

Netmark's 2016 Guide to  
**The 6 Fundamentals  
of Digital Marketing**



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# Introduction

Over the last several years, we've had an opportunity to talk to tens of thousands of companies about their online presence. In that time, we have also seen some dramatic shifts in digital marketing strategies. When we opened our "digital doors" back in 2007, some of the techniques that worked for our clients were very different from the majority of techniques that we use today. That's because we are always adjusting and adapting to new search engine updates and best practices so that we can keep helping our clients see positive results. In fact, the fundamentals may be the only things that have remained constant.

During our years in business, we have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on research and data to ensure that we are always ahead of the curve, allowing us to provide quality service to our clients. Part of what we've discovered is that the fundamentals will always be the foundation of online success, regardless of any new updates or design trends that pop up. With this in mind, we wanted to make information readily available to anyone who wants to learn more about the basics of digital marketing.

The purpose of this guide is not to give you a full digital marketing strategy, it is to inform and instruct you on the key concepts of website optimization and advertising on a basic level. This guide is meant to help those just starting out to have a sound understanding of what to know and what questions they can ask as they put resources towards making their business more successful.

These fundamentals will help you solve the two most important questions of online marketing:

- **How can I get more traffic to my website?**
- **How can I increase my website conversions?**

At Netmark, our main goal is to help businesses experience the online success they deserve. We hope this guide gives you a bit more direction as you strive to make your business grow.

To your future success!

~ Dan Morley  
CMO, Netmark



# A User-Centered Website

Having a quality website is critical to success in the online world. After all, your website should be at the center of your online presence. If we are to liken your online presence to hosting an event, having a good website is like finding the right location for your event. Despite all of your planning the success of an event can all come down to location, location, location. The right venue can make a good event even better and a bad venue can make an otherwise well planned event fail.

If you already have a website, you should start by taking a moment and really looking at it. As you look at it, ask yourself some key questions. Does my website serve the purpose I originally planned for it? Does it convey what the purpose of my business is? Whom do I want to visit my online business? Am I providing content that those types of visitors want? What is my website really being used for? These are all essential questions to ask yourself about your website in order to make sure that it is user-centered and effective.

Generally speaking, the end result of all of your work on social media, search results, and online ads is to get customers and potential customers to your website. That is because, ideally speaking, your website is where your potential customers can be converted into the real deal and where current customers can find what they are looking for.

If you don't have a website, we encourage you to use the following steps to help your website be exactly what your customers — both current and future — are looking for. However, we also encourage you to make sure that you are not spending all of your budget on a website that nobody can find. Hold some budget back for marketing your site.

## ○ Step 1: Have Good Hosting

When it comes to your site running well, hosting makes all the difference. In our opinion, some of the best hosting sites are:

- Bluehost\*
- Go Daddy\*
- HostGator\*
- Amazon Web Services\*

You may be wondering, what does a hosting site do? In short, they keep your website up and running, meaning that your site cannot survive and thrive without them. The hosting platforms mentioned above have different strengths and weaknesses. You need to do some research to determine which hosting service is right for you.

Going back to our event analogy; strong hosting for your website is in direct correlation to the environment, location, and resources of a venue. Picking a hosting platform with the right resources for your business will set the stage for your website and business in the digital realm. Using a good venue — i.e. hosting service — makes all the difference for your guests. In a business situation, the hosting platform will take care of essentials like file storage, email hosting, server space, databases and more. They provide these types of resources so that you don't have to provide them yourself. Below we have listed a few key metrics and questions to guide you as you find the right hosting platform for your site.

### Basic Metrics to Look For in a Hosting Company:

- An uptime of 99.9% — this means that your website will be up and running on their servers 365 days a year. Anything less can and will be damaging to the business.
- Unmetered/unlimited bandwidth
- Unmetered/unlimited webspace or disc space
- Quality customer service
- High ratings

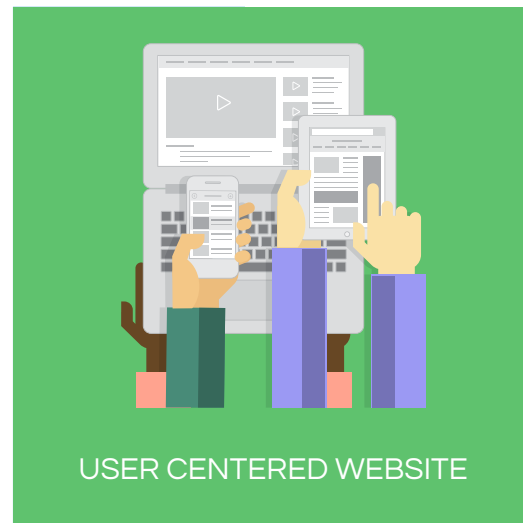
### Additional Questions to Consider:

- How many domains can you have?
- Do they support e-commerce functionality?
- How much does it cost?

## ○ Step 2: Choose an Effective URL

A URL is basically a global address for specific documents, pages, or other resources on the World Wide Web. Put more simply, your URL is what is commonly referred to as your website address and people use it to locate

Picking a hosting platform with the right resources for your business will set the stage for your website and business in the digital realm.



your site. In fact, the word locator is even in the name: URL stands for Uniform Resource Locator. Netmark's URL is Netmark.com — okay, technically our full URL is <http://www.netmark.com/> but we're trying to keep this simple. Following these tips will help you create an effective URL.

### Make it Relevant

Your URL should represent either your company name or what visitors will find on your website. It is common practice to use your company name with no spaces followed by a domain name like .com or .org. However, there are times when it makes more sense to have a URL that is related to what you do instead. Either way, your URL should be relevant to your company. If you choose a URL that is not readily associated with your business, you may need to pursue a variety of branding opportunities to connect your web address to your business in people's minds — making your URL relevant to your company. Believe it or not, there was once a time when nobody knew what the URL Google.com was for.

### Keep it Short and Simple

There are a lot of good reasons to keep your URL short and simple. Of course, short is relative but you need to make sure that your URL is short and simple enough to be typed without difficulty. Long and/or difficult addresses can cause problems for users and introduce opportunities for typos to land people in the wrong place.

#### Things to avoid in your URL:

- Words or names that are difficult to spell
- Excessive and/or irregular repetition of letters
- Long strings of words
- Hyphens and underscores

When listing your URL on both physical and digital assets, you may choose to capitalize the beginnings of words to help separate them in people's minds. For example, if your URL is something like [manywordsstrungtogether.com](http://manywordsstrungtogether.com), you may want to think about listing it as [ManyWordsStrungTogether.com](http://ManyWordsStrungTogether.com). The capital letters won't affect people's ability to get to your site, but it will help separate the words in their minds.

### Make it Effective

Your URL will be present in many different locations. In order for it to be effective, you'll need to think about how your URL will be used on your social media platforms, on other websites, and even on signs and other

Long and/or difficult URLs can cause problems and introduce opportunities for typos to land people in the wrong place.

physical assets. As mentioned above, you may choose to use capital letters to delineate words within your URL. Whatever you decide, however, make sure that you are being consistent in your use. To really be effective, it needs to be both clear and memorable. You should also determine if you will want to pursue your URL as a keyword for search results because this will affect how you use your URL on your site and elsewhere.

### Keep the User in Mind

In short, you need to keep the user in mind when creating and branding your URL. When your URL is memorable and easy to type, people are more likely to visit your website directly because strong URLs make it easy for users to get to your site.

#### Some Examples of Strong URLs Are:

- [color.adobe.com](http://color.adobe.com)\* – Very simple and highly relevant to the site's content especially since Adobe is already branded in most people's minds.
- [www.mashable.com](http://www.mashable.com)\* – Easy to remember and has been branded in the minds of users.
- [www.idahofallsfamilydental.com](http://www.idahofallsfamilydental.com)\* – This example URL has very strong ties to both an industry — family dentistry — and a location — Idaho Falls — making this a very strong URL.

#### Some Examples of Weak URLs Are:

- [www.manyonline.org](http://www.manyonline.org)\* – Without strong, targeted branding, most people would not associate this URL with the Museum Association of New York.
- [www.a4pt.org](http://www.a4pt.org)\* – This URL is so simplified that it could lose all meaning without strong, targeted branding.
- [www.commoncompanyname.com](http://www.commoncompanyname.com)\* – Using a common name for your URL gives no indication of what your company is or does, and can become confused with similarly named companies.

## ○ Step 3: Build a Strong, Effective Website

As we already mentioned, a strong, effective website should be at the center of your online presence. All of your social media outreach, search engine results and online advertising should be geared toward directing qualified traffic to your site so that you can sell your products or services.

In order to accomplish this, your website needs to be built on a strong foundation — on a strong Content Management System (CMS). Some of

A strong, effective website should be at the center of your online presence.



the best and most commonly used CMSs are WordPress\*, Wix\* and Joomla\*. Finding the right CMS for your website is the key to effectively managing your time while still having a great website. Even if you know how to code, manually coding your website can drain a large amount of time and energy that could be directed more effectively elsewhere in your business. One of the main benefits of these CMSs is that they do most of the background coding and programming for you.

If you don't have any web design or coding experience, we would strongly suggest that you have your website designed by a web design company. However, you'll want to make sure that they build your site with a CMS that you can learn how to update yourself. You generally don't want to be responsible for making big changes to your site, but being able to make small updates without working through a third party can be very beneficial under specific circumstances.

Most hosting services will allow you to connect your website directly to your chosen CMS, but it's important to make sure that you can use the two together. The whole point of your CMS is to make website creation easier, not more complicated.

Some additional ways that a good CMS can help you include:

### Pre-Designed Themes

A pre-designed theme is essentially a template that can be used with a specific CMS to build a strong, attractive website more quickly. Some of these themes are available for free, but most range in price from \$50 to upward of \$100 depending on the developer and the features that are included in the theme. Generally speaking, you get what you pay for so it can be a good idea to invest in a quality theme. ThemeForest\*, TemplateMonster\* and Wix Templates\* offer many attractive, effective, and mobile friendly templates that can be used to create a strong website. Many of these themes are also designed to be responsive and look good on a variety of mobile devices as well as in web browsers.

### CMS Plugins

Most CMSs offer a variety of plugins that can be used to help you create landing pages, slideshows, and more. Most of the plugins are quick and easy to install, but you may need to take some time to learn exactly how to use the plugins to your advantage.

### E-Commerce and Back Office Options

If your website needs to have ecommerce functionality or any other back

The whole point of your CMS is to make website creation easier, not more complicated.

office options, you'll want to make sure that you choose a CMS that is designed to support these functions. This will allow your website to function correctly without having to spend a lot of time on custom coding.

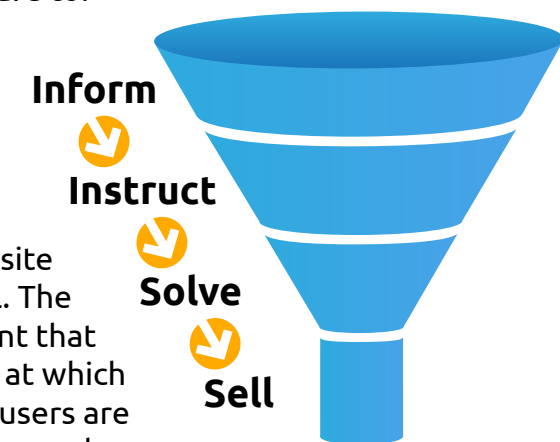
## Step 4: Create Useful Content

Once you have the right hosting platform, a solid URL, and a strong website to send your users to, it's time to fill it up with content. If we go back to our event analogy, content correlates to the drinks, appetizers, entrées, and desserts that you serve in order to satisfy your guests once they are at your venue. But you may be asking yourself, what is content? To put it simply, content is information that you present in order to help your clients and prospective clients. Content comes in a wide variety of forms from on-page text to infographics and videos. This section is not intended to be a comprehensive look at content marketing, but it should help you understand the basic idea.

In our experience, content should be used to strategically funnel your website visitors toward the actions you want them to take. To this end, we suggest creating a variety of content that fits into different sections of what we call the content funnel. Each piece of content should be designed to help your website visitors in some way. The main portions of the content funnel — and the ways you can help your visitors — are to:

- Inform
- Instruct
- Solve
- Sell

Depending on their needs, visitors to your site may enter at different points in this funnel. The best results come when you provide content that addresses their specific needs at the point at which they enter your funnel. Keep in mind, that users are generally looking for a solution to a problem and you can provide that answer. As with any other strategic funnel, the upper levels are designed to expose a large number of people to your information. The trick is to use upper level content to help create more qualified traffic to your lower level content. Content can take a wide variety of forms, but it's your job to make sure that it is the relevant solution your users are looking for. And, yes, one piece of content can sometimes fill more than one of these needs.



# SEO

## Search Engine Optimization

If you have looked into digital marketing in recent years, it's possible that you've heard the phrase "SEO is dead." However, nothing could be further from the truth. Search Engine Optimization has been the lifeblood of being found through search engine searches for well over a decade and it will continue to be important for years to come. The "dead" part of SEO is attempting to manipulate the signals that search engines use for ranking sites. In recent years, Google and other search engines have caught on to these manipulated signals and worked to minimize the effect of the manipulation and/or penalize those sites that have used those practices, especially in excess.

### ○ Relevant, Useful and Important

In its true form, however, SEO is making sure that your website is following specific, best practices so that Google and other search engines can see and rank your website. Put another way, SEO is creating or improving your website — sometimes in ways that aren't visible — so that the search engines recognize it as being relevant, useful, and important in regards to the question asked by a searcher.

When a search engine thinks that your site is relevant, useful, and important to a search query, it should rank well in the Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs). Unfortunately, SEO is not a "one and done" process. It can be a relatively slow process at the outset and requires consistent effort to maintain. Search engines are constantly evolving, and your SEO strategy has to be able to evolve with them. The power of a good SEO campaign is unbeatable, but it is a very competitive and fast paced environment.

You should also note that successful rankings and traffic from SEO seldom happen overnight. Instead, you will need to consistently work on your site to make sure that everything is working properly and being seen by search engines. Additionally, you should understand that SEO isn't really about being ranked number one for one specific keyword. In fact, the best SEO strategies target many different keywords and focus on garnering better traffic, not just more traffic for your site. Think about it, would you rather have 1000 visitors with only 10 converting into customers or 800 visitors with 15 converting

into customers. Don't get so stuck on rankings, specific keywords, and overall traffic numbers that you lose sight of the overall results that can come from your SEO strategy.

Taking it back to our event analogy, SEO is all of the planning that goes in ahead of time to make sure that the event runs smoothly and that people are aware that the event is happening so that they can attend. For example, if you're hosting a public event, you would want to have the event fully planned and scheduled ahead of time so that there are fewer opportunities for problems to arise. You'd also need to follow applicable deadlines and guidelines in order to make sure that the local newspapers, magazines, and event listings are able to publish information about your event in their events calendars so that people who might be interested in your event can hear about it.

### ○ Start with a Strategy

Establishing an SEO strategy is like planning your event. The more thought you put into who you want to attend and how you're going to let them know about your event, the more successful you'll be.

**Your SEO strategy should begin with these questions:**

- Who is your ideal customer?
- Where are they located?
- Where do they spend their time online?
- What words and terms might they use to search for companies like yours?
- What is their likely intent behind each search query?

### ○ Optimize Your Website

Once you have a strategy in place, you'll need to optimize your website. Doing so is like following the rules and guidelines established for having your event listed in event calendars and listings. Typically, you can't just call the publisher of an event calendar on the day of your event and expect it to be listed. Similarly, you can't expect SEO to launch you to the top of the search results overnight. Below, we've provided you with some of the most foundational ways in which you should optimize your website to yield long-term SEO results.

Don't get so stuck on rankings, specific keywords, and overall traffic numbers that you lose sight of the overall results that can come from your SEO strategy.



SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

**1. Utilize Relevant Titles and Meta Descriptions**

Your titles and meta descriptions are very important pieces of information because they show up in the search engine results. A page’s title is the heading that shows up in the search results and it is also the name that appears on the tab or window when you are on the page in a web browser. A meta description, on the other hand, is the information that shows up below the title in search results. These two short pieces of information are generally the first impression you get to make on a potential website visitor, so make them count.

*Example:*

**Page:** Netmark’s Homepage (<http://www.netmark.com/>)

**Title:** Netmark - Digital Marketing Agency

**Meta Description:** Netmark is a premiere digital marketing agency specializing in paid advertising, social media management, and website SEO.

*How it Appears in Search Engines:*

**Google Result:**

**Netmark - Digital Marketing Agency**  
[www.netmark.com/](http://www.netmark.com/) ▼  
 Netmark is a premiere digital marketing agency specializing in paid advertising, social media management, and website SEO.  
[Contact Us](#) - [Search Engine Optimization](#) - [About Us](#) - [Pay-Per-Click Management](#)

**Bing Result:**

**Netmark - Digital Marketing Agency**  
[www.netmark.com](http://www.netmark.com/) ▼  
 Netmark is a premiere digital marketing agency specializing in paid advertising, social media management, and website SEO.  
[Staff Profile](#) · [Contact Us](#) · [Services](#) · [Pay-Per-Click Management](#) · [Website Development](#)

You should also be aware that search engines can display alternate text from your page if they don’t feel that your meta description is relevant to the searcher’s query.

**2. Submit an Up-To-Date Sitemap**

A sitemap is essentially a list of all of the pages on your website. An HTML sitemap is generally accessed via a link in the footer or header of your site and helps visitors find a specific page that may or may not be accessible through your other menus. An XML sitemap, on the other hand, helps Google

and other search engines to better crawl and index your site. By submitting an XML sitemap, search engines are able to discover and index all of the pages on your site more easily. When the search engines are able to crawl and index new and updated pages on your website and blog, your organic search rankings tend to improve.

**3. Have Relevant Content on Your Pages**

As we’ve already discussed, having relevant content on your pages allows your site to be relevant to searchers’ questions. On-page content needs to be written and presented so that it can be used by your site’s visitors to answer the questions they have. Search engines exist to help people find what they are looking for on the Internet. It’s your job to make sure that the information on your site’s pages is relevant to the questions your ideal customers are likely to ask. Don’t write for the search engine bots though. If your content isn’t useful to real searchers, they are unlikely to stay on your site and become customers.

**4. Target Keywords That Are Relevant to Your Business**

Your on-page content should include the words and phrases that you want to rank for. If you want people to find your site when they are searching for Blue Widgets, then you’d better have the words Blue Widgets on your site.

You should be aware that while ranking for general keywords can be a great goal, it may not be practical due to competition levels and varied searcher intent. Going after less competitive “long tail keywords” can actually be more productive and result in better qualified traffic coming to your site. As an example, instead of targeting just the phrase “Blue Widgets,” you may want to target a phrase like “Blue Widgets for sale in Your Town, USA”

**5. Work to Gain Links from High Ranking Websites**

Clear back in the dark ages of the Internet (circa 1997) Larry Page and Sergey Brin wanted to find a better way to organize the seemingly infinite amount of data available on the World Wide Web so that people could find what they were searching for. In the early days of their company — a small endeavor they named Google — they started looking at links between websites as votes approving of those websites. This groundbreaking idea would eventually become the foundation of most modern search engines.

Over nearly two decades, this idea has been refined and become more detailed and complex. Now, instead of simply counting the number of links

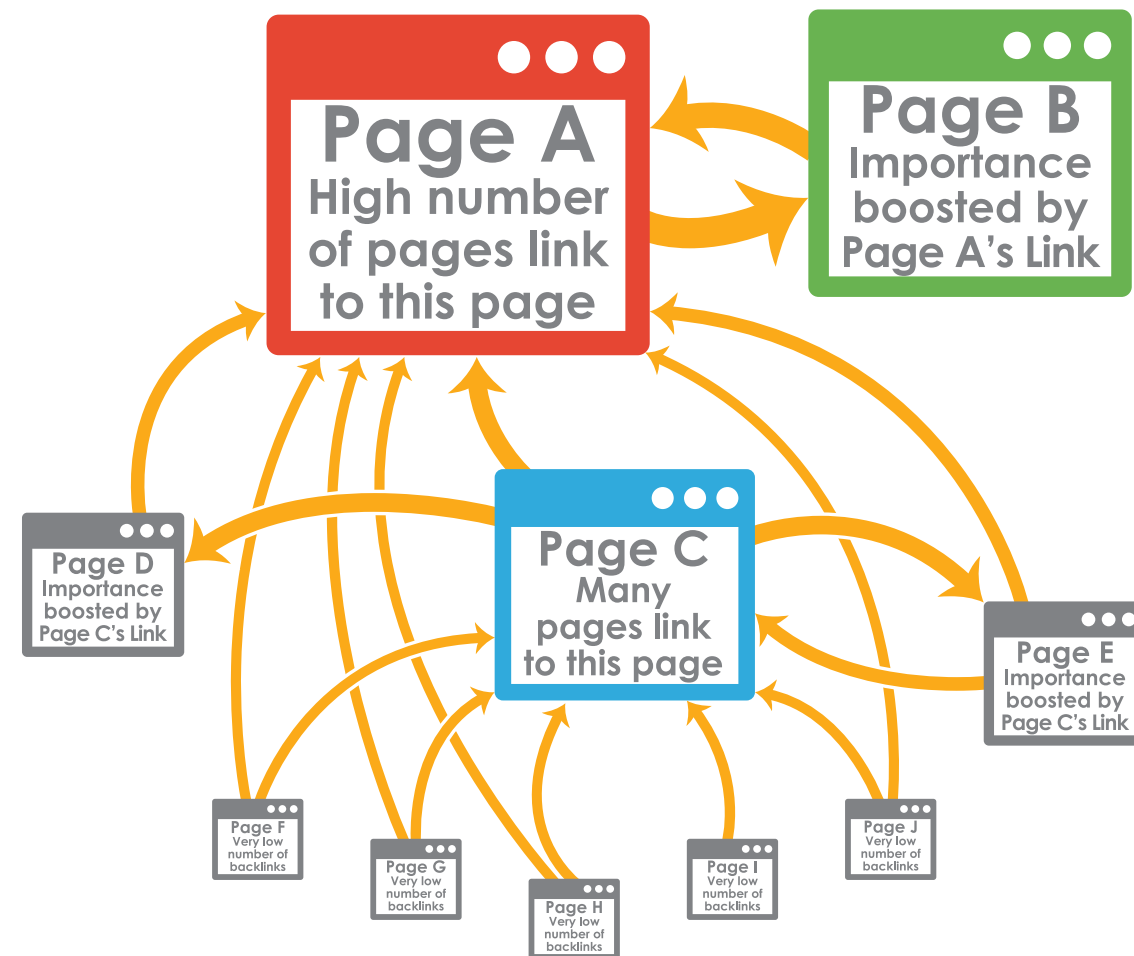
Going after less competitive “long tail keywords” can actually be more productive and result in better qualified traffic coming to your site.



leading to a specific website, search engines also look at the quality of sites from which those links originate. If the links look “spammy” or are irrelevant to the website they link to, the links will be discounted and the site possibly penalized for low quality links. Links from a .gov or .edu domain tend to be more trusted than those coming from more general domain types like .com because entities have to prove who they are in order to get these types of domains. Nevertheless, .com sites that are well established and trusted by the search engines also have more weight when it comes to their links.

Sites that are well established and trusted by the search engines have more weight when it comes to their links.

As illustrated in the graphic below, large numbers of links can boost your importance but so can a smaller number of links from trusted and well established sites. In essence, getting links from high ranking and trusted websites is like bringing a popular friend or friends with you to a party: you’re cool by association and the host’s estimation of your popularity is increased.



# SEM

## Search Engine Marketing

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is a blanket term used to describe a variety of online advertising efforts. Like SEO, it is used to attract users to your site who will find your offerings valuable to them. When people think of Search Engine Marketing, they usually only think of the ads that are placed at the top and to the right of search engine results in search engines like Google and Bing. However, the term is also commonly used to refer to paid advertising on social platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Google+ and Pinterest; on many websites; in many apps and throughout the digital world.

This type of online marketing is also commonly referred to as Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising because you generally pay a certain amount each time somebody clicks on your ad, although there are also options for paying per thousand impressions on many online ad platforms.

Whether you’re referring to paid online advertising as SEM or PPC, there are some key elements you should understand before you get started.

### Differences Between SEO & SEM

Let’s start with some key differences between SEO and SEM. As we discussed above, SEO is used to get your website to rank in the regular search engine results, commonly called organic search results in the digital marketing industry. Conversely, SEM is paying to place your ads with your website information in specific locations, including above or next to search engine results.

Both the organic and the paid sides of search results can be highly competitive, but they offer very different value propositions. For example, while SEO tends to be highly effective in the long term, it can take 6 to 12 months — or even more depending on competition levels — to see consistent results from your SEO efforts. You also must continue to optimize and refresh your online presence in order to maintain rankings. With SEM, on the other hand, you can see placement of your listing almost immediately but maintaining that placement requires upkeep and a constant infusion of money.

One of the best analogies we’ve heard for the difference between SEO and





SEM is to think of it like losing weight via diet and exercise or via plastic surgery. SEO, like losing weight through diet and exercise, takes time to be effective, requires constant attention to details, and still requires work to maintain once the desired results have been achieved. SEM is more like using liposuction to take the pounds off. The results are fast and dramatic, but require money and constant upkeep in order to be maintained.

### ○ Key Components of SEM

SEM is a simple idea that can have complex implementation. While we don't have the time to delve into all of the specifics of SEM implementation, let's look at some of the key components that can make your paid online marketing efforts a success.

#### **Cohesive Campaigns**

When you work in SEM, as in traditional advertising, you work in campaigns. A campaign is simply a series of ads that share a common theme and are designed to work together. In SEM, you create your ad campaigns to target specific, relevant keywords. The most effective campaigns are cohesive; they tie everything — your keywords, your ad groups, etc. — together so that you aren't putting out conflicting messages with your ads.

Here at Netmark, we sometimes call this the Princess Theory. Chris Parrett, one of our SEM Specialists, says that "The Princess Theory refers to a little girl's princess-themed birthday party. Everything — from the decorations to the cake to the party favors — matches the theme. Similarly, your AdWords, ad groups, and campaign as a whole need to match the same theme."

#### **Relevant Ad Placement**

Another way to make sure that your ads are as successful as possible is to make sure that your ad is relevant to where it is being placed. Going back to our event analogy, placing fliers for

a golf tournament in a sporting goods shop is likely to yield better results than placing them in a sewing machine store. Of course, you want people to click on your ads. But, ultimately, you want people to see and click on your ad who are interested in your solution. What you have to understand is that it doesn't matter how many people see your ad if the people who see your ad aren't interested in what you have to offer.

"The Princess Theory refers to a little girl's princess-themed birthday party... Everything matches the theme. Similarly, your AdWords, ad groups, and campaign as a whole need to match the same theme."

– Chris Parrett,  
SEM Specialist

The best ad placements are contextual to what the person seeing the ad is doing, seeing or reading at that time. Think of the last time you were late getting to the theater. You probably didn't miss the beginning of your movie, but you may have missed some of the previews. Were you disappointed at missing the previews? If not, do you know someone who would be? The answer is probably yes. However, the question that arises is, why? Why would somebody be disappointed when they miss movie trailers? After all, they're just ads.

The answer may surprise you. Most people don't like to miss the previews before a movie because they actually want to be advertised to under these circumstances. The ads are contextual to what they are doing and it actually adds to the experience instead of detracting from it. Contextual advertising — advertising goods or services that are related to what somebody is doing, seeing or reading — has been shown to be highly effective. Because of this, context and relevance are the key to success in online advertising.

#### **Understanding Ad Rank and Ad Position**

When working with paid search platforms like Google AdWords or Bing Ads, your ad position refers to where your ad falls among the ads placed around specific search results. In a traditional advertising auction, the person who is willing to pay the most gets the best placement. That's not necessarily true in ad placement bidding for search engines.

Google Ad Rank and other search engines' ranking determinations actually involve a combination of different factors. Remember, search engines are trying to give the best and most relevant information they can to their users so that those users will return and use their services again. That's why most search engines use custom algorithms to determine ad placement based on factors like bid and relevance. And on most Pay-Per-Click ad platforms, including Google AdWords, you only pay when your ad is clicked on.

#### **Google Ad Rank:**

Let's take a closer look at how Google Ad Rank is determined to illustrate how ad position is determined. Hal Varian, Google's Chief Economist, says that they use a variation of what's called a second price auction for ad placement. In a second price advertising auction, the advertiser doesn't have to pay their full bid, they only have to pay enough to beat the next highest bidder below them.

Why would somebody be disappointed when they miss movie trailers? They're just ads. But people *want* to be advertised to under these circumstances. The ads are contextual to what they are doing and it actually adds to the experience instead of detracting from it.

Varian gives an example where Bidder #1 bids \$4, Bidder #2 bids \$3, Bidder #3 bids \$2, and Bidder #4 bids \$1. In a traditional auction, each would pay what they bid and be placed in descending order. In a regular second price auction, on the other hand, their placement is still descending but bidder #1 pays \$3, Bidder #2 pays \$2, Bidder #3 pays \$1, and so on. In short, you bid what you are willing to pay as a maximum, but you actually pay just enough to beat your competition. In this type of auction, the buyer often pays less than their full bid. With us so far? Good, because this is where it gets even more complicated.

Traditional Auction		Second Price Auction			
Bidder	Bid	Payment	Bidder	Bid	Payment
Bidder #1	\$4	\$4	Bidder #1	\$4	\$3
Bidder #2	\$3	\$3	Bidder #2	\$3	\$2
Bidder #3	\$2	\$2	Bidder #3	\$2	\$1
Bidder #4	\$1	\$1	Bidder #4	\$1	...

Your ad placement through Google AdWords takes into account more than your maximum bid because they want to show highly relevant ads to their users. Therefore, your ad position is determined using their Ad Rank algorithm. The three core elements of your Ad Rank are:

1. **Your maximum bid.**
2. **Your Quality Score** — including historic and expected click through rates (CTR), the relevance of your ad to the searcher’s query, and the quality and relevance of your landing page.
3. **The expected impact of Ad Formats** — including phone numbers, sitelinks, and the presence of your website’s domain in the ad headline.

Interestingly, if your Ad Rank isn’t high enough, your ad may not show up at all because Google feels that it isn’t really relevant to the searcher’s query. Using information from Google’s Ad Rank support pages and videos, we’ve put together the graphic below to help make it easier to understand.

### Google Ad Rank and Cost per Click

	Maximum Bid	Quality Score	Format Impact	=	Ad Rank	Appx. CPC
Bidder #3	\$2	High	High	=	20	\$1.73
Bidder #2	\$3	High	Low	=	18	\$2.42
Bidder #4	\$1	Medium	Medium	=	8	\$0.69
Bidder #1	\$4	Low	No Formats	=	5	Not Relevant Enough to Rank

As you can see, your ad position is not just about what you’re willing to spend. Bidder #3 actually has a lower Cost Per Click (CPC) for a first position ad placement than Bidder #2 has for the second position because their Ad Rank is higher due to high estimated format impact. If Bidder #2 wants to move to first position, they can improve the quality of their ad or modify their ad formatting — improving the quality side of their Ad Rank — or they can increase their maximum bid — which will also increase their CPC. Interestingly, Ad Rank is calculated separately for every search query your ad may be eligible for in order to determine if and where your ad will be placed.

While it is a complicated system, there is sound reasoning behind these ranking algorithms. To quote Varian, “...it all goes back to the ecosystem that Google, our users and our advertisers all live in. When users see better ads, they’re happier and they’re more likely to actually click on those ads and that makes advertisers happier, which makes Google happy because with happy users and happy advertisers, we have more people using our system.”

# SMM

## Social Media Marketing

As any event planner knows, word of mouth advertising can be invaluable. This has also been historically true for businesses. Good word of mouth can bring in new potential customers and bad word of mouth can scare them away. But do you realize just how much social media has added breadth and volume to word of mouth? Online reviews and social media conversations can make or break a business faster than almost anything else.

In spite of — or maybe because of — this, many business owners feel that using social media for their business is daunting and confusing. Well, you can start posting what “feels right,” or you can learn how to post in strategic ways that will help you engage your audience. The best Social Media Marketing (SMM) is driven by a clear purpose. SMM strategists can help you set clear campaign objectives that lead to the best results in the shortest amount of time and following a few best practices can really improve your social media presence.



### Best SMM Practices

#### Create a Great Resource:

- Complete your profile for your chosen platforms and make sure that they are set for public access.
- Provide useful, relevant information to those who follow your profile.
- Post regularly and use up-to-date photos and content.

#### Prepare Your Site For Social Sharing

- Make it as easy as you can for others to share the content on your website.
- Embed social sharing buttons on every page of your site and blog.
- Suggest to those accessing your content that they may want to share it with others.

#### Engage Your Audience

- Post exclusive content and run exclusive promotions on different social



sites so that those who follow you on more than one platform don't see the same things in different places.

- Don't just talk about your company – maintain appx. 80% lifestyle/industry content to 20% company content in your postings.
- Don't spam your customers – spread out your posts to increase their visibility.

#### Listen Carefully

- Respond quickly to questions, comments, and concerns – within a few minutes, not hours or days.
- Have someone available around the clock.
- Always be polite, courteous, and professional in your interactions.

### Social Media Platforms

The six Social Media platforms that businesses most frequently use are Facebook\*, Google+\*, LinkedIn\*, Pinterest\*, Twitter\*, and YouTube.\* While this is true now, it can always change due to the volatile nature of Social Media. Each of these platforms offers different strengths and abilities to the businesses that uses them. For example, Twitter can be a great way to directly interact with current and potential clients who have questions, but Pinterest is generally better for sharing information about goods or services that lend themselves to visual advertising.

Using some or all of these major social media platforms is a good idea, but you might want to consider if there is any benefit to using social media platforms that are less mainstream. For example, sites like Periscope\*, Snapchat\*, Instagram\*, Tumblr\*, StumbleUpon\*, CafeMom\*, DeviantArt\*, and Flickr\* all have good sized followings but aren't as broad in their reach as the more mainstream platforms. In SMM, sometimes it's okay to think niche because targeting your social media presence to where your target customers are already engaged can work great. Nevertheless, it's important to never use more social platforms than you can reasonably keep updated and engaging. Overextending yourself can be just as bad as not having a social media presence at all.

In SMM, sometimes it's okay to think niche because targeting your social media presence to where your target customers are already engaged can work great.



# UX Design

## User Experience Design

User Experience (UX) Design, unlike SEO, SEM, and SMM, is geared around how visitors interact with your website. While some people think that UX Design is only concerned with the aesthetics of a website — how it looks — good UX Design can actually improve the ratio of website visitors who complete desired actions based on either subtle or direct requests.

Every website owner has specific things that they want their visitors to do. Whether that is buying something, registering for a membership, downloading a file or completing a contact form, these specific actions convert site visitors into site users and customers. In the Internet Marketing industry, these types of actions are collectively referred to as conversions. The goal of good UX Design should be to increase the number of website conversions that take place without necessarily increasing your website traffic.

In our event analogy, UX Design is like having the right decorations and details — the right centerpieces, the right lighting, the right color scheme, the right MC — to turn a generic event into something truly memorable and remarkable. Having people attend a single event isn't enough. They have to enjoy the event enough to want to attend more events and maybe even tell their friends about them.

### Scientific Approach to UX Design

Improving your UX Design can involve changing seemingly insignificant details including button color, on-page images, and the wording and location of your Calls to Action (CTAs). While these things may seem unimportant, they can actually make a big difference in how users interact with your site.

We believe that in order to improve your conversion rate strategically, you have to approach UX Design scientifically. We use a five step process to apply scientific analysis in an industry that can be anything but scientific. Our UX Design process is:

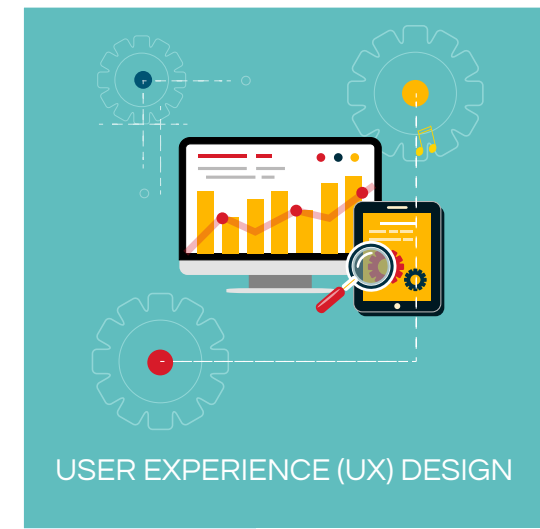
1. Create a hypothesis to improve a website's conversion rate.
2. Decide what needs to be tested in order to support that hypothesis.
3. Make the appropriate changes to the website and begin A/B

conversion testing.

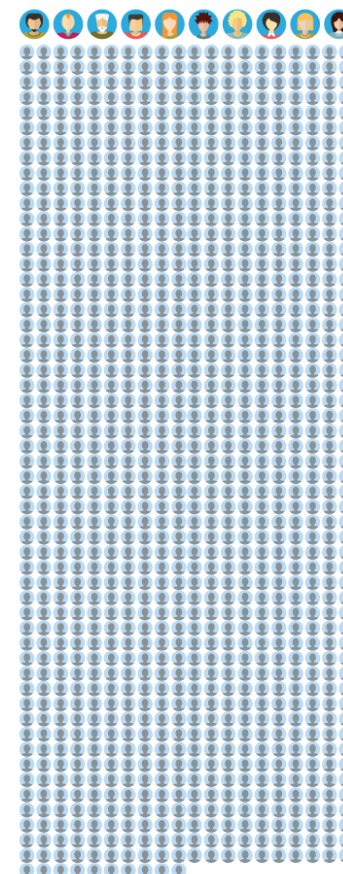
4. Collect enough data to draw real conclusions from the test results.
5. Review the conversion performance and make adjustments.

While this process takes time, it can have a powerful effect on your conversion rate and ultimately your bottom line. For example, if you currently have 1,000 visitors to your site in a week and 1% of them are converting, that's 10 conversions in a week. In order to double your number of conversions to 20 at your current conversion rate, you would have to figure out how to increase your weekly site traffic using SEO, SEM and/or SMM to 2,000 visitors. This could potentially be a daunting endeavor. If, however, you can improve your UX Design and increase your conversion rate to 2%, you can double your conversions without doubling your visitors.

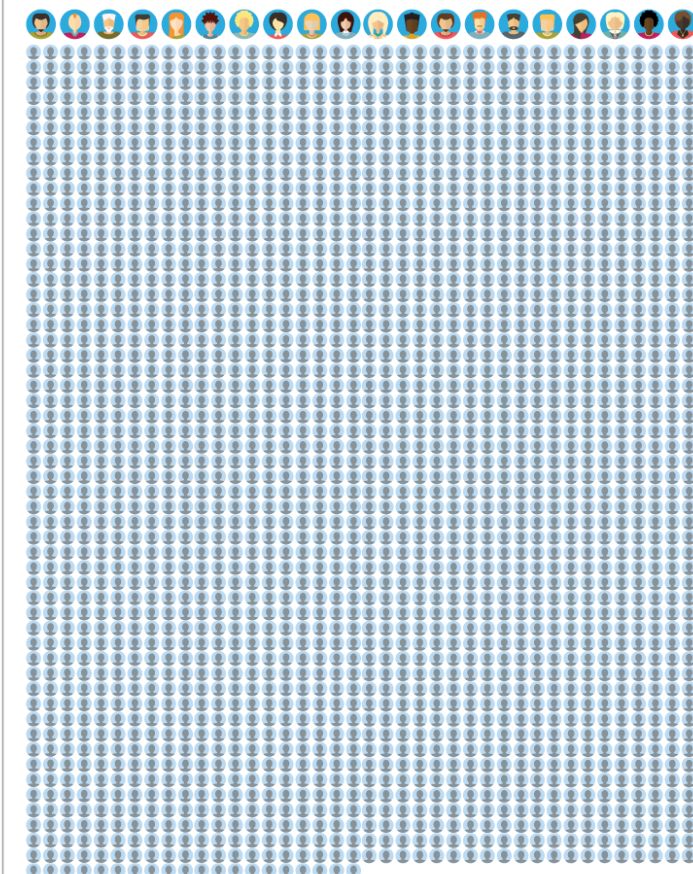
While this process takes time, it can have a powerful effect on your conversion rate and ultimately your bottom line.



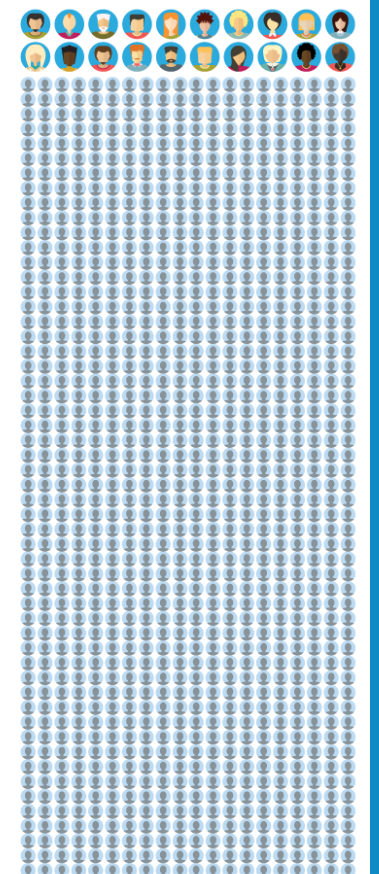
Original Conversion Rate of 1%



Doubled Conversions Through Increased Traffic



Doubled Conversions Through UX Design





# Email Marketing

In essence, Email Marketing is a conversation between you and current or prospective customers. It can be used to attract new customers, but it can also be used to maintain a relationship between your current customers and your business. When writing marketing emails, you have to be very careful of your tone because you don't want to sound like your sole purpose is to make a sales pitch.

In our event analogy, Email Marketing is like sending direct invitations to people who have either attended one of your events in the past or who have expressed interest in your events or events like yours. You would want to send invitations to these people to make sure that they are aware of new events coming up but you would also want to make sure that they aren't just throwing your invitations away.

While Email Marketing may not seem as effective as it was ten or fifteen years ago, it can still be a very relevant to modern digital marketing efforts.

When done correctly, it can be your chance to inform and teach — to build your company and its reputation in the minds of consumers and invite them to create or continue a relationship with you.

## ○ Elements of Effective Email Marketing

Inboxes are flooded with new email every day. In order to be effective, you need to make sure that your emails utilize these elements:

### **A Strong Subject Line**

Your subject line is like a mini ad all by itself. If your subject line doesn't catch a person's attention and, ideally, intrigue them, it is unlikely that they will open and read your email. Take some time to craft your subject line so that it is brief, pointed, and interesting.

### **Avoidance of Spammy Words**

We're all aware of how much email gets filtered out automatically by spam filters. Even if your email makes it past the filters, there are specific words and phrases that a lot of people tend to ignore. Here is a brief list of spammy words to avoid in your marketing email subject lines:

- Sale
- Free
- Help
- % Off
- Reminder
- Days of the week
- Donate
- Assistance
- Fwd: and Re:
- Report
- Webinar
- Superlatives like perfect, wonderful, etc.

This is by no means a fully comprehensive list, but you get the point. You have to legitimately get a person's attention in order to have a better shot at having your email opened and read.

### **Ending with a Call to Action (CTA)**

Just like on your website, requesting that people take specific actions can result in them doing so. By ending your email with a CTA, you give them a not so subtle hint of what they should do next. Will everybody perform this action? Probably not. But if you ask people to do something, more of them will than would have if you didn't ask. After all, if you don't ask, the answer is always no.

### **Personal and Individual**

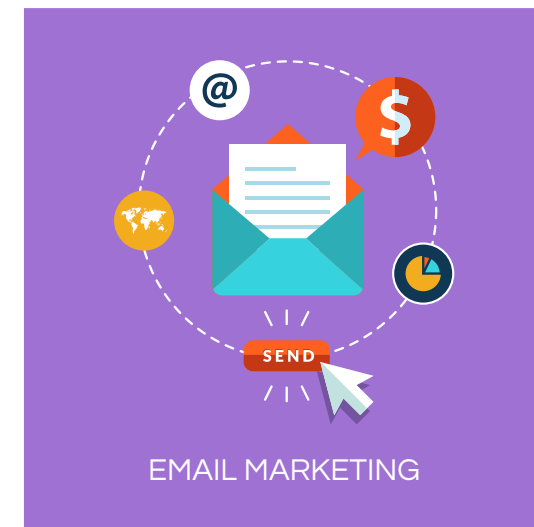
Your emails should be personable and, when appropriate, personalized. People like to feel like they are receiving exclusive information. While most people know intellectually that emails from companies tend to be mass generated, emotionally, they like to feel like they have been singled out to receive this information. Avoid sounding salesy and focus on sounding like a real person who is reaching out to them on an individual basis.

If you decide to personalize the marketing emails you send, make sure that your system is working correctly and your information is up to date. Personalization can actually be harmful to your efforts if you have the wrong data or your system isn't working right because nobody wants to open an email with the wrong name in the subject line or, worse, a placeholder like [NAME].

As you craft your marketing emails, make sure that you keep the reader in mind. Ask yourself questions like what would I want to read? what would get my attention? and how would I feel if this was sent to me?

Effective Email Marketing can be a great source of qualified, interested traffic to your site. Simply put, this is because people who have read and reacted to your emails are more likely to complete conversions on your site.

Avoid sounding salesy and focus on sounding like a real person who is reaching out to them on an individual basis.



## ○ Special Tricks

### Use the “Second Subject Line”

We are all consumers and we’ve all become more aware of when we’re hearing or reading a sales pitch. To be honest, the attention span of most consumers is somewhere between that of a goldfish and a puppy. We aren’t willing to give people (or emails) the benefit of prolonged attention anymore. Instead, we make a judgment call within 5-7 seconds. That is why you have to work hard to get somebody’s attention, and get it quickly.

It’s also important to remember that many people have their inboxes set up to show a snippet of the body copy in addition to the subject line. Used correctly, this can act as a second subject line and improve your open rates. We’ve included some examples of correct and incorrect usage of the “second subject line” below, changing the relevant text to red for emphasis.

To be honest, the attention span of most consumers is somewhere between that of a goldfish and a puppy.

### Using the “Second Subject Line” Correctly:

Exclusive Discount from [COMPANY NAME] - [Have you visited www.samecompanyswebsite.com lately? If not, now is a great time to visit...](#)

Definitive Guide to Engaging Content Marketing - [Hi Aaron, I thought you might appreciate a free copy of the latest marketing research...](#)

### Using the “Second Subject Line” Incorrectly:

[COMPANY NAME] Invites You to Attend Leading Industry Events - [If you have trouble viewing this email, read the online version. Dear John...](#)

It's a New Year! Be Bold! Be Heard! With Custom Shaped Ear Buds!! - [To view this email as a web page, go here. Forward to Friends Aaron...](#)

As with many different aspects of Digital Marketing, you’ll need to perform some A/B split-testing to know which messages work best — for example, if using their name really matters — but by utilizing the second subject line, you often double your chance of getting the right message in front of your reader.

### Utilize and Optimize a P.S.

P.S. Having a post script at the end of your marketing emails can actually improve your engagement levels! Many people simply scan through an email without reading all of the text, but a P.S. can recapture their attention at the end of the email and give you a chance to summarize what the email is about and point them toward the action you want them to take.

# Conclusion

Every business is different. Therefore, every business must approach their digital marketing with a unique plan. Because everybody’s path to success will be different, we didn’t set out to provide a step-by-step guide to online success. As Dan Morley, Netmark’s CMO, said in his introduction to this ebook, we wanted to make information readily available to anyone who wants to learn more about the basics of digital marketing. We hope that by reading this book you have learned some foundational information about the basics — the fundamentals — of digital marketing.

The six fundamentals of digital marketing that we presented in this book — a user-centered website, SEO, SEM, Social, UX Design, and Email Marketing — can work together to help you create a successful online presence. Each fundamental by itself can help you manage different aspects of your online presence, create relationships with existing customers, or gain new customers who are looking for what you have to offer.

When used together, however, these fundamentals can help your digital marketing succeed like a well planned social event. No matter what industry your business is part of, these six fundamentals can help create an interest in your brand, products and services that has not been there before.

We hope that by reading this book you have learned some foundational information about the basics — the fundamentals — of digital marketing.

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**Do you have questions  
about digital marketing for  
your business or industry?  
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