

17 Things to Check Before Your Website is Marketing Ready



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INTRODUCTION

Unbound digital marketing offers a substantial benefit to small and medium sized businesses who couldn't afford to compete otherwise on a global scale. With Google as the great equalizer almost anyone can attract and hold attention online if they do it right.

But there's one barrier that often stands in the way and that's a good website. Without a good website that's Marketing Ready, your campaign could stall or never get off the ground in the first place.

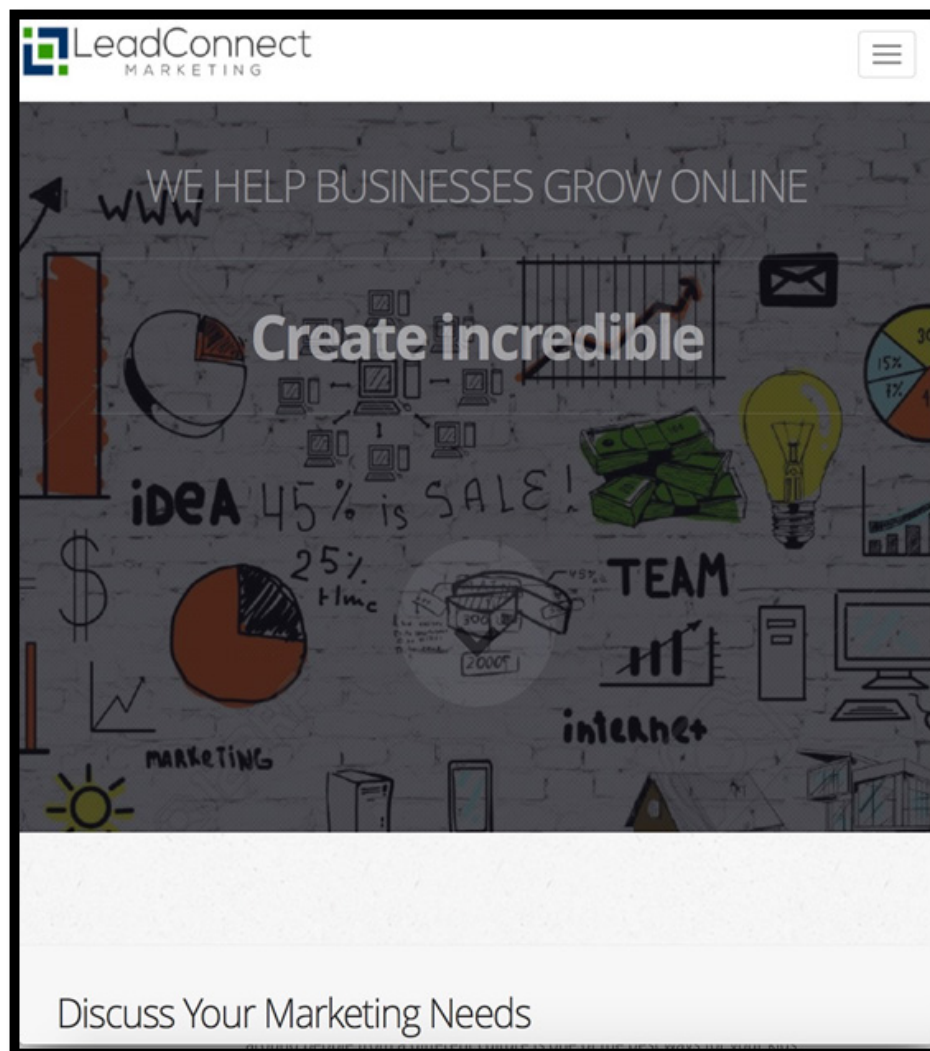
Below are 17 things I check for when we onboard a new client to ensure their site is ready to convert existing traffic, generate new traffic, and host all the content in development.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

The following technical issues can be major road blocks to success online if not handled right in the early stages.

RESPONSIVE DESIGN

In April, 2015 Google updated their systems to check if websites listed in their search results were “mobile-friendly”. If a site was not mobile friendly, it was removed from all mobile search results.



This was a very big deal. On average, a typical B2B website gets between 15-30% of their traffic from mobile devices. This update hurt a LOT of companies.

The best way to fix the problem and ensure your website not only ranks in mobile search results but ranks WELL, is to have it updated with a responsive design.

Why “responsive” instead of just a separate mobile website? Here’s what a responsive website looks like:

Depending on the screen size the site is viewed on, the site changes in shape and size. You can even drag and resize your browser on a desktop and it will update to match the size. Your design team can ensure that every possible viewer of the site - big screen, laptop, tablet, or phone - gets the best possible experience.

USER FRIENDLY NAVIGATION

The language of marketing can be vague. Jargon and buzz words create a high wall to entry for those who just want a website that performs well.

One of the most commonly cited buzz words behind digital marketing is “user experience” or UX. Let’s boil this one down to the basics though because it is very important and can pose a major obstacle to your marketing efforts if not properly implemented.

The user experience is the feeling visitors get when they visit your website. It’s the impression they get of your website, the way they interact with it, and how they find what they are looking for.

There are three things to check for when evaluating your User experience at the highest level:

1. **Navigation** - Is it very clear how to get to the major parts of your website within 2-3 clicks at the most. Have you buried information, hidden key conversion points or forgotten to include anything vital to the process.
2. **What Do You Do** - Can a perfect stranger determine exactly what you do in 10 seconds or less when they land on your website. Use [UsabilityHub.com](https://usabilityhub.com) to ask strangers to run such tests and poll them to see if your site does this right.
3. **Clear Calls to Action** - Is it clear to the visitor exactly what you want them to do and why you want them to do it. Does the headline lead to a list of clear benefits, and then lead to a button or form that allows them to take action on what you are offering?

The bottom line is that your user experience will determine how a new visitor to your website interacts with your website and your content. the better the experience, the more likely they are to take the actions you want them to take.

LOAD SPEED AND IMAGE SIZE

Load speed and image size are directly related to the performance of the website. They can both affect how your site ranks in Google's search rankings and are relatively easy to fix.

The problem, however, is that load size can directly relate to the code of your website, how images and videos are implemented and the way the site is implemented on your server. Fixing a heavy website can be a time consuming process if the site needs to be completely recoded.

TRACKING CODE ON EACH PAGE

The only way to ensure your website performs as needed during a marketing campaign is to have solid analytics in place to track performance. Are your pages drawing new visitors? Are they converting when visitors arrive? Are people following the path you've laid out for them?

Through careful implementation of analytics you can track the performance of key pages and changes you make to those pages and continually improve the marketing performance of your entire website.

This is an easy fix. Install [Ghostery](#), a free plug-in for Google Chrome, and check to see if there is tracking code on every page of your site. If not, you can install Google Analytics for free - a tool that will measure visitors, time spent on your website, and paths they take between actions you put in front of them.



This data is gold to a marketing team when the time comes to market your content.

ON PAGE SEO

Before throwing a metric ton of effort into an SEO campaign, the following issues need to be tackled as well.

DUPLICATE CONTENT

Google's algorithm is designed to prioritize and rank content based on its value. One of the big problems of the Internet, however, is that there are often many versions of the same page.

Whether the site owner copies and pastes content between sections or a competitor borrows liberally from that site, duplication is a rampant practice.

To combat this, Google will prioritise what they see as the "original" version of a piece of content. Whether it's the first piece or just the most comprehensive and best valued, that means the second, third, fourth...and 100th duplication are basically ignored.

Beyond being ignored, a site can actually get penalised for having too much duplicate content. Google wants your website to provide value to its visitors. If your content is duplicated from elsewhere, they don't see that as valuable. Hence the penalty.

So step one of any good marketing campaign is to ensure the duplicated content on your site is replaced with fresh, original content.

“THIN” CONTENT

The other big content sin according to Google is when there just isn't enough of it. Google wants to see sufficient content to provide value to your visitors.

If that sounds nice and ambiguous, that's for good reason. Every situation is different and so too is every visitor. An executive looking for quick statistics is different from a college student looking for links, who is very different from a career academic who would prefer a long read.

So there is no “right answer” to this problem. The general rule of thumb we recommend is a minimum of 300 words and a maximum of however many words are needed to cover a topic in-depth.

Some pages we work with can rank very well with only 100 words and a link to a video, whereas others will require much more because of the competition and nature of a request.

TAGS AND DESCRIPTIONS

The content on your site needs to be tagged and described properly. There are a few things that this entails, many of which are less important than the other two issues in this section we've already covered.

But even these little things can help so we focus on them early to ensure they are squared away before the heavy marketing campaigns kickoff.

First, we need to tag everything on the pages that requires it. This means images, videos, links, and any other multimedia. These tags will provide context to users and search engines alike and help rank that content for key searches.

Second, we add descriptions to all content and pages. META descriptions are what Google displays when your pages show up in search results. These are important because they encourage people to click into your site and the higher that click through rate, the better your site will be ranked.

LINKS TO OTHER WEBSITES

Links to other sites are a tricky part of the process. On one hand, good links to other websites lend credibility to your own content by showing your references and that you are in-tune with the resources out there for your industry. It's almost a required part of the process to have something in place as links to other sites from your own.

On the flip side, Google sees links as a passing of authority from one site to another. They are one of the major factors used to rank websites in search and so, too many links to other sites can bleed out site of its authority and lend it to others.

So a good on-page best practice is to limit the number of links to other sites to between 1-2 per page. These links should be relevant, informative, and formatted to open in new tabs. This will ensure they don't distract from your content.

CONTENT ON THE SITE

Does the content speak to the audience? Is there enough to achieve your goals? Here are factors that help us determine what's needed.

WHAT DOES EACH PAGE "DO"?

The very next question I ask when reviewing a website for marketing readiness is what the pages on that site do. Does every single page have a specific function and is it immediately clear what those functions are?

A page without a function is a hiccup in the navigation that can distract and pull your prospects away from what you want them to do. The tricky part is that SEO and marketing in general benefit from having more pages with more content on the site, especially if they target your key terms.

But if those pages have no real purpose and don't drive people to key points in your marketing funnel, then they lack value and can quickly become distractions instead of benefits.

Ask yourself what every page does, why it exists on *your* website and how you can ensure it is optimised effectively.

WHAT'S THE CONVERSION POINT FOR EACH PAGE?

A simpler way to answer the above question is to look for conversion points. What is the action you want your visitor to perform when they view a certain page? Should they download an offer? Contact you with questions? Request a quote on a project? Submit a photo? Read a blog post? Watch a video?

The call to action should be as clear as possible, guiding your visitor to the specific action you want and need them to commit to as part of this process. If you don't make it clear (and visible), the page loses its value, no matter how well it performs.

DO YOU HAVE A BLOG?

A blog is not a make or break component of a marketing campaign. I typically recommend creating one for almost all business models, but if you don't have one, it won't stop you from starting and taking advantage of a true digital marketing strategy.

What can get in the way and what will slow you down substantially in this process, however, is a poorly implemented or severely out of date blog. If your blog has not been updated in several months, has low quality content, duplicate content, or content with no conversion points on it, then it is a waste of space and should be removed.

Even if your blog is mostly empty, consistency, frequency, and quality will keep it from being a liability on your website. I've seen blogs with only one post a month draw 1,000+ hits a month to corporate B2B websites. It's doable with the right promotional approach.

ARE PDFS ACCESSIBLE OR HIDDEN?

Most successful businesses have documents, one sheets, resources, and there pieces of material they make available to prospects and customers.

These documents, when offered for download are incredibly valuable to people who may consider buying from you. But if those documents are hard to find on your website, too large, or hard to open or read, it defeats the purpose.

In fact, cumbersome documentation can be a bigger negative than positive when marketing your website. Before investing heavily into a marketing program that will drive new traffic to your website, these documents should be cleaned up, organized, and relocated on your site to ensure they are as useful as possible for visitors.

A resource library where a visitor can easily find and access all of this information will be an invaluable tool for them.

THE MARKETING EFFORTS

Finally, what do your current marketing efforts look like and what types of changes are needed to execute on a higher level.

WHAT'S YOUR MESSAGE?

The average small or medium sized business doesn't need a six figure branding plan to be competitive in their space. What they do need, however, is a clean, consistent, and clear message that makes it very clear to anyone visiting your website (or any other online resources) what you do, why you do it, and how you are different from your competitors.

Your message should be consistent in the design of your website, the language used on the website to describe your services or products, and the marketing efforts you engage in.

Here are a few areas where messaging often gets muddled during an online marketing campaign:

- **Print vs. Digital** - Old print documentation may contradict your brand, especially if you have your website redesigned. This can be even more problematic if you digitize documents as PDFs.
- **Social Media** - Whether you hire an agency or task an intern or marketing coordinator with managing your social media profiles, the messaging should be the same as your website. Create a style guide that includes the company's stance on issues in your industry, and the style and type of language that should be included.
- **Blog** - The company blog is a fantastic tool you can use to share insights into the industry, solve problems for your prospects, and share resources. Make sure the voice matches that of the rest of your website, however, to avoid potential issues with brand confusion.

- **Design Elements** - If your website was built 10 years ago and your blog 5 years ago, and you're just now setting up your social media channels, they likely don't match. When designing for the web, quality and clarity is important, but so too is consistency across your properties.

There's no need to change existing messaging, but as you prepare to create new content and promote your company online, make sure the message being used on those channels is always the same.

WHERE ARE CTAS LOCATED?

A Call-to-Action is a button, image, or body of text that entices your visitors to do something. It can be a contact button, a quote request, a consultation signup form, or a piece of documentation made available to download.

Do a quick audit of what call-to-action buttons or links you have on your website and where they are currently located. If they are not prominently visible on your site, move them up to draw attention.

A good rule of thumb is to have 2-3 CTA buttons on every page of your website with no more than two visible at any time.

DO YOU ENGAGE YOUR READERS?

Every audience is different. What engages Millennials buying furniture for a new home is much different from what engages a 40-something corporate executive trying to cut costs on his budget.

So when you look to see if your content is engaging your readers, look first and foremost at the audience you are trying to engage. Don't write what you THINK will make them happy - ask them what works.

Look at the data on your website. Find out if they are truly engaged by reviewing analytics to see how long they stay on your site, how many pages they visit, and what kind of response they typically have after reading your content.

Not sure how to do this? Keep reading for a chance to get a free evaluation for your site to determine just how engaged your visitors really are.

CREATING A MARKETINGREADY WEBSITE

A marketing-ready website is one that will engage, entice, and elicit action from your visitors. It is a site that perfectly represents your brand and draws attention from people you want to hear from.

The number of people on your site and the number of leads you generate are less important than the quality of those who finally contact you. That's what a good marketing-ready website will do.

If you're ready to learn about how marketing-ready your website is, click the button below and contact us for a free **MarketingReady** Evaluation. One of our Marketing Strategists will review your website for the following criteria and provide a report showing where you can make improvements and draw more attention from your target audience:

- Is your website mobile-friendly?
- Does your website's navigation drive people to convert?
- How fast does your site load?
- Is there duplicate or thin content that needs to be fixed?
- Are there any red flags for Google on your site?
- How accessible is the content on your site?
- Is your message consistent across all of your properties?

When done you'll receive a **MarketingReady** score so you compare your site to that of your competitors and see if you're ready to start investing money into your platform to drive new visitors and generate new leads for your business.

[Get My MarketingReady Score](#)