

How do clients
find your website
in between
the competition?

This is your website



Introduction

Marketing and business executives realise that the persuasive power of traditional advertising media is continually being eroded. Consumers are increasingly cynical - they are worn down by the constant barrage of advertising.

Internet search engines go against this trend. They have achieved something unique and valuable in the eyes of most consumers: independence! People trust Internet search engines more than they trust traditional advertisements. They know that a paid online or printed advertisement will favour the advertiser, whereas the result of an Internet search is perceived as information. Your ability to stand out from the crowd on search engines depends largely on your ability to provide information and answers to the questions being asked by internet users.

Imagine for a moment, going to your local car dealer and asking; "Does Brand XYZ make more reliable cars than Brand ABC?" You probably don't expect to receive an honest answer. If the dealer sells Brand XYZ, there is no way they will disagree with the statement.

*Your website can
become a giant
advertisement.
How easy it is to find
depends on you.*



*Why don't you help it
stand above the rest?*

As a forward-looking business leader, you realise the meteoric rise of Google offers an amazing opportunity to increase the quantity and quality of sales leads. So, can you take full advantage of your website?

Here is a simple test: Pretend you are a client searching for the type of products and services you sell. Then search Google for them. If you are not in the top 10 results, you might as well not exist.

Smart business leaders realise this and they have been quietly working to gain a high ranking. That's why they are winning the sales leads! Your competitors are investing in their website and search engine optimisation because they know it is the hottest source of quality sales leads.

Would you consider leaving your ad out of the Yellow Pages (some would, but more on that later)? Then why would you miss the opportunity for website optimisation? Your website can become a giant advertisement. How easy it is to find depends on you. If

it looks bad, you lose credibility. If designed incorrectly, people will not even find it. If it looks bad and is poorly designed then hope that people do not find the site.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Malcolm White".

Malcolm White
Managing Director, Communicat Business Solutions

I think my website is not important

We disagree. Here are some typical responses to concerns we commonly hear.

1) "We are a manufacturer and we don't sell direct. We sell through a channel of resellers or dealers. We don't want our resellers to think we are dealing with the public."

On the contrary, manufacturers and distributors are the very organisations that have the greatest need for optimising their

web presence. It is vital to support your resellers and provide them with qualified, informed sales leads. You need to build the brand. You cannot leave this task to your dealers; you will lose control. Imagine if the car manufacturers left it to their dealers to build the Internet presence for their products.

Your resellers/dealers need you to provide a marketing presence on the internet. Your website should include (as a minimum) full product information, a dealer locator, approved service locations, manuals, news and a facility for customer feedback. Your dealers and service agents will certainly appreciate the sales leads you pass to them from your website.

If your website comes up first in a client's search results, then you will benefit by being able to steer them to your better dealers/resellers. This ensures that the client receives favourable experiences and service with your product.

2) "We don't want tyre-kickers. We prefer sales leads to come from references from other clients and business contacts"

It is courteous and helpful to provide future clients with information. In effect: to put the welcome on the mat. Your website and internet

presence is an ideal way for customers to become informed buyers of your products and services. Once you provide information on your website, the tyre-kickers are less likely to bother you, since they will find out what they want to know via the Internet

3) "I don't want my competitors to discover our trade secrets."

Obviously, you are not going to give away sensitive information on

your website. You can explain the benefits of your service to your clients, but you will not explain exactly how you build your products or provide your service. You may decide to provide a secure login area to provide customers or partners to provide them with sensitive information.

4) "We are part of an international organisation. An overseas head office manages the website."

It is a courtesy to your customers to provide localised information including pricing, availability, sales and service

locations and spelling. For example, you may not stock the full range of products in Australia. You might also have your own revised product or service information

I'm not convinced!

Maybe traditional marketing services such as the Yellow Pages *actually have* been serving your purposes adequately these past few years. So are you actually satisfied with just 'adequate' results? Which one of the charts on the side do you want your business to achieve?

Google and the other search engines are many times smarter than Yellow Pages. They have the ability to answer a wide range of questions. The Yellow Pages can only answer one question: Who sells Product A in a specific location and how do I contact them?

When was the last time you searched the Yellow Pages for information about the latest model of car and its safety features? When was the last time you searched the Yellow Pages for the range of accessories you can attach to a mobile phone or MP3 player? Have you ever looked through the Yellow Pages to find out features for various air-conditioning units?

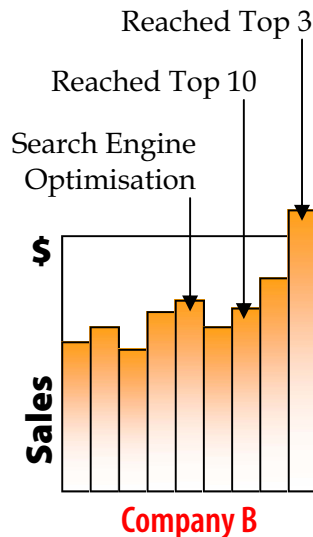
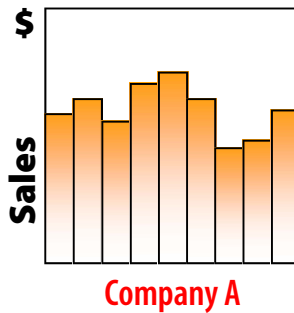
Even novice Internet users realise that trying to use the Yellow Pages to answer

questions can be a tedious process that involves ringing many vendors and repeatedly asking the same questions. People also understand that the Yellow Pages is an advertising medium and hence biased. They understand that the biggest ad does not mean the best service, price or quality.

Contrast this to search engines. Internet users realise that results do not go to the highest bidder – no matter how large their marketing budget. Search engines use sophisticated algorithms to determine the best websites that can answer the questions that people pose. If a result ranks highly, then they trust that the website will be able to answer the question they have asked.

Generally, the current trend is people usually starting their searches using a search engine – that's what they are designed for! The search *may* finish with the Yellow Pages to locate where to buy it. Consider the sales potential if your website could answer the questions people pose *and then* point them to where to buy it. No doubt people will stop there – without even going to the Yellow Pages to shop around.

Do you want your sales to look like Company A or Company B?



The writing is on the wall

Many believe that within a few years the Internet will totally replace printed directories. Even the Yellow Pages is scared that search engines will kill their business model. How can we say that? In February 2004, they purchased an Internet search engine. Their plan: to step into the arena with their own search engine.

It's a clear fact that Google and its competing search engines are the number one buying reference today. The Yellow Pages has no competition to keep it honest and affordable. Search engines have so much competition that companies have to give their services away - whilst continually making them more user-friendly and feature-packed. That's value!

Some companies are doing what they have always done; spending tens of thousands of

dollars on outdated advertising methods. This mentality is preventing them from accessing the most prolific source of new sales leads currently available. As well as saving money on advertising, you can also save money on brochures and telemarketing. You can divert some of your advertising budget toward the number one source of sales leads, and gain positive results at a fraction of the cost of traditional promotional methods.

The process of search engine optimisation

will generate sales leads from the website. Optimising your presence on Google and other search engines will give you access to the biggest source of customers in

the world today. Best of all, by the time new leads phone you they will be qualified and ready to buy. They will be fully informed about your products and services. Just show them the dotted line.



So how do search engines actually work?

This is a complex topic beyond the scope of this article. In brief: Internet search engines use automated programs called 'spiders' to crawl around the

Internet and find information. The information they find is stored in massive databases for later reference. When a user performs a search, the search engine takes the keywords the user provided, taps into its vast database and dynamically determines the best matching pages.

People in the industry know there are two major contributing factors to a website rank:

1) Website content

Does your website contain the keywords the user has asked for? What is their density? What are the page titles, headings, meta tags etc. saying to the search engines? Poor or little content always rates poorly

2) Links from external websites

The number and quality of links from other websites. Receiving a large number of links from highly rated websites means you are an authoritative source of information. In addition, getting a link from somewhere such as Microsoft is more valuable than if it came from 'Joe Blog's Corner Store' website

These two categories can be broken down into many sub-categories. As you break them further apart, the industry has varied opinions on the relative weighting of each item. This stems from the fact that the exact algorithms search engines use to determine the best matching pages are closely guarded trade secrets.



The top 3 search engines

How can I get my website to rank higher?

1) Make sure website content is valuable

Some of the standard and undisputed strategies to improve the content on your website include:

- Develop your website as an information resource. By providing genuinely useful content, you can incorporate important 'keywords'. Keywords are words that people use in a search engine to find your product/service and website. Your Internet marketing consultant can advise you how to achieve this 'emphasis'.

- All the relevant information about your products and services should be displayed on your website, for your customers to view and most importantly, so that the search engines can index it and tell your new prospects about it. This includes brochures, fact sheets and product specifications. Remember, this also increases your credibility in the eyes of clients and search engines.



Our aim is to get your website to appear in the top three results.

2) Make it easy for spiders to understand your content

Make sure that spiders can actually decipher the valuable content. There are certain technical 'features' that prevent spiders from seeing content. Checking and working around these limitations makes your website more accessible to a wide variety of people.

In addition, there are a numerous website design and technical requirements which can enhance the chance of search engines reading

You need to be aware of the technical 'features' that prevent spiders from seeing content.

and prioritising your website. For example information under the 'news' section of your website and 'headings' will be prioritised and indexed by the Search Engine spiders.

Therefore, your most important keywords should be included at those levels.

The bad news is that some forms of web design will hide your website from search engines so your website might as well not exist. Issues such as JavaScript, Flash and images all hinder the indexing ability of spiders. It takes expertise to circumvent these issues. You can still use Flash, JavaScript and images – it just pays to be aware of their limitations.

3) Obtain links from external sites

The second part of website rank – links from external sites – is usually industry specific. The exact methods to use will depend heavily on your own website content, the links you give out on your website, your industry competitors, your target audience, how

seasonal/cyclical your products or services are etc. It pays to speak with a seasoned SEO expert to determine effective strategies to pursue.

Setting up a whole farm of dummy websites with links back to your own website is not very useful. Search engines can detect this behaviour and ignore it. Links become more useful when the site they come from is ranked highly itself. The wording used in the link is also important so varying the link text between websites is also beneficial.

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4) Strategies to avoid

Generally stay clear of 'grey' techniques. These are cutting-edge techniques that exploit weaknesses in algorithms to inflate rankings. A primitive example is making whole paragraphs of keyword rich text the same colour as your background i.e. white text on a white background. It did not take long for this practise to be heavily penalised by search engines. This is the major drawback with grey techniques. Sure, it may temporarily boost your ranking; but when search engines catch on to the practise, you will be penalised. All your hard work will be thrown out the window. If the technique sounds a little 'shady' and deceptive to you, then walk away from it..

Stay clear of cutting-edge techniques that exploit weaknesses in algorithms to inflate rankings

So how can I tell if the investment increased my ranking?

You may think the obvious way to evaluate the effectiveness of your website is to look at your website and compare it with your competitors. This will tell you nothing

about the effectiveness of your website, and may even give you a false sense of security. Your website may look fantastic; have all sorts of interactive menus, animation and multimedia, and still rate poorly.

The only way to evaluate your website is to ask a search engine the same questions that your target market would ask. Once you know where you rate against other websites, it is time to determine how effective the actual leads that come into your website are. It pays to monitor where users come from, what page they enter the website, what page they leave the website and where they go once they have left. For example, if you find out that 60% of your users are going to an online finance calculator then shouldn't you

include one on your website? What if 1/3 of your clients actually came from a particular website; wouldn't it pay to investigate methods of increasing traffic from this website?

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Communicat will help you track your ranking over time.

Ask an expert Internet Marketer (such as Communicat) to evaluate your competitors who are gaining a higher search engine ranking than you are achieving. Your advisers can analyse your competitor's websites and tell you why your competitors are gaining a higher ranking. You can use this information to build a plan to increase your own ranking.

Before you start your search engine optimisation project, it is vital to record your existing keyword ranking and that of your competitors. From this point on you need to track your progress, analyse which techniques are working and which ones aren't. There are simple tracking programs that can take care of recording the matrix of results that occur when you intersect a list of websites against a

list of keywords across various search engines.

Success stories Wayne Brabham, Manager, Olympic Fitness
Equipment, distributors of gym equipment,
Melbourne:



"Our customers come into the store, they know what they want, and they buy it quickly, even though every purchase is for hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars. I asked a customer the other day why he bought from us rather than our competitor. The customer said he had done his research on the internet and Olympic had the most complete information about gym machines. He was able to use the Internet to checkout the deal with Olympic and compare it with other suppliers."

"Our website educates our customers. Usually we don't need to spend time explaining product features. This reduces our cost of sales and helps us to keep our prices low. Our customers are informed and qualified before they come into the store. They know exactly what they are buying. We also eliminate the cost of printing brochures. All of our product fact sheets are online. Our website doubles as an intranet. We can instantly print any brochure from the sales counter or the customer can print them from home. It's exactly the same brochure."

"When we originally designed our website it was a gamble. We thought the benefits would come from online orders. Sure we have received many online orders, but the benefits of a successful website go far beyond online ordering. It has made our own business more efficient and totally streamlined our sales process."

David Biwer, Marketing Manager, And1 – distributors of basketball shoes and apparel, Melbourne:



"We target a youth market. The only way to reach them is via the Internet. Their friends are online, their music and information are all online. It's a waste of money for us promoting on TV or general media. We are the number one product in our market segment and we only target young basketball players."

"We don't sell direct. Our purpose is to explain to our customers the unique advantages which our products offer. We build the brand. Then we tell our customers the location of retail outlets so they can buy our products."

Where to from here?

It's all about leads...

- Communicat can advise you how many leads you are missing out on every day. We can find out how many people are searching the web for your products and services.
- We can help you analyse why your competitors are ranking higher than you.

Company background

Communicat was established by Malcolm White in Melbourne, 1987.

He started with a vision to offer an integrated services business to improve client's business. We now have a team of 25 professionals servicing clients across Australia and overseas. Communicat has staff in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney. We also have a network of related IT support providers in other areas to assist us with national and international projects.

1) **Accounting, Business and e-Business Software**

Our experience in implementing and integrating a wide range of proven business systems enables us to find the right solution to match the needs of your business. The systems we specialise in include Microsoft Business Solutions (MBS) Great Plains, Arrow Financials, Business Objects, Crystal Reports, Microsoft CRM and Attaché Accounting. We have also developed effective and affordable CRM and e-Business software. Communicat will tailor your systems to your business without compromising compatibility and support.

- We can tailor a cost-effective strategy to increase your ranking on search engines

Call or email us today to discuss how you can increase the number of leads by increasing the latent potential within your website. Take this opportunity to harness a medium where size does not matter.

2) **Computer Technology**

Our highly skilled technicians supply, install and support a complete range of computer hardware / software, communications and network equipment, Internet related solutions and security oriented systems. We provide broadband and dialup ISP services, web site design, system hosting and custom software design. Our online hosting services provide access to email, Exchange server, accounting systems, CRM systems, business solutions and application software without the complexity and overhead of your needing to provide in-house servers and systems.

3) **Services**

Communicat is dedicated to supporting your accounting and financial systems including the underlying networking technology. We have implementation and integration experience with accounting, business and e-Business software and we can provide consulting for business related issues. Our consultants will provide training to your staff and ensure the successful implementation and lifetime support of your system. We will also help you to recruit the staff you need.

