

PLANNING YOUR WEBSITE AND CREATING EFFECTIVE CONTENT

The content on our website is sending me to sleep. What is it doing to our customers?

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INTRODUCTION

Creating customer focused search engine friendly content

Creating your content is the most important part of your site and yet is often rushed and not thought out. You need confident information that converts visitors into potential clients and potential clients into repeat customers. What often happens is you re-write your staff handbook in web page form.

- Create confident and appealing information
- Client centered copy that is easy to read
- Link your website to your business goals
- Plan 'calls to action' and create pathways through your site
- Create 'stories' that will draw in your audience
- Plan for interaction to maintain attention and encourage enquiries or sales.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Stage by stage we will take you through the content writing process.

This isn't just about writing flat content. We want you to create interactions with your visitors that will convert into new clients or sales

We will take you through a process that ensures:

- Each page performs a task
- Visitors interact with you
- Content is customer focused
- Search engine friendly
- Visitors turn into new clients or sales.

ABOUT YOUR WEBSITE

Let's start by gathering the basic information about your site.

NAME OF WEBSITE:

DOMAIN NAME:

TAG LINE (140 characters):

AUDIENCE

TYPICAL VISITORS: Break these down into different age groups, professions or economic types.



REASONS FOR VISITING: What activities will they be attempting to complete.

COMPLIMENTARY INTERESTS: What are they interested in that compliment your market.

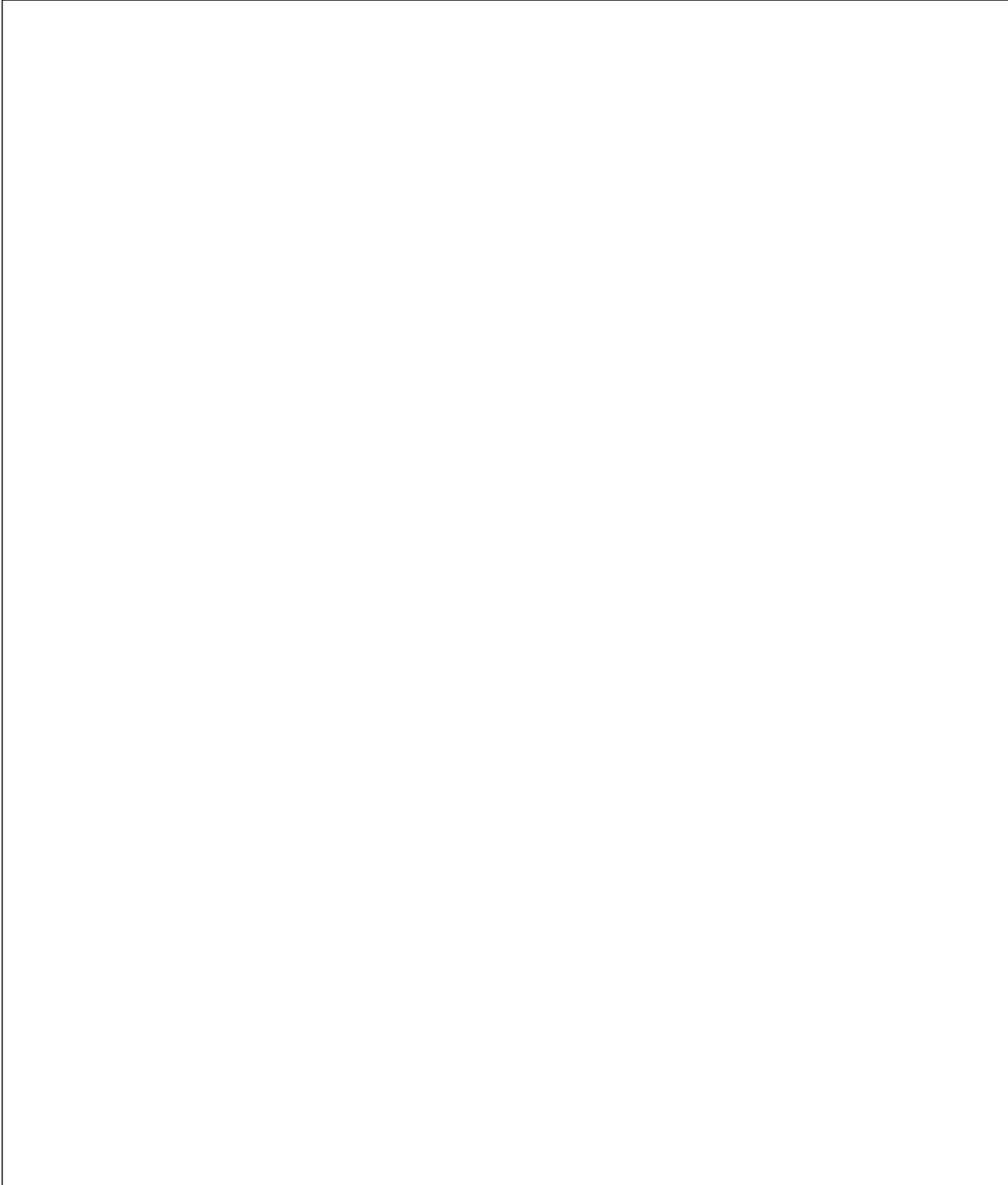
TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE OF TYPICAL VISITOR: Confident browsing the web, highly technical, knows all your acronyms by heart? None technical want everything in plain English?

WEBSITE CONTENT

Start here by thinking about your content, brain storm keywords, phrases and subject areas.

Concentrate on the things that will make you stand out and promote what you do.

Think about what your potential audience is looking for as well as what you want to promote.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to brainstorm and write down website content, keywords, and phrases.

7 STEPS TO CREATE TRAFFIC AND CLIENTS FROM YOUR WEBSITE

The problem with a lot of business websites is they have not been designed with proper goals. Everyone knows they need a website. Most companies create a typical who, what, where, brochure style website. They then go onto the task of running their business expecting their website will do its job without them. When their website does not get the results they want, they design a new one. The lack of success from the original website is then repeated in the new one.

Sound familiar? Here are 7 key steps to make sure you hit the target for website success.

1. Define the goals and targets for your website

Without proper goals and targets how can your website be successful?

- Do you want more clients?
- More leads for prospective work?
- Do you want to sell more widgets?
- Are you looking for a higher awareness of your company?
- More press coverage?

2. Set goals and create content to achieve results

Once you have some goals, look at the content on your website. Does it effectively meet those goals?

- Create content with purpose.
- Landing pages to entice leads.
- Add case studies and testimonials.
- Regular news items and press releases.

3. Use your website to start building relationships

Too many websites are pages of flat text that gain no response from visitors. Create prominent signpost to encourage customers to contact you.

- Ask for opinion on a blog post.
- Comment on changes in your industry.
- Show your knowledge and become an expert.
- Make use of social media to drive discussion and traffic.

When you network in the real world you create relationships with people you meet. Use your website and social media channels to start building relationships with the people who visit your website.

4. Focus on the needs of your customer

Too many companies obsess about what they want to tell their customers. Have you put thought into what your customers want to know? Your website should be customer focused. If a prospective customer does not find what they want, they will go somewhere else. Start designing your website around the typical tasks a visitor to your website will want to complete.

5. Entice your customer into contacting you

Think about what motivates people to contact you. Visitors must be enticed and persuaded into that first interaction. Just because you place a form on your site does not mean people will fill it in. Create content that will attract them. Make sure your website makes you approachable and gives them a name with a human face. Make contact as easy and smooth and attractive as you can.

6. Measure the success of your website using analytic tools

Hopefully you have weekly or month analytics report. If you don't get some! Google Analytics is easy to set up and free to use. Now spend some time learning how to read the reports for your website.

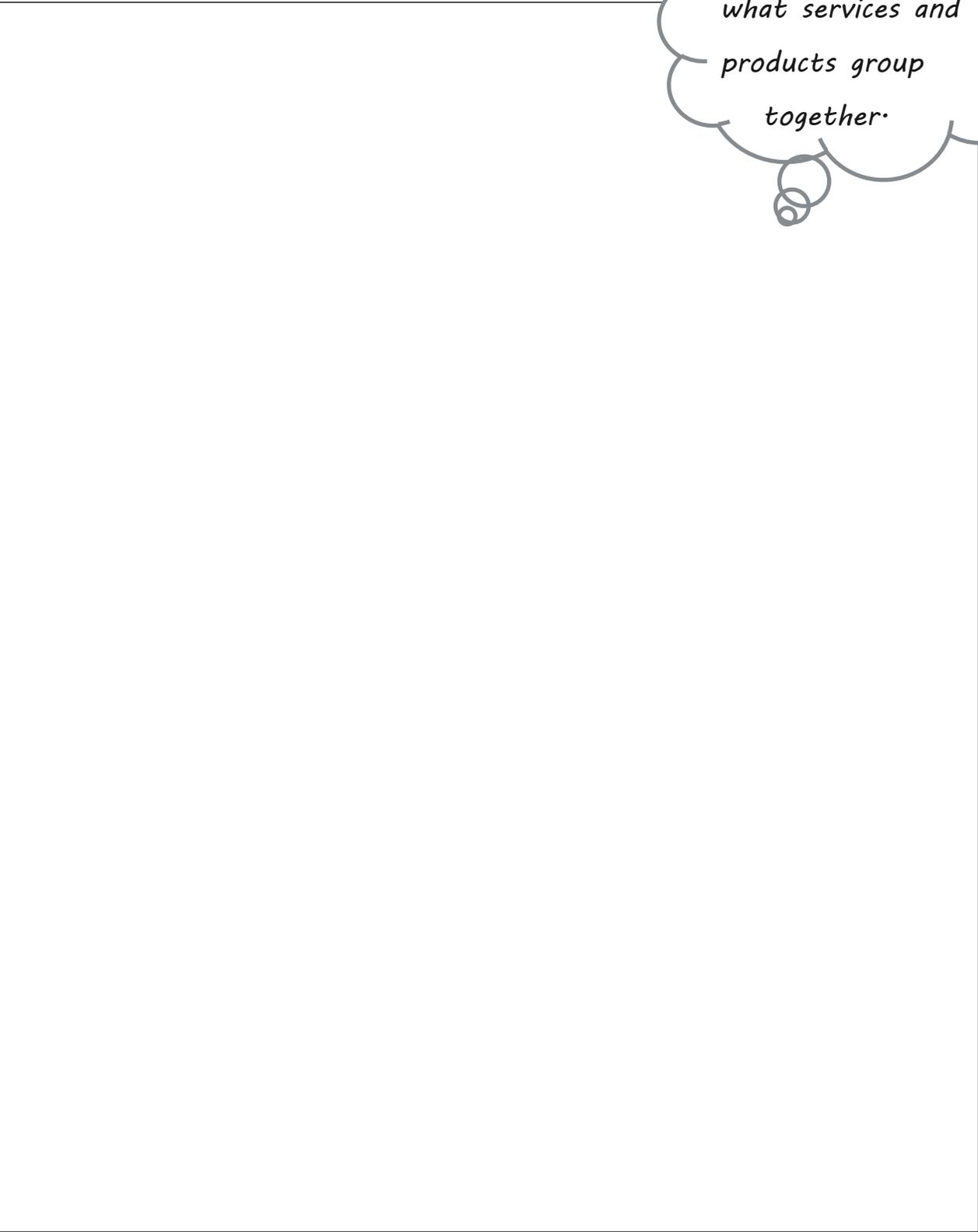
Don't just focus on traffic numbers go deeper to the real power of the data you have at you finger tips.

- Look at where people enter your website
- Which pages are most popular?
- Measure the success of new content
- Pay attention to where visitors are leaving your website. (Typically called your bounce rate.)
- How many pages are part of each visit
- How much time are they spending on each visit
- Measure how effective your social media activity is

7. Make changes

Creating effective website content is about continually analysing your results and taking action. Too many website owners read the reports and then do nothing. Look at what is working and what is not. Keep pages that are working and adjust and re-write the ones that are not. Remember, Google loves websites that are updated regularly. By making adjustments to your content you are helping to improve your customer experience and your Google ranking.

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES, YOU WANT TO PROMOTE



*Time to think about
what services and
products group
together.*

IS YOUR WEBSITE SELLING YOU OR YOUR SERVICES?

One of the biggest problems of many business websites is that they spend a lot of time talking about themselves. “But isn’t that the purpose of our website?” I hear you shout. “Surely to promote our company we have to talk about ourselves?” Unfortunately, you may only be talking to yourself.

People don’t search for your company, people search for solutions

When people use Google or any other popular search engine, it may come as a shock to find that they are not actually looking for you specifically. In many cases they may not even know that your company exists. They might not even care about your company, if they do know you exist.

What people are searching for is a solution to a problem. It may be that you have products that will solve their problem. Unfortunately, if nowhere on your website do you explain this, they will never find you.

Don’t use technical or industry specific language

If your product is aimed at insomnia your product might not appear if someone inputs ‘can’t sleep’. It might seem obvious but never underestimate the simplicity of search terms. 70% of all searches fail, that is a lot of people that might be looking for solutions to a problem you could solve. Do your research to find out what keyword searches are used in your industry.

Find the market that has the right problem

If your products and service solve a problem then do some research and find the market that has that problem. It is easier to sell to a market that knows they need a solution. You will never sell an electric car to someone who has no interest in living in an environmentally way.

Of course, it should be obvious why your products and services are amazing. Unfortunately, you probably don’t have the brand recognition of Apple or Nike. You need to tell your customers what problem your product solves.

You and your staff can become experts

Social media is making it easier than ever to interact with your prospective Market. Whether your preferred platform is Twitter, LinkedIn or Facebook, start building your connections and interacting with the online community. You can show off your knowledge and expertise within your industry without overtly selling.



Use the expertise in your company to become experts in your field.

- You can use a blog.
- Get involved in social media sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook.
- Answer questions and offer solutions to encourage traffic to your site.
- Don't over sell, solve the problem asked. No one likes to be sold to, be straightforward and factual.

Make it easy and obvious

Attention spans on the web are low. On average you have less than 15 seconds to capture the attention. Every page should have some kind of call to action. Your buy buttons should be prominent and any invitation to contact enticing.

Success = traffic x conversion

You may get a large number of visitors to your site but in the end the most important factor is how many of those visitors become customers. If you are offering them something they want they are much more likely to buy. Do not put any barriers in the way of then getting in touch.

Make sure there are no dead ends on your site

When someone gets to the end of a page make sure you are sending them somewhere else or inviting them to contact you. Don't encourage them to leave.

Often very small changes and creative thinking can massively improve the productivity of you site.

WHAT TASK DO YOUR VISITORS WANT TO COMPLETE?

When coming to your site a task might be:

- To buy something
- Find a phone number
- Get technical support.

List the tasks below:



10 minutes on the website and I still can't find their contact details!

WHY YOU MAKE BUT THEY DON'T BUY

For many artists, designers and solo entrepreneurs being your own boss is often as much a lifestyle choice as it is business. You may have a burning need to create, stretch your skills and take pride in the small details of your work. Many choose to run their own business in the hope that they can find the satisfaction that has eluded them in the 9 to 5 existence. They want to have a greater pride in what they do and more input, be more ecologically sound, or show a greater level of customer service. The problem is that for many of these businesses, this philosophy goes against the mainstream of where their customers choose to spend.



Desire is often about gratification not luxury

It isn't that people don't want to buy quality, but they are not experts in every field. Affordable is often judged as good enough. While the quality of hand made products may be higher priced, their unique features are not always recognized - a smoothed edge, double stitching, a finer quality of wood, a limited-edition product - and so not appreciated by many shoppers. Always try to emphasize the 'unique quality' of your goods.

Ease of purchase is also another major factor in this fast-paced society - we want things now! Not that this can be blamed solely on money or laziness. Brand recognition will also have a strong influence. Many still pay over their budget for that branded trainer or shiny gadget. A better-quality product can be overlooked because it is just not recognized or easily available where they shop.

- We are after convenience
- Instant gratification
- Brand recognition and price.

Here I hesitate to say that value for money, so often the reason we buy, may have little to do with true value.

We are often fooled by the draw of a bargain

There is a reason why the bigger brands make profits even in these difficult times. Their business is based solely around research and marketing and understanding why people buy and taking full advantage. 'Not so special' discounts and misleading claims can mean fast sales. These strategies often fly against the philosophy of many independent retailers who take pride in using local produce and often choose originality and quality over instant fashion fixes.

How do smaller businesses and brands compete?

While big brands can pay large amounts to agency to build buzz, smaller businesses have to, by necessity, work in-house. Social media has made it possible to replicate some of the techniques used by expensive marketing agencies. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn to name but a few offer free access to a large pool of potential contacts and customer. With these tools you can build your own network. There is a simple formula for this technique.

Contact + Craving + Credibility = Influence

If you are in contact with your potential advocates, they are interested in what you are saying, and once you have credibility then you can build influence. The most difficult of the three can be credibility. Credibility can be built over time as you network with people and build trust and proof of your expertise. This can seem manipulative, but it does not have to be. Go out, be yourself and use the passion for what you do to inspire people. Explain what makes your product or service different. Emphasize workmanship, customer service, attention to detail. You will be surprised how many customers are unaware of the work that goes into what you do.

Show don't just tell

Tangible demonstrations of what you can do or the product you are selling are more memorable, whether this is in the form of free samples or videos showing your product in action. Remember to make these short and snappy to keep people's attention and gain the most impact.

Build a community using social media

By building up a presence in social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook, you can build a network of interested and like-minded individuals. Hints about the best supplier, the new big thing or personal recommendations all happen regularly across social media. Don't try to sell directly to this audience. Be yourself and interact with the community. Share ideas and insights and you will build up a reputation that may eventually turn into indirect sales.

In the end the aim is not to compete with the big brands. Philosophically, many of us would not want to do this. However, by taking the basic techniques they employ you can make your own products and services more profitable, allowing you to sustain the lifestyle that inspired you in the first place.

WHAT PROBLEMS DO YOU SOLVE?

People don't search for you. Often, they don't even search for your products and services. People search for solutions to problems that they have.

MAKE A LIST: Each problem of is a potential page that can be optimized for search engines and visitors alike.



*What do you mean
you didn't know our
widget was the
latest thing for
this?*

TESTIMONIALS AND CASE STUDIES

This is your chance to demonstrate your triumphs and showcase customer satisfaction.

Pull in testimonials that talk about specific products and services.



Yes, yes, you're great ... but can you do this?

BRINGING IT TOGETHER:

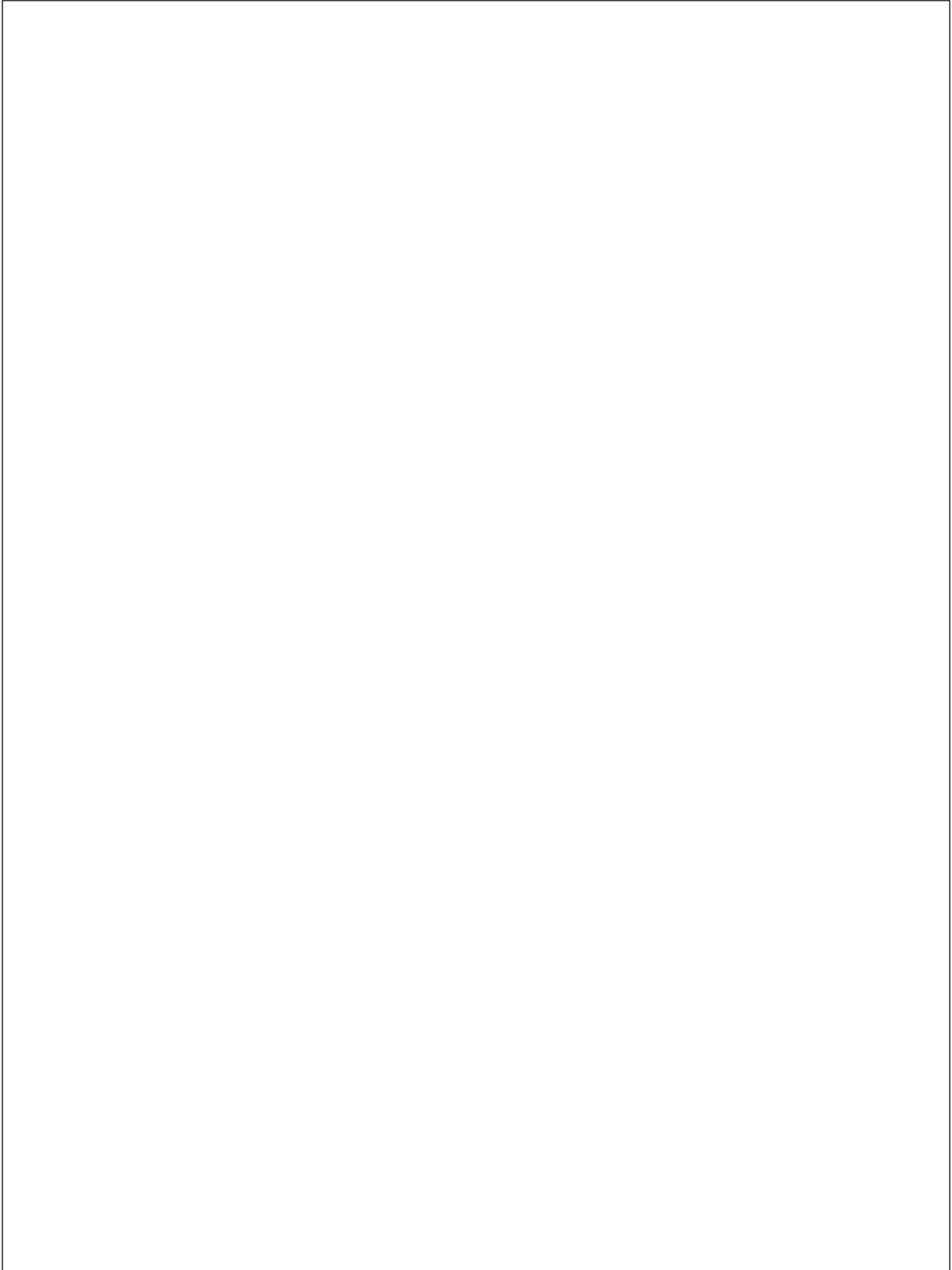
Now looking at the list of content, create a list of the pages you will need. Try and separate your most important products and services so they each have a landing page that you can optimize. Don't separate them to an extent that you have one sentence on each page. For effective optimization you need at least 300 words.

Using the three previous tasks

- Products and services
- Tasks your visitors might want to complete
- Problems you solve
- Testimonials and case studies.

Make a list of possible pages.





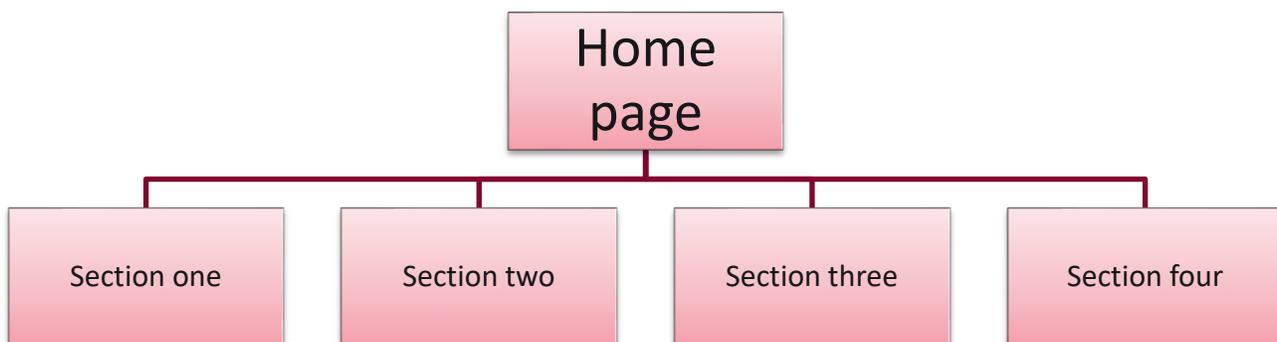
Site Map

Draw a diagram to illustrate how the pages will link in your site or menu structure.

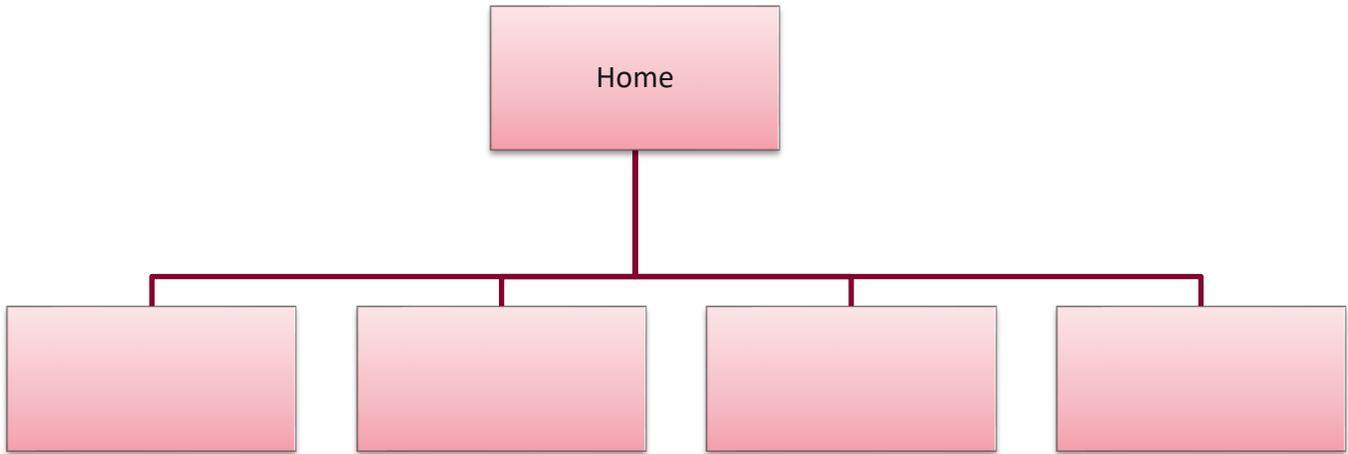
Keep in mind the task your visitors will want to achieve and prioritize the most important information.

Think of this as a map guiding your visitor through your content. Navigation and site structure should have strong sign posts to quickly finish tasks, but also attract the visitor to dig deeper.

*That last click
was the final
straw!#@**



Draw your own map here:



META INFORMATION

Meta information will form part of your search engine strategy, as well as focus you on the purpose of the page.

META TITLE:

Used in top band of browser, and often found as the title or clickable link in search results.

META DESCRIPTION:

Meta description will often appear under title in search results. Make it short and to the point to encourage visitors.

KEYWORDS:

What keywords or phrases will this page target? We encourage you to also do keyword research, to see what keywords or phrases are used by your target audience.

PAGE TITLE: This is the first heading on the page.

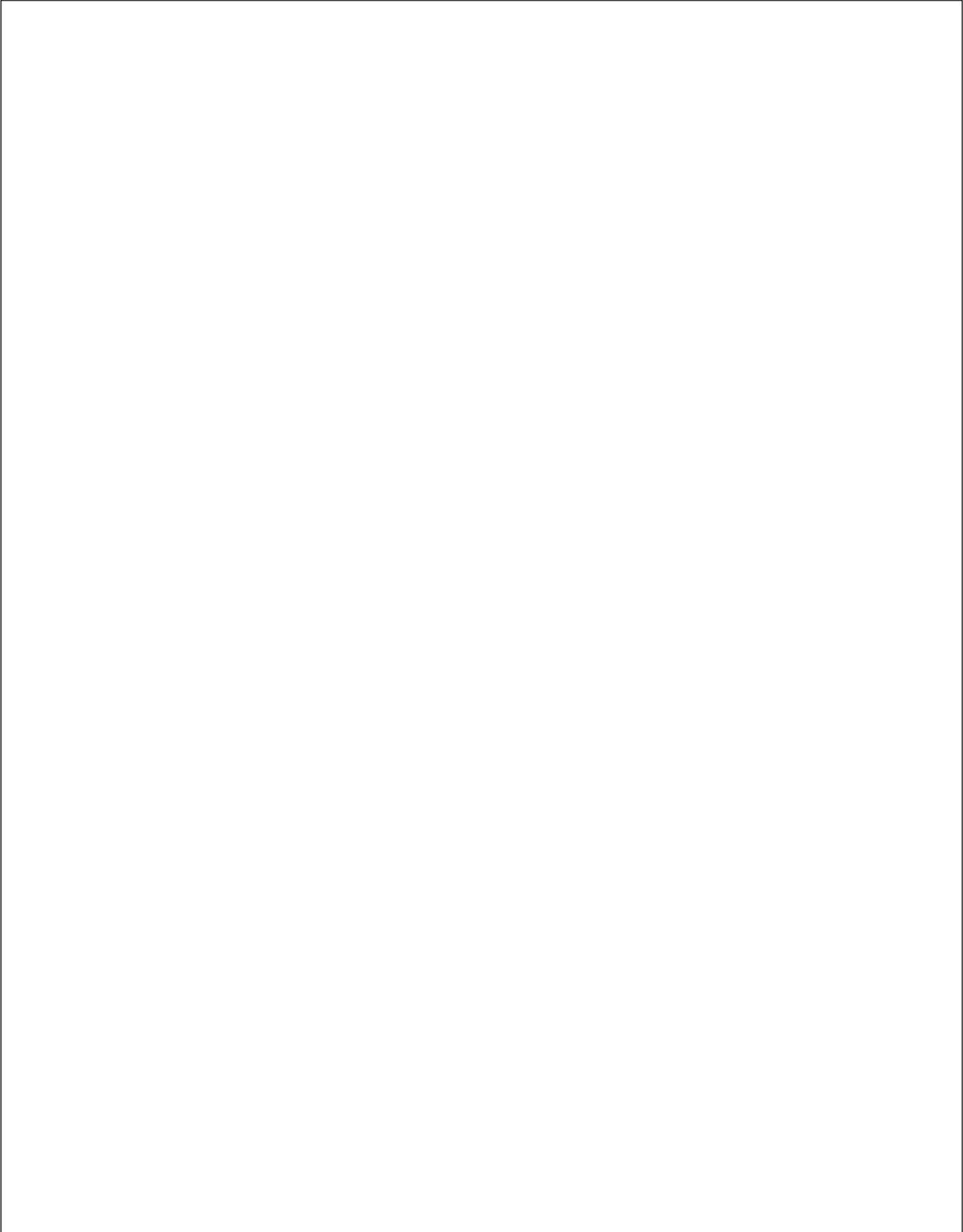
PAGE CONTENT

Start with a series of bullet points or headings to highlight the main points. These can be filled out into actual content.

- Try to include keywords in headings
- Make them easy to scan
- Quickly capture the attention of the visitor.
- Related pages. Encourage visitors to stay on your website
- What action do you want to illicit? Enquiry, newsletter subscription, sale?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying the lower half of the page. It is intended for the user to fill in the actual content of the page based on the guidelines provided above.

Page content continued:



PAGE ASSETS

CALL TO ACTION: An action to inspire your visitor to interact with the site. This could be an email enquiry, survey, newsletter or subscriptions.

RELATED, STRATEGIES AND MARKETING

RELATED PAGES: Create pathways no page should be a dead-end

PURPOSE OF PAGE: Each page should have a purpose to encourage enquiries, converting visitors into new clients or sales.

TARGET AUDIENCE: Target pages at specific audiences this will gain better conversation. If you have more than one target audience, you may want to write a variation on your content.

Repeat for as many pages as needed!

CONCLUSION ...

This is only a starting point. Your content should grow with your business. Keep updating and adding new content to keep your audience coming back for more.

Use social media to research what questions are being asked.

INTERACT AND NETWORK.

Your website and presence online should be an ongoing conversation with your target market and customers.

NEED HELP?

Line and Form offer both writing and website review services to fit your needs.

We can help revise your content or work with you to create a completely new website and content strategy that will take your business into the future.

Check out our website or contact us directly.

Web: www.lineandform.co.uk
Email: leonie@lineandform.co.uk
Twitter: @leoniejane