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CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS

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07

Search



## GROW YOUR BUSINESS

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## Building A Creative Team

With technology developing at a break neck speed, we now live in a fluctuating world of evolving job titles and concepts. Building a creative team in this day and age should be simple, with so many diverse types of business models, we are no longer looking for a cookie-cutter classic business type.

In order to keep up, small business owners must invest time and effort in building not only the best team possible, but also the most creative.

Diversity on your team, no matter how big or small, is one of the most important factors. Building blocks that create a foundation are made up of different shapes and sizes, with a strong support system holding them together. Your business needs these different shapes and sizes.

There are many ways to describe unique business personalities. When building your team, start with a list of qualities that you respect, admire, lack, and desire.

Make these requirements for all the positions you look to fill, both encouraging compatibility as well complimenting, though opposite, strengths to be supported.

Next determine the job titles you wish to fill. Take some time to craft these into personalized titles that represent your company culture and vision. The more creative the title, the more enticing it is to those who are less likely fit the standard corporate mold.

Browse through job sites and take a look at what is being offered in your industry. You will notice an obvious break from traditional roles, especially in small business sectors. Take note!

It is important during the interview phase that you realize you may be naturally drawn to candidates who represent your strength of character. Take a risk, think outside the box, and interview the least likely candidate.

Breeding creativity means stepping outside the lines, you cannot do that if you constantly fall back on your usual patterns. As you get around to hiring, hire on culture, not qualifications. As you have defined your mission and values and have crafted job titles to reflect this, look for the best fit not just on paper. You will be rewarded with team members who bring thoughtfulness,

challenge you in a positive way and work harder to prove themselves.

Once you have a creative, diverse team in place, it is your responsibility to encourage, motivate and continuously breed the company culture. As the leader, you must identify the varying personalities, work in different mindsets, and address the unique needs of your diverse team.

It may seem simpler to hire a team of clones, you understand them, you know how they think, and you know what you are getting. But this will prove stagnancy in the process.

You need creativity and diversity in order to be challenged. You need to be challenged in order to proffer change and you need change to continue growing. If you are not growing, you are falling behind!



# Back to Basics: How to Get Your SEO Right

The business gurus have spoken: 2016 will be the year marketing strategies go back to basics. The trend will sweep across industries and will encourage business, both big and small, to revamp their plans: cultivating, simplifying, and strengthening. Back to basics may mean simple, but it is more complex than meets the eye, that is, if you missed the class in basics to begin with!

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is one of those trends popped up in the last 15 years, something you may not feel very versed in if you are over the age of 30.

So what are the basics of SEO for small businesses? Here we go...

First things first- in or out of house. Is your business at the stage in which you must conduct this task on your own? Do you have someone in-house who can take this on? Or will you need to hire an outside agency? Agencies can be preferable, but expensive. If you take the task on yourself, these are some basic tips to get you started:

1. Take a good, hard look at your website. This is the most basic you can get.

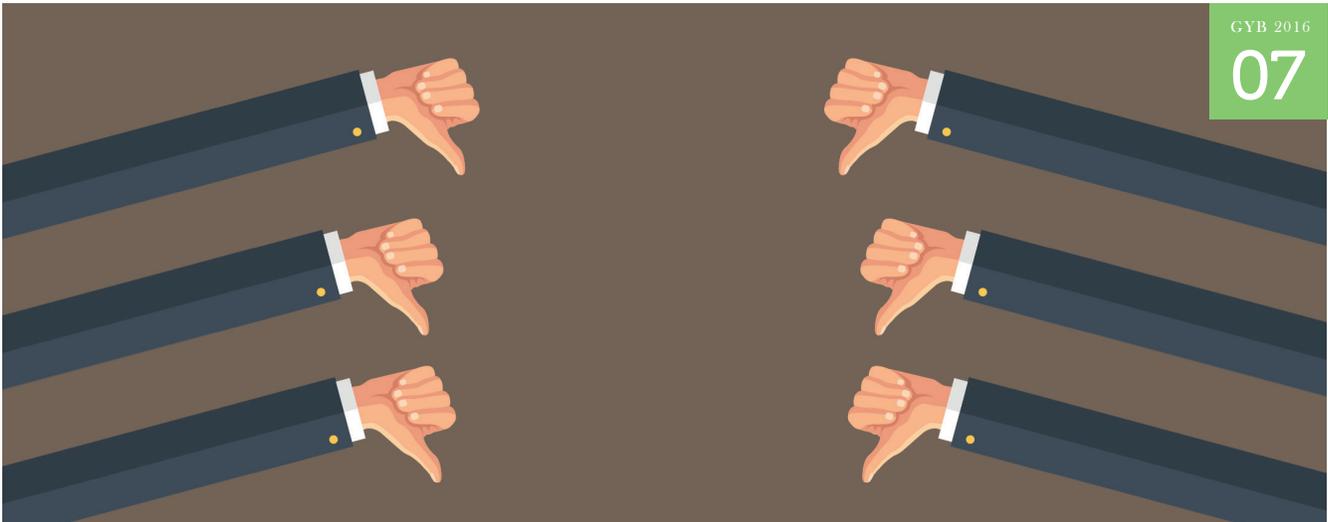
Examine user friendliness, conversion rates, technical aspects, and overall look and feel. Then, crack down on content- this is where the bread and butter of SEO lies. Word choice, phrasing, and repetition - These are the fundamentals of content optimization.

2. Content is key. Some tips- quality over quantity, length is not important. Frequency is important, along with creativity and uniqueness. Key words- keep it to two or three times in any given piece, don't overdo it. The content must sound natural and genuine in order to do its job. Do your research to find out what the best keywords are, it's more formulaic than you might think. Pro tip: utilize Google's free Keywords tool to get you started.
3. Consider your SERPS (Search Engine Ranking Positions). As spelled out, this is where you fall in any given search involving your key words. SERPS are also driven by title and description tags. Title tags describe what your site is about in general, while description

tags are more well-worded snippets of what specifically can be found on your pages. Well-written description tags are what can drive up your SERP.

4. Note the changes in Off-Page SEO. So far, we have been discussing things that happen ON your website. Off Page refers to link sharing, which experts say is no longer of importance. Avoid purchasing backlinks of any kind and cultivate the links you do incorporate to be relevant. Do not simply throw the widest net, narrow the drop zone to stick to your niche.

The only good SEO practices are effective SEO practices. They demand a lot of work- stick to the basics and keep your valued time and resources for other marketing tactics this year!



## Common Reasons Project Fail

There is a surprising amount of research on this topic- business owners and experts-alike have a fascination with studying their failures, and rightfully so!

It's only failure if you do not learn from the mistakes, and develop practices to prevent them in the future...

First of all, goals. If you do not expertly provide your team with a carefully crafted, laser-focused goal, you are doomed for failure. Lack of communication can lead to a plethora of problems, including lack of coordination amongst groups, which is vital.

You also want to remember to always provide the "why". With a goal AND an understanding of how the goal will affect the business, the team will fail to see applicability and therefore fail to feel any form of responsibility.

It is vital to establish not only leadership of the project, but also ownership. Who, specifically, has final say over the work? Who has the power to send things back to the drawing board or push something into production? Whether it be one person, one department or

one committee, it must be established before you begin.

Big dreams, small budget- sound familiar? With small business, this is often the cause of a project to fail. Being realistic, recognizing your restraints and working around them is the only way to prevent this type of failure. Carefully consider your team on every project. Each project should be evaluated individually and moving people can prevent burn out and can foster new ideas and fresh perspectives.

Before any work begins, realistic deadlines must be established. Goal markers, check in points, end dates- these all must be set in advance. It also must be decided who has the power to extend or push up a deadline and what the conditions for said changes would need to be.

Related to deadlines is regular project monitoring. Finding a small problem mid-project means you can isolate and/or repair it. Waiting until the last minute will cause the waterfall effect to wave it way across the work completed by everyone else and can be catastrophic.

It seems daunting and failure is inevitable. Learning from failure is the best way to turn a negative into a positive. However, it only works if you document the lessons and consistently apply these tools to future projects.

### **BLURB:**

As 2016 proves to be the 'back to basics' year, take another look at your elevator pitch. Every good business owner should be able to sum things up in 30 seconds or less. Likely you have yours down pat, and likely it is outdated or stale. Take a fresh perspective, considering any changes in audience your business may have experienced and new trends in the industry.



## The Secrets to Creating A Great Slogan/Tagline

The slogan or tagline of your business can be viewed as the frontlines of the marketing battle—it's the first introduction, possibly the strongest factor in whether a consumer proceeds to find out more about your business.

Strapped with such an influential task, your slogan must be more than good, it must be great!

Sounds like a challenge? It can be, but breaking it down can simplify the process and assist in the creation of something personalized and powerful.

These days, it is common for companies, even the smallest businesses, to have a logo. This is your starting point. Your slogan must match and similarity reflect the logo and what it represents.

What was the purpose of your logo? What was your message? Who was it aimed towards? How does it reach and appeal to that audience? These are all great questions to start with. Answering them will allow you apply these concepts to your slogan development.

Logo + Slogan = Brand Identity. Brand Identity = the foundation of your marketing plan. Important stuff!

Relax—the pressure of a perfect slogan can affect the overall outcome- think writer's block! The best slogans, however, aren't meant to last forever. Removing the thought of "this is IT" will free you up to observe your mission, values and culture as it is NOW and reflect that in your slogan.

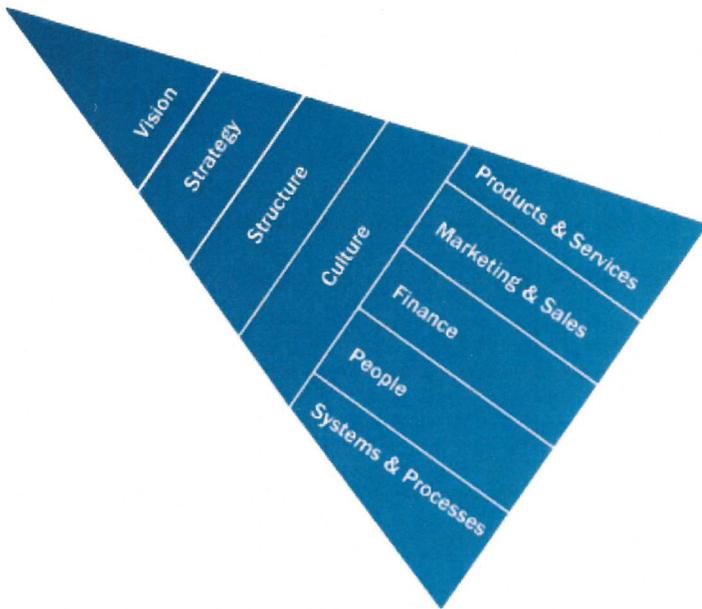
The most successful slogans are the ones that don't overstay their welcome. Brainstorm loads of ideas, the good the bad and the ugly, and write them all down. Share them with team members, family, friends, and gather opinions. Consider creating a committee in-house and a focus group of your loyal customers to offer feedback.

Rome wasn't built in a day, and your slogan won't be either. You need to work the process of elimination and never expect to fall face first into the best option. Feedback is imperative.

Never have a slogan that is more than one sentence long. This is not an exception- this is statistically proven to be ineffective. The inherent goal of a slogan is to QUICKLY and effectively capture the audience's attention. Keep it simple, stupid!

Avoid hyperbole and grand claims- honesty is the best policy when it comes to drawing in clientele. Essentially, a beefed up slogan writes checks your business can't necessarily cash! Don't overpromise from the get go- disappointment weighs heavy on consumers, and will weigh heavy on your brand reputation.

As always, it is true- humor really is the best way to attract. But be tasteful, tactful and respectful if you go this route. Sense of humor is highly personal and a slippery slope to endeavor. Consider hiring a slogan writer to go this route- we all think we are funnier than we are!



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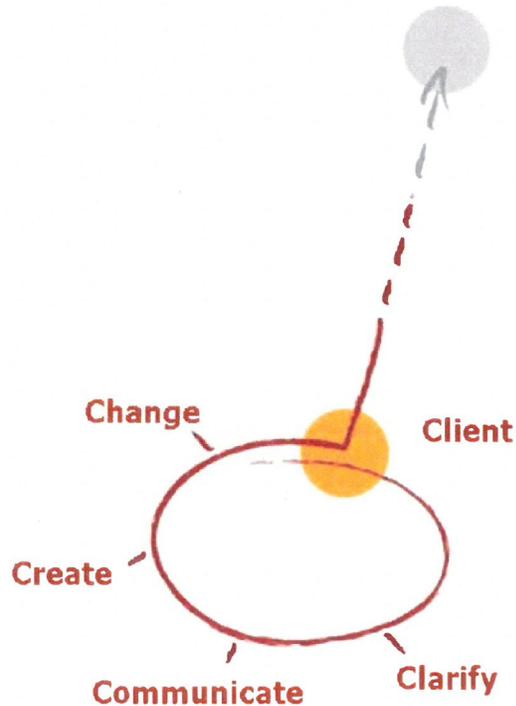
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