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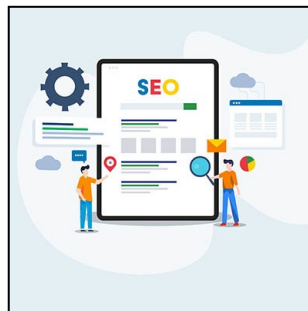
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"Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all."
— George Washington

I Don't Feel SEO is Working for My MSP



There is no denying that SEO can seem to be a little... nebulous at times. However, there are many ways to measure if SEO is working for your MSP: your analytics, search position, and of course conversions. Despite these tangible measurements, many MSPs don't feel their SEO is working. Before you call it quits, here are some questions to answer before you give up on your SEO.

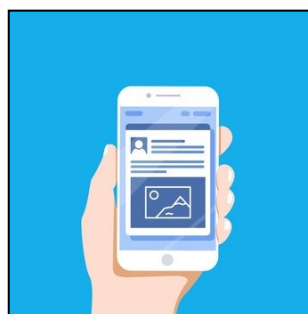
Have You Updated Your SEO for the Modern Age?

When developing their SEO strategy, many MSPs continue to fall back to the old tactics of yesterday. That is, focusing solely on or rather hoping for that silver bullet of a keyword that opens the flood gate of traffic and leads. However, that was nearly two decades ago, and the search engines, most notably Google, have abandoned the practice of using keywords as a primary ranking tool. In fact, when talking about the keywords meta tag, Google doesn't look at it at all. It's irrelevant to SEO. Period.

Regardless, it may be time to update how you think about your keywords in terms of user-friendliness.

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Keeping it Simple: Social Media Advertising



In the age of web 2.0, marketing has evolved from customers being told what to buy, to one in which business and customers have a conversation about which product is best suited for their needs. More often than not, this conversation occurs on social media.

So for example, let's say you have a new service you wish to promote and are using social media to tell your customers about it. For this primer, we will refer to Facebook, but the same concepts apply to all types of social media marketing.

Yes, Facebook.

Despite some recent hard knocks, Facebook is still the preferred social media platform for a majority of users. People usually use Facebook during their break for quick updates; this means you need to hit them with your best shot while you have their limited attention. Effective engagement means your content needs to be designed to be quickly digested and acted upon. A photo and a short bit of text with a call to action should be all you need to encourage your

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Social Media and the Rule of 7



Social media marketing, like all marketing, requires repeat viewings to enter the consciousness and equally important the subconscious of the audience. This is why there is the "Rule of 7" - the long-held belief that a potential customer needs to see your ad at least seven times before they are willing to commit to an action. Yes, there are impulse buyers, but they are the exception, not the rule. Most people take some time before they commit to a course of action and successful...



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Three Ways an MSP Can (Re)Direct Web Traffic



While you never know which new piece of content will gain the most traction, it is not uncommon for

a blog post that is not “on brand” for your MSP to take off. Instead of letting the interest in the blog and the traffic it is driving to your website go to waste, there are ways to capitalize on it and use it to develop qualified leads and conversions for your MSP services. Here are three ways how.

An Off-Topic Blog Post Can be a Success for Your MSP Website

In a perfect world, your most successful blog would be about a service your MSP offers. Unfortunately, we’re not in such an environment and sometimes your most popular content will be one that is “off-brand”. What do we mean by this?

In the before-times (before the pandemic), we held a Thursday tradition

called Crockpot Thursday. Each week we made a big meal for the office and many weeks we produced a silly video about it. This content was, by a pretty wide margin, our most viewed content. People loved it on social media, it drove traffic to our blog, and it got a lot of comments and hits compared to everything else.

Why? People would prefer to not be marketed to. That doesn’t mean marketing content is inherently bad, but fun, off-topic content is almost always going to attract a wider audience. You don’t watch television for the commercials, right?

Of course, if you aren’t the entertaining type, simply providing a wide wealth of valuable knowledge can go a long way too. It doesn’t have to strictly pertain to the services you offer; it just needs to be valuable to your desired audience.

Before determining whether or not a blog post is a success, and worth investing resources into, you should consider a few things.

Keeping it Simple: Social Media Advertising

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audience to click through to your landing page.

Here are some suggestions to make the most of the social media’s limited space and the short attention span of your audience.

A compelling headline.

Your headline should be exciting, tell what service you’re providing, and how you can help your audience reach their goals. Your headline should be unique to the campaign you’re running. So a caption for a contest will be different than one which offers to provide a solution. No matter which type of campaign you’re running, give them a reason to click through.

Add an image.

Humans are by nature visual creatures, so if you’re able, try to include a picture in your post. However, if you do, it must

be relatable to the ad and of the highest quality you have available. The only thing worse than just dropping in a random piece of clip art is using one that’s blurry, pixelated or lifted from a Google search.

Offer a deliverable.

It’s ok to give away a little secret sauce. A deliverable can be anything of value: A whitepaper, a coffee mug, discount code, anything at all, but it must be of perceived value. Further, it should be relatable to your ad and something that is unique to your business. A deliverable gives them a reason to click on your link and gives them a taste of what your company has to offer.

A strong call-to-action.

Your call of action should be well developed and provide the user a reason to complete an action. While Buy Now is a classic, Buy Now To Learn The Secret Sauce, is a bit more substantial and tells

Is the blog consistently driving traffic to your MSP website? A blog that is only hot for a day or two probably isn’t driving the type of traffic you need, particularly if it’s off message. If you don’t know, the first thing you should ask yourself is whether you are measuring your success.

Information about your website’s traffic and which pages are top performers are critical tools for developing your SEO and content marketing strategies. Fortunately, they can easily be learned by reviewing your Google Analytics.

Here’s how to check your top pages:

Log into your Google Analytics account. On the left-hand panel, navigate to Behavior, drop down to Site Content > All Pages. There you will see a list of your top pages (you can sort/filter these as you like). In our case, our top page is a blog from our Facebook 101 series. Notably, this page has almost 3,000 more pageviews than the next blog, so clearly, it struck a chord with readers...



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the audience what they’re getting and why they should click on the link.

Less is more.

Keeping the text to a minimum encourages your audience to travel to your landing page to get more information, learn about your company and how you can help them. While it’s ok to give a taste of the secret sauce, you don’t have to let them into the kitchen. In this case, the price of admission is traveling to your website and filling out a form.

KISS

Keep it super simple...your form should be as simple as possible. All you need is their name and email address. You already...



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I Don't Feel SEO is Working for My MSP

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Why is this? Early marketers used black hat tactics such as keyword spamming to manipulate search results. Google stopped placing value on individual keywords and instead focused on their attention to content as part of an overarching narrative.

When considering updating your SEO for the modern age, your business needs to consider how your potential customers receive information. Long gone are the days of using a single source of information to get your message out. In other words, your website and your on-page SEO are important, but other factors outside of your website play a huge role as well.

Moreover, today's consumers are in control of where and how they are marketed to, and unless you meet them where they are, you are limiting your ability to market your services. As such it is critical that you understand the difference between inbound and outbound marketing and why you should invest resources into inbound marketing.

Here are some areas outside of your website that play a role in your SEO:

- Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.
- Local peer groups that have an online presence (on Facebook, forums, Reddit, etc.).
- Your local chambers of commerce websites.

- Business directory listings like Yellow Pages, Google My Business, Bing, Yelp, and more.
- Local news sites that could use your MSP as a resource for technical explanations and interviews, as well as covering events.
- Your ongoing marketing efforts (any traffic you drive to your website helps Google determine the authority of your site).

On top of all this, it's also about providing great content that is valuable and helpful to your audience, and providing a positive overall experience while someone is...



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reCAPTCHA: The First Line of Defense



When managing hundreds of websites for managed service providers (MSP), security is paramount.

An MSP can't preach strong security practices to their clients while having problems with their website. These days, hackers are aggressive and relentless when it comes to using exploits to test your security. So much so that even when applying multiple layers of protection across a site, the server, and keeping everything patched, threats can sneak in. This is why it is critical to have a first line of defense; in this case, a CAPTCHA.

CAPTCHA stands for "Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart." Its goal is to keep bots from accessing your

forms. These bots can have two goals; one is to steal your SEO authority by creating backlinks from your site, reducing your SEO ranking, while increasing theirs.

In the second variant, the bot seeks to exploit a weakness, gaining access to your website and once there, compromising your site.

The second instance - the hack of their site - is what a fellow MSP was recently subjected to. Their website was so compromised, that Google listed it as a 'hacked' site. Imagine being number one in search results and underneath your title are the words, "this site may be hacked". Talk about a business killer! After numerous attempts to mitigate the hack, they reached out to our team for assistance.

In troubleshooting their site, we noticed there were over 13,000 suspicious registrations. What was worse was the majority of the entries weren't limited to

fake names, they were also hyperlinks, which once clicked, would expose their systems to intrusions. This is, of course, what one of their team members accidentally did,

exposing the business.

The question to ask is how were 13,000 false entries from a foreign country

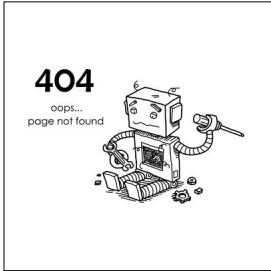
allowed to register in the first place? The simple answer is there was nothing in place to stop them. No permissions, exclusions, or requirements were placed before a visitor could register. No first line of defense. Of course, most website owners know that the solution to prevent the spamming of forms is having a CAPTCHA in place. They just don't want to use one, mainly because - and let's be honest - out of fear of turning off potential customers, which is a valid concern.

The reality is, most website developers know that a CAPTCHA can increase your bounce rate and generally reduce your opportunities for engagement. Simply put, a CAPTCHA can be yet another roadblock to conversion. A 15% bounce rate (in addition to the existing bounce rate, is nothing to ignore) due to a CAPTCHA isn't unusual, and low bounce rate is critical to engagement and conversion opportunities. So this MSP needed to make a trade-off: open access to their registration forms, or install a CAPTCHA and potentially reduce their opportunities for traffic and conversions. They decided that they would rather have more...



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Don't Be Afraid of the 404



Despite reports to the contrary, 404 errors do not directly hurt your SEO and marketing practices. They can, however, indirectly cause issues. We're going to examine how, but

rest assured Google doesn't look at a 404 error and take points from your site as if it was a punishment.

404 errors are generally not a bad thing; they are a natural part of a website's life cycle. Your site should always be evolving and when things change, some things going to break. The 404 error is Google's way of verifying that you wanted to remove a URL from your website or to let you know something is wrong. It's merely a reporting system; it does not judge you.

The only time a 404 error would indirectly be a problem would be if the URL was connected to other content whose absence could affect user experience. If that were the case, you would do a redirect. Google ranks the user's experience very highly, and if they are excessive, 404s can cause the user inconvenience. This could cause Google to notice how visitors interact with (or don't interact with) your site and reduce your ranking, because you've reduced your authority by having too many broken URLs.

One of the most important things to consider when it comes to SEO is that Google is primarily concerned about user experience. Everything that you do - from increasing your ranking, acquiring traffic, obtaining conversions - in fact, all your marketing efforts, should be viewed based on how they benefit the experience of your audience. That's what

Google is mostly concerned with. This means a 404 is considered as normal, as long as it doesn't affect user experience. When they do however, 404 errors can become a problem.

Types of 404s

All 404 errors are not the same and can be treated with various levels of concern and urgency.

- **External 404** - These happen when another site makes a link to a page on your site and the page it links to is no longer there. Sometimes, you don't have control over these. Anybody could mistype a link or try to link to a page on your site that just isn't there. However, if you removed a page and cause a legitimate 404 error, you could be missing out on qualified referral traffic.
- **Outgoing 404** - The reverse of an External 404, an Outgoing 404, occurs when you link to another site's page and the page it links to is no longer there. While a minor error due to the inability for you to control what another site is doing, it is best to correct them if possible, just from a user experience perspective. In cases like this, you should either update the link and if that's not possible, remove it.
- **Internal 404** - These are broken links within your site. If you have to worry about any 404 error, this is the one to worry about. An internal 404 error can damage your reputation and as a result, your ranking. An internal 404 error happens when someone clicks on a link on one page of your site to go to another (internal) page on your site, but the link is broken and goes to a 404 page...



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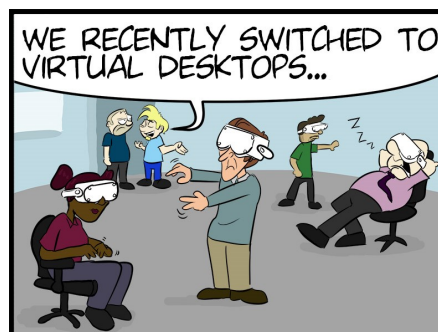
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