THE Seven Habits OF Highly Effective Websites



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"The Web is influencing more than $1 trillion of in-store sales."

Chris Copeland
CEO, GroupM Search[3]

Get the Maximum Value from Your Site

Whether it's a book or a new car, software or a plumbing service, the majority of purchases start online today. It's a given fact that both B2B buyers and consumers frequently begin by researching products and services online before they buy.



Even more important is the influence of online content on the purchase decision. Experian reported that webpages ranked second only to word of mouth as the most influential factor for a purchase.[1]

But with the average U.S. Internet user viewing **2,750 web pages per month**,[2] how can you make your site stand out among the competition?

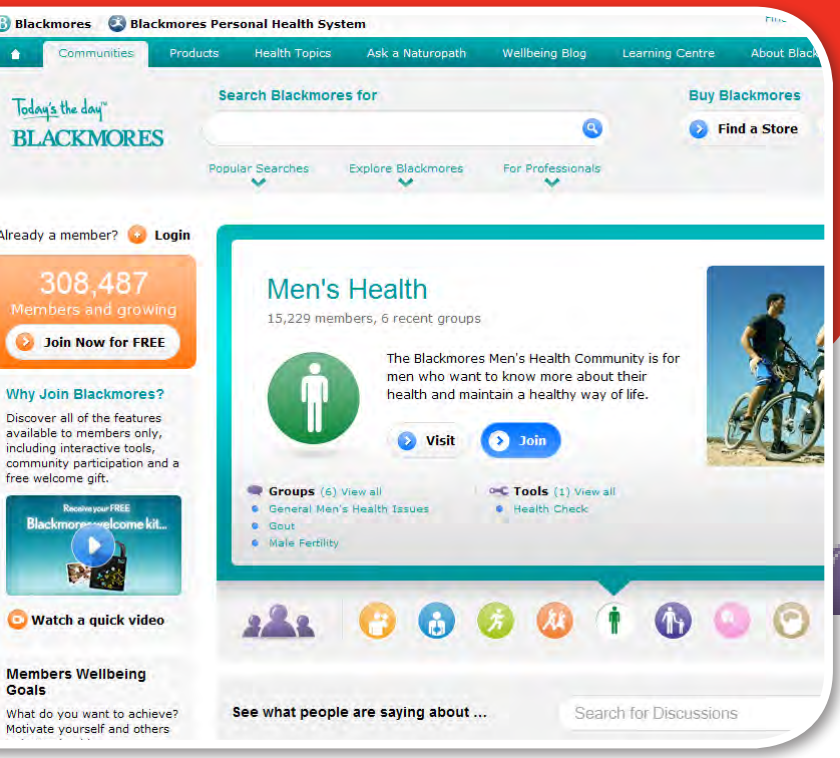
Like Stephen Covey's extremely successful *7 Habits* books, which help people be more effective in all sorts of ways, this ebook presents seven equally effective habits for websites. Read on to learn more about these proven principles that will help you get the most out of your most strategic marketing asset — your website.

1. "How Word of Mouth, the Internet and Online Consumer Reviews Influence Purchase Decisions," Bill Tancer, Experian, 2011
2. The Nielson Company, January 2011
3. "Eighty-Six Percent of In-Store, Retail Buyers Search on Generic Versus Branded Keywords, Research from Group Search Reveals," GroupM Search, October 17, 2011

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GET IN THE HABIT

The customer-centric focus of Blackmores, Australia's leading natural health brand, is leading the website to fast becoming Australia's biggest online community dedicated to natural health. The members of the over-300,000 strong community enjoy a totally personalized user experience based on their preferences and needs.



HABIT 1:
Put Your Customers in Charge

The first habit of highly effective websites is to embrace the fact that you need to think like your prospects and customers. Start by putting yourself in your customers' shoes — how would they organize your website?

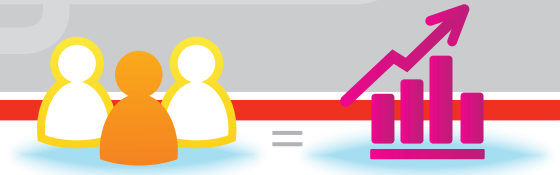
Your customers would make it easy to use and easy to find everything they need quickly. Is your website doing that now?

If not, it's time to start listening and responding to your customers' needs. Then optimize the structure, content, and tools on your site to help customers achieve their goals. By doing this, you'll create more loyal customers and repeat business, plus you can lower support costs.



308,487 members and growing

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Manchester City Football Club does an excellent job of aligning its business goals with the needs of its fans. The website experience is fun and includes fan-centric features such as using rich media to enable fans to actually see the view from the seat they are considering before they purchase the ticket. The result? Manchester City sells more tickets and fans look forward to the on-field experience.



HABIT 2:
Balance User Experiences with Business Goals

Once you understand your customers' goals, then it's time to align them with the business goals for your site.



To balance user experiences with your business goals, you should:

- Identify what business outcomes you want to achieve
- Marry customer goals and your business outcomes into a set of guiding principles for your site

Making this effort can pay off in a big way. Your guiding principles enable you to achieve your business goals as a direct result of anticipating and delighting your customers. Better yet, you'll also lower your cost of doing business as you increase conversions, and you'll keep customers coming back again and again, which increases lifetime customer value.

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HABIT 3:
Implement Your Site Goals Consistently

Just like brand and message consistency, you need to have goal consistency across your site. So, this third habit starts with the results of Habits 1 and 2. Then you apply those results – your combined business and customer goals – on a consistent, continual basis across all aspects of the site. This means ensuring you follow your site principles with every design and content decision your organization makes.



By doing this, you set your site up for greater success. Customers who can achieve their goals on your site will convert in higher percentages. And you'll build loyalty as you consistently meet the needs of your site users time after time.

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HABIT 4:
Deliver Value to Your Web Visitors

Now you're on your way to meeting your visitors' needs and hitting your business goals. The next thing you need to do is apply Habit 4 to deepen the relationship.

To create loyal, repeat visitors and customers, you need to create a *reciprocal* relationship with them. How do you do that? You offer value in exchange for your visitor providing something valuable (typically that's information that you are asking them to provide.) For instance, you can deliver helpful content, provide newsletters with coupons, or maybe you offer them a free online tool.



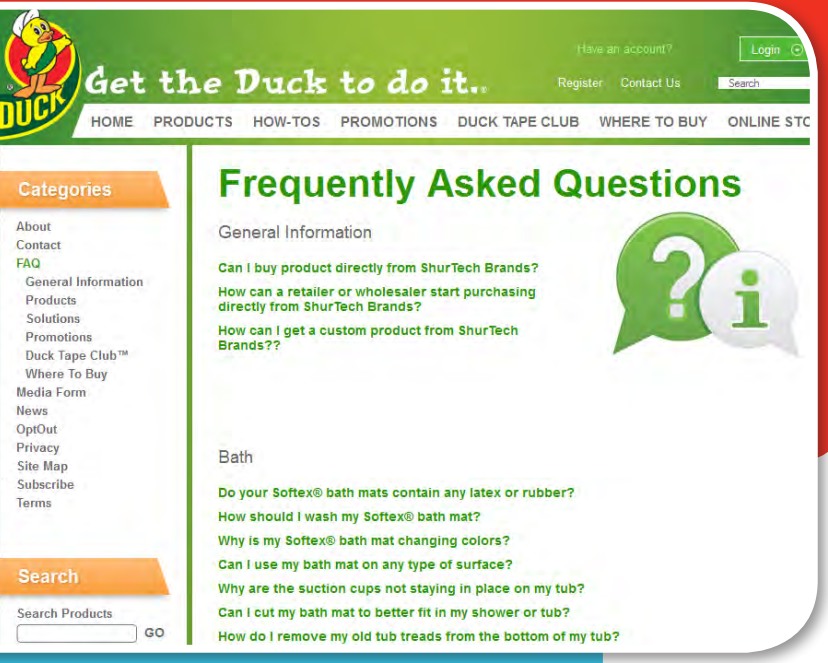
Look at every form, every place you ask for information, and ask yourself whether you're giving enough value in return. And make sure you are explaining how you're using that information so that customers don't feel unsure about having provided you with their personal data.

By creating a reciprocal relationship, you build goodwill with customers and keep them coming back for more.

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Duck brand completely revised its site based on user feedback. For instance, it created an extensive FAQ to provide answers to questions visitors had searched for and not found before. The new site senses what visitors are looking for and lets Duck brand adapt to provide it.





HABIT 5:
Be Honest About What is not Working

No one likes failure, but it's how you handle it that can turn it into an opportunity to delight your customers. So for this habit, instead of focusing on what works, you need to look at what on your site is *not* working as well as it should. Because if it's not working, that means a site visitor failed in their goal.



Let's say your site has a search engine and your visitor searched and found nothing. What if you provided some different and/or related suggestions rather than showing a failed search result? That could turn a negative into a positive for your visitor.

Put a program in place to identify the "holes" in your site. Ideas for this include:

- Soliciting and listening to feedback
- Enabling visitors to rate your pages or comment on content
- Showing visitors that you are listening when they provide feedback

By doing this, you'll improve the site experience, potentially lower customer support costs, and demonstrate that you care about your visitors' experience.

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The Knot, The Nest, and The Bump are a collection of sites that really take a long-term view of the customer relationship. This integrated marketing approach extends the conversation with the customer over time and through important life phases such as marriage, creating a home, and building a family.



HABIT 6:
Create Ongoing Dialogue with Your Customer

"What we really need is a mindset shift that will make us relevant to today's consumers, a mindset shift from 'telling and selling' to building relationships."

— Jim Stengel, former global marketing officer for Procter & Gamble.

This statement says it all.

Your website presents an amazing opportunity for you to understand and engage your customer. Think of how you can interact with your site visitor to create an ongoing dialogue. Some ideas might be:

- Across multiple visits, keep prospects moving forward by providing relevant information based on what they have already done or read on your site
- Add a share bar so visitors can share interesting, helpful content with their friends and colleagues



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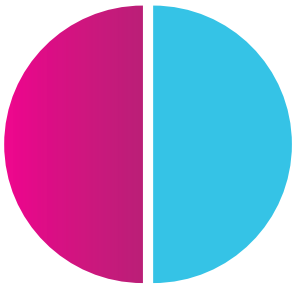


HABIT 7:
Sharpen Your Website's Saw

Sharpen your website's saw, that is, make it as effective as absolutely possible by utilizing renewal techniques that can help you keep your site up-to-date and optimized for best performance. Techniques you can use include:

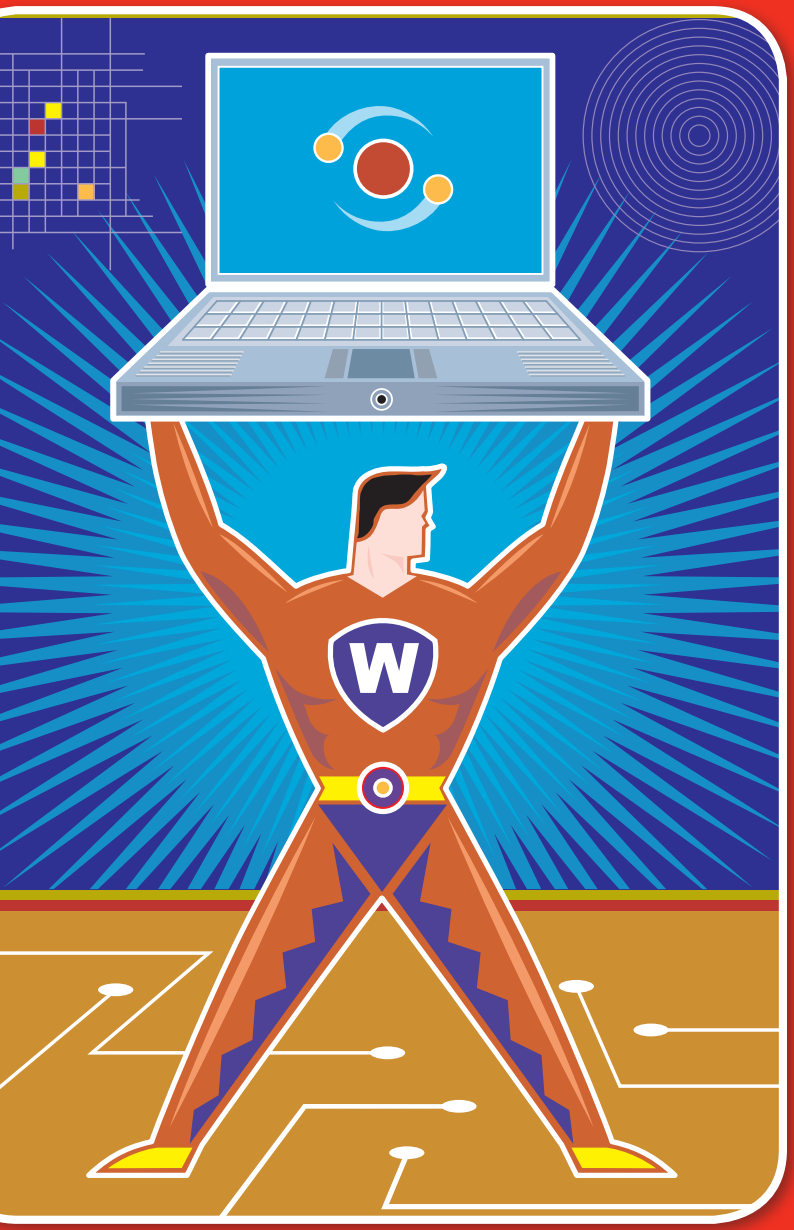
- Testing messaging and concepts to see which are most effective
- A/B split testing to determine which landing pages, which calls to action, which designs result in the greatest number of conversions
- Multivariate testing to test combinations of variations to determine an optimal version

By testing, you'll learn what messages, designs, and concepts lead to better conversions for which segments, which segment message is resonating stronger in which categories, and which campaigns resonate strongest with which segments.



And that information in turn can help you inform decisions and optimize marketing spend. And the good news is that the convergence of web analytics, web content management, and marketing automation into a single marketing management platform make it easier than ever to test and optimize performance of your online marketing efforts.

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Take Action

Today's empowered buyers seek out sites that offer compelling experiences, relevant content, and a reciprocal relationship. If you put the seven habits we just covered into practice, you'll create a highly effective website aligned with both your customers' and your business' goals.

Get started now on making your website more effective by:

- Changing the way you approach your site by putting yourself into your customers' shoes
- Offering more value to site visitors to build long-term relationships
- Demanding a better experience and better results from your website
- Selecting tools and techniques and refining business processes to achieve these goals



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About Sitecore

Sitecore redefines how organizations engage with audiences, powering compelling experiences that sense and adapt to visitors both online and in-person.

Sitecore's leading Content Management System software is the first to cohesively integrate with marketing automation, intranet portal, e-commerce, web optimization, social media and campaign management technologies. This broad choice of capabilities enable marketing professionals, business stakeholders and information technology teams to rapidly implement, measure and manage a successful website and digital business strategy. Businesses can now easily identify, serve and convert new customers with Sitecore's Digital Marketing System, part of its encompassing Customer Engagement Platform.

Thousands of public and private organizations have created and now manage more than 32,000 websites and digital experiences with Sitecore including ATP World Tour, CA Technologies, General Mills, ESPN Rise, Heineken, ISS, Lloyd's of London, Microsoft, Omni Hotels, Siemens, The Knot, Thomas Cook and Visa Europe.

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