21 POINTERS TO
SHARPEN
YOUR WEBSITE

DULL WON'T WORK.

Shall we begin with goodbye?

Your visitors are going to make their decisions to stick around and click around in seconds. If the pages you present don't engage them immediately, say goodbye. Off to Google they go.

Let's get to the point.

Your site should—and yes, it could—be your most powerful marketing tool.

It can't be cluttered. It can't be confusing. It can't be dull. Everything on it must be as sharp as possible.

This guide gives it to you straight. It presents a series of concise, to-the-point pointers to help you understand how to develop a highly effective website.

The tips are simple. However, it's going to take some hard work to make them work hard. Are you with me?

Let start sharpening.

Unscientific and biased research by Feldman Creative reveals 3 of 4 sites are dreadfully dull.

1. START SMART.

Starting from scratch isn't necessary. Seriously, survey your competitors or any sites you like. Note the effective ideas and allow them to inform parts of your plan. Mix, match and make these strategies work to serve your purposes. It's not stealing. It's simply the smart way to start. So get over it and get going.
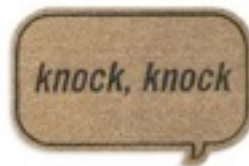
2. KNOW WHO'S THERE.

No joke. Do you know who will come a-knocking at your door? Who belongs there? Get on the same page with this person. Examine his purpose. Know her pain. Prove you understand the problem that compelled him or her to enter your domain and point the way to the solution.
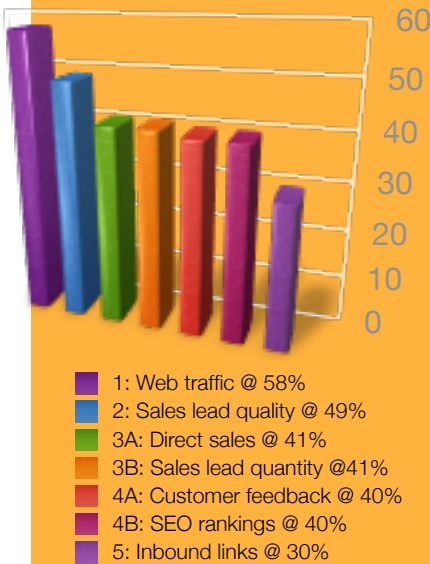
3. GENERATE SOMETHING.

A ridiculous number of websites are created for the wrong reasons. If your site is meant to be a marketing tool, the right reasons to put in the time and money will be to generate more visitors, leads, and customers. What's your goal? Define it and then ask your visitors to do it.

76% SAY "EASY PLEASE"

Easy does it.

In a recent study by HubSpot, 176 participants were asked "What is the most important factor in the design of a website?" An overwhelming majority responded by answering, *"Make it easy for me to find what I want."*

- 1: Web traffic @ 58%
- 2: Sales lead quality @ 49%
- 3A: Direct sales @ 41%
- 3B: Sales lead quantity @41%
- 4A: Customer feedback @ 40%
- 4B: SEO rankings @ 40%
- 5: Inbound links @ 30%

More content, more leads.

The Content Marketing Institute and Marketing Profs surveyed over 1,000 marketers to learn:

- On average, B2B marketers employ eight different content marketing tactics
- 90% expect to grow their business through content marketing
- Success is measured with the criteria charted above— web traffic ranked #1
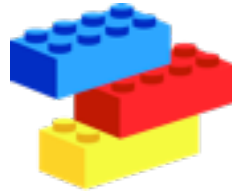
4. BUILD ON A SIMPLE PLATFORM.

No law dictates you must make WordPress or another content management system (CMS) the platform upon which your site is built. However if you want to update content fast and easily and steer clear of HTML school, a proven CMS is indeed the way to go

6. MAKE IT EASY TO NAVIGATE.

The age-old KISS concept applies when it comes to site navigation. Apply common sense by placing the most important links first and prioritize from there on out. Fight the urge to buck convention and offer visitors an uncomplicated and uncluttered interface with limited choices.

8. CREATE MAGNETIC CONTENT.

Content is your site's reason for being. Start getting it together early in the process. Develop a variety of media— images, video, audio, presentations, and of course, copy—to appeal to different tastes. Understand the more content you offer, the more magnetic your site becomes. And serve up more content regularly, daily, if possible.

5. SAY HELLO TO S.E.O.

According to Vanessa Fox, author of Marketing in the Age of Google, "Your search strategy is your business strategy whether you realize it or not, because that's how potential customers are trying to find you. School yourself in SEO and choose and use keywords with great care.

7. PROVIDE CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS.

You've established who you want to bring to your site and what you want them to do. So make it as plain as day. Create a compelling call-to-action that maps to their needs. point their eyes right at it and lead the way.

9. USE THE POWER OF YOU.

Without question, the most common mistake website owners make is fixating on themselves. You must come to grips with this reality: your visitors aren't there to read about you. They're interested in solving their problems and meeting their goals. Remove as many mentions of "I," "me" and "we" and put the power of "you" to work.

10. PUBLISH AND PUSH.

Most successful websites feature fun and informative blogs offering a steady stream of content users value. Your blog supplies the ultimate source of useful content. The comment section that follows each article should encourage conversation. And the RSS (really simple syndication) feed you provide automatically delivers your stories to readers who choose to subscribe.

11. GIVE YOUR CUSTOMERS A VOICE.

You want to get your customers talking. Our network-centric lifestyles have transformed word-of-mouth into "word-of-mouse" advertising. Never under-estimate this, the most powerful form of advertising. In addition to inviting visitors to comment on articles, offer surveys, polls, user forums, and opportunities to ask questions and review your products and services.

12. BE SOCIAL AND SHARE.

Social media has come to stay. School yourself on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, understand the enormous reach of YouTube and SlideShare, and discover the bookmarking, news, Q&A, and specialty sites driving online interactions. Identify where your customers are, engage them there, and place the familiar buttons that allow visitors to share all over your site.

13. TELL CUSTOMER STORIES.

No one can weigh-in with more credibility than your customer. So strive to deliver the kind of proof your prospects will respond to with customer stories that showcase how your products and services deliver satisfaction. Avoid the trite and too-good-to-be-true quotes. Develop stories that actually are true.

14. PERFORM PAY PER CLICK TRICKS.

Remember, "A Field of Dreams" was fiction. If you build it... promote it. The real magic comes from pay-per-click programs such as Google AdWords. Also, advertise on targeted sites your customers frequent. Locate opportunities to syndicate your content. And look for no-cost opportunities to syndicate your stuff on sites that publish relevant content.

15. MAKE MOBILE MEANINGFUL.

Most websites are not optimized for mobile devices. Big mistake. You can't afford to neglect the fast-growing population of customers shopping for products and information on their smart phones and tablets. A large selection of services make it cheap and easy to create and host a mobile version of your site. Doing so will create more traffic and a much greater user experience.

16. DON'T KEEP THE GUESTS WAITING.

Trash the flash. And think long and hard about plating up any porky pixels or wondrous wizardry that might load slowly or not at all. By the time your big fat page loads, there will be no one there to impress—or apologize to.

You're either or you're out.

Social media. It's not a trend. It's your friend. Like it. Follow it. Get into it. It's simply not optional. Your customers use it. Your competitors do too. If you're not interested in joining the conversation, you're not as committed to making your online marketing work as you need to be.

17. KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE F.

There's this amazingly scientific, oft-cited study that unamazingly reveals users fix their eyes first and foremost in an F-shaped pattern on the page. At the risk of stating the obvious, use the F space wisely by showcasing a clean logo, the site's navigation, contacts, shortcuts and whichever elements are most important for engaging your visitor.

18. TRUST PROFESSIONALS.

There are a number of ways to decrease the cost and speed the development of your site. However, allowing amateurs to write and design it is not one of them. It's downright dangerous. If you want your site to do its job, team up with seasoned pros and allow them to do theirs.
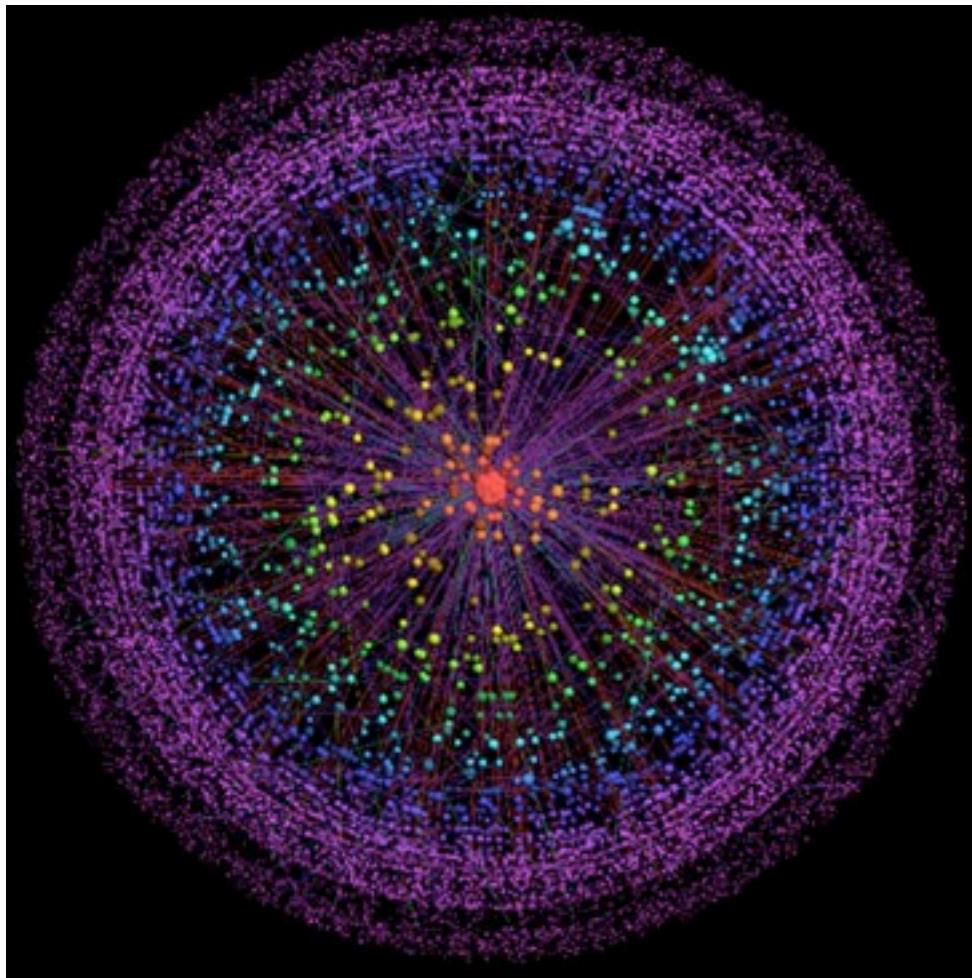
Some scientists in Israel determined the Internet looks something like this. Isn't it beautiful?

19. COUNT ON YOUR METRICS.

Your website is a business tool designed to deliver results. As you know, you can't manage what you don't measure. Use analytical tools for pinpointing what is and isn't producing visitors, leads and sales. Make ongoing adjustments to perpetually produce more favorable results.

20. TEST AND COMPARE.

A/B testing, especially for your landing pages, is a powerful method for achieving better results. When you're able to compare and contrast different approaches to copy and design, the task of refining your site becomes very simple and will have a significant effect on your conversion rates.

21. KEEP ON KEEPING ON.

Is your site *perfectly* sharp? It's not. It never will be. There's no finish line in website development. It's a process. So keep measuring. Keep refining. Keep creating useful content. Keep making your site more valuable to your customers and it'll keep becoming more valuable for your business.

PENCILS OUT, PLEASE.

It's time for a quick review of the "21 Pointers to Sharpen Your Website" presented here. Make a few notes. Give yourself some assignments. Get to work. And good luck.

SITE-SHARPENING QUESTIONS	YOUR ANSWERS
HAVE YOU SURVEYED YOUR COMPETITOR'S SITES?	
DO YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHO WILL BE VISITING?	
HAVE YOU ESTABLISHED YOUR OBJECTIVES?	
HAVE YOU SELECTED A CMS?	
ARE YOU READY TO GO WITH SEO?	
IS YOUR NAVIGATION SIMPLE?	
IS IT CLEAR WHAT YOU WANT CUSTOMERS TO DO?	
ARE YOU CREATING MAGNETIC CONTENT?	
DOES THE COPY FOCUS ON YOUR CUSTOMER?	
DOES YOUR SITE FEATURE A BLOG?	
ARE YOU ASKING CUSTOMERS TO JOIN THE CONVERSATION?	
IS YOUR SITE ALL SET FOR SOCIAL MEDIA?	
HAVE YOU PUBLISHED CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORIES?	
WILL YOU BE USING PAY-PER-CLICK ADVERTISING?	
DID YOU MAKE A MOBILE VERSION OF YOUR SITE?	
ARE YOU USING SLOW-LOADING STUFF?	
ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN THE F-ZONE?	
DID YOU, OR WILL YOU, HIRE WEBSITE PROFESSIONALS?	
ARE YOU MEASURING AND ANALYZING?	
ARE YOU TESTING THIS AGAINST THAT?	
WILL YOU EXPAND YOUR SITE REGULARLY?	

Point your browser to FeldmanCreative.com for all your online marketing needs. Owner Barry Feldman has been a copywriter and creative director since 1988. A seasoned storyteller, Barry will help you create an ultra-sticky website, deliver persuasive copy, execute strategic content marketing, and offer pointers to sharpen your site, attract and engage prospects, nurture relation-ships, generate sales, and build loyal brand advocates.