

# SEO Fundamentals

## for small business

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March 2022

## Overview

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We've been involved with optimising websites since 2003, and it's fair to say that search engine optimisation as a practice has changed quite a bit over that time. Those early "Wild West" days have been replaced with a more mature market where everyone finds their place more on effort than some jiggery-pokery. That said, the fundamentals still remain.

In 2008, I wrote a book about common-sense SEO. It was a link building exercise at the time, but the book was also published in 2010. The funny thing is, even though the content is around 15-years old, the fundamentals still remain the same - fundamentals that surprisingly are still often overlooked as people chase traffic.

SEO is also not an afterthought to be plugged in after you have built your website. You need forethought, with propositions that drive the intent of the user so that you get what you want.

So, this insight is all about getting the basics right. As the title of my book said, "The 20% of the work that delivers 80% of the results".

## Your Happy Ending

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Let's quickly start with the end game because there are many ways to build a website. **Why do you really want one?**

If you see it as a marketing tool like most small businesses, you could pop up a site and forget about it. After I uncover the usual surface-layer reasoning with many new clients, the majority actually want sales enquiries. It makes sense, right?

So, it helps to establish how that mechanism will work because it's essential. If you are asking someone to make an effort to contact you, potentially sharing some of their personal details, they have hurdles to overcome in their head to feel comfortable.

**So, your number one job when designing content for your website is to remember the outcome you want. If you want an enquiry, all roads lead to making that happen - design, content and SEO.**

## Planning Your Story

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Imagine you are researching online. You probably want facts quickly. If you don't, you'll pop back to Google and click on the next option in a million. When you look at this interaction objectively, you soon realise that you do not have time to self-indulge when it comes to your content.

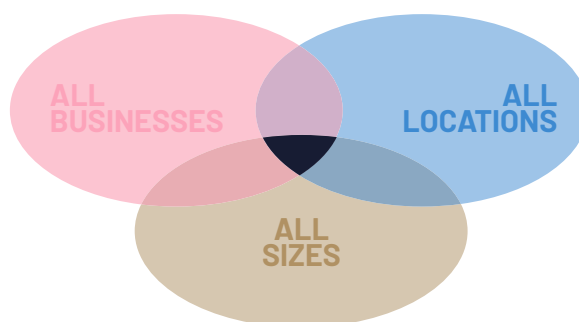
People do not care what you think about yourself. They also don't care for over-elaborate phraseology and superlatives. You don't need to tell people about 'your compelling and professional philosophy towards customer service' upfront - that's you patting yourself on the back. (If it's true, your reviews will tell that story). Take this real example, remove the company name and you'll be hard to know what they sell:

### Our Product Range

xxxxx has a vast product range on offer, giving our customers the very best choice. By offering a wide range of products, we are confident we have the right solution for you. Our aim is to focus on our customers requirements, so we can use our knowledge and expertise to provide the best product to improve your lifestyle.

Your story needs to be succinct. What are people looking to buy when they engage with a company like yours? Don't overcomplicate it.

Your website, therefore, needs to be a collection of pages, each with its own job of attracting relevant traffic and converting it to sale/enquiry.



### Example

I have an Accountancy Business in Basingstoke. Firstly, I don't want to travel far for clients, so I will make Basingstoke a key aspect of my story. I want to be a bigger fish in a smaller pond, and this pond is more than big enough for my business.

Secondly, I have decided the kind of clients I want. We can't be all things to all people, so let's get rid of the people we don't want. This allows us to focus on business size, the type of person you want to work with, or industry specialisation.

My proposition could end up being an **accountancy firm in Basingstoke that specialises in businesses looking to grow and/or sell, with a minimum turnover of £1 million.**

Therefore, any story we tell needs to stay focused on the people we target, with every bit of content ready to answer their issues.

- What problems do they specifically have?
- How do we have a solution that suits them?

## Example Two

We have done quite a bit of work for companies that sell windows, doors, and conservatories in the past. So much so that once I created a secondary website explicitly aimed at those companies.

Through my discussions with business owners in this sector, I realised that all they really want is sales leads. So, my content focused on "how to get more sales leads for your double glazing company". I put it on a separate site to be richer in relevant keywords without detracting from my main site's content (story).

## Keywords & Keyword Choice

There is a fascination with keywords, but it's simple. Keywords, or more importantly, groups of words (key phrases), create context.

So, which ones to pick? More on that in a moment. You may have come across the phrase keyword density in relation to SEO. Keyword density is the percentage of times a keyword or phrase appears on a web page compared to the total number of words on the page.

Yes, every extra word you add to your page, which may be off-topic, dilutes what you could be trying to say; and what you want to be found for in search.

I have used this keyword density tool from SEO Book for years to get an overall picture of the content on web pages in terms of percentage. It can be enlightening and helps me stay focused on phrases I think are important. (link: <http://tools.seobook.com/general/keyword-density>)

### Here's the homepage of the Rewind Marketing website:

#### Summary

**Page title:** Rewind Marketing Consultancy in Basingstoke  
**Meta keywords:** marketing consultancy, basingstoke  
**Meta description:** Straight-talking digital marketing consultancy in Basingstoke with a business head. Strategy, website design, digital marketing, lead generation.  
**Total word count:** 197 (315 including stop words)  
**Unique words:** 124 (175 including stop words)

[All text](#) [Body text](#) [Headlines](#) [Links](#) [Images](#)

#### All text

Word	Count	Density	2 Word Phrases	Count	Density	3 Word Phrases	Count	Density
<a href="#">marketing</a>	15	4.76%	<a href="#">website design</a>	7	4.44%	<a href="#">get in touch</a>	3	2.86%
<a href="#">design</a>	12	3.81%	<a href="#">in basingstoke</a>	5	3.17%	<a href="#">marketing consultancy</a>	3	2.86%
<a href="#">basingstoke</a>	10	3.17%	<a href="#">digital marketing</a>	5	3.17%	<a href="#">in</a>		
<a href="#">digital</a>	7	2.22%	<a href="#">marketing consultancy</a>	4	2.54%	<a href="#">consultancy in basingstoke</a>	3	2.86%
<a href="#">websites</a>	5	1.59%	<a href="#">web design</a>	4	2.54%	<a href="#">basingstoke hampshire rg</a>	2	1.90%
<a href="#">business</a>	5	1.59%	<a href="#">rewind marketing</a>	3	1.90%	<a href="#">hampshire rg qh</a>	2	1.90%
<a href="#">consultancy</a>	4	1.27%	<a href="#">get in</a>	3	1.90%	<a href="#">nd floor church</a>	2	1.90%
<a href="#">hampshire</a>	3	0.95%	<a href="#">in touch</a>	3	1.90%	<a href="#">marketing we help</a>	2	1.90%
<a href="#">touch</a>	3	0.95%	<a href="#">consultancy in</a>	3	1.90%			

By looking at this page alone, do you get a feel for what this page is about? Personally, I am not interested in keywords. I am interested in an overall picture of page with a range of phrases that complete the picture. Search engines are sophisticated enough to understand what your page is about. That said, you need a starting point.

## Choosing Keywords

Let's assume (because it's true) that Google wants you to pay for traffic using Adwords. I'm not sure I would 100% trust them to give me the overall steer on which keywords to use. That said, if you have an Adwords account, you have access to Keyword Planner ([ads.google.com/intl/en\\_uk/home/tools/keyword-planner/](https://ads.google.com/intl/en_uk/home/tools/keyword-planner/)).

There are various other tools available, and many of the good ones cost money. I use SEM Rush ([semrush.com](https://www.semrush.com)). I have also used Keyword IO ([keyword.io](https://keyword.io)), which has some free tools.

More and more, when I choose keywords, I use these tools to sanity check my initial work, which is done with pen and paper.

This is because you need to stay focused. Keyword Tools will lead you to big keywords. But, you are not trying to attract lots of traffic, just the right traffic. So, it makes sense that you only really want to be found by people who know:

- **What they are looking for that relates to what you do.**
- **They have a problem that is something you can fix.**

Everything else gets in the way.

## Choosing Relevant Keywords

By creating content that is relevant, and by staying specific, you'll have a better chance of attracting relevant traffic. It's not a case of chasing Number One position in Google (something that no longer exists in reality). It's about creating a connection to people through word choices. Some of that is keyword driven, and some is about engaging people.

With that in mind, think about your current customers' language - the ones that fit your target market.

- **What do they call what you do?**
- **What words do they use for their problems?**

**You must be objective. You are not trying to attract more of you; you are looking for more clients.**

You also have multiple chances of capturing groups of people, and this is where the magic happens.

# Pages & Topics

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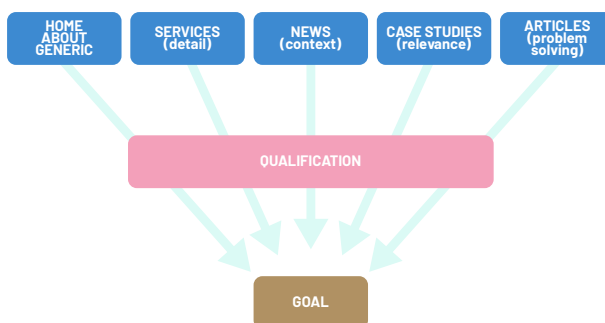
If we continue with the analogy that your website is a story, like a book, then each page you create needs to work within that story. That said, in the same way a book may have chapters, so can your website with the pages you create.

Traditionally, people think about websites from top to bottom. In fact, it should be the other way around. You can create multiple pages (in relevant sections) that are geared towards attracting specific traffic.

These include:

- **Case studies that highlight the type of work you do for the companies you are trying to attract more of.**
- **News from your business that focuses on the areas you are looking to be found for.**
- **Articles / white papers about specific topics and issues your target markets are interested in, or problems they are facing.**

Any of these specific content types needs to be written specifically, with context, and be good enough quality for the reader. Don't publish because you think you have to, do it because you have something interesting to say that no-one else might be talking about.



## Content Example

So, if we use the accountancy practice example mentioned above, we might be looking for businesses that are looking to sell in the next five years. We could create a service page about "Accountants For Selling A Business", a case study about how we helped someone sell their business, and articles about "How To Gear Your Business Up To Sell".

# Content Tagging

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Some elements of your web page content are more important than others - by a long way. We have spoken about producing focused content, but what about the way your page is actually created, either by code or via your CMS?

When programmers or CMS systems create web pages, they use all sorts of tags and markups to make things look a certain way when run through a web browser. If you go to any web page, right-click on it and choose "View Source" you can see the programming code of that page.

Semantic markup is a way of taking elements of your page and saying to the world wide web...

- This is the title of my page
- This is a heading
- This is a list of bullet points
- This is a description of the page
- This is a paragraph
- This is an image that shows xx

It's a way of adding description to each element on the page for users and search engines. (There are many other tags, including Open Graph (<https://ogp.me>) elements for social, but we'll stick to 80/20 rule here).

When you look at many small business websites, they will carry the same TITLE and DESCRIPTION site-wide. It dilutes the possibility to be found specifically for more niche content on your website.

By tagging your content elements correctly - not just for SEO, but also for user journeys - there is more chance your page will be found, your link clicked, and your audience to be engaged.

## Page Title and Description

In my opinion, the main two areas to get right, to begin with, are the Meta Title and the Meta Description. These snippets describe the page to search engines, and are often used as the search engine result. So, they need to contain specific keywords/phrases, but also need to be engaging enough to attract a click.

The ideal length for a meta title is between 50-60 characters. For the meta description, it's 155-160. That's when Google starts to truncate your text. REMEMBER, the purpose of the title and description are to sell this one page, nothing else on the site.

This example shows the meta title and description for our Website Design page:

<https://rewind.marketing> › websites

### Websites Designers in Basingstoke - Rewind Marketing

Websites for business that deliver results. Experienced website design company in Basingstoke.

Design, content, SEO, conversions - Results that matter.

## Page Heading

The page heading is an obvious element to include as it reinforces what the page is about and is also a key factor for search engines in determining the pages topic. Many CRMs will automatically create this so make sure it bears relevance and has context.

Using the page example above, the H1 is set to **Website Design in Basingstoke.**

You should only ever have one H1 heading on the page, and along with the Title and Meta Description, these are arguably the three most essential parts of your web page, allowing search engines to differentiate your pages.

## Content & Additional Markup

When you write the words on your web page, you should also break up your content. There are two key reasons for this:

- Your customers are human - they need to be able to read your content. More importantly, they need to be able to scan it.
- Search engines can make more sense of a page if the content elements are described to them.

You are able to tag elements to describe what you are writing and how each element should be taken:

- **Hierarchical Sub Headings - (H2 / H3) - used for breaking content into manageable and relevant chunks**
- **Paragraph text - for standard writings**
- **Lists - both bullet points and numbered bullet points**

Good use of subheadings, bullet points, etc. breaks your web page into readable chunks of information - perfect for people scanning through your web content, and also allows you to add in extra key phrases.

### Tagging Example

Back to our accountancy practice example for a page about "How To Gear Your Business Up To Sell". Your page could be broken down into sections, with sub headings and lists such as:

- **When Is the Best Time To Sell My Business**
- **What Are The Pitfalls of Selling A Business**
- **Five Important Factors To Maximise The Value of Your Business**

### Image Markup

Logos, photos and diagrams that you place on your website are not 'content' as such, they are images made up of pixels.

As search engines (and screen readers) cannot read images on a web page, HTML offers you the ability to attach a descriptor called "ALT Text". The Alt text tag allows you to describe the image and can also be used for adding specific additional keywords. The keywords need to be relevant, but (as in the example image above of a search result), why just put "google result" when I can enhance the story of my page and extend that to "example of meta title and meta description for SEO". Even with content-management systems you have the ability to add alt text to images, so make the most of them.

## Summary

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Great SEO for your website is obviously much more than just the points above. But, time and time again, I come across the basic SEO fundamentals overlooked as people chase traffic, having to revert to costly advertising as their site gets ignored.

Like any marketing activity, it's about effort and cost versus reward. But, by understanding what you want your website to deliver in real terms, you can start to create and evolve the pathways that may make it possible for strangers to find your business, learn to trust you, then make contact.