

Whitepaper

How to get more customers via your website?

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INTRODUCTION

The internet offers your company a lot of new opportunities to increase your profits. Of course you want to make use of all possibilities.

The efficiency of your website depends on two factors:

- 1. The number of visitors: First, people need to find your website, through search engines, external links, advertisements you publish in other media, etc. Search engine optimization can help, but also a good structure and valuable content of your website is very important. In addition, 'the more, the better' is not the best principle here: your visitors only benefit from your website if you can quickly present them what they're looking for.
- 2. The conversion: How many of those visitors will actually become a customer of your business, or find the right information, or contact you. In short, to what extent your website achieved its goal. And for this, the quality of the content of your website is paramount. Compare it to a store: If it's well-appointed, it's neatly clean and has an interesting offer, you can be sure to attract more customers.

More visitors = good - Higher conversion = better!

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THE MOST IMPORTANT TIPS, RIGHT AWAY

Keep it simple

Internet users are impatient. They want to **find the information** that they are looking for or to see the product they need and want to buy **real quickly**.

- Too much additional information? Moving images everywhere? It only distracts visitors and... click!
 He or she is gone!
- Navigation buttons that aren't immediately understandable? No time to click those and... click! Visitor
 is gone!
- Jargon? Argot? Correct but complicated formulations? No way a visitor wants to think twice and...
 click! He or she is gone!
- Information that obviously is no longer **up-to-date**? A visitor judges immediately and... click! He or she is gone!
- The most important information or the button to order is at the bottom of the webpage? Scolling all the way down takes to much time and... click! Visitor is gone!

The tip 'keep it simple' goes for the structure and the layout as well as the content of your website.

Create your website with your target audience in mind

You know your customers, so you also know your target audience. Try to visualise at each decision for your website – navigation, layout, content – what will please the people of your target audience the most.

- You are selling accessories to professionals? **Use their language in your texts**. A limited amount of professional jargon does not matter. In fact, it will generate credibility.
- Your target audience are older people, somewhat unfamiliar with computers? Choose a quiet layout, very clear navigation and a slightly larger font.
- You know for sure that your target audience are visual persons? Use more images and/or videos but make sure they are being supported with textual information.

And remember, there is always a second target audience that you have to keep in mind: the search engines...

Determine accurately the goal of your website

Concentrate on the ultimate goal of your website and make sure the visitor reaches it as swifly as possible.

- The purpose of a **webshop** is to **turn visitors into customers**. Make it as easy as possible for visitors to order and to pay that is the goal you want them to reach.
- The purpose of an **informatif website** is to **offer information**. Make sure visitors get that information as soon as possible (clear structure, integrated search engine). Make sure they can also download the most important information, f.e. in a pdf file.
- Your ambition does not go any further that a 'business card' on the internet? Make sure a visitor knows
 exactly what you or your company does/offers/means. And make sure that an interested visitor can
 easily contact you: phone number + e-mail address on each webpage.

Besides a main goal, your website can have a number of secondary goals. Also give them some thought:

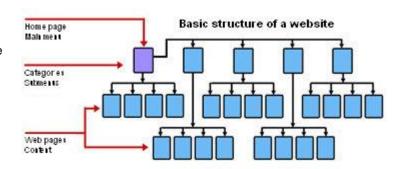
- Visitors who request more information by e-mail,
- Visitors who sign up for your newsletter.
- Visitors who pass on your website address via **social media** to their acquaintances, etc.

STRUCTURE OF YOUR WEBSITE

A **good structure** allows for *smooth and clear navigation* through your website. That is important for your **visitors**, but also for the **search engines**.

Three layers are optimal

"In three mouse click you will have exactly what you are looking for" is an excellent slogan. A structure of up to three layers ensures that visitors quickly find what they are looking for and that your website scores well with the search engines.



Organise the navigation following that structuur

A well considered structure automatically provides clear navigation and a solid menu layout.

- Make it easy for visitors and choose **logical**, **short names for menu items**. Search engines will also appreciate that.
- Increase trust by following internet conventions as well as possible, even if they are not cut in stone:
 - 'Homepage' at the start of a menu, 'Contact' at the end.
 - The main navigation items at the top of the screen (main menu), the secondary navigation items left (submenus), necessary but few consulted items at the bottom (privacy, terms and conditions, code of conduct. ...)

"Three layers aren't enough for me."

Often it helps to drastically rethink the structure. And in many cases it is possible to address an extra layer, but that does not have to be visible in the menu structure. Visitors will reach the fourth layer via links on the third layer web pages.

Stick to the structure when your website expands

It's good when your website **expands naturally**: Regular visitors find **new information** and search engines give growing websites a **better score**. Make sure it does not get messy and that the **3-layer structure stays intact**.

Use internal links wisely

If a webpage refers to information that is on another webpage of your website, please **link** to it. But make sure that the visitor does not get lost and knows exactly where he is. **Breadcrumbs** are a good tool for this.



A few choices concerning structure and navigation that are up for improvement:

"I have a very large printed catalogue and I want my web shop to have exactly the same structure."

That seems to be a logical choice and for a very extensive web shop, a structure with more than three layers can not always be avoided. However, it is a good idea to make it possible for visitors to find what they are looking for in as few steps as possible through overview pages. Or provide comprehensive search options. Searching on properties, for example, is a good way to quickly find specific products.

"I want flashy navigation buttons with cool symbols that change when the cursor hover over them and when visitors click on them."

Unfortunately, there are few useful symbols that are immediately understandable to everyone. If you want to make it clear to visitors to what information a particular link leads, a word or short text is still the best. This applies to both navigation and other links. In addition, search engines more easily detect relevancy if the text of a link is related to the content of the destination page for the link. This improves the ranking of your website in search results.

"Before visitors reach my homepage, I want to show them a breath-taking animation and/or a video about my company!"

Flash-animations have largely disappeared from the internet and likely the browsers used to access your website no longer support such animations. Clearly this is not such an impressive point of entry. A company video can be a good idea, it offers the advantage to show exactly what you want the visitor to see. But try to avoid using a video that start automatically, if visitors to your site have to sit through the entire thing every time they frequent your page, chances are their patience will soon run out. At least provide a 'Skip intro' button and make your homepage accessible without the intro when bookmarks or favourites are used. Also, the extra click for switching off or skipping animations or videos, stands to jeopardise the "three clicks" rule.

LAYOUT OF YOUR WEBSITE

Your website is at least the **virtual signboard** of your company, so you better make sure that it has the same **professional appearance** as your business itself.

Make your brand/company recognisable

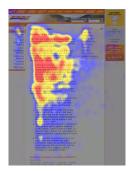
- Incorporate your logo, house style and/or business colours into the design of the website.
- If you do not have those (yet), make sure that your company name appears in the same way as on your letters, leaflets, invoices, business cards.
- Present your business visually: a front door photo, a video of your business in action, etc. A (mood) image, even though it adds little information on its own, can help to incite confidence by the visitor.

Do not choose layout items that are too exotic

You possess your own customized font? Most visitors may not have your special font available in their browser, so they will see your typical layout completely different from what you meant them to see. Keep it simple: **Verdana** is still considered the most popular and readable font for the screen.

You want your visitors to focus on an animation, a business video in a special format or a flashy 3D application? Make sure that the information you find important is also available in an **alternative**, **wider known format**. Browsers can be very sophisticated nowadays, but a considerable number of users still choose not to install too many special features.

The most important items in the right places



At the left you see the result of an eye-tracking survey of a commercial website. People **view/scan** a web page usually in a blurred **F-pattern**. The most viewed areas are in red, the lesser viewed areas in yellow. In blue are the areas that hardly attract attention. Keep this in mind when choosing a layout.

Items that are vital and serve best the objective of your site, should be positioned in most viewed areas. These days people browse the internet more and more on mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets. That is why good websites have a responsive layout that adapts itself to the size of the used screen. Make sure that key elements remain visible, also when they are shown on a smaller screen.

Everything in a single screen is better

Studies show internet users more easily absorb information displayed in a single screen. If scrolling cannot be avoided, position all vital information at the top of the page. Place longer, more tedious pieces of text in lower sections.

In reality it is difficult to determine the amount of information visible without scrolling, this depends entirely on the visitor's screen size, menus and toolbars in place, font size, etc.

The newspaper construct: above/below the fold

Only the top half of a paper is visible on the newsstand, so above the fold are 1) the logo; 2) the articles and photos that sell. Below the fold less noticeable, but still interesting, articles and images are featured. A construct also applicable to websites ...



Improve legibility

An easy to read font (f.i. 'Verdana' is very effective), proper contrasting between text and background, a solid background colour, clear distinction between text and navigation elements: anything that improves legibility is welcome. Remember, compared to paper, reading from a screen is more difficult.

A few layout choices up for improvement:

"The first thing to be noticed on any website, is a photo/video of my company!"

An excellent idea, if said photo/video holds a sound call-to-action that inspires the visitor to do exactly what you want – usually to become a customer. If such is not the case, it is more efficient to allot that space to key information, allowing it to reach your visitors immediately.

"I want full control of what visitors see on my website. Every page should be an image with all text embedded!"

This has a lot of disadvantages: it takes longer to load the page, it is difficult to update, it is impractical on mobile devices, etc. The worst part is search engines only partially index images, through the text sent in the alt-section of the -tag, which can never be as meaningful or valuable as the text itself.

"My website needs to attract attention, so the more sound and movement, the better! And every page should have a completely different layout!"

Research into the usability of websites shows that visitors are mostly annoyed by 'moving items'. Use them wisely. A second source of aggravation are websites that instantly play music. In any case, provide an off switch. Mind you, moving items and music can offer additional value, entirely dependent on the design and purpose of the website. Thoroughly consider before using them and keep it functional.

"The text on my website should really jump out. Make everything big and bold!"

Using too large a font quickly comes across as pushy. In addition, most recent browsers allow modification of the font size. Using standard sizing is probably the best idea. Using only bold makes text more difficult to read, especially on a screen. A good idea is emphasising important words or keywords by using bold. Just don't go overboard.

CONTENT OF YOUR WEBSITE

Content, both **text** and **images**, constitutes the most **vital part** of your website and is your toolset to **convince visitors of becoming customers** of your company.

An effective mix of text and images

Too much text makes your website look boring, not enough text does not inspire curiosity. Images offer added value if they are relevant, meaning more than "just a pretty picture". Always take into consideration what appeals most to your target audience.

Delete superfluous text but keep it legible

Internet users are an impatient lot and reading on a screen is already sufficiently difficult. Keep your texts concise and to the point. Your visitors will be keener on reading them when they are written attractively and easy to read. Bear in mind that search engines mainly focus on text during referencing.

- Use colloquial language, check spelling and grammar.
- Be consistent in addressing your audience.
- Use short, simple sentences with a meaningful vocabulary. Use active sentences.
- Do not write out numbers and avoid abbreviations.

Be stingy with adjectives

Adjectives put a certain stress on your text, either positive ('right choice', 'easy maintenance', 'fast service') or negative ('disappointing result', 'high cost', 'late delivery'). Adjectives that are too activating, may annoy the reader: is your offer 'unique' or ideal'?

Choose images that relate to your text

Using images is just fine, as long as they actually add to a text, images are supposed to illustrate. A photo relating to the information in the text will **encourage** readers more than just a pretty picture. In general, search engines are blind to images and will only index them when additional information is added – for experts: the alt-section of the -tag, this option can be used in your content management system (CMS).

Images can be scaled on insertion into the contents, as such tempting visitors to leave them on large format. It is more practical to **compress** images and give them a more **manageable** file size. This will allow your website to **load quicker**.

Use summaries where possible

People love lists – when they are not too long. Numbered summaries are ideal for lists that are complete and have to be followed in a particular order, f.i. checklists. Summaries using bullets are also effective.

- Start with the longest item, or even better, make the most important piece of information a bit longer and put it first.
- The first item is the most important one.
- Summaries are easy to scan.
- Summaries that are too long are counterproductive, 3 to 5 items are ideal.
- 7 items is risky, rather keep it short.

A relevant title, subtitles and text in paragraphs

Internet users scan the contents of a webpage: they read the title, if relevant - the introductory sentence and / or subtitles, if they arouse interest - the below paragraph, they glance at the images and check the navigation to verify if other sections of the website might peak their interest.

Preferably the title is a summary of the entire page!

Ideally, a visitor knows exactly what the page is about after reading the title

A subtitle reflects what the below paragraph is about

Even if a visitor only reads the title and subtitles, he will be able to extract all vital information. If this appeals to his interest, he will likely read the rest of the webpage as well.

One theme per paragraph

The first sentence of a paragraph is most important one. Avoid cramming too much information into one paragraph. Elaborate on an idea in a few lines. Add a relevant subtitle. Insert blank lines between paragraphs.

Limit the number of paragraphs per webpage

Be concise and focussed. Remember to position key information at the top, in the first paragraph. If you have to provide additional information, place a link to an underlying webpage where you elaborate on the theme - there is no explicit need to incorporate this underlying page in the site navigation.

Titles, subtitles and paragraphs create a **structure** on every webpage. When titles and subtitles are provided with an <hx>-tag, search engines will index this structure and the webpage will receive a better score.

Use 'keywords' as a foundation for your web texts

Keywords are **words** that describe **your company's activities in detail**. These words should definitely appear in your texts. Which keywords apply for the entire website? Which keywords relate to a specific page? Keywords are also the words entered into search engines by your target audience, when **looking for your products and / or services**.

Carefully consider keywords for your company **before drafting texts**. Which keywords relate to the entire website? Which keywords apply for a specific page?

- Use keywords in titles, links and the beginning of the text, as such a visitor knows where he is on the site.
- Don't be afraid to repeat keywords, but don't exaggerate.
 Also use synonyms.

Keywords are equally important for 'regular' visitors as well as search engines: based on these keywords, the relevance of your website is determined.

What are quality keywords?

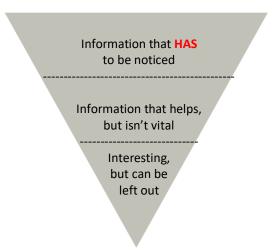
Imagine you own an electronics shop. Possible keywords include

- electronics
- electronics shop
- electronica
- electro technical
- electro
- electro shop
- electronics store
- electric parts
- etc.

But also your city, the name of your company, possibly your own name, certain brands you represent, misspelled variations on your keywords, etc.

Most people have learned to write following a certain pattern: introduction, informative center piece, conclusion. If you write texts for the internet, you better not follow this rule. Instead, apply **the principle of the 'inversed piramid'**.

- Start on topic, position vital information at the beginning of the page, preferably even in titles and subtitles.
- If there is a conclusion to be mentioned, mention it straight away.
- · Omit descriptions and elaborations.



Use meaningful text links

In theory any element of a webpage can be turned into a link: buttons, images, portions of images, videos, entire sections of text. It is however more effective to use **short and meaningful text links**, something your visitors will appreciate, but also search engines.

Ranked from poor to good:

- More info / Read more / Click here not very meaningful
- 2. Click here for more info is a call-to-action, but also not very meaningful
- 3. (Click here for) more information on diy-saunas contains a distinct keyword and links to a page that offers pertinent information

On the internet it is a common rule to underline links, that's why it is a good idea to not underline any segments of normal text.

Why are text links recommended?

For human visitors: It brings clarity and for a number of people text links are the only ones they can use. For instance, the visually impaired are also avid internet users, their browser reads aloud the webpage contents. This means, text is not a problem and for images the alt-segment of -tag is read out. After a simple commando, links are read aloud in chronological order – this will only work if they are text links, and if they are relevant. A list with f.i. ten times 'Read more', is not very helpful.

For search engines: the robots that search engines dispatch to grade websites, index and follow links. If there is an obvious relationship between said links and the contents of the page they are referring to, f.i. a link containing a keyword that is also present on the webpage – the webpage featuring the link will receive a higher rating.

Calls-to-action, preferably on every webpage

A call-to-action is an incentive aimed at visitors to immediately do 'something'.

- With a little motivation, visitors will take action a lot faster, call it human nature.
- A website merely presenting business information versus a website inviting to take action: research shows internet users are more appreciative of the latter.

Studies prove that **calls-to-action** contribute the most to **conversion**: visitors do not simply absorb information, they also do something with it: they take action. Calls-to-action really make your website interactive.

Often the result of a call-to-action can be measured: '<u>Download the DustBuster vacuum cleaner manual here'</u> takes visitors to a different page. Web statistics reflect how many visitors that page received, or how successful the call-to-action was.

A call-to-action presented as a button is fairly efficient, the text used should be clear and to the point. A button can be given a **contrasting colour**, with a text in a slightly larger font, which will make it stand out even more.

Examples of calls-to-action:

"You can do this, you can do that" → "Do this, do that"

Be direct, to-the-point. Don't be afraid to give orders!

- Send this page to a friend
- Look at all our promotions
- Don't have an account? Register here for free and order on line!
- No more problems parking your car: apply on line for a parking card and visit our store carefree.
- Read more about the new Thumbelina Cookbook Series
- Receive a free monthly e-marketing tip → your e-mailaddress
- Download a check-list for your new website here
- Be the first to review the new Imaginary Instruments air guitar.
- Consult our Facebook page for last-minute information on our promotions
- And the all-time favourite: Order now and receive a free gift!

'Click here ...' - yes or no?

Simply using 'click here' is a bad idea, it is an empty incentive. Even a lot of internet experts claim that a link or call-to action should never start with 'Click here...'.

Cons: 'Click here ...' is patronising to the visitor. The link text itself should be clear enough to show where the link leads to. Also, your visitors are sufficiently intelligent to notice a link.

 $Pros: \\ \text{`Click here } \dots \\ \text{`is a personal and direct incentive and a first class example of a strong call-to-action}.$

Can you write strong calls-to-action without WITHOUT using 'Click here ...'? Good!

Do you want to use the strong call-to-action 'Click here ...' in certain strategic places? By all means, go ahead!

List options in the right order

When given the choice, visitors will always prefer **the final option**. Keep this in mind when offering different options to your visitors.

- Click here for more product information (→ Only important to the visitor)
- Call us for a free estimate: 0X XX XX XX (→ Interesting, you establish a direct line of communication)
- Order now and receive a special discount (→ That's what it's all about)

Keep your website up to date and regularly provide new content

Nothing as annoying as a website offering out-of-date information. Make sure your website is always **up-to-date**:

- Immediately remove products or brands you are no longer offering.
- New address, new phone number? Update immediately!
- Avoid using phrases such as 'this year', 'next month', 'for 20 years' a.o. These become obsolete
 overnight.
- Use specific time notations: 'in 2020 (applies to 2019, 2020 and 2021), 'October 2020', 'since 2010'.

A few content choices up for improvement:

"I want my affairs to be legally sound. Visitors to my website first have to read and agree to the terms and conditions. Better yet, post the terms and conditions at the top of every page!"

If you store user data through your website, you will have to make sure the whole process is GDPR- compliant. Accepting general terms and conditions – and often also the privacy policy – are an integral part. But starting every page with an overview of general terms and conditions is a completely different story. Chances are the average visitor will not even read the first paragraph of the terms and conditions. A good idea is to place a link to said terms and conditions, but visitors shouldn't have to read these until they actually share personal information.

"I am the third generation running this company. I want to publish my biography, my father's and my grandfather's on the site!"

In reality that's not a bad idea, it adds a personal touch to the website and it is content that will set your website apart from the competition. But it is not a good idea to make this the focal point of your website: rather provide information your visitors can use immediately. Of course, a simple mention of the company going strong for three generations does inspire trust.

"I already have the title for my homepage: 'Welcome to the website of company Such & Such!'"
Welcoming your visitors is a nice gesture, but if they are recurring visitors - which is the general idea - after a while this will become a tad ridiculous. Imagine allowing yourself the luxury of frequenting your local pub 3 times a day: in the morning for coffee, a sandwich for lunch and a beer after work. Do you expect a bear hug from the proprietor every time you walk into the place? "Welcome to the website of ..." is a life-size cliché. Such an important space should be dedicated to a useful call-to-action, for instance: "Looking for a plumber in Cambridgeshire? Contact us now for a free quote!"

YOUR HOMEPAGE = YOUR BUSINESS CARD

Your homepage will mainly be viewed by **people that know your company** and enter your **domain name directly into their browser**. Internet users will also reach your homepage through search engines, but often they will land on a different page of your website, depending on the search they entered.

You have one shot at making a good impression, so make your homepage count!

Only key information

- A homepage clarifies what your company does, but from your customer's point of view.
- At the same time it is your website's table of contents.
- The text is short and to-the-point, written from your customer's perspective. Always effective: your company's strong points.
- The homepage is **simple** and does not feature an excess of offers and promotions.
- Use a catchy title or slogan, avoid using 'Welcome to the website ...'
- Keep the text short, written from the customer's perspective. Don't use 'Company X does this and that ...' but 'You are looking for this?', 'You need that?', 'Company X can do for you ...'
- Limit the amount of text to three paragraphs with relevant subtitles
 - This and that, with the best service for you
 In the first paragraph explain what your company does (from the customer's perspective).
 - X makes the difference for you
 In the second paragraph clarify why your company is better than your colleagues competitors.
 - Interested? <u>Do this now!</u>
 Do not forget to insert one or more calls-to-action.

Is a creative homepage always a good idea?

This entirely depends on the purpose of your website. Creativity is always a plus and internet users enjoy being pleasantly surprised. Take into account how your homepage will be perceived on a second visit, a third one, a ...

CHECKLIST WEBSITE

For which target group(s) is the website intended?

More than 1 target group: has	□ yes □ no						
Primary goal of the website:							
Secondary goals:							
Can these goals be easily ide		☐ yes ☐ no					
STRUCTURE							
Number of layers in							
navigation + structure	max. 3	3 to 5	more than 5	unclear			
Navigation buttons							
Wavigation battons	text	image + text	image	unclear			
Breadcrumbs (website > cate	goriv > webpage	>)					
	Bo,		yes	no			
Clear navigation + structure							
		sufficient	can be improved	not enough			
LAYOUT							
LAYOUT							
Logo, corporate style, corporate colours		yes	no				
			763				
Picture/image which has a clear relation to the company			yes	no			
Well readable font			yes	no			
Good contrast between text and (solid) background		yes	no				
6 11 1 1							
Separation between content and navigation elements			yes	no			
Is the website responsive – legible on both desktop screens and							
smartphones and everything	yes	no					
Scrolling							
		no scrolling	little scrolling	a lot of scrolling			
			1	1			

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WEBSITE :
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CONTENT							
Spoken language, adapted to the target audience							
		yes	no				
Relevant page naam (showr	n in browser bar) a	nd page title (shown					
in browser tag)			yes	no			
Text divided in paragraphs, with relevant intermediate titles							
			yes	no			
Enumerations in lists							
			yes	no			
Short lists (3 to 5 items, max. 7)							
			yes	no			
Keywords in titles, texts and	Llinks						
Reywords in titles, texts and links		sufficient	can be improved	not enough			
Synoniemen van keywords a	aanwezig						
Synomemen van keywords t	danwezig	sufficient	can be improved	not enough			
Belangrijkste informatie/conclusie vooraan/in titels en tussentitels							
			yes	no			
Links via significante teksten (met keyword, zegt wat er zal volgen)							
zimo via significante tenster	· (met keyword) 26	Se wat er zar volgen,	yes	no			
Clear calls-to-action, on eve	ry wehnage						
cical cans to action, on eve	ry wespage	sufficient	can be improved	not enough			
Good mix of text and image	s						
			yes	no			
Relevant images							
Nelevant inages			yes	no			
Images with relevant text in the 'alt' segment							
			yes	no			
Images well scaled (file not too large)							
,			yes	no			
Picture/image which has a c	lear relation to the	e company					
,			yes	no			
Website up-to-date				□ .			
		sufficient	can be improved	not enough			
New content on a regular base (news, blog)							
		sufficient	can be improved	not enough			
LINKS							
Links from the website tor	П	П					
external websites	more than 5	3 to 5	2 to 3	none			
Links from external			2 10 3				
websites to the website	more than 5	3 to 5	2 to 3	none			
WEDSILES to the WEDSILE	more than 3	3 10 3	2 10 3	HOHE			