

9 **Must-Have** Elements of a High-Performing Small Business Website

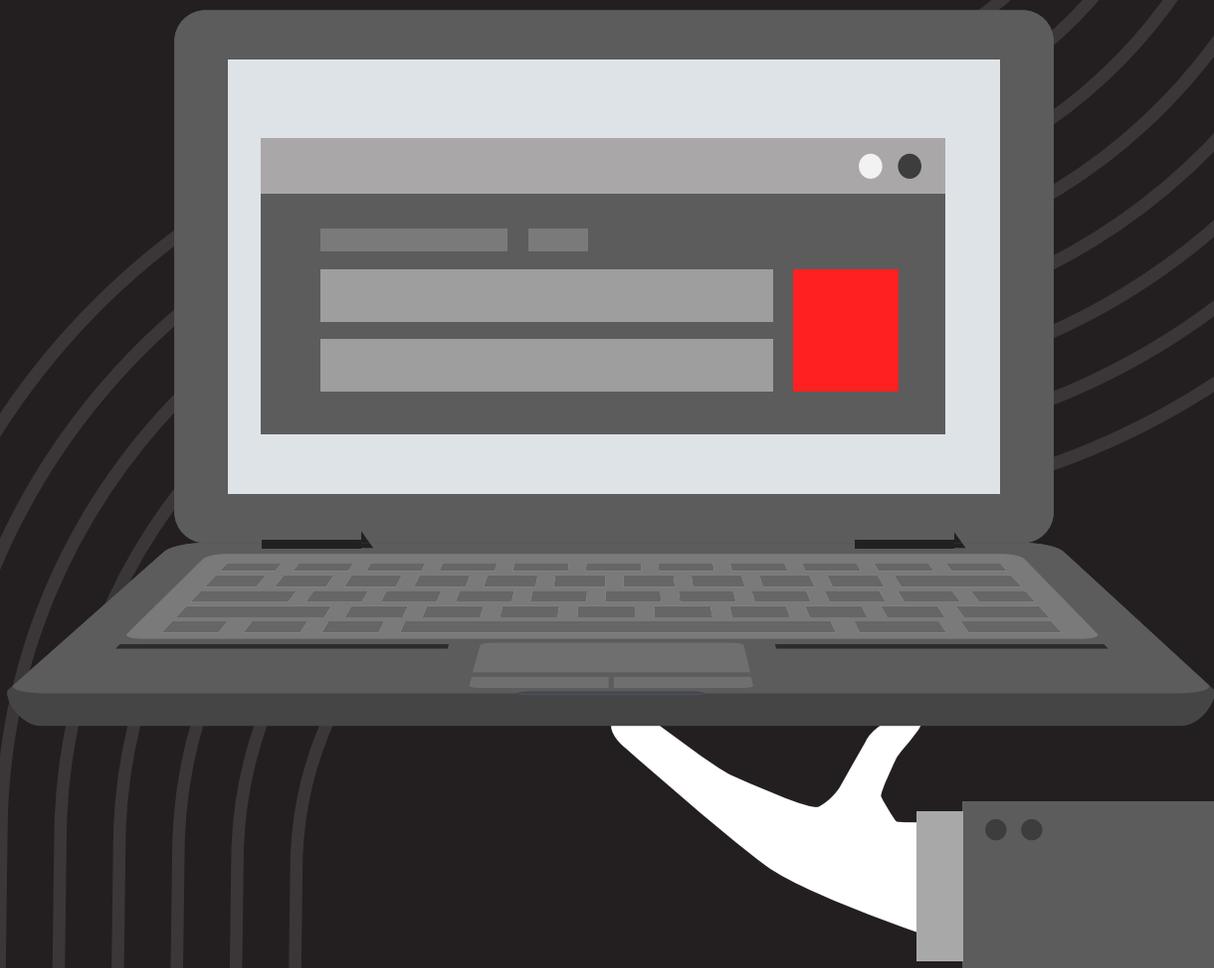


Table of Contents

Introduction	3
9 Must-Have Elements of a High-Performing Small Business Website	4
1. Intuitive	5
2. Simple	6
3. Fast	7
4. Mobile	7
5. Valuable	8
6. Secure	8
7. Actionable	9
8. Authentic	9
9. Professional	9

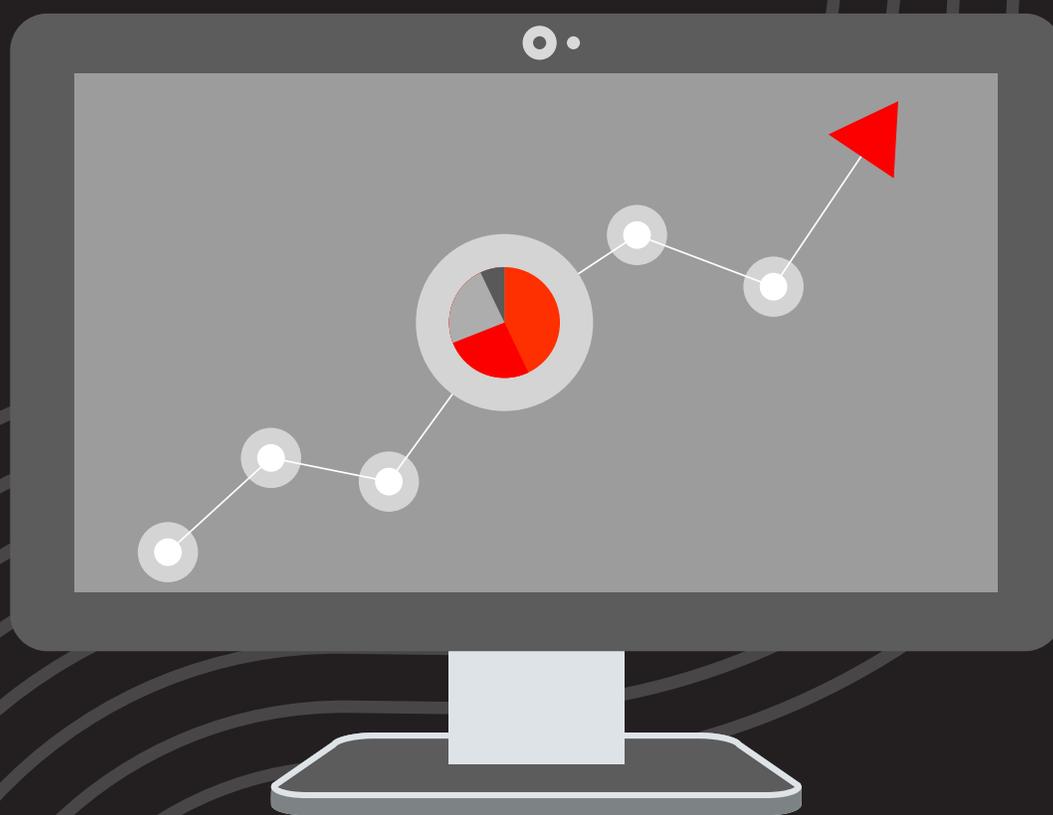
Introduction

You want more from your website, but how do you extract all of the potential your web presence has to offer?

The elements required for your small business website to succeed will vary greatly based on your industry, audience, and a wide variety of other variables. However, there are 9 fundamental elements that every high-performing small business website possesses.

In this guide we'll walk you through each of these foundational components, explain why they're important, and help you understand how to best incorporate them into your own site's success. Rather than spend any more time explaining the massive value you'll get from this guide, **let's jump straight in.**

9 Must-Have Elements of a High-Performing Small Business Website



Intuitive

The first priority for any successful website is its user experience, or the way your visitors feel when using your website. For example, if someone ends up on your site and can't easily figure out where they need to go to find the information they need, they'll likely be having a frustrating user experience.

On the other hand, delivering intuitive navigation that helps your visitors get exactly where they need to go quickly and efficiently allows you to provide them with a far more positive user experience.

As such, work on planning your site architecture well ahead of time based on the paths your users need to accomplish the goals they have when using your site.

User Flows

This type of planning typically is referred to as identifying user paths or flows. A user flow is the page-by-page or step-by-step path they'll take from arriving on your site to the time they leave.

For example your visitor may:

- Arrive on a blog post they found on Google
- Click on a link to your product/service page
- Click on a CTA for a related PDF guide
- Visit your landing page and complete your form
- Leave the site

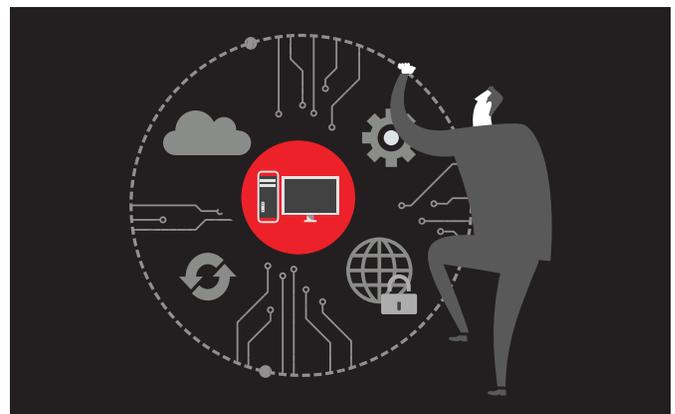
By mapping out as many of these potential user flows as you can, you'll be able to identify any sticking points in your navigation and overall site architecture that would cause your visitors to experience their interaction with your online brand in a negative light.

Navigation

Mapping out your navigation before you get started can help you deliver an intuitive user experience as well. When visitors end up on your home page (or any page for that matter), your main navigation is the first place they'll look to start their journey through your website.

Many small business sites offer too many options in their main navigation and include excessive dropdown navigations that can leave visitors wondering which of their options is most relevant to them accomplishing their goals.

Instead, work to consolidate your main navigation as much as possible so that it only includes your core offerings. Any subsets of these offerings could be housed on a main page or within a short and simple dropdown menu. Always work to streamline your users' ability to navigate intuitively.



Simple

The next element (and virtually every other element listed in this guide) ties back to delivering a seamless and intuitive user experience. Many small businesses assume that they need to outdo their competitor's website in order to maintain their competitive edge.

This typically leads to excessive amounts of flashy designs, third-party plugins, unnecessary features and functionalities, and other elements that end up distracting visitors.

Avoid Excess

We'll make this very simple for you: If you don't know the precise benefits that a feature, functionality, page, graphic, or element of your site is providing then you should likely remove it. Unless you can point to that element and determine exactly how it's helping your user or your business achieve a goal more effectively, it probably isn't.

In fact, it's likely to be annoying, confusing, or distracting your visitors, slowing down your site, or adding extra bulk that search engines dislike.

Clear and Concise Copy

One of the most important ways to keep your website simple is to write copy that is short and to the point, while still providing your users with all of the information they'll need.

Yes, there will be SEO opportunities on a select number of pages where you may decide you need to include more copy, but that extra length should focus on providing extra value to your reader. That's what Google will be looking for anyway.

Let's use your product page as an example. Rather than expounding on every detail that makes up your product or service, try to consolidate your copy to focus on communicating the core benefits that your customers will get from your product and the essential information they need to fully understand those benefits.

Fewest Number of Pages

Simple websites are those that communicate everything in as few pages as possible. For example, rather than having multiple tiers of pages that spread out your offerings over individual solutions for individual industries, put all relevant solutions for the same industry on the same page.

By decreasing the number of main pages on your site you'll provide your users with the value they need and avoid them getting lost in a myriad of similar but irrelevant pages that address their unique need or goal.



Fast

Another critical contributor to a flawless user experience, speed is something that many small businesses don't pay close attention to unless performance is dreadfully slow. Instead, work to identify whether your users could be experiencing slow page loads by using simple (and free) tools like Test My Site.

If your pages are taking too long to load, it could have a subtle but profound impact on your website performance, especially over the long term if the issue goes unnoticed or ignored.

Mobile

With 52% of website visits being served on mobile, your site's mobile experience is equally as important as your desktop experience. If you're not already prioritizing your mobile site, start immediately.

AMP

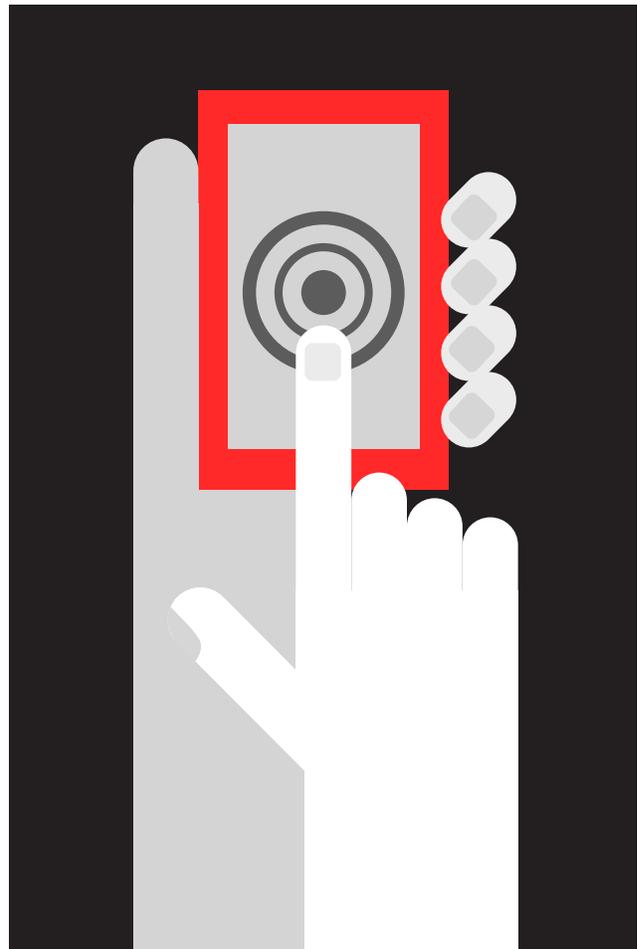
Google's AMP project, or Accelerated Mobile Pages, is a set of criteria that developers use to build simple and fast-loading pages for mobile users. Google understands that mobile users are even less patient with load times and for that reason they often penalize slow-loading mobile sites.

By using tools like Test My Site, you can determine whether or not Google views your mobile site as being slow and identify ways to improve your page load times.

Get Simpler

Big, beautiful features that display well on a desktop can be clunky and awkward on mobile. Plus, they'll likely slow down page load times even further. We recommend simplifying your website on desktop because it helps users consume it more efficiently.

This level of simplification is even more important for mobile. When it comes down to it, nothing but the bare essentials should be included on your mobile site. That may mean eliminating functionalities even when they prove to be useful on the desktop. Whatever the case, work to communicate as much as you can with as little as possible.



Valuable

One thing that we see time and time again with small business websites is a lack of value. Your website should serve as more than an online billboard for your business. After all, it's an opportunity to provide your audience with so much more than you could ever fit into an ad or brochure.

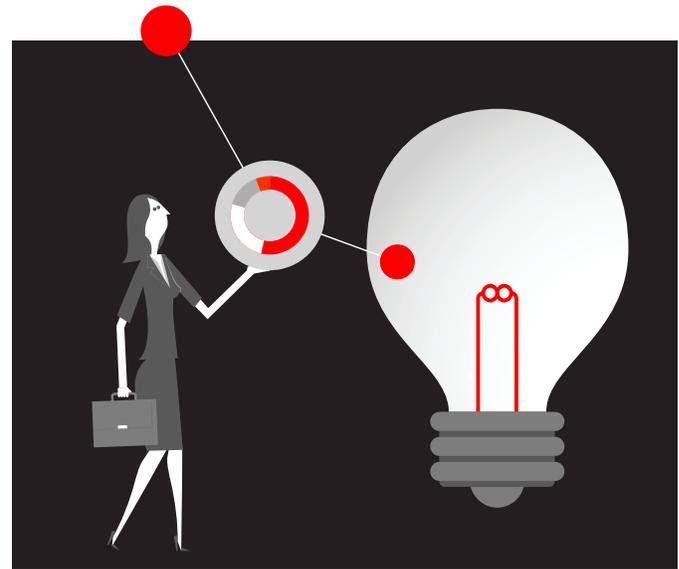
Help your users understand your business and your products by providing the information and resources they need. That means identifying their challenges and working to address them on each of your pages. You may not be able to directly address their challenge on a product page, but that doesn't mean you can't direct them to a resource that does.

Content

The way people shop and buy has changed dramatically. Today your customers are conducting far more research than ever before and require a significantly higher level of trust in a business in order to actually buy from them. That's why creating content like blog posts, ebooks, webinars, and videos is so important to your website's user experience.

Very few visitors to your site (less than 2%) will be ready to buy from you right away. By providing the answers to their questions, solving their problems, and meeting their needs, you'll be able to earn that trust and bring them one step closer to buying from you.

Everything that determines your site's user experience comes down to the value your visitors get from it and how easy it is for them to receive that value.



Secure

Today the vast majority of companies are conducting at least some of their business online. Whether that's selling goods directly from your site or simply hosting your company email accounts, security should be a major consideration for both customer-facing and internal activities.

With online threats more prevalent than ever, the risks of doing business online can be great. What's more is that most small businesses assume they aren't a target as they don't represent much value to cybercriminals. We're here to tell you that this assumption is completely inaccurate. Small businesses represent the sweet spot between the heightened security of large enterprises and the low asset value of the average consumer.

That said, there are powerful ways to protect your business from these threats. As this important topic falls outside the scope of this article, we highly recommend you reading our **comprehensive guide on the matter**. It could save your business from considerable damage.

Actionable

Another simple, but critical element of a high-performing small business website is action. Many sites are an amalgam of random pages that display information about various products or services, but very few prompt their visitors to take action the way they should.

When you land on any page of your website, do you know what action you're supposed to take next?

Rather than leaving it up to visitors to determine these steps on their own, prompt them to do what you want them to do. If you want a visitor on your homepage to read your most recent blog article, tell them and do your best to quickly explain why.

If you want them to go from the blog article to a landing page for your downloadable offer that you use to collect lead information, prompt them. Use a simple but attention-grabbing CTA (call to action) to link them to your guide or ebook so that you can grow your list and nurture that lead toward a sale.

The point is to make sure that you don't leave any dead ends on your website. Instead, ensure that your visitors always understand where they need to go next.

Actionable

Next up, ensure that your website is authentic to what you offer. Don't make promises you can't keep, so to speak. Everything about your website should represent what you actually deliver to your clients. For that reason, limit stock photography as much as possible in favor of real-life examples. Make sure your

copy speaks to your true offerings rather than playing up your services as a way of keeping up with your competitors.

You may not consider your business to have a strong brand, but it's unlikely that that's the case. Evaluate whether your website is in line with your company's mission statement and core values.

Identify the defining characteristics of your employees, your customers, and your geographical location and determine whether your website feels like your business. It will help you set expectations for your future customers before they ever interact with your business, while working to qualify potential customers.

9

Professionalism

The final element of a high-performing website is professionalism. We've all seen websites that make the business look and feel unprofessional. Poor quality design, copy, graphics, and images can turn potential customers off after a poor first impression.

While we urged you to keep things simple earlier in this guide, a professionally designed website will be more likely to look and feel professional and paint your company in a positive light. Unless you have an excellent inhouse team, anything you do yourselves will likely not be up to par.

Invest in your success by hiring professional copywriters to support your site's copy and professional designers to provide that exceptional user experience. You now have the knowledge to guide their hand and point out any elements that don't fall in line with the fundamentals found in this guide.



ABOUT PICS ITECH

PICS ITech, co-founded by Terry Rossi and Richard Rosenthal, has been helping small businesses optimize they're internal and customer-facing IT initiatives since 1995. They've worked with companies from around the world in nearly every industry to help them establish and implement highly effective IT strategies. PICS is continually working to improve their abilities in order to stay on the cutting edge in the ever-evolving world of information technology.

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