

Small-business Guide to Winning at Web Marketing: 10 Easy Steps to Improving Your SEO

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When was the last time you opened your yellow-pages directory? Fifteen years ago, that was a shopper's primary resource for locating your business, but today your customers are turning to search engines millions of times a minute.

Search engines, like the directory of decades past, favor those listed first. The closer your company appears at the top of the list, the more likely you are to attract customers. Unlike printed directories, you no longer have to name your company AAA Repair Service — you can be found based on your ability to solve the customer's problem.

Moving up your placement in search-engine results (SER) is not something you can achieve overnight, but it can be done. Here are ten projects that you can do on your own that will positively affect your rankings.

1. Send out regular press releases or news announcements.

You don't have to wait for a major company accomplishment to alert the media, you can send a news announcement each time you have something you feel is noteworthy: a new product release, a just-launched campaign, or maybe a new logo. There are distribution services that will forward your announcement for free or at a very low cost to thousands of authors, commentators, bloggers, and editors. These releases, when posted to news sites or quoted by bloggers, contain inbound links to your site and this creates a buzz that search engines hear.

2. Add meta tags to your web pages.

Meta data is a type of computer speak that describes your page, image, or file to computer applications and search engines. Search engines are reliant on the meta data that is included in every page of your web site to know what the page is about. Without meta data, the search spider will make a best guess, but since a spider is an application, its guess may be quite far from the mark.

If you have an HTML site, be sure to include — at the very least — a meta description and meta keywords in the head section of each page. The meta description will provide the text that is displayed after your web site in search-engine results. The keywords are the words that you feel a typical visitor might type into a search engine if the visitor was looking for services that you provide.

If you have a blog site, it's even easier. Simply fill out the excerpts and tags fields provided and the blog engine will feed that information to the search engines.

3. Create a site map.

A site map is a list of the full path name of every page that you wish to make public and viewable to visitors. Site maps shortcut the process of a search engine's task indexing your site and readying it for returning in the results when someone searches on



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keywords that define your services. For more information on how to create a site map, refer to our white paper, [6 Steps to Creating a Site Map](#).

4. Contribute articles to other sites.

Gaining premium positioning in search-engine results often depends on how valid the search engines deem you and your site. If they believe that your site is misleading or weak content, they will rank you below sites of better value. If you believe that you shine in your area, consider positing stories that show off your expertise to encyclopedic or how-to sites such as [About.com](#), [How.com](#), or [Ezines.com](#). When you do post a story, be sure to complete the author information thoroughly. Most sites will not allow blatant self-promotion, but nearly all have an author profile.

5. Create a blog.

If you have a static HTML site, consider adding a blog site. Better yet, replace your web site with a blog site so that you can easily make regular contributions. Search engines are much more likely to rank sites higher that have more-current content.

6. Register with online directories and ask your customers to post reviews.

If you have a B2B or B2C business, register with online directories such as [Yelp!](#), [DEXknows](#), or [Angies' List](#) and send an invitation to your customers asking that they post a review of the services or products they have received from your company. Gather positive reviews for posting at your site as well (with the reviewer's permission, of course). Be sure to add a link to the customer's site when you do post their review since the outbound links will also help to validate your site.

7. Comment at industry blog sites.

In pursuit of validation, find other industry blog sites that are congruent with your site's goals. Post positive comments in response to postings and articles with a link to your site. Doing so will enable readers of the article to follow your site as well.

8. Post customer testimonials.

Include a comments card or send a comment survey to customers each week. Collect the positive comments and post them to your site on a testimonials page with a link to the commenter's site. Use the individual testimonials on pages of the same topic. If you're able, create a video of the customer stating their testimonial and post it to your site and to YouTube (with ample inbound links to your site).

9. Link to complementary sites.

Identify customer and partner sites that are congruent with your site's goals and create inbound (links from their site to yours) and outbound (links from your site to theirs) links. It's best if you create an entire article, post, or story about the partner with links from keywords to their site. Never create a hyperlink on the text "click here," since that will only increase your search-engine positioning for those words. Instead place a link on the entire keyphrase, e.g., "[Turn to Sir Speedy Centennial for printing services in south Denver and Centennial.](#)"



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10. Post company news to social-media sites.

Join Facebook®, Twitter®, and LinkedIn® and post company news and factoids very regularly. Every day is not too often. Be sure to post your current specials or offers. Customers will often follow your social-media accounts so that they get early notice of offers and special pricing. Also include links to follow you in your email signature line, email, direct mail, press releases, and news announcement.

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For more information on improving your search-engine-optimization skills, visit this link for [30% off the book *Small-business Guide to Winning at Web Marketing — The What, How, Who, and When of Web Marketing*](#)

If you're launching a new company or becoming a self-employed entrepreneur, then this book is for you. *Small-business Guide to Winning at Web Marketing* will help you to understand the electronic and traditional marketing landscapes and show how you can use them to benefit and grow your business.

Today's marketing is a lot like playing pinball. It's not a straight shot — you have to bounce around a lot to really rack up the points and since some pins are worth more than others, you need a certain amount of skill and luck to be able to ping them more than once. In this book, you'll learn the game basics, some strategy, and a few tricks, but mastering pinball — web marketing — will depend entirely on how long you can keep the ball in play.

There are thousands of search-engine optimization services that you can enlist, but you should understand the options available. There is so much you can contribute and this will reduce the financial impact on your company that expensive contractors can have.

This book starts with your web site and rolls right on through social media, social bookmarking, blogging, press releases, news announcements, printed material, QR codes, and much more. Don't flounder — you don't have time. Get this book and win at web marketing.



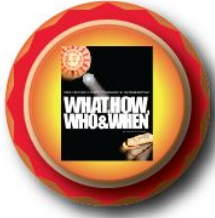
About the author

Cyndie Shaffstall, entrepreneur

[Cyndie Shaffstall](#) has been a member of the publishing and print industries for more than three decades. Her career spans many interests, specialties, and job verticals, but first and foremost, she is an entrepreneur.

At the onset of the 90s, Shaffstall provided corporate training services for companies looking to upgrade to a Mac-based workflow from traditional typesetting and pre-press workflows. Her clients at that time included reputable in-house and commercial publishers such as [United Airlines](#) and the Clarinda Company. In 1992, she self-published her first book,





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[QuarkXPress: Making the Most of Your Negative Experiences.](#)

Functioning primarily as a trainer, Shaffstall founded [The World-Wide Power Company, LLC](#) and in 1998, acquired the assets of XChange US and their publication, [X-Ray Magazine](#). The companies were merged to form [ThePowerXChange, LLC](#). Shaffstall sold ThePowerXChange in 2009 and *X-Ray Magazine* in 2010, but is still a contributing author.

Shaffstall is the inventor behind [StrappyArt](#) and the developer of [data2date](#).

In 2004, Shaffstall contracted with [Quark, Inc.](#), to assume the lead of their XTensions® developer program and in 2005, became director of their [QuarkAlliance](#)™ program — a position she still holds today.

Shaffstall has just published [Small-business Guide to Winning at Web Marketing](#) and consults as the SEO/SMO advisor for [Spider Trainers, LLC](#), a company founded to parlay the power of search engines in order to create [optimized professional visibility](#) for the executive and entrepreneur. Shaffstall works on the development of [Today's POV](#) in her spare time.