certain your website has a realistic MWR and a solid backup response.

Are you expecting a sales miracle?

One of the more astounding beliefs held by businesspeople is the expectation of miraculous sales feats from their websites. Many businesspeople sincerely believe that if they simply throw a website together and upload the files to the Web they'll soon be swimming in a sea of money.

This belief does have a direct equivalent basis in the real world. It's akin to chain letters or mail order millions. The same sharks that have been telling you how to make millions without working have merely shifted their scams online. It's quite simple really: write a book about how to write a book in five minutes and then sell it to people to claim your Web millions. Here's another system that allows you to make Internet millions by utilizing free classified advertising. Here's another system that provides you with 100 million site visitors for the cost of a cup of coffee.

Caveat emptor. Read some of these online gurus with a very large grain of salt. Remember to use common sense. At a deep level we all know "You get nothin' for nothin'."

When you're considering your design or redesign for your website, it's imperative to be realistic. You can make money selling goods and services on the Internet, but don't rush out and put a down payment on that condo in the Bahamas based on unrealistic expectations.

The only sacred cows are on the farm

Making a commitment to successful online marketing means developing a willing attitude, including:

1. A willingness to develop a coherent strategy;
2. A willingness to invest time;
3. A willingness to invest money;
4. A willingness to analyze your strategy and make appropriate changes.

If you perform 3 of the above 4 steps your strategy might succeed. If you disregard the final crucial step you'll either slash your profits or destroy your chances of online success.

The last step is the most important one. If you're not measuring you're not marketing. Simply put, you must have a company-wide willingness to rigorously analyze and discard any under-performing aspects of your Internet strategy.

2. Sounding Good on the Web

Once you've spent some time determining what your MWR it's time to move from the theoretical to the practical. Before you rush out and contact your favourite graphic designer be sure that you're not guilty of putting the cart before the horse. Perhaps the graphics before the words would be a better expression.

What are words for?

If your primary aim is a website that will effectively market your business you must strive to make your copywriting sell on your behalf. While excellent graphic design will make your company look good on the web, that's simply not enough. To truly maximize online marketing effectiveness your business needs to both sound and look good.

While we are largely moving into an era of sound bites, video clips, and 15-second television commercials we need to recognize that the written word is still one of the most effective methods of communication.

Copywriting: DIY vs. professionals

Copywriting is a skill that is developed over a great deal of time. You don't go to a carpenter to fix your plumbing. You don't call your plumber to fix your car. Don't utilize a graphic designer to handle your copywriting needs.

While most high school graduates can write a passable sentence or two you need to be mindful that copywriting is a very specific skill. The copywriting on your website should be designed to create desire from your prospects. This isn't something that most aspiring writers learn in high school English.

You have already learned about the importance of your most wanted response. Here's your most important copywriting lesson:

People buy emotionally and justify their purchases logically.

If everyone bought logically we'd all be driving the cheapest cars from work and parking them in the gravel driveways of the cheapest houses we could buy. We'd buy all of our clothes from Wal-Mart and drink homemade wine. When the boss came to visit we'd cook up steak on the barbecue, but only if it was on sale.

How long would Rolls Royce be in business if they marketed their cars on the basis of safety? How many people really buy clothes from Versace because of the style? In the preceding two examples they are buying very expensive items because they make them feel better about themselves. These prestige items allow their owners to feel a little bit superior. They'll tell you they buy prestige items because they last longer, are better quality, or some other specious reason that sounds logical.

Everyone, especially the marketing divisions of these companies, knows that the logical reason isn't true. You'll never go broke appealing to emotion.

Features tell, benefits sell

The key point to be mindful of in all of your marketing communications is that people buy things for what they do, not for what they are. People care about what your product or service will do for them (benefits). One of the single biggest mistakes made in all copywriting is to confuse features and benefits. If you start to look around at what your competition is doing you'll be surprised to see how common this mistake is.

Focus on your customer

If you check your web page statistics software you'll be amazed to see how few of your site visitors actually visit your web page entitled "About Us". You may think that the fact that you have 200 computers or a new state of the art manufacturing facility is extremely interesting to others, but it isn't. This is a concept that is very difficult for many business owners to fully grasp.

It can be very educational to run a search on your site and see how many times the word "we" or your company name appears versus the word "you."

For truly effective copywriting be sure to focus on the benefits being sought by your customers. Get rid of the "we's" and maximize the "you's." Whenever you're tempted to talk about a feature keep asking yourself "so what?" until you can't ask it anymore. This will distil the feature you are offering to the highly-sought core benefit.

Here's a short example. Note how features start with "we" and benefits start with "you":

Feature - We offer a no time limit money guarantee.

So what?

You will get recognition at work for making a wise decision.

So what?

You can feel confident in your purchase.

So what?

You'll get peace of mind with our no time limit guarantee.

When copywriting for your website pile on the benefits and watch your sales soar. You should seriously consider hiring a professional for your copywriting needs. The *way* you say it will determine how *well* you sell it. Go to www.broadfieldcommunications.com/contact-us/ and we'll discuss your copywriting needs.

3. Looking Good on the Web

So many designers...So little time

Once you have your ducks in a row with your marketing and copywriting, your next step is to contact your friendly web designer. You'll notice that I didn't say friendly *neighbourhood* web designer. The beauty of the Web is that the geographical location of your designer doesn't really matter. The point is that you need not fear going a little farther afield for your web design needs.

We design websites and do programming work for companies that we've never personally visited.

What's important is that you feel comfortable and enjoy working with your chosen design firm. It's also very important that you remain in control of the process. Remember that the job needs to be done to *your* satisfaction.

Are you really looking good?

Rule number one is that if your website visitors won't wait to see your website load you'll never be looking good. One of the worst web design practices is designing graphics-rich, slow-loading pages. Tell your graphic designer to keep your website pages fast loading. If they are unwilling to slim your pages down then feed them (your designers) to the piranhas.

Please don't flash me

Although being flashed can be fun, being flashed online can be more aggravation than it's worth. Flash is a ubiquitous animation program designed to make fast-loading animations for the Internet. It is a wonderful program - when used sparingly. Never, ever, ever, have a Flash introduction to your website. It *really* annoys website visitors.

How do I get there from here?

If Columbus believed the maps he was reading he never would have “discovered” America at least 500 years after the Vikings did. In fact he would have sailed off the edge of the world and ended up sleeping with the sea monsters and dragons. While Columbus was a great explorer, your typical Internet user isn’t quite as adventurous.

Make sure that the navigation on your web site is crystal clear, intuitive, and easy to understand. Don’t send your visitors down dead-end branches, and make sure they can get back to your home page with one click from any page in your site. If they have to spend 5 seconds figuring out how to get from A to B they will leave your site. Make it easy on them and on you.

Give them a reason to drop by

The more useful information offered on your site, the more often it will be visited. Put some meat on those web site bones. Providing potential customers with truly useful information is a great way to build credibility and trust for your company.

This is not meant to contradict what you’ve learned earlier. The primary purpose of your site is to obtain your most wanted response. It’s a fact that at least 95% of people who visit your site today aren’t ready to buy today. You need to provide them with a compelling reason to *re-visit* your site. One technique you can use is to have an archive of useful information on your site. Real, timely, take it to the bank, useful reports, tip sheets, articles, audios, and videos that can help them with their business challenges, not thinly-disguised sales material.

Maintenance matters

Putting your company on the Web means you must make a commitment to maintain your website. If you have no one in-house that can do this, then be certain to outsource this vital task. Your site is a direct reflection of the care and consideration a prospect can expect when dealing with your business. The fact is that if you have broken links, outdated information, or pages that aren’t there anymore, you’re committing a major Web faux pas.

4. Getting the Word Out

Congratulations, you’ve been working hard. You’re almost ready to unleash your freshly optimized website on the world. By this point you have:

1. Established and clarified the marketing purpose of your site
2. Utilized effective copywriting on your site to sound good on the Web
3. Designed a fast-loading site that makes you look good on the Web

Now it’s time to consider how you’re going to get the word out on the Web. There are innumerable ways of promoting your website on line in an effort to build traffic. Many of these are either prohibitively expensive or a total waste of time. On-line promotion is an enormous subject that is more than adequately covered on the Web. One quick search will reveal endless books, e-books, and websites devoted to this subject.

For the purposes of our report, the following are what we consider to be the best online methods to get the word out:

Search engines & directories

The free traffic you can receive from the major search engines is still one of the greatest deals out there. The simple fact is that if your business isn't in the top 20 listings you can forget about being seen in the search engine listings at all. In order to get high in the ranking your website needs to be optimized for search engines in general and Google in particular.

This is done through search engine optimization (SEO).

There are two major reasons we don't view SEO as one of our most favoured web marketing strategies:

1. The intense competition and the incredible number of sites going on line every day
2. The fact that Google changes its search algorithms and therefore your rankings in their generic search results which can make your website disappear from the top rankings overnight

Having said that you must be sure to:

1. List your site with Google as many specialty search engines and directories as possible
2. Be certain your website has been designed with the most basic SEO techniques
3. Be aware of the fact that SEO is a very specialized part of online marketing you may need to utilize and there are many firms that specialize in this.
4. Be aware that dominating the generic search engine listings will likely require the assistance of a SEO firm and will cost you money – probably on an ongoing basis

As search engine strategies and optimization has been more than well covered on the Web and change almost daily I will only give you the bare bone basics of SEO:

- Make sure you use keywords in your site title
- Make sure you sprinkle keywords in your HTML text copy on your pages
- Include keywords in your site description
- Seek as many inbound links to your site as possible and provide lots of content
- Register individually with each search engine and directory - don't bulk submit
- Accept the fact that top rankings will cost your company, time, money, or both
- Accept the fact that as soon as you figure out the placement algorithms they will change

Pay per click

The single biggest business problem on the Internet is that of visibility. There are millions of sites out there competing for top twenty listings. What are the odds of your company getting a top twenty listing? Well, when was the last time you won a million on the lottery?

The simplest solution to visibility is to buy traffic to your website based on the keywords that best describe your company's products and services. The Pay Per Click (PPC) search engines are the perfect way to increase visibility.

PPC is a fast way to get noticed

PPC networks are bringing the Web into a more solid and realistic financial footing. It's ridiculous to think that companies investing millions in search and indexing technology shouldn't be able to monetize their investment.

New PPC and cost per action networks are springing up on the Web nearly every week. Google remains the undisputed leader in PPC and gets massive traffic either directly or through its partners. It's important to realize there are many alternatives to Google that are rising to prominence. Go online and search for these alternatives.

PPC basics

- You register with Google AdWords and pay a small registration fee
- You write out a list of keywords (search terms) that best describe the interests of the target market that can be best served by your business
- You see what each keyword will cost on a per click basis
- Keywords in high demand are the most expensive to buy
- Based on your financial resources you bid on buying keywords
- If you are willing to pay top dollar or have the highest click through rate from your advertisements you get top rankings
- These rankings show up on their search sites or on those of their partners
- Every time the link to your site is clicked it costs you the prearranged bid price and the money is deducted from the amount that you deposited

The key point is for you to know what your conversion rate is and the rest is duck soup. The conversion rate is simply the number of visitors (clicks) that your website needs to generate one sale.

For example, if it takes 100 visitors (clicks) before you get one sale from your website it means your conversion rate is 1%.

If your keywords are costing you \$1 per click your cost per sale is \$100.

If you can make money at an acquisition cost of \$100 per sale, then buy as many keywords as you can at \$1 per click.

If you can't make money at \$1 per click you have several options:

1. Bid on lower value keywords
2. Improve your conversion rate
3. Sell items with a higher profit margin
4. Think of another way to promote your business

Conversion rates average around ¼% to 1% - anything above that is great.

Google is constantly changing so be sure to check out their website for more information.

Newsletters

Approximately 3% to 5% of any group of prospects is ready to buy now. What this means is the vast majority of your site visitors won't be buying anything today. You need a system in place to ensure that you're not losing the remaining 95%+. Having them bookmark your site and add it to their favorites list is unlikely to help you very much. How many sites have you bookmarked yet you never return to?

Your best bet is to offer your prospects a newsletter. This is a great backup response and one that most prospects will welcome. In effect you are reminding them that you're out there every time you send them an issue.

Unfortunately, newsletters are as common as leaves on trees. While they aren't losing their effectiveness it is becoming harder to entice prospects to subscribe.

Here are a few tips to help differentiate your newsletter:

- Make it easy for them to sign up. Don't ask for too much personal information
- Offer a bonus for subscribing such as a free report or a free course
- Make sure that you include an exclusive "Subscriber's Special" offer with each issue.
- Make it factual and interesting, NOT a thinly disguised sales letter
- Make your newsletter 80% content and no more than 20% advertising
- Have a regular publishing schedule and stick to it
- Keep it short - 500 to 1,000 words maximum
- Whenever possible, offer new and unique ways of solving problems

- Encourage readers to pass it on and use social media options

Affiliate programs

Another attractive online marketing option is to establish an affiliate program. What you are basically doing is setting up partnerships or joint ventures with other site owners. You are trading traffic from their site to yours for a commission.

Generally speaking, your affiliates are sending you traffic from their websites via a link, banner, or sales page. They also can send out e-mailings or postal mailings with their affiliate codes on them. Depending on the arrangement, you may be paying them for each click, lead, or sale. Traffic from their site to yours is coded to ensure that they get their commission.

Affiliate basics

- Whenever possible pay for sales, leads, or clicks in that order
- Keep in mind that qualified traffic is better than high traffic
- Make sure your affiliate agreement is legally airtight
- Test your affiliate software frequently
- Phone potential affiliate partners instead of e-mailing them
- Consider offering lifetime purchase commissions to affiliates
- Make it as easy as possible for affiliates to sell your products and services
- Offer your affiliates well-written marketing material
- Consider having your affiliates pre-sell your site; have your site make the sale
- Remember that 80% of your activity will come from 20% of your affiliates
- Pay your affiliates promptly
- If you really want to roll out a big program consider Commission Junction and others
- As with the PPCs, the key point is for you to know your conversion rate
- With affiliates the conversion rate is simply the number of visitors (clicks), or the number of leads that your company needs to generate one sale

If you can't make money on a per-click or per-lead basis then you have several options:

1. Offer less per click or lead

2. Improve your conversion rate
3. Sell items with a higher profit margin
4. Consider offering affiliates a “pay per sale” model
5. Think of another way to promote your business
6. Conversion rates per lead depend largely on your internal sales processes

Of course the conversion rate is irrelevant if you are operating pay-per-sale affiliate program. This is absolutely, positively your best bet. You offer a generous commission per sale. If affiliates don't generate sales you don't pay them. It's like having a worldwide sales force on straight commission.

When calculating your commission for a sale be certain to always consider the life time value of your customer. Simply put, if a new customer will make a large number of purchases over a long period of time it may be worth your while to offer ALL of the profit in the first sale to your affiliate partner.

Other promotional methods

There are innumerable online methods to build traffic to your website: Search engine optimization, pay per click, mobile marketing, cost per action networks, social media, local search, newsletters, online advertising, article marketing, ezine advertising, co-registration, link building, blog commenting, and joint ventures are just some.

There are also many offline methods you can utilize to drive traffic. Direct mail, for example, can generate substantial amounts of well-qualified traffic. We recommend that companies use a combination of online and offline methods for best results.

Regardless of what methods you choose to build your traffic accurate measurement will lead to optimized results. That leads us to the core fundamental of all successful marketing.

5. Measure Analyze Discard means you won't go MAD

In the beginning of this report we mentioned that if you aren't measuring you aren't marketing. Nowhere is this more easily done than on the Web. We are shocked and amazed at the number of our website design prospects who have no clue about their website's traffic and effectiveness.

Measure your traffic

The first rule of marketing is measurement. The first rule of online measurement is to never put a visible counter on your site. It is very unprofessional and has the potential of creating great embarrassment. How many site visitors would you like seeing your counter statistics indicating you've had 148 visitors since 1998?

Internet Statistics (Web Stats) packages are invisible and increasingly powerful. Your site visitors won't even know their movements are being tracked.

The first area you need to examine is what statistics packages are being offered by your current Internet Service Provider (ISP). Many ISPs offer free Web Stats packages with their hosting packages and they may be all you really need.

You can easily add the powerful, and free, Google Analytics software to your site as well.

If you feel you need greater statistical depth for your company you may need to buy or rent one of the more powerful Web Stats packages. As always, your best bet is to go online and do some research.

Analyze your traffic

Having a web stats package and not using it is about as useful as enclosing a pigpen with a mud fence. If you've gone to the time and trouble, then make sure you use your Web Stats to help improve your site.

What you should watch for:

Pages visited

The first thing you need to determine is which web pages are being visited by your prospects. This tells you what aspects of your business have the most promise in the marketplace. It also tells you which pages hold the least amount of interest to your visitors. Perhaps navigation to these pages needs attention. It's possible these pages need to be improved or discarded.

Sources of visits

Often referred to as referrers, this tells you the origin of your traffic. You can see how much traffic is coming to your site from various search engines, directories, affiliates, links, cross promotions, ezine advertisements, and banner ads. This information tells you what is working and what needs improvement.

Search terms

Keep a running total of all of the search terms used to reach your site. You will begin to see patterns and common themes. This can help you identify new areas of business concern (opportunities) in the marketplace. It also can help you refine the keywords in your web pages.

404 codes

This means that the page in question can't be found. It's not good for your company image to have clients pulling up blank pages on your site. Check your site links to be sure everything is working properly, now.

Time spent on pages

If the page in question is 2,000 words long, and the average visit is thirty seconds, either your audience consists of superhuman speed-readers or perhaps you need to shorten you page.

So....what do you do with the information you get from your statistics?

Once you've analyzed your traffic you have to make some tough decisions. The main decision you need to make is what you consider to be acceptable performance. To use the old cliché you need to determine the bottom line. The following may help you....

Percentages are meaningless - do you make a profit?

The Web is the most profound and profit-laden direct marketing vehicle in business history. One common business perception that needs to be discarded is utilizing response rates as a basis of success. Percentages are meaningless, profits aren't. Profit should be the basis of making your promotional decisions.

In direct marketing, many business owners consider a promotion that doesn't pull 1% or 2% or some other arbitrary figure to be a dismal failure. A better way of looking at any direct marketing endeavor is to determine whether it generated a profit. If you do an online promotion that has a ¼% response rate, and returns \$110 for every \$100 spent, then roll it out. That's the kind of bad news most marketers ought to take all day.

Be ruthless – discard the duds

I know this sounds extreme. You can't let your emotions override your common sense. It's important not to fall in love with your ideas. This is very good advice. If a particular promotional activity isn't working, move on to the next one. Seriously weigh the cost of trying to improve marginal activities. Here are some good practices:

- Enhance and expand your winning campaigns
- If you have a winning ad, affiliate, promotion, or pay per click campaign, then roll it out
- Consider modifying your promotional activity if it is marginal
- Discard what doesn't work
- If it looks like the particular turkey you're promoting won't fly than let it go
- Throwing more money at a bad idea seldom makes it a good one

The first step in improving the results you are getting from your website is to have a good grounding in what leads to good results.

We hope that by putting the preceding information into practice in your company you too can untangle the web.

How to Improve Your Website Results

Broadfield Communications makes it easier for businesses to improve their website results. Whether your interest is branding your business, influencing choice, generating more sales leads, or increasing online purchases, our websites will grow your business.

How you will benefit from our website and mobile website design services:

We provide our clients with comprehensive and well-organized website and mobile website design services. Here are some of the ways you will benefit:

- Your website design project will be easy and stress-free
- You will save time and money by dealing with one supplier for all of your website needs
- Your brand will achieve consistency across all media channels
- Your website will be based on clearly defined goals developed during our Web Strategy Consultation
- Your website design project will be a positive pleasurable experience courtesy of our dedicated project managers who work the way you like to work
- You will get traffic-building tools that get more of the right visitors to your website
- Your website will be optimized to convert more traffic into sales leads and customers
- You will get your questions answered promptly and accurately with our ongoing support

In addition you will benefit from our online marketing and mobile marketing services. We will provide you with: online strategy that strongly differentiates your company, creative services that motivate action, and media selection that builds both awareness *and* your ROI.

Take the first step to improved website results

If you would like to discuss some strategies you can use to develop (or improve) your website then contact me for a no-obligation ten minute Strategy Session Telephone Meeting at:

1-800-353-4447 or I can be reached at:

www.broadfieldcommunications.com/contact-us/

Thanks,

Andrew Shedden
President