

Ten steps to being found online

A guide for start-ups, SMEs and those that got left behind

Contents

A brief introduction

The ten steps

- 1 Build your website**
- 2 Link to your website**
- 3 Give it away**
- 4 Business networking**
- 5 Social media**
- 6 Blogging**
- 7 Get your friends working for you**
- 8 Find a partner**
- 9 Write a press release**
- 10 Stay on top of everything**
- 11 Pay Per Click advertising (a ten-step list that goes to eleven – gosh how generous...)**

A brief introduction

Why does this little document exist?

I'm a freelance copywriter, and while I count some big names among my clients, I also work with sole traders and small businesses. People who aren't necessarily keen computer users, let alone internet whizzes.

Two of my clients, with whom I've become good friends, really needed some advice on how to market their business to a wider audience. Neither of them spends their time glued to the web's latest offerings, and in order to expand their client base, showcase their business and even make room to diversify, they need an internet marketing strategy. While copywriting is my main professional activity, I've got a public relations background and a fair bit of social media and general marketing experience. Getting found online is a vast subject, and even this document is just a starting point, so clearly sitting down and explaining all these steps, and more, over a couple of cups of coffee wasn't really going to help. So I decided to create an easy guide for them.

It was blindingly obvious that their position would hardly be unique. So I've made it available for you too. I hope it helps.

It's still a work in progress, because this document barely scratches the surface of the world of internet marketing, and even at a fairly basic level there's much more to say. If you've got questions that are unanswered here, or answers and subjects that you think *should* be included, please do drop me a line and let me know.

You can find my contact details on my website: www.ahcopy.co.uk

You can follow me on Twitter: www.twitter.com/ahcopywriter

You can make contact on LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/ahewson

You can 'like' my company on Facebook: www.facebook.com/AHCopywriter

Hopefully once you've seen how, you'll use one or all of those media channels to pass the guide on to contacts you think might benefit.

Here's wishing you luck with your endeavours.

Anthony Hewson

AH Copy

But before you start on the ten steps, here are a few enlightening facts about the internet and the way it's being used:

82.5% of the UK population (51.4m out of 62.3m) has internet access. *Source: Internet World Stats, June 2010*

Research suggests that small companies without websites are missing out on a combined turnover of c£235bn annually. At the same time, companies who set up online gain an average 37% in turnover. *Source: Mr Site, March 2009*

90% of business buying decisions and 60% of consumer buying decisions are made following internet research. *Source: Yahoo/Industrial Marketing Survey, 2009*

Social media (including blogs) is the fourth most popular online activity, accounting for 10% of all time spent online. *Source: Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey, July 2009*. Tying in with that, 90% of consumers trust peer recommendations. Social media is just one place they'll be hearing their peers' perceptions.

If Facebook were a country, it would be the third largest in the world by population. In July 2010 Facebook signed up its 500 millionth user. Around 50% of users log in on any given day. The average user has 130 friends, and over 500 billion minutes per month are spent on Facebook globally. *Source: Facebook*

As of May 2010, there are 70 million LinkedIn members. *Source: LinkedIn*

In May 2010, there were 106 million Twitter accounts, increasing by an average of 300,000 per day, though it's worth noting that 41% of accounts have never sent a tweet since joining. There are, however, around 55 million tweets per day, with the UK generating 5.9% of Twitter site traffic. *Source: website-monitoring.com*

Can your business afford not to be engaged?

The ten steps to becoming visible online

1 Build your website

And if you've already got one – revisit it bearing the following information in mind



Arguably, you don't *need* a website to be found online, but done correctly it'll make it a hell of a sight easier.

Of course you can do it for yourself, with a little tech savvy, by using such online tools as [Weebly](#) and [Moonfruit](#). If your hosting or building solution includes templates then you can achieve a professional look reasonably simply. If you choose any of these routes, just be aware that if you want to change who hosts your site, you may lose the design and be forced into a mini-rebrand. If your site needs to go beyond the very straightforward then it would be worth having it designed professionally.

What's in a name?

This question bears some consideration when you're buying a website address – your domain name. It needs to strike a compromise between being as short as possible while being recognisable and memorable. Avoid hyphens if possible. Yourcompanyname.com is one option, or yourcompanyservice.co.uk. One works for brand association, the other might eke a little extra SEO juice (see [make sure people can find your website](#), two paragraphs down from here). So my website is www.ahcopy.co.uk, but with hindsight, oh glorious hindsight, perhaps all those years ago I should have made it www.ahcopywriter.co.uk. Of course, you could buy several to cover all eventualities, but use only one for your marketing, and point them all at the same website. Don't get too bogged down, and take advice if you're really befuddled. There are stacks of places to buy domain names and host your website; you could start by looking at www.1and1.co.uk, www.uk2.net or www.123-reg.co.uk.

Choosing a website designer and developer

Website designers are everywhere, so choosing one can feel like picking a name out of a large and very full hat. Short-list your website designers based on their portfolios and client testimonials, and pay particular attention to any published case studies. A case study will show you the process the designer has undertaken to fulfil the client's brief. That method is important: you want creativity AND understanding; suggestions WITH co-operation. Whether case studies are available or not, you should ask the developers you approach to provide you with timelines and be sure that they build future-proof websites (websites you can add functionality to later, and which won't become obsolete as website browsers progress).

It's important that you build in flexibility and room for expansion. Where possible ask for administration rights and access, so that you can upload documents, add pages and amend page content at will. Web designers may create you a bespoke system, and allow you access behind the scenes (the back end) so that you can do this, or they may use a third party system. This is known as a content management system (CMS), and would probably be too elaborate unless you're planning to add and change content pretty regularly. It's worth considering the option of including a [blog](#), and some [social media](#) functionality (you can read more about these in [sections four, five and six](#)). If your site is going to be reasonably static, but you don't want to be stung every time you want to add a page or change a few words, you'll want to find out in advance how much your web designer/host is going to charge you for making site updates.

Make sure people can find your website

Of course it's all very well having a beautifully conceived and designed website, but if it can't be found readily then it's not going to bring you much new business. The secret to being found online (or achieving search engine visibility, as the jargon would have it), is to make sure your site is search engine optimised. Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the process (and process it most definitely is) of boosting your website's ranking in the search engine results. Some website developers create websites with SEO firmly in mind, others claim to do so, and others concentrate on functionality and aesthetic. Find out which those on your shortlist are doing by comparing their descriptions of services with those of an SEO company.

SEO is a combination of techniques (SEO copywriting, title tags, ALT tags, header tags, keyword selection, meta description and link-building, to mention a few) designed to tell Google and the other search engines that your website is important when someone searches for that topic. You can find more detail on [search engine optimisation techniques here](#).



One of the SEO techniques mentioned above is SEO copywriting. Simply put, this is the method employed for creating website content or copy which includes a certain density of likely keywords or keyphrases (terms entered into search engines by web users). You can't expect to rank highly for every single keyword you can think of, and you should be wary of any SEO experts claiming they can get you to the top of Google for anything. But by using certain keyword tools as [Google AdWords](#) (see [section 11 – PPC](#)) you can identify keywords which will deliver the best traffic to your site. This is an ongoing process, as we'll see in [section 2 – Link-building](#).

Don't forget though that being found is only half the battle. Getting the site visitor to talk to you is the second half. So your SEO copywriter needs to write content that's written primarily for human eyes and mindsets. That means getting across your USPs (unique selling points), clear explanations and effective calls to action for your target readership.

Part of the website build and publish process will be to create a sitemap for the search engines, and a sitemap for visitors. Your search engine sitemap will be an invisible file (XML) telling the search engine's crawlers (AKA spiders, robots) how the structure of your site works, and the human version will be a readable version for people who get lost in your site or want to find information swiftly. Your XML sitemap, which can be created for free at <http://www.automaticsitemap.com>, or one of several other sites, should then be submitted to all the major search engines.



2 Link to your website from other sites around the web

Link-building is an SEO technique that needs continual revision, and you can do it yourself



Ok, the website's been designed, written, optimised and published on the internet. Link-building, one of the SEO techniques mentioned previously, is an ongoing process.

The good news is that you can do a lot of link-building yourself, at no cost. The bad news is that it's immensely time-consuming. Whatever happens, don't be tempted to buy automatic site submission packages promising listings in hundreds of business directories. At best these directories are valued by neither Google nor humans, and at worst it can have a negative impact on your SEO efforts.

If you decide to do your own link-building, here's where you should be looking:

- [Google Local Business](#)
- [DMOZ](#) (good luck – it's a human-edited directory lacking in human editors, so if you get listed at all, let alone quickly, you can give yourself an almighty pat on the back)
- [Yahoo Directory](#) (it's going to cost you \$299 per year – that's £193 at the time of writing - but Google apparently rates a listing here very highly)
- Local business directories (because starting local makes sense – buyers of all kinds shop locally)
- General business directories (eg <http://www.businessmagnet.co.uk>). Some are free, some cost, and to a degree it's hit and miss. Unless your budget is endless I'd stick to the free listings initially
- Niche directories. Every industry will have a few, it's just a question of searching for them.

Creating your listings can be a job in itself. You don't want every description to read the same, and if there's the possibility of using relevant keywords within the link (example: [copywriter's blog](#) rather than [my blog](#) or [click here](#)), then take the time to do so. This text is known as anchor text.

Link-building is time-consuming. Writing effective descriptions is time-consuming, and writing descriptions that aren't identical is even more so. It may be worth approaching a professional writer if time isn't on your side, or an internet marketing and SEO specialist who'll know exactly which link-building efforts are worth the financial and time investment.

3 Give it away

Because who doesn't want a little something for free?



It might seem counter-intuitive, counter-productive even, but giving something away is a great way of getting noticed.

This works in several ways. It creates a resource that your potential customers will be searching for, and that they'll want to share with colleagues, friends and on social media sites. It provides more content for the search engines to index, and additional landing pages if they're well optimised. It demonstrates your expertise, it raises brand awareness and it gives the impression of a touch of altruism, even if you're the most hardened miser in town.

So what should you give away?

Not the farm, certainly. But snippets – advice, charts, tools; anything you feel will benefit others but which doesn't completely obviate the need for your service.

And what form might these free giveaways take?

Well, they could be anything, but typical examples include white papers, slideshow presentations, top tips and articles (either in PDF format or viewable online), podcasts, webinars and any variation on these themes.

Of course if these tasty freebies are sitting on a virtually unknown website, nobody's going to take them. So you need to start looking for places to share them – get the word out.

Popular places to share include [Mixx](#), [SlideShare](#), [Scribd](#). You can even sell documents on sites like [Docstoc](#).

Now you're starting to go viral. Viral marketing is where word spreads organically, like a virus...

4 Business networking

It IS *what you know*, but it's ALSO *who you know*



For those of us who dread the perceived awkwardness of networking face-to-face, the painfully early starts for breakfast meetings and the room full of strangers (all of whom appear to have no trouble introducing themselves to one another), online business networking is a wonderfully stress-free starting point.

As with all these steps, there are multiple benefits to be had:

- the potential to increase your client base and network of experts
- the chance to deepen your understanding of any given field
- increased links to your business website and greater search engine visibility
- a chance to demonstrate your knowledge and prove your credentials.



The biggest and best known of the business networking sites is [LinkedIn](#). Given its multi-million user base, LinkedIn is a must-join.

There are in-depth guides to getting the most out of LinkedIn, but the simplest instructions are these:

- **Profile:** provide a detailed and well-written profile to establish credibility and tell people more about you and your work. Put up a photograph. People connect with people. It adds to the feeling of trust. A simple headshot will do
- **Search:** Search for colleagues and contacts with whom you've dealt in the past. You can search by individual name or company name
- **Invites:** Invite friends, contacts and colleagues not already on LinkedIn to build your network further. Every contact you connect with extends your professional reach
- **Testimonials:** Don't be shy. Solicit testimonials *from*, and volunteer them *for*, your past and present colleagues and clients
- **Q&A:** LinkedIn Questions & Answers are a place to get help and advice, or give others the benefit of your knowledge and opinions. You may make new contacts, be awarded 'best answer' for a given topic, and of course learn new and useful information
- **Groups:** LinkedIn Groups are a bit of a mixed bag. Some groups are full of tedious self-promotion, but go searching in professional fields related to your own, and you can target new customers.

The list of generic business networking sites is quite lengthy, and interacting with them all in any great depth would suck every day dry. But you *should* take the time to establish a basic presence (profile, picture and links to your website and main networking profile). I'd advise signing up to:

- [Biznik](#)
- [Ecademy](#)
- [Naymz](#)
- [Plaxo](#)
- [Ryze](#)
- [Spoke.](#)

Niche social networking and business networking sites are another matter. There *may* not be one for your particular industry, but there could be one or two very useful ones. Perhaps try typing search terms such as *social networks retail* or *business networks sports* into [Google](#). You may uncover a goldmine of information, contacts and business. If you're feeling a little ambitious, tools such as [socialGo](#) and [Ning](#) will let you create your own network from scratch.

5 Social media

Would you do business with someone who wasn't friendly?



But isn't social networking about posting pictures of your best friend vomiting into his own glove-box? Well yes, and that's right and, erm, proper, but don't forget that your social network can sometimes be the source of business contacts, and even direct work. Plenty of us have Facebook friends that we don't know that intimately. In turn, they may not know what you and your company do. And they may want your services.

But building a social media presence is not a quick solution. And actually your efforts here should never end. There are numerous guides out there to getting the most from various social media sites (I'd recommend visiting [Mashable](#) for the latest developments and stacks of handy links), so I'm just going to get you started.

The top two pan-industry sites you should start with are Facebook and Twitter.



Let's start with Facebook. Within a handful of years of its creation it became the social network of choice and more recently its business networking side has been bolstered. Once you've signed up as a user, you're free (and I mean that in both obvious senses of the word) to create a [Facebook page](#) for company use. Even without buying advertising space on Facebook there is room to get your business profile noticed.

Complete a profile, add links, product and service descriptions, photos, videos and more. Use the photo section to upload your logo as your primary image. Update your page status with news and points of interest; share useful tips and web links; include polls and surveys; use the wall for client and customer comments and kick off discussions on the review page. Check the privacy settings, where you can ensure the page is searchable within Facebook AND indexed on search engines.

Invite your friends, colleagues and clients to become fans of your business page, and let word-of-mouth bring you a higher profile. You can read more about this in section 7 - [Get your friends working for you](#). Note that I've said Facebook *pages*, not Facebook *groups*. Pages offer greater functionality and appear more prominently in your friends' newsfeeds and profiles.

Facebook ads work on the Pay Per Click model (see section 11 - [Pay Per Click](#)), and can be tailored to match your target audience pretty closely. They also include full statistical analysis so you can monitor the success of your ads. What's more, you can use the ad tools for free to work out how many UK Facebook users fall within your target demographic.

[MySpace](#), [Bebo](#) and even other social networking sites may well have their advantages, so experiment at will. But Facebook now has an online population of 500 million, which would, if you can imagine Facebook as a physical place, make it the third largest country in the world, behind only China and India. Yikes.



[Twitter](#) is a different beast entirely. Many people take a bewildered glance and abandon it. It's a stream of information that could easily seem a raging torrent if you allow it.

The concept involves posting information in no more than 140 characters. You 'follow' people or companies you like/admire/share an interest with/want to target and often common courtesy means that they'll follow you back. Twitter is all about social interaction.

If you start posting updates which flog your service to death, the followers you *do* acquire will most likely disappear rapidly. However, if you aim to post information which helps or entertains people, you'll begin to gain credibility, and the chance to truly interact will begin. [Twitter's getting started guide](#) will help you out initially, and [the site's 101 for business guide](#) will give you the nitty-gritty. Out of the gate though, you need to upload a photo (because as we've established, people interact with people) rather than a logo, include the one web link you're permitted, and make the most of your 160-character biography space. It's also worth noting that because Twitter is ALL about interaction, you can be more informal, personal and colloquial in the way you write than you would on your company website. Services like [Twitbacks](#) and [Social Identities](#) allow you to create custom backgrounds for your page – an additional element of branding and the chance to display more information.

Use the [search function](#) to find topics of interest, and you'll quickly find interesting people to start listening to, and then talking to. Once you're reasonably comfortable with what Twitter does you might find it useful to use a service like [Hootsuite](#) to manage your Twitter profile.

Facebook and Twitter are really just starting points. There's so much more. You may think of [YouTube](#) as a place to watch amusing videos of cats proving they're rubbish at landing on their feet, that unfortunate Star Wars Kid, or unauthorised concert footage. But thousands of businesses use it to host promotional material: everything from software tutorials and walk-throughs to full-scale adverts. The point is that virtually any place where people gather online is a place where you can begin to engage with customers.

And *engage* is the operative word. Spend much time researching online and you'll see the phrase *social engagement* flogged to within an inch of its life: social media is about give and take, not just pushing and selling. If you come across an interesting website that your Twitter followers may appreciate, share it. If someone you follow sends out a message that might be helpful to others, retweet it so that the people who follow you can learn more. Answer questions, ask questions and get interactive.

6 Blogging

Share your thoughts, ideas and advice



A web log, or blog, is essentially an online diary, notebook, series of articles and/or discussion forum. Technorati, the leading blog search engine, indexes millions of blog posts. People blog about *everything*, from their insomnia to their social lives. Your blog of course will be business-orientated, imparting pearls of wisdom. You're giving away information, educating potential clients, customers and partners. Nobody's expecting you to give away all your expertise, but the idea is to engage, intrigue and entertain an audience.

There are no hard and fast rules about how long a blog entry should be and there's nothing wrong with a little variety. You might make one entry some news about a client and the way you helped them, or you might write a helpful list of tips which will give your target audience some useful starting points. Of course they then might want your help to take things further... You might write a 150 word musing or a 1,500 word in-depth analysis. The choice is yours. The most important thing, and here you'll spot that I'm not always practising what I'm preaching, is a regular update. Whether it's daily, weekly or once a month, it's a good idea to keep your readers keen for your next blog post.

It's not a bad idea to have a practice run before you get started. Go to Wordpress.com, probably the biggest and best blogging platform, and use the totally free hosted solution to set up a blog about anything and nothing. Play with it. Begin to understand the possibilities before you think about how you can incorporate what you've learnt into your business website.

Above all though, you need to provide your visitors with the chance to talk to you, and each other. Make sure that comments are enabled on any articles; allow RSS feeds so readers can subscribe to your blog and be automatically informed of any new posts; and include social media sharing buttons. See [section 7](#) for more details.

Having a blog allows you to demonstrate your authority and expertise as well as providing you with the opportunity of marketing your company through a wider variety of online channels. What's more, it affords the opportunity to engage and interact with potential customers and partners, and that in turn gives you feedback and ideas from those who visit. To cap it off, regular blog updates will increase your search engine visibility, provided your articles are written with due regard to search engine optimisation.

7 Get your friends working for you

Friends needn't just be your rock, they can be your signpost too



Friends aren't just handy for life's leisure time or emotional roller coasters. Without wishing to sound too cold and calculating, they're also the cheapest way to network. Tradesmen have been capitalising on this forever. Need a plumber you can trust? Ask a friend or family member. Really the same principle applies with a huge array of jobs.

So of course that means the small talk at your wife's ex-colleague's house-warming party might pay off, but I'm thinking specifically in terms of online awareness building. I've already spoken about social media; it offers a unique opportunity to get your friends working for you without going out of their way.

If you've set up a [Facebook page](#), as discussed in [section 5 social media](#), you can invite your friends to become fans. Not only does a burgeoning number of fans on Facebook lend credibility to your business, like a counter of testimonials, it publicises your business beyond your immediate social group. Whenever somebody becomes a fan of a page, Facebook feeds that information into a newsfeed. Assuming your friend's friends haven't opted out of that feed, or been excluded, your best chum John becoming a fan of your business is highlighted in front of every Facebook contact he's got. According to [Facebook's official statistics](#), the average user has 130 friends and becomes a fan of four pages per month. For the sake of argument let's say you invite every one of your friends to become a fan. Let's say 30 of them do so. That information is going to be broadcast to 3,900 people. No, they're not all likely to care. But it's a free way of getting your name in front of thousands of people.

If you've been sensible, you'll already have tried to invite and connect with all your friends through [LinkedIn](#) too. LinkedIn offers updates whenever somebody in your network makes a new connection and when answering questions in the [Q&A section](#), there's the facility to recommend someone to solve someone's problems.

Which leads me onto testimonials. If any of your friends have ever used your professional services (and let's assume you didn't completely bodge the job!), they'll probably be only too happy to write you a testimonial. These can be placed directly on your website, on LinkedIn if they're a member, and countless other business networks and websites (for instance [Sheriff Ratings](#)). It may come as little surprise, but as confirmed by the July 2009 Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey, 90% of consumers trust peer recommendations. And while you're getting your friends to make a little effort, they can help push your company website to a wider audience, especially if it includes a blog. There are countless sites out there dedicated to sharing information you've found online.

It's often a good idea for your website to feature [Sharethis buttons](#), [Addtoany buttons](#) or one of their competitors' offerings – it makes the sharing process far easier. Whenever you write an article, update your blog or website, push a quick and polite email with a link to your friends. Be direct – ask them to promote you on the social media platform of their choice. [StumbleUpon](#), [Digg](#), [Reddit](#), [Technorati](#) and innumerable others exist for just that. Just make sure you return the favour when asked. Or better still, *look* for opportunities to promote your friends.

8 Find a partner

Forming partnerships gives you extra sales channels and additional skills to offer



What could be better than someone else carrying out your sales and marketing for free?

Working in partnership with an individual or company offering a complementary service can pay huge dividends. As a freelance copywriter I've formed business partnerships with PR agencies, design agencies, web designers and an SEO and internet marketing specialist. All parties concerned get to offer a wider range of services. This gives them an additional selling point when pitching to potential clients and customers. It can also broaden your own knowledge, which is never a bad thing; you've a more complete and rounded understanding of your industry and target audience. It's not just about the opportunity to cross-sell though; reciprocal links on your website might provide direct access for potential customers, as well as having an admittedly tiny effect on your search engine results.

Partnerships also offer companies the chance to cross-promote using special offers.

If, for instance, you were a personal trainer, you'd be well served establishing a partnership with a nutritionist. Your promotion? A free/50% discount/whatever-offer-works-for-you nutrition plan when a client books 10 training sessions. The nutritionist gains business he or she might not otherwise have had and you've added an incentive for customers to sign up. At the same time, or in alternation, the nutritionist could offer discounted or free personal training sessions when somebody signs up for a nutrition plan. Everyone's winning.

As for the parameters of your partnership, well that's entirely up to you. Exclusivity, contractually signed, might be limiting or beneficial; an informal arrangement might be too loose for you or the perfect arrangement. It all depends on your business and the benefits you perceive possible.

9 Write a press release

Press releases can be good news for your business



Full-scale public awareness campaigns are probably best handled by a PR agency with experience in your industry niche, but if your budget is limited there are still things you can do to increase your visibility online and in print media.

A press release is no more than a brief news story. The first step is to identify some viable news. New members of staff, new ventures or partnerships, new contracts, new products and services, a sales promotion or even a charitable event or sponsorship are all typical opportunities to issue a press release. What's more, a little opportunism can pay off. Keep a close eye on industry news (see section 10 – [Stay on top](#)) and related research revelations and you may be able to tie in a story that deals with the issue of the day. That'll certainly increase the odds of your story making an editor's final cut.

Of course you still have to write your press release. The formula is relatively simple, though if you're not the most comfortable or accomplished writer you might do well to use a [PR copywriter](#) or a PR firm to draft it for you.

You'll need an attention-grabbing headline. Don't sweat the detail too hard, as journalists often will probably want to write his or her own headline if your story is picked up, but you DO still want to draw the eye.

Your opening paragraph needs to sum up the entire story. This gives the journalist everything needed within seconds and also means that if space is an issue, there's minimal editing required to include your news.

The following paragraphs - and unless yours is a complex and scintillating story then you're really looking at no more than a page of A4 - should deal with the substance behind your release. If you can get a quote in, then so much the better. Worst case: a confidence-inspiring sales-boosting quote from a relevant person within your company. Best case: endorsement from a recognised public or industry figure if you can get it. The middle ground will be some form of endorsement from a client or customer.

Your final paragraph needs a snappy summing-up, along with a sense of direction for the future or an outcome arising from your news. Include a good quality, high resolution photograph if the subject matter can be illustrated and a company profile in a *Notes to Editor* section at the end.

Done. Now you need to distribute your press release. Again, the time you spend researching likely online and hard-copy publications is the time where PR agencies earn their fees, but thanks to the internet you *can* do it yourself. Just set aside a few hours. Most publications' websites will give you the appropriate contact details and sometimes even press release submission guidelines.

You can even use a few free press distribution websites. They're not as likely to result in hard-copy publication as a directly targeted press release, but they will provide you with some inbound links to your website at the very least. That's where using an [SEO copywriter](#) (or learning the techniques yourself if you have the time) will reap rewards. A press release written to include the right ratio of the right keywords can only help your results in the search engines. So check out a few of these free press distribution websites: [Free Press Release](#); [Free Press Releases UK](#); [Press Box](#); and [PR Log](#).

10 Stay on top of everything

Update your online presence, and keep abreast of developments



You've had a lot to take in, and really this was just a brief introduction to internet marketing – you could (and many have) write a book on the social media arena alone.

The good and bad news is that life online doesn't stand still. Good, because there will always be new resources and sites to use to your benefit; more opportunities to stand out from your competitors. Bad, because you can't afford to sit back and congratulate yourself for long.

So you're going to have to keep up to date with:

- your industry
- developments in social media and internet marketing
- the social and business networks in which you've become involved

Thankfully there are various tools to help you do this, and you can source them for free. They're usually known as aggregators. Examples include [Google Reader](#) and [FeedDemon](#). Even web browsers like [Firefox](#) will aggregate your chosen RSS feeds. But you can make life even easier for yourself with a digital dashboard. This is basically a start page where you can organise your digital world.

My personal favourite is [Netvibes](#). News feeds, blog feeds, social media updates for all your profiles, to-do lists, calendars and much, much more can all be fed into a customisable web page. Make that your homepage, check each newsfeed first thing, lunchtime and before you log off in the evening, and you should always be completely informed.

For those who've created Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook page profiles, www.hootsuite.com will manage them all.

11 Pay Per Click (PPC)

Because it's better when it goes up to eleven



Pay per click (PPC) is a pretty self-explanatory term for an online advertising medium that offers the small business advertiser a chance to compete with even the most limited of budgets. It's also known as search marketing.

PPC adverts are the ads you typically see displayed down the side of search engine results pages and in the sidebar of social media sites and blogs.

The biggest PPC avenues are [Google Ads](#), [Microsoft adCenter](#) (displaying ads on the Bing and MSN websites), [Yahoo search marketing](#) and [Facebook Adverts](#).

All work along similar lines. You, the advertiser, get a specified character limit to write your sales message, a link to take your potential customers to the landing page (destination web page) of your choice, and sometimes the option to upload a fitting image or choose a colour scheme.

You can set your own budget. If you have £50 to spend, you can set a PPC campaign to end when your £50 is spent, or to continue beyond; you can even define your maximum daily spend. Typically search marketing works on a PPC model or CPM (cost per thousand page impressions). With PPC the cost of each click (CPC – sorry about all the abbreviations; evil, confusing stuff for the uninitiated) may vary depending on the popularity and value of any given keyword. CPM means paying for the number of times your advert is generated. Either way, the more you bid for your campaign, the more often it will be seen.

Google Ads is based primarily on keyword choice. So as a freelance copywriter I might want to target the search terms ‘marketing copywriter’ or ‘writing for websites’. The price of those keywords or key phrases varies depending on their popularity. But there are numerous other similar words and terms which I could also use; the [Google AdWords Keyword Tool](#) provides a list of such terms, how often they’re searched on, and how popular they are in other Google Ads campaigns. This is invaluable in identifying which words might be the most effective for your advert.

You’ll also see that you have the option to restrict your advertising to Google’s search results, or to make use of demographic data and allow your ad to be displayed on other relevant websites.

Facebook Adverts require you to use this sort of demographic info to target your audiences. Once you’ve written your ad you can choose the sort of people you want to see it. Specify gender, age, location, relationship status, languages, education, personal interests and even friends of people who already know about your Facebook Page.

The great thing about these advertising schemes is that they’re yours to play with as you please. Pause them if you’re inundated with work; run concurrent adverts so you can analyse the comparative appeal and success of each through the analytics results provided; refine your copy if you need a change of focus; or change your landing page to assess your conversion rates.

Even better, you can often get a free intro to the services. As I write this, website builder and business networking site [Qapacity](#) is offering €50 of Facebook advertising for free on sign-up. That is the perfect, risk-free introduction to PPC. If it’s still there!

Summary

It might seem daunting that there’s so much going on online. But really that just means that there’s potential. Take the steps one at a time, but bear them all in mind as you go, so you can develop a decent internet marketing strategy. And talking of decent: there are a lot of decent people out there. Don’t be afraid to ask people questions: most of them will gladly help and advise. That’s one of the best things about LinkedIn: the Question and Answer section. You can ask any kind of question and receive a wealth of information in return.

Show an interest in getting found online and you’ll find that the learning curve is enjoyable if steep; do it with a sense of resentful obligation and it’s going to be a pretty rocky road.

And whether you find useful snippets of info you’d like to share, you’ve got questions that are unanswered here, or you just want to give some feedback, please do get in touch.

Good luck.

Acknowledgements

My thanks go to IconsEtc, whose beautiful icon designs illustrate this internet marketing guide. If you take a look at <http://icons.mysitemyway.com> you’ll see a huge range of fantastic icon sets available for free. Be aware though that they’re at a resolution suited to website use, and if you want to use them for print or PDFs you may need them reworked.

So with that in mind, special thanks to Sue Hewson (if in doubt, turn to your mother. Especially if she’s rather handy with graphics software) for reworking the IconsEtc selection at the higher resolution required.



A Hewson Ltd 2010. Unauthorised use and/or duplication of this material without express and written permission is strictly prohibited. Excerpts and links may be used provided that full and clear credit is given, including a link to the original material.