The Three Keys to Success

What makes an online business succeed?

What is Success?

Before we can answer that question, it helps to define what we mean by "success." Perhaps success is different on the Web than in the brick and mortar world. Perhaps we can apply a formula that quantifies success, or a statistic that provides a valid measurement

The Real Meaning of Success

People understand, however, that there is no simple measurement, whether money, fancy cars or big houses, that can measure success. The very concept means something different to each of us. Earl Nightingale provides a great definition that can be applied to all sorts of ventures: ***"Success is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal."*** In other words, success is not something static. It is the progress that you are making toward a worthy goal. It is a road and not a place.

Success, then, is, in some sense, a state of mind. It is a state of mind that can bring us satisfaction and joy. It is a state of mind that means continually moving forward. You do not have to create the perfect solution at a given point in time. Everything changes and, to make progress, you must respond.

A long-time Runner

EZ-NetTools has been working in the online world for a long time. From the middle of the 1990s, when the Web was in its infancy, we have worked with thousands of websites and thousands of site owners. We have seen the successes and the failures, the hits and the misses, what works and what does not. During this time, we have seen enormous changes, but we have discovered three fundamental constants that are the real keys to online success.

The Keys are Both Simple and Deep

Like many strategies that are broadly applicable to diverse situations at many different times, those three keys look relatively simple. Remember, though, that a great deal of detail lies behind the simplicity.

In addition, always bear in mind that even the best concepts will not make a bit of difference if they are not applied with relentless consistency. Consistent application of great principles is how

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progress is made, and progress is the true hallmark of success.

The three keys are a progression. Everything starts with a great website, but the best website in the world is useless without visitors. Once you have the visitors, what do you want them to do? In most cases, you want them to take some clearly-defined action. That process is known as "conversion."

Each key depends on the one that precedes it. The process is progressive. Why drive traffic to a mediocre site? Why worry about conversions if you have no traffic? Each element is applied systematically, one step at a time.

The Three Keys

If you look at the most successful online businesses, they share three characteristics. They each:

- *Have a great website.*
- *Drive Traffic to the Site.*
- *Make More Conversions*

Key 1: A Great Website

We analyze the sites in our system on a monthly basis. If you were to visit one of our most successful customer sites, you might expect to find something eye-popping, a shiny design with perfect color-coordination or a flashy site that shows off the latest in mind-blowing web technology, with bells and whistles galore.

"Our top customer sites, above all else, are functional. They are there to do a job."

Make it Functional

The reality may be disappointing. Our top customer sites are, above all else, functional. They are there to do a job. If our sites look good, so much the better, but looking good is secondary. Their first priority is to take care of business, and they do that because of the way they function. What can you do to launch a truly functional site?

Do Not Bury Important Things

Studies have shown that you have all of three seconds to capture a visitor's attention. A visitor who has to hunt for what he wants is a

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- works well with mobile devices
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visitor who is likely to head for the door.

Content is king! 👑

Having an abundance of information for your visitor is an important part of a great site. It plays a major role in the second of our keys as well.

Simple Menu Navigation

Keep your navigation simple. Visitors will not tolerate a learning curve, and they will rarely complete an action that takes more than three clicks. Navigation should be intuitive and consistent throughout the site.

Keep Files Sizes Small

Aim low. Your site should load quickly and keep fancy graphics to a minimum. Today, Internet connections are fast and computers are powerful, but that does not mean that a site should necessarily take advantage of every cutting-edge technology. Before broadband became widely available, sites were designed with slow connections and small screens in mind. Today, with many users accessing the Web through phones and other mobile devices, those same factors have come back to life.

Rule of seven.

According to recent research, people begin to lose track when confronted with more than seven items at a time. It may not always be possible, but try not to overwhelm your visitors with too many items to digest.
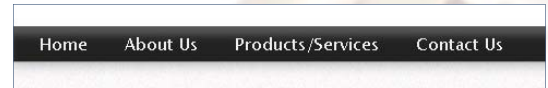
Keep it Consistent and Simple

Trust is the real bottom line. Every business relies on trust, but it is critical on the Internet, where you are not dealing face-to-face and people are constantly bombarded with stories of online scams and rip-offs. A great site must encourage trust. It can do so with a consistent, professional look. A site will never inspire trust if its navigation changes from page to page or if it presents a barely comprehensible mess of fonts and graphics.

The best sites keep things simple, consistent and functional. They load fast. They function on different devices. They display well on smaller screens. They are content-rich. They may not win awards for beauty, but they get the job done.

🔑 Key 2: Driving Traffic

The best web site in the world will not attract substantial traffic if left to its own devices.

"A Website is only as good as it's content"

Mobile Phones connections are generally have slower than land-lines . That, along with Data restrictions means keeping your file size low will you help win customers!

"The best sites keep things simple, consistent and functional. "
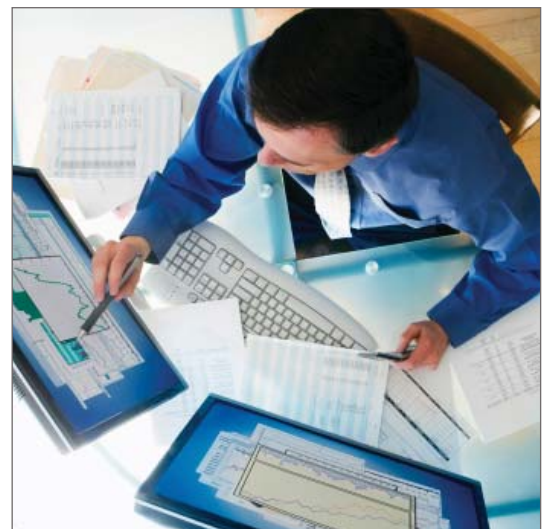
There is no shortage of people offering magical shortcuts to attracting swarms of visitors. Few, if any, of those people really know how to get the job done, because there are no tricks or gimmicks that will actually have a consistent effect. There are a number of legitimate and effective ways to drive traffic to your site, but they all take some work.

Search Engine Opimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a powerful tool. When SEO is done right, the payoff can be phenomenal. A Georgia Tech study estimated that 80 percent of website traffic comes from search engines and, even more to the point, 75 percent of searchers never make it past the first page of results. Obviously, you want to be on that first page. Good SEO can get you there.

SEO is an ongoing process. Remember that your competitors also covet that first page and will not be sitting still. Meanwhile, the search companies themselves are constantly adjusting their ranking algorithms, the secret formulas that determine who comes out on top. It takes serious effort to get to that first page, but it takes just as much work to stay there.

Content is still king. Search engines love content that is relevant, original and authoritative. A great site needs first-class content for many reasons, but nothing is more important that the ability of excellent content to harness the power of the search engines.

Paying per click is worth it if you get the right clicks for a reasonable fee. With pay-per-click, you are advertising on pages of search results for certain keywords, paying a fee each time one of your ads generates a click on your site. This is an option that can quickly get expensive, especially if your site is not converting enough of those clicks to paying customers.

There are many other methods that have proven effective in different situations. Your content can appear on external sites like e-zines and content aggregators. You can trade links with other sites. You can start a newsletter or a blog. The hottest trend, one that looks like it is here to stay, is the social networking phenomenon, and you can make use of Facebook, Linked-in and Twitter, among others, to increase your site's visibility.

Key 3: Conversion

Conversion is the last piece of the puzzle. In general, it refers to the process of getting a visitor to take a desired action. The most obvious example is the visitor who buys something, but conversion can mean subscribing to a newsletter, filling out a form or downloading some trial software.

Obviously, conversion is the goal of every commercial website and, as was true of the two steps that precede it, site owners can encourage conversions in many different ways.

"SEO is an ongoing process. Remember that your competitors also covet that first page and will not be sitting still."

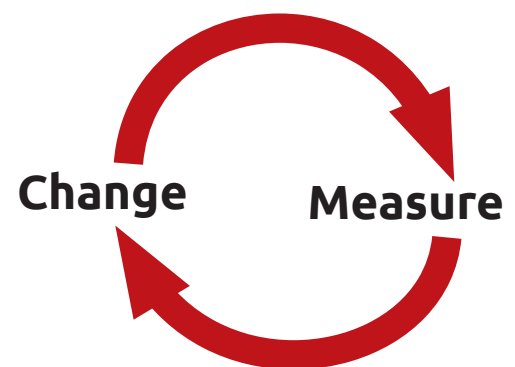*"Search engines love content that is relevant, original and authoritative."*

Change   Measure

Define Conversion

Define what conversion means to your business. Have a very clear idea of what you want your visitor to do. After all, if it is not entirely clear to you, it will not be terribly clear to your visitors.

Determine your conversion ratio.

In simplest terms, this means calculating the overall number of visitors in comparison to the number who take the action that qualifies as a conversion.

Make Adjustements

Once you have established a baseline, start improving by making incremental changes. The best approach is "split testing," in which you launch two versions of the same page and track results. This is an ongoing process in which you keep changing, testing and, in the end, progressing. Try to keep it simple. If you change too many things at once, you will never know which particular change made a difference.

Your customers are always right. There are hundreds of theories about what a website should do to increase its conversion rate. The only real experts, however, are your customers. They may not act as they "should" in response to your changes. Your job is to focus on what works, not on fitting your strategy to a theory.

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Learn More...

Each point encapsulates a great deal of information that will be explored in a deeper analysis of how these principles work in the real world.

EZ-NetTools

Launch2Success