

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**Free Gift
Inside
Worth £129**

TRADE UP YOUR ONLINE MARKETING



**Discover the SEO Tools Every Tradesman Needs to
Get Found, Build Trust and Win More Clients Online**

ANDREW LUDLAM

Contents

Title Page	1
Praise for Trade Up Your Online Marketing	4
Your Free Gift Worth £129	7
Introduction.....	8
Chapter 1 – Introduction to Keywords.....	11
Chapter 2 - How to Find the Right Keywords	15
Chapter 3 – The Importance of Backlinks	23
Chapter 4 – How to Build Backlinks for Your Website	29
Chapter 5 - Unleash the Power of SEO Outreach.....	33
Chapter 6 - Google’s Top 4 SEO Ranking Factors	36
Chapter 7 - How to Maximize the Value of Search Traffic.....	45
Chapter 8 – Top 10 Practical SEO Tips You Can Start Using Today.....	49
Conclusion	53
Reader Bonus	54
The Author	55
About Choice Digital	56
Copyright	57

Trade Up Your Online Marketing

ANDREW LUDLAM

Praise for Trade Up Your Online Marketing

“Specifically written for the building and construction industry, “Trade Up Your Online Marketing” provides a great introduction on how to drive more traffic and generate more business through your website. Packed with both beginner and advanced techniques, the book is written using simple and easy to understand language. “Trade Up Your Online Marketing” gives you a solid and practical ground plan to follow that will improve your ranking on Google and other search engines”

Justin Jakubait – Absolute Interiors Limited

“We all know that being top of Google is key, especially in the buildings trade and whilst there's lots of online marketing “advice” out there much of it is out of date, or simply doesn't work. However, “Trade Up Your Online Marketing” does the job. It is full of usable advice that you can implement straight away. It is a true beginner's guide based on years of experience and bang up to date. Highly recommended!”

Michael Birmingham – Redrose Limited

“Running my own decorating business, I know how important it is to make sure my company website is found at the top of the search engines. Word of mouth only gets you so far, especially with new websites appearing every day. However, learning about search engine optimisation (SEO) can be confusing. “Trade Up Your Online Marketing”, explains – in plain English – the specific SEO tools and strategies you need in 2016 and beyond to get found and win more clients online”

Jason Chinsammy – Redecorate London Limited

“The first online marketing book specifically written for the tradesman, “Trade Up Your Online Marketing” is highly recommend for business owners that might have struggled to understand and implement online marketing strategies before. The book is packed full of advice that you can take action on today, and its author, Andrew Ludlam, is extremely knowledgeable on the subject of SEO”

James Warrington – Darusi Services Limited

““Trade Up Your Online Marketing” is both an easy to read and excellent step-by-step guide to help the building and construction trade rank their company websites higher in the search engines. It does exactly “what it says on the tin” and is ideal for business owners who might be new to online marketing or not even sure what search engine optimisation is. Perfect for beginners “Trade Up Your Online Marketing” takes you through SEO in an easy to understand format”

John Doyle – JD Decorators and Plasterers

“Before reading “Trade Up Your Online Marketing” I didn't know much about search engine optimisation or how important it was for ranking your website in Google. I am so glad I read this book! It explained everything very simply, so that even a novice like myself could improve my website rankings in Google. In the competitive buildings trade we can't always rely on word of mouth, and so improving your online marketing is becoming more and more important. This book is a great place to start!”

Derek McFall – ATS General Builders

“I highly recommend “Trade Up Your Online Marketing” for any trades person who is trying to better understand SEO, improve the traffic to their website and what they can do to be successful with both. The book covers the most up-to-date SEO practices as well as chapter on internet marketing tips that can be implemented immediately. Easy to read, easy to understand, the book also comes with a free website audit. What more could you want? This book is an extremely valuable resource for any ambitious trades person wanting to win more clients online”

Ricky Harrison – Founder of WhosThat.co.uk, the online recruitment platform for the construction industry

Praise for Choice Digital

"Choice Digital are an extremely savvy online marketing agency. They can quickly cut through all the fluffy marketing and technical "stuff" and tell you exactly what to do and where best to invest your money to win more clients online"

Mark Lacy, Founder – Toning Centres Southeast

"Having previously used an SEO agency who promised the earth but didn't deliver, we were cautious when exploring other options. However, Choice Digital are the perfect partners for us. Honest and reliable they clearly know their online marketing are we seeing great results after just a few months"

VIP Security Solutions

"One year into running our clinic, we felt stuck on how to generate more leads from our website. Choice Digital came to the rescue and offered plenty of valuable advice and input on practical ways to improve our marketing. Having engaged their SEO services our clinic has seen a weekly increase in online patient enquiries and the investment with Choice Digital has been more than worth it"

London Osteopathy Health Clinic

"With his expert marketing knowledge and lead generation ideas, Andrew has now become an integral part of our growth since June 2013. With Andrew's help we are continuing to grow our business each month. We certainly consider Andrew a very valuable "partner" of our firm and highly recommend his marketing insights and expertise."

David Mahwe, Managing Director and Partner – Muson & Hills LLP

Your Free Gift Worth £129

As a thank you for purchasing this book, I would like to give you a free gift.

Simply visit www.choicedigital.co.uk/free-website-audit/ to apply for a free website audit worth £129. Choice Digital's free website audit is a great way to see how well your trade website is currently optimised for the search engines, and the first step towards helping you win more clients online!

Your free website 'health check' will reveal:

- The key strengths, weaknesses and obstacles to your website's success
- The hidden SEO and technical factors that are stopping your business website from ranking well in Google
- Specific pointers and analysis on what website pages need attention and the actions you need to take to surge up the search engines and gain more online enquiries

Normally priced at £129, the team at Choice Digital will carry out an extensive review of your website and present our results in your own custom-made report. We will also provide a free consultation to explain our key findings and recommendations.

Here is that link again: www.choicedigital.co.uk/free-website-audit/

Introduction

As a tradesman, you already know that having an online presence greatly impacts the success of your business. With hundreds of new buildings and home improvement companies launching websites each week, it is becoming more and more difficult to get your customer's attention – and money.

As such the ability to make sure your company website, and therefore your services, get found by the right customer at the right time is more important than ever before.

Simply put, it is all well and good having a great looking website, but if it hardly attracts any enquiries then it is not serving its purpose. Paying attention to how your website ranks in the search engines such as Google will significantly increase the size of your website's audience, which will then lead to more work for your business. This is where search engine optimisation, or SEO, comes in.

If you don't know what SEO means, here is a basic definition from Wikipedia.com:

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the process of affecting the visibility of a website or a web page in a search engine's (e.g. Google.com) unpaid results - often referred to as "natural," "organic," or "earned" results. In general, the earlier (or higher ranked on the search results page), and more frequently a site appears in the search results list, the more visitors it will receive from the search engine's users. SEO may target different kinds of search, including image search, local search, video search, academic search, news search and industry-specific vertical search engines.

SEO is the simple activity of ensuring your website can be found in Google for words and phrases relevant to what your business is offering. SEO are all the things you can do to ensure your website ranks highly in the search engines.

It is not enough to build an amazing website and then hope people find it. What you must do is include elements in the website design that capture the attention of search engines. This is where your SEO efforts come into play.

So, if you're a bathroom installer from Kent, and a prospective customer is searching online for a

bathroom installer in Kent, you want to make sure your website is found on the first page of the search engines!

Unlike some traditional (and very hit and miss) methods of advertising such as newspaper, magazine or radio advertising, whilst an organic and well-planned SEO strategy can take time to put into place, once the results start to come in, there is no upper limit to how great your return on investment may become.

Essentially, the whole process of SEO is to:

- Discover the keywords to include on your website that you want to be found for;
- Create content that is relevant and meaningful, and;
- To ultimately get the attention of both the search engines and your ideal customers

And given that the world of organic search is roughly two-thirds Google, one-third Bing (source: searchengland.com), getting your website on the first page of Google's search results is the Holy Grail for any tradesman looking for more customers online.

In addition, it is vital that you keep up to date with latest developments in SEO, especially given that each year Google changes its search algorithm around 500 to 600 times. Whilst most of these changes are very minor, Google occasionally rolls out a "major" algorithmic update (such as Google Panda and Google Penguin) that affects search results in significant ways.

For example, 'keyword stuffing' – using the same keywords repeatedly throughout your website, not because they are useful in your website copy but because you want to increase your keyword count – is now a thing of the past.

So too is gaining links from unrelated websites and something we at Choice Digital see all the time when initially reviewing a client website. Think a link from, say, a Russian website that sells steroids is a good idea for your business? *Think again.*

If your buildings or home improvements company has not engaged in search engine optimisation yet, it

is definitely missing out on a very cost-effective way to generate on-going business. However, SEO needs to be done in a manner that adds value to your company website and offers visitors a great experience.

Regardless of the industry or trade you operate in, every business owner should have the goal of reaching page 1 on Google for terms relating to their services. The importance of being found online cannot be overstated, and whilst it can take a little time and effort to get there, the benefits for all small businesses, especially in the building and home improvement sector, greatly outweigh any negatives that you may have come across or heard.

SEO can be extremely complex and is constantly evolving. Don't expect to wave a magic wand and be on the 1st page of Google the following day. It can take several months, depending on your competition and the industry you operate in.

The aim of "Trade Up Your Online Marketing" is to provide you with the very latest, as well as easy to understand, SEO practices and tools. Regardless of which building or home improvement sector you operate in, using the advice and guidance in this book you will have the very best opportunity – and practical knowhow – to ensure your website gets found, builds trust and wins more customers online.

Chapter 1 - Introduction to Keywords

The title of this chapter is a little bit misleading because it makes two assumptions. First, you need to find keywords you want your company website to get found for in the search engines and second, you need to find the *right* keywords.

Unfortunately, keyword research analysis is often ignored by many business owners looking to build more search engine traffic to their websites. Not surprisingly, they end up failing with SEO.

The most common way to fail is that your website does not get any traffic at all. This is not unusual. For example, you might choose keywords (e.g. ‘plumber’, ‘electrician’, ‘bathroom installer’ etc.) that are so competitive that bigger and more established competitors easily outrank you in the search engines.

I often see many companies fall into this trap because they wrongly assume that the only keywords that are related to their niche are the same keywords that everyone else is targeting.

You must remember that regardless of the buildings trade you operate in, there are already many hundreds of businesses competing in that sector. There are already companies who potentially have a lot more money, a lot more experience and simply know how the game of search engine optimisation is played. SEO can be a very hostile territory and, frankly, you will waste a lot of time, effort and money if you try to rank for the same keywords that your competition is targeting.

The second way that companies fail with keyword selection is that they pick keywords that draw lots of *untargeted* traffic. The problem is these keywords are not related to their industry niche, or they are related but they do not convert.

Okay, so what are the right keywords? Keep in mind the following considerations.

Keyword Intent Determines the Right Keyword for You

When was the last time you performed a search on Google? Nine times out of ten, you were probably operating on autopilot when you did a search. You think you know what you are looking for, just type in a keyword, and lo and behold a result pops up. Typically, you are happy with the result and go on

your merry way.

However, if you *slowdown* that process, you would realise that you had a specific ‘intent’ when you put in a certain keyword. Otherwise, you would not have picked that key phrase or keyword. You would have chosen other options.

It is very important to pay attention to the intent people have when they enter certain keywords because some keywords refer to one type of intent and other keywords within the same category refer to other intent.

What kind of intents are we talking about?

It all boils down to objectives. As mentioned earlier, when you last used Google, you had a certain intent. Maybe you were looking to purchase a specific product or service, or, maybe you were looking for reviews on a specific product or service.

These two situations are very different from each other as far as intent is concerned.

In the first situation, you are looking to buy something. In the other example, you already have a product or service in mind, but you need to get more information so you can be convinced whether it is the appropriate solution for you.

These are two distinct intents that you must be clear on and, unfortunately, a lot of business owners who try search engine optimisation ‘in-house’ are completely clueless regarding the intent behind keywords. Not surprisingly, they end up optimising for keywords that have the wrong intent.

Intent is crucial. It can make or break your business online.

The bottom line in promoting your business online is that you need to get the right service in front of the right person at the right time – and the right action must take place. This might seem like a tall order and it is, but the good news is armed with the right keywords, this takes place pretty much automatically. It all boils down to keyword intent.

Target the wrong keywords and you are, at best, going to see a trickle of online enquiries, or at worst no enquiries at all. That is the harsh reality that picking the wrong keywords brings to the table. The workaround to this is to nail the concept of keyword intent and its timeline.

Four Major Categories of Consumer Intent

On the internet and in a large measure in the offline world, there are essentially four consumer intents: know, like, trust and buy.

The Know Intent

Consumers with this intent are simply people looking for general information. For example, if somebody found out that they had a leaking tap, their first inclination would be to go on to Google and find any kind of article or guide on how to fix it.

They are not looking for a specific company or service (yet). Their intent is to simply to find their own solution. People with this very broad intent are not necessarily looking for specific services but researching topics. In fact, at this stage there might be so many different solutions and directions someone can go in, that you are just wasting your time trying to appeal to people at this step.

The Like Intent

Once a person has a basic enough understanding of a service they need e.g. 'new bathroom' they would then start to search online for a specific set of solutions.

The like stage is easier to work with because at least, at this level, there are several groupings of options that are possible (e.g. 'new bathroom' or 'new bathroom installation') and you only need to pit them against each other.

In the mind of the consumer, the question is which course of action makes most sense in my situation? Which costs less money? Which is more effective? Which is more efficient?

Those are the kinds of questions people usually ask at the like stage. Put simply, they are looking for and researching a specific set of solutions that they would like.

The Trust Intent

Once a person makes it through the like stage, they have basically zeroed in on a way of meeting a need. They have arrived at a set of solutions. If you are trying to sell a product or service within that set, then you might think you have an easier time.

Well, not so fast. You still must remember that your service is just one option and there could be many other options in the set. **You still have to differentiate yourself.** You still have to get the consumer to choose your service ahead of other companies in your industry.

The ‘like stage’ goes some way in filtering all competing options, but it does not go far enough. Therefore, the ‘trust stage’ is crucial. You basically must give the prospect enough information that they would filter out other solutions (companies) and go with yours. This is very tricky because, at this stage, the alternatives might actually be stronger candidates. Perhaps they are more established, or have better articulated their point of difference in the market.

However, the consumer would be more willing to override such factual advantages and prefer yours if you get them to *trust* you. This is where credibility and authority building comes in. As a business owners working in the building and home improvement sector, you will already know how important consumer trust is.

In the know stage, you are simply giving the consumer information. In the like stage, you are helping the consumer make comparisons. In the trust stage, you are focusing on your credibility and authority. In other words, you are collecting on all the goodwill that you have established prior to this stage.

The Buy Intent

The final stage in the consumer buying cycle is the ‘buy stage’. In this stage the consumer has already decided on a service and he or she is ready to buy! They have already made up their minds which specific service they require, for example, a ‘swimming pool installer in London’. They then simply go on a search engine such as Google or Bing to find the right vendor.

It is not a surprise then that a lot of SEO specialists and online marketers target these types of keywords because essentially any visitor that is at the ‘buy stage’ is a prospective client.

Since there is less effort in converting that consumer, you can imagine how competitive it is to rank in the search engines for these specific keywords. As such many other local businesses in your industry are sure to be targeting these keywords. However, it can be done and especially with a good SEO strategy, which “Trade Up Your Online Marketing” will reveal in detail.

Chapter 2 - How to Find the Right Keywords

Now we have discussed the importance of ensuring your website ranks in the search engines for the right keywords, the next question is how do you find the right keywords or keyword phrases to rank for. In fact, the best way to explain this process is to first tell you how not to do this!

What is the worst way to find keywords? It is very simple. Use Google Keyword Planner.

Google Keyword Planner is a free AdWords tool that helps you build and set up pay per click (PPC) campaigns on Google (you know, the paid adverts that typically appear at the top of pages) by finding keyword ideas and estimating how they may perform.

Now you might be scratching your head right now as, after all, don't most SEO specialists use this tool? Aren't most websites on the internet built on keywords found through Google keyword planner?

You would be right, and that highlights the problem. Since almost everybody whose building these websites is essentially using the same tool, they are basically using the same pool of keywords!

This is a serious problem. This explains why there is so much competition in almost all niches on the internet. The fact of the matter is this: everybody is using the same keywords and everybody is targeting their customers using the same keywords.

What is the result of this situation? It is very simple. You are setting yourself up for failure if you find keywords the same way as everybody else. If you are just going to rely on Google Keyword Planner, then you are going to find the same related keywords that your competition is using. This leads to a high competitive density and the bad news is that you will struggle to get found online.

To gain a competitive advantage, you need to use a different set of keywords. You cannot target the same pool of keywords that your competition is using. To make matters worse, Google Keyword Planner is a very limited tool because it will only give you keywords that are closely related to the keyword that you enter.

If you use the same 'seed' keyword that other tradesmen are using, chances are the keyword variations you get will be restricted by the keywords you started with.

This can be a serious problem because if you are just using the industry-standard keywords, then you

are stuck with pretty much the same pool of keywords that everybody in your industry is using! You need to get out of that pool. You need to come up with a way to guess how your target customers in general search for information related to your trade.

It is very likely, especially in the buildings and home improvements sector, that potential customers are not actually using ‘industry’ keywords. They are not using that same tired pool of keywords that all your competitors use. Therefore, if you *can* identify those unusual, unconventional or unsaturated keywords, you will gain a tremendous competitive advantage.

While your competitors are all beating themselves up trying to fight over the same core set of keywords, you on the other hand are enjoying the benefits of targeting keywords that everybody else has missed. Now, the question is *how* do you get this pool of keywords?

The key to successful SEO is concentrating on what are known as **long-tail keywords**. Although these keywords get less traffic than more generic terms, they are associated with more *qualified* traffic and users that are typically further down their path of intent.

Relevance is the most important factor to consider when choosing the right keywords for SEO. Why? Because the more specific you can be, the better.

For example, trying to rank your website in the search engines for the keywords ‘kitchen installer’ will be difficult. Trying to rank your website in the search engines for long-tail keywords such as ‘kitchen installers in Essex’ or ‘Essex kitchen installers’ will be easier, and ensure much, much more relevant traffic visits your website.

The good news is that choosing the right long-tail keywords for your website can be a simple process – one that's made more simple and quick when you use the right tools to perform your keyword research.

If you operate and target a specific area of the UK, you might want to consider adding location-based keywords to all your pages, since traffic from other locations is not going to be of much help to you. If your business operates across several towns and cities, it might also be a wise choice to create a separate web page dedicated to each location so you can make sure your brand is present when people are searching on individual locations.

What is Keyword Research?

Keyword research is when people use keywords to find and research those actual search terms that people enter into a search engine. Knowledge about these actual search terms will help inform the content of your website, including **meta title and description tags** (see Chapter 6 for a full explanation of these important SEO elements). Therefore, it is important that wherever possible you ensure your website contains the keywords that your potential customers are likely to be searching for.

The following steps will provide a good overview on how to find the right keywords for your website to rank for in the search engines.

How to Research Keywords

Step 1: Make a list of important and relevant services based on what you know about your business

To kick off this process, think about the general services you want your trade website to rank for. Try to come up with about 5-10 service categories you think are important to your business, and then you'll use those categories to help come up with some specific keywords later in the process.

Working in the buildings and home improvement industry, there are probably a range of services you provide. This is a good starting point for your topic categories. So, to begin with, put yourself in the shoes of your customer – what types of services would your target audience search for?

If you were a company that installed swimming pools, for example, then you might have general topic categories like “outdoor pools”, “indoor pools”, “bespoke pools”, “hot tubs” and “saunas”.

Step 2: Fill in those service categories with keywords

Now that you have a few service categories you want to focus on, it's time to identify keywords that fall into these categories. List those keyword phrases you think are important to rank for in the SERPs (short for search engine results pages), that is, specific terms that your target customer is probably conducting searches in Google on.

For instance, if we continue with our example of the swimming pool installation company, and we look further at the topic of “indoor pools”, as the business owner you might then want to brainstorm some keyword phrases that you believe people would search for in relation to that topic. These might include:

- do I need a site survey?
- swimming pool filtration
- swimming pools in conservatories
- do I need planning application?
- health spa swimming pools

And so on and so on. In this step, we are not coming up with the final list of keyword phrases, just ‘brain dumping’ phrases we think potential customers might search online for related to a service category.

Another smart way to come up with keyword ideas is to figure out which keywords your website is *already* being found for. To do this, you'll need website analytics software like Google Analytics. This will enable you to drill down into your website's traffic sources, to research and discover the keywords people are using to arrive at your site.

Repeat this exercise for as many topic categories as you have. If you're having trouble coming up with relevant search terms, you can always ask your employees or customer service team. They are always on the ‘front line’ and therefore likely to have a very good idea regarding the types of phrases their prospects and customers use, or common questions they have.

Step 3: Explore related search terms

If you're struggling to find more keywords people might be searching for regarding a specific service you provide, go to [Google.co.uk](https://www.google.co.uk) and look at the related search terms that appear when you type in a keyword.

When you type in your search phrase you will notice that Google provides a dropdown list of related terms, and similarly when you scroll to the bottom of Google's results, you'll notice some further suggestions for searches related to your original input. These keywords can then spark even more ideas for other keywords you may want to take into consideration.

Step 4: Include a mixture of head terms and long-tail keywords in each category

Head terms are keywords phrases that are generally shorter and more generic – they're typically just one to three words in length e.g. “indoor swimming pools”. Long-tail keywords, on the other hand, are longer keyword phrases usually containing three or more words such as “indoor swimming pool designer London”.

It's important to check that you have a mix of head terms and long-tail terms because this will give you a keyword strategy this is balanced with long-term goals and short-term wins. That's because head terms are generally searched more frequently, making them often (but not always) much more competitive and harder to rank for than long-tail terms.

As a quick exercise, without even looking up the search volume or difficulty, which of the following terms do you think would be harder to rank a website for?

1. indoor pools
2. indoor swimming pool installer London

If you answered number 1 then you are right. But don't get discouraged. While head terms generally receive the most search volume (and therefore greater potential to send traffic to your website), to be honest, the traffic you'll get from the term “indoor swimming pool installer London” will be far more desirable because someone who is looking for a service or solution *that* specific is probably a much more qualified customer.

Someone searching for the head term "indoor pools," on the other hand, could be searching it for a whole host of reasons unrelated to your business.

Long tail keywords convert better, because they catch people later in the intent cycle. A person searching for "indoor pools" is probably browsing, and not ready to buy. On the other hand, someone searching for "indoor swimming pool installer London" is looking for a solution and is ready to buy now!

Step 5: Research how your competitors rank for these keywords

Understanding what keywords your competitors are trying to rank for in the search engines is a great way to help you give your list of keywords another evaluation.

If your competitor is ranking for certain keywords that are on your list, then it makes sense to work on improving your ranking for those. Especially if that business is more established or, simply put, is ranking at the top of page 1 on Google for various keywords.

However, do not ignore the keywords your competition does not seem to care about. This could be a great opportunity for you to own market share on important terms too. Remember, the goal is to end up with a list of keywords that provide some quick wins but also helps you make progress toward bigger, more challenging SEO goals.

How do you figure out what keywords your competitors are ranking for, you ask? Aside from manually searching for keywords in an incognito browser and seeing what positions your competitors are in, SEO applications such as Ahrefs, SEMrush and Majestic SEO allow you to run several searches that show you the top keywords your competitor is ranking for. This is a quick way to get a sense of the types of terms other businesses in your trade are ranking for.

Step 6: Use a Keyword Planner to audit your keyword list

Now that you've got the right mix of head and long-tail keywords, it's time to narrow down your lists with some more quantitative data. In other words, you need to find some objective data that demonstrates a good number of searches for your list of keywords.

There are several tools at your disposal to do this, and I would recommend using applications such as

SEMrush, kwfinder.com or keywordtool.io. Run your keyword list through these applications to find the search volume for each. Search volume calculates the numbers of times a keyword is searched for in a search engine such as Google.

Whilst these and other keyword tools vary in application, scale, as well as price, they often provide additional features such as SEO difficulty scores, search volume for local keywords, as well as additional long tail keywords that you might not have been aware of.

What is a Good Keyword Search Volume?

Okay, so the next question is likely to be, what is a good keyword search volume? 100, 1000, 10,000 searches per month? Actually, search volume does not matter as much as you might first think.

Search volume is a good sign that there are people out there looking for a particular service or solution. But what matters more than tonnes of search volume for a specific keyword is actually the following:

- Conversion Rates

If you have 3,000 people visit your website one month after searching for a keyword for which your website ranks, but only 3 people convert, does it matter that you had 3,000 visitors? The purpose of SEO is much more than just attracting people to your company website. It's about attracting *relevant* people to your website.

As I discussed at some length earlier, the intent of your prospective customer is key. So, ensure your website content appeals to someone who is searching for a solution, and not someone who simply interested in a topic. Remember: value not volume.

- Feasibility

Think about how likely you are to rank for and convert the keywords you are selecting.

How much content do you already have on your website? How much content can or do you need to create? It is very important that you base your keyword analysis not just around what keywords make

the most sense for your business, but how much time and effort you can invest to put in place a strong and sustainable SEO strategy.

There is another option, which is to simply outsource your keyword analysis and ranking to a provider that obviously can devote the time and expertise to doing this all for you.

- User Experience

If the 3,000-people mentioned previously come to your website, but then realise it isn't helpful, interesting, easy to navigate, looks dated and unprofessional etc., then you are not doing much to help your SEO.

Search engines such as Google are smart enough now to recognise and reward those websites that produce good content, keep visitors on the website longer and thus provide the best user experience. Further, given that the search engines care about this, then they want to deliver the best possible search experience for their users.

Therefore, you should use search volume as more of a guide for your SEO strategy, as opposed to dictating it. The most important elements, as discussed, are to focus on choosing keyword categories that your buildings and home improvements company provides, that you can write interesting content for your website on and – most important of all – readily appeal to the needs of your potential customers.

One last tip: be sure to re-evaluate your keywords every 3 to 6 months (and some businesses like to do it even more often than that). As you gain even more authority in the Google search results, you will find that you can add more and more keywords to try and rank for. This will enable you to both maintain your current presence in the search engines, as well as develop even better rankings for new keywords (and services) you want your company website to rank for.

Chapter 3 – The Importance of Backlinks

For a long time, the way to rank any website on Google was a pretty straightforward affair. Google, in the past, ranked websites and pages based on a simple voting system. The more ‘votes’ a website received, the higher up it showed in the search engines as it was assumed to be more relevant.

One of the major voting systems that Google employed to judge a website’s relevance, and thus enable it to appear further up the search engine results, was backlinks.

Backlinks, also known as inbound or incoming links, are website links to your own website from another place on the internet.

They are extremely useful to search engines, because they give a good indication that a website is popular. Another website adding a link to you is essentially a ‘vote’ for your website, as it shows their customers that they think your site is worth visiting.

Essentially Google built its search engine using this common-sense technology, including the specific text being used to link back to a website. These are called anchor texts.

Anchor text, or link text, is the visible link you see on the screen. Ideally, this text should contain a keyword, as this clearly shows what the link is about and therefore its relevance to a search term.

For example, if I wanted to link to Google, I would obviously write www.google.co.uk but this doesn’t indicate what the link is about or if it is relevant unless you were already aware of the website. However, a strong and relevant backlink would include descriptive keyword – and therefore in this example the link would be far more successful if my anchor text was [search engine](#). The anchor text still links to Google when clicked on (try it and see for yourself).

Of course, Google has evolved its base technology over the years. It is no longer this simple. Indeed, and at the time of writing, Google considers over 200 different factors in determining search rankings.

Be that as it may, backlinks still account for a disproportionate amount of Google's ranking decisions. In fact, according to backlinko.com which analysed over 1 million Google search results, it found that (as of September 2016): **backlinks remain an extremely important Google ranking factor and that the *number* of websites linking to a specific page correlated with its rankings more than any other factor.**

Similarly, despite Google's many algorithm updates, exact match anchor text still appears to have a strong influence on rankings.

I mentioned this base technology because, previously, the best way to rank on Google was to simply generate lots of backlinks, from any website regardless of its content, and the more the better.

So, a bad example, which is still practiced today by less scrupulous SEO specialists would be a link from, say, a Malaysian website that sells steroids. A random page is put up on the website together with a badly written article on for example, 'Norwich loft installers' with a link back to the company website. This is very bad SEO practice.

A good example, would be generating *relevant* backlinks and preferably from content, such as articles, you have created and distributed across related industry associated websites.

In an ideal world – or rather in Google's world – the content on your company website should be so fascinating that people would voluntarily link to it because they think your content, on say how to budget for a loft installation is so interesting it requires sharing.

If you are going to wait for people to, out of the goodness of their hearts and out of their own sheer curiosity, link to you, you are going to be waiting a long time. In fact, depending on your industry niche, you might be waiting forever because there will not be enough people linking to you in a purely natural and organic way.

Let's be honest, whilst you might be able to write at length about the pros and cons of granite kitchen worktops versus post-formed worktops, this might not set the search engines alight with links.

Not surprisingly, a lot of website developers, as well as marketing professionals have taken matters into their own hands.

Instead of waiting for all this linking to happen on a purely organic and natural basis, they build the links directly.

They would create different websites and then link to their own target website. They would buy links from authority websites in their niche. They would engage in all sorts of proactive means to engineer a link footprint for the target website, so that it can rank higher for their preferred keywords.

For the longest time, this practice worked. In fact, even to this day, it is still going on. The problem is

Google has started to penalise websites that have been overly aggressive in optimising their backlinks.

In fact, it has become so bad that Google is discouraging people from intentionally building links. Instead, the new paradigm is that people should *earn* links instead of building them.

Now a defined backlinking strategy is very important and still works, however, more and more the search engines and especially Google, are basing their search results on relevance: relevant content on your website and therefore relevant websites linking to your website.

Focus on Earning Links Organically

Of course, this does not mean that you should play the game the way Google wants you to play, which is basically publish great content and just wait for links to magically appear as a product of pure goodwill.

Instead, you earn links by producing great content and then making people in your industry aware of the content that you have on your company website. This is kind of a midway or intermediary solution to the link generation problem. It is not as aggressive as actually building your own link networks and engineering all sorts of link sharing trickeries. On the other hand, it is not as powerless as simply just waiting for these magical links to appear from volunteers.

This is where the state of SEO is now. It is all about *earning* links. If you get too aggressive in building links, Google will take care of you. In other words, Google will penalise websites for obvious or overzealous link building, as this algorithm change now pays great attention to anchor text density and anchor text patterns.

How Do You Earn Links?

The key to earning links involves three factors: content, promotion and contribution.

You need to produce high-quality content that people would want to link to. Second, you need to let niche-specific online platforms in your industry know about your quality content. Third, you need to contribute to relevant content already on the internet.

Outreach is crucial to this equation. You cannot just publish your content and hope that somehow,

someway, people will build links to your page. You must take the first initiative. You should reach out to these third-party websites that are in your trade to let them know that this great resource on your website exists, or, that you want to contribute to their existing online content.

You must remember that credibility is the currency of the internet. If people want to be considered as industry experts, they must link to high-quality content. If you position your website properly, it provides a win-win solution.

How the party linking to you wins is measured in terms of increased credibility. Since your content provides so much value and demonstrates your business as the go to company in your trade, they will look better linking to you.

Modern SEO has shifted from link building to SEO outreach. It is all about how you sell building link relationships to niche online properties in your industry.

Content Promotion Checklist

Here is a quick checklist on how you can draw links from niche-related websites and blogs. Remember, you must have a laser focus when targeting your industry niche. Simply getting links from anywhere and everywhere is going to harm your website rankings.

Google pays attention to such link signals and is quick to penalise websites that focus on link quantity instead of quality. As I mentioned previously, at Choice Digital we always tell our clients to think value not volume (even though we do all the link building for them!)

- **Find a Blog List that Lists Resources Similar as Yours**

Many blogs like to list niche-related resources. For example, if I am running a trade related blog, one of my posts would probably focus on different companies or thought leaders that specialise in that specific industry.

If you are having a difficult time finding such lists, the good news is you can use a virtual assistant service from companies such as Upwork or Freelancer.co.uk. However, do be mindful that you will need to provide very specific instructions as to what websites you would like them to find, how best to approach the website owners as well as monitor the progress of your backlinking strategy and campaign.

- **Get Interviewed and Link to Your Top Content**

All industries have experts. If your website or company blog is so well put together and has so much valuable information, you can be quickly viewed as an expert.

In fact, look to get interviewed by other websites or blogs following your industry sector. Since these online publications are always looking for new content, you might want to create the interview and just ask them to publish it.

Since it is free content that they do not have to pay for, as well as it is being 100% original and industry specific, the chances of having your interview published are quite high.

In the interview, put together an author profile that sells your credibility in your trade. Make sure you include a link (backlink) to your website. This can provide a great boost in your website rankings. Why? Most of the websites that would be publishing your interview are likely to be closely related to the trade sector you work in.

Make potential customers aware of the interview on your website, as it's a great way to instantly build credibility and trust.

Contribute Content and Link to Your Top Content

One of the most common ways to earn backlinks is to simply write guest posts on trade related websites. Look for any kind of industry-related blog that would be interested in the original content you produce.

You should not have a difficult time finding interested parties because, as I mentioned in the point above, owners of authority websites and blogs are always looking for fresh and new content. And content is not free. It takes time, effort and money (especially if you outsource the writing) to consistently produce interesting and original content.

Now imagine how thrilled many website owners or bloggers would be when you present them with free original content. The only condition is that you link to your top content in the 'About the Author' section. This is a pretty irresistible offer because it produces a win-win situation.

If you pay attention to all the link earning techniques outlined in this section, one pattern should be very clear. In terms of modern SEO, outreach is king. You must reach out to other websites. You must do your research, and you must give them a compelling reason to publish your content. This is a very important lesson to understand because it all boils down to content quality.

People are not going to publish your material if your content is rubbish. If your content is obviously self-serving and focuses primarily on your target keywords, nobody is going to share this information.

However, if you produce and share valuable and relevant material, then recognised industry experts in your sector will rarely hesitate to share it online.

Chapter 4 – How to Build Backlinks for Your Website

The reason why a lot of SEO has shifted over to earning links instead of building them is because many people still build backlinks in ways that can get their website penalised.

Therefore, if you want to build your backlinks right, and remain compliant with the way Google is policing backlinks currently, please pay attention to the following.

Obvious Versus Non-Obvious Link Building: What is the Difference?

Let's use an example. If I run a roofing company, there are many ways I can build backlinks to my website. The safest way is to simply use the company or brand name, and natural search terms as anchor text, but if I were to become too aggressive, I might use, say, "roofers London" multiple times. That is red flag as far as Google is concerned. Google knows that "roofers London" is both a competitive keyword in my niche, and it's not a *natural* search term, whereas "roofers in London" is.

Not surprisingly, websites that follow this dubious practice of overly targeting a keyword will gain more scrutiny. If I do things wrong, then Google is going to penalise me. Obvious link building is all focused on 'money keywords'. There is very little emphasis on branding or natural search terms as backlink anchor text.

Another obvious link building red flag is trying to get links from everywhere. If my company website is all about loft installation, but I get links from, say, dog training, holiday destination websites and other unrelated sites, this counts against me. This gives Google a reason to think that I am just basically spamming my links.

In my experience, and especially when first auditing a trade website, many companies are simply unaware that they can have many hundreds of spam links to their website, as they have entrusted their SEO campaign to someone who might be using 'black hat' methods (Black hat SEO refers to a set of practices that are used to increase a website or webpage's rank in search engines through means that violate the search engines' terms of service).

Another red flag that Google has been documented as paying attention to is the *volume* of backlinks. If I were to look at the number of backlinks I gain on a graph, and it is flat until a certain date and then it spikes up, this looks unnatural.

Unless my website was mentioned on the BBC or Daily Mail website, and suddenly all other industry-related websites started linking to me, chances are Google will interpret this massive spike as a cause for alarm.

Not surprisingly, if those link sources turn out to be unrelated to my industry and they are linking to me using my main keywords (and not ‘natural’ keywords) then my website could be penalized, and see a major drop in the search engine rankings.

Non-Obvious Link Building

With this type of link building, your focus is on only obtaining links from your industry. If a website is not related to your niche, then you do not try to get a link from that website.

Your ‘backlink footprint’ wherever possible should be heavily tilted towards websites that are directly or very closely related to the niche your website is in.

Another non-obvious way of building links is that the large percentage of your links should be linked to your brand name. They do not link to your “money” or high keyword. This makes a lot of sense because when people promote their websites, people often link to them based on the company name, not the actual money niche-target keyword of that site.

Another factor that works in your favour is when you obtain links from the top authority blogs in your industry. Therefore, you should wherever possible try to get links from blogs and websites that are the acknowledged authority and credibility leaders or experts in your industry. Specific trade association websites, or online trade forums would be a great example.

The key takeaway here is that non-obvious link building focuses on *expertise* i.e. on the added value your link provides as far as the users of third party websites linking to you are concerned.

Since they are obtaining real value because you are offering relevant information, then it is less likely that you would be accused of spamming.

Find Competitor's Links

Another tactic to get quick backlinks is to run link detection software on your competitors' websites. The software will map out your competitor's complete website and provide examples and ideas of where you can also source links from. Platforms such as Ahrefs and Majestic SEO are excellent for doing this.

Here is a great insider tip: search on Google using a specific keyword phrase that you anticipate your prospective customer is likely to be searching on. Then look at the top 5 results for that keyword.

Next, using platforms such as Ahrefs and others, analyse these competitors' backlinks. You'll be certain to find many backlink opportunities that you might not have previously considered or been aware of.

However, a word of caution: be aware that not all backlinks are created equally. Some links are worth more than others.

What Makes a Good Backlink?

For the purposes of this book, and from a general point of view, the important characteristics of a high-quality link are:

- **Authority**

If an important site is linking to a competitor, then this clearly demonstrates to both the search engines, as well as the visitor, that this site has something important to say in its specific industry. As discussed previously, a link from a trade related website will have far more 'value' than a link from an unrelated website. Commonsense, however, many business owners (and poor SEO professionals) forget this and often try to find links simply from anywhere and everywhere. That might have worked in 2014 but not anymore.

- **Relevance**

A relevant backlink is a link that is positioned on a site/page that *also* has content related to the same service, or is in the same industry. The relevance of a link is based on the content of the linking site or

page, and the relevance of the words surrounding the link. For example, a specific article on, say, the ever-growing skills shortage in the construction industry, which contains both a quote and link to a competitor's website.

- **Uniqueness**

Unique links, whilst hard to come by, provide even more value. Hence why using SEO audit tools will enable you to play detective and source one-off links, that you might also be able to use. A quick example of such a link would be a trade expo website that links to the companies and speakers participating at that event. Naturally, not all your competitors can be present at that conference so that is a great place to build some high quality and unique links to your site.

- **Traffic**

If a link is not clicked on, then obviously, the intention of the link is void. Therefore, if you discover competitor links 'tucked away' in some random article on an irrelevant website, then do not try to duplicate this practice as it's unlikely anyone is clicking on that website link. This is a clear example of an unnatural link, and one that was specifically created to 'game' the search engines.

Another example, is footer links. These are not considered to not be important as they are only seen by search engine crawlers and are rarely clicked by people. Even today, you will still see many websites – and especially in the trade – where the bottom of the home page has live links to almost every readily available town that company might cover in the UK. This is very bad SEO practice.

Chapter 5 - Unleash the Power of SEO Outreach

Let me repeat, modern SEO is all about outreach. It is all about ensuring the right ‘eyeballs’ pay attention to the quality of your content and link back to your company website.

Therefore, if you truly want to unleash the power of SEO outreach, the following key steps will take your link building and SEO outreach to the next level.

Find Highly Targeted and Niche-Specific Potential Link Sources

The first step is to find as many trade websites, blogs, directories and other online resources that are directly related to your industry. If you cannot find a long list of these, then you need to take the next step, which is to find websites that are closely related.

Google does not impose some ironclad rule that there must always be an identical industry connection. It can often be close enough.

Essentially your backlink profile needs to look both natural and valuable. Meaning, if there are no other websites that directly address your industry sector, then your backlink sources would still be good if they come close enough.

For example, if you run a roofing company and there are no roofing blogs, or roofing specific websites on the internet, then a link from a trading association, trade e-magazine article, online trade forum would still work. Simply focus on proximity.

Create Content That Link Sources Regularly Link To

This is where many online marketers mess up. They believe that when it comes to creating or earning backlinks, they must re-invent the wheel. The good news is that you do not have to do that because, well, reinventing the wheel can take a lot of time and effort. Plus, you have a business to run!

Instead, focus on what works. In fact, the most powerful thing you can do to find backlinks is to simply look at your competitors, and find the content on their websites that is linked to the most. The next step

is to then create *better* content than the competition.

For example, if your competitor's website has an article that features, say, "The 5 Ways to Ensure Your Kitchen Extension Goes to Plan" you can blow them out of the water by producing content that features 20,30, or 40 items. Or, if this simply isn't possible, ask for contributions from other experts in your industry so you can put together a very detailed and expansive piece of content – without too much work.

Not only will this build trust with the reader, it will also help to position your company as the authority in your building niche, as well as provide an opportunity for your company to connect with other experts.

Reach Out with a Key Focus

The interesting aspect regarding SEO outreach is that a lot of marketers think in very passive terms. They think that they only need to come up with a great piece of content, put the link in their email and the process will take care of itself. Unfortunately, it does not work that way.

You have to sell. You have to focus on salesmanship. However, the good news is that you can be more persuasive by simply making sure that your outreach addresses the key fundamental question that almost everyone asks themselves: "What's in it for me?" If your outreach materials do a good job of answering that question, you will get a backlink.

So make sure you answer this fundamental question in the beginning of any outreach email. There is no scientific way of doing this, you just tell them, "I am reaching out to you because..." And then simply lay out how your link is going to benefit them.

In fact, the most common reason that you should give is that your content makes their website more authoritative. Linking to your content is going to deliver solid value to them because it communicates, in no uncertain terms, to their readers' that their website is a truly credible website that is built on solid expertise.

People will not link to you if they do not get a benefit. Regardless of the trade you operate in, authority websites and blogs are not charities. They do not exist to benefit you. They exist to benefit the owners. So, always create a win-win situation.

In conclusion, and as I have mentioned previously, I would simply suggest when looking for backlink opportunities that you focus on value not volume. Now, if you would rather simply outsource the whole process, the contact me direct at andrew@choicedigital.co.uk and we can discuss how best to develop a bespoke backlink campaign specific to your trade.

Chapter 6 - Google's Top Four SEO Ranking Factors

As mentioned previously, at the time of writing Google lists over 200 factors with regards to how they rank a particular page. Keep in mind that Google itself does not come up with a comprehensive list, as they wouldn't want to give everything away! Many SEO professionals have guessed or estimated this number based on a wide range of public announcements made by Google.

Many SEO experts have paid close attention to Google's public statements regarding their algorithm. When these professionals get together, the consensus is that these factors number around 200.

That said, please take this number with a grain of salt. Understand that many SEO and digital marketing professionals will want to make a big deal of this 200 plus factor ranking system, as they obviously stand to benefit. Why? Because it highlights the fact that Google is tough to dominate. It highlights that you need very specialised training and experience to rank on Google.

Now, do not get me wrong, I am not saying that the 200 plus Google ranking factor is a myth or a hoax. Far from it. In fact, I fully believe that Google certainly pays attention to these factors. However, based on how Google still does things and based on ranking performance of many websites my company Choice Digital has analysed on the internet, the following **four** areas are vital to your website being found on Page 1 of Google.

Get these four factors right, and you would do well enough in your rankings. I am not saying that you would be number one for all your keywords (that can take time, effort and money and still doesn't always happen) but you should still see a significant surge in your website rankings.

By focusing on four of the most important factors, you have a better chance of getting maximum return on your SEO investment, and you stand a better chance of out ranking your competition, many of whom will be oblivious to these four key ranking factors.

Number 1: Backlinks

As I mentioned in a previous chapter, Google is still structurally dependent on links. There is no way

around it. You must understand that a lot of these other SEO ranking factors that Google discusses are dependent on you being logged online to Google's Chrome browser.

When you are logged on to Chrome, it will detect your intent. Google Chrome will detect how you search for things. It will detect the relationships of the content you are searching for online. However, many people are not on Chrome. In fact, a good many people won't know what Google Chrome is. That is a serious problem. So, Google goes back to its default ranking factor, which is backlinks.

As you might have now gathered, links to your website matter. Relevant links to your website matter even more.

In fact, links still matter now more than ever because of all the penalties that Google has been handing out. Google has been qualifying the kinds of links that they would pay attention to as well as the context of those links. Instead of diminishing the value of backlinks, these recent moves by Google incorporated into Google Panda have made links even more valuable.

Number 2: The Power of Citations

One of the most important trends in search engine optimisation is non-link-based pattern detection, and specifically citations. In fact, and particularly if you're targeting a geographically specific customer base, local citations are vital.

So what is a local citation? A local citation is any mention of a local business on the web, *with or without a link*. It can come in various forms and simply include the company name, by itself, or the company name and phone number.

A complete local citation should include the company name, address and phone number. A citation that does not include all three of these is sometimes referred to as a partial citation.

So as strange as it may sound, citation refers to the process of link building without actual links! Google looks at this as a signal because it pays attention to the website page that mentions your company name. So, whilst it is not exactly viewed as a backlink, it is interpreted as *something* like a backlink.

As with backlinks, there is also a huge variation in the value of different citations. A mention of your business' name, address, and phone number on an authority trade directory is worth far more than a

mention of your business on some spammy web directory that was created solely for low quality link building.

There are two types of citations: structured and unstructured. **Structured Citations** are the most common and are found on business listing sites like yell.com, yelp.co.uk, touchlocal.com, etc. These are referred to as structured citations. **Unstructured Citations** are often found on blogs, newspaper websites, event listing websites such as Eventbrite.co.uk, job recruitment websites etc. Again, these can be extremely valuable to your local rankings.

According to some SEO experts, citations make up roughly 25% of the top factors in local search ranking factors. This being the case, let's take a quick look at the top four main factors that will help with your citations:

- **Business Name**

Your business name or business title is arguably one of the most important factors for ranking well in local search engine results. The key here is to ensure that your company name remains *100% consistent* across every single data source on the web, to help establish trust in your existence and location.

For example, if you decide to call yourself "Premium Plumbers Ltd" in one listing and "Best Plumbers London" (to take advantage of keyword search terms) in another, there's a big chance that Google and other search engines will view these listings as two separate businesses when indexing your business.

In fact, Google as part of its Guidelines for Local Businesses states that your title should reflect your business's real-world title.

- **Physical Address**

Your physical company address should also be consistent across all your citations. For example, listing your business at '246 Riverside Avenue' in Yellow Pages, then as '246 Riverside Av.' in Yelp and at '246 Riverside' in Google Places (now referred to as Google My Business), will lead the search engines to consider all three listings as different businesses, which will ultimately lower their overall confidence and negatively impact your rankings.

- **Phone Number**

The same note about the importance of consistency applies equally to phone numbers, especially on the web. If Google finds several different phone numbers for your business location, then you can be sure it will trigger red flags with their algorithms. This especially applies to local tradesmen who might use a landline and/or a mobile number. Therefore do ensure you use the same phone number or phone numbers across all your local citations.

Categorisation

When you proceed to create a local listing for your business in Google, you will often be asked to pick 2-10 categories that best describe your business, which search engines then use to serve up results relating to keywords to users.

Improper or absent categorisation will severely impair your ability to rank for local keyword searches. So, how do you go about optimising category names? To be honest this should be relatively easy for businesses in the buildings and home improvement sector. That said, if you are struggling, simply perform a keyword research to discover common industry names consumers may be using to find companies like yours.

Finally, let's now turn our attention to some of the best places online to list your business to gain the most impact.

The top three are: Google My Business (formerly called Google Places), Bing Places and Yahoo Local. Next comes the national business directories such as Yellow Pages, Thomson Local and Yelp. Then you should source local business directories to list your company in. Search for either "[your city] + business listings" or "[your city] + directory" to get some useful results.

Generating citations for your physical business location, regardless of your industry, is one of the cornerstones of local SEO, helping you to get in front of your consumers. For any trade, you simply cannot afford to overlook how well you currently rank and what the potential possibilities local SEO can open for you.

Number 3: Social Signals

Do social signals matter for SEO rank? While social signals such as Facebook page likes, retweets on Twitter, or Instagram follower counts may not (yet) have a direct effect on the search results, these signals have an *indirect* impact on how your site ranks in the search engines.

In early 2014, Google's Matt Cutts clarified some of the confusion around social signals and search rank. According to Cutts, as of January 2014, Google's algorithm does not look at how many followers or likes someone has on Twitter or Facebook.

If we think about this, it does make sense. Why? Well if, say, Instagram and Twitter followers did have an impact on search results, some less scrupulous tradesmen out there might try to ensure they have thousands and thousands of followers.

However, whilst Google may not be tracking the number of people who like your Facebook page or retweet you on Twitter, the ripple effect of these actions does impact your rank. Simply put, these social signals will let Google know your company website is being talked about and that engagement is high.

Another direct way having strong engagement on social media can help your SEO, is the simple fact that your tweets and shares are going to get in front of more eyes and more potential customers looking for your services.

Another less obvious advantage is that the more retweets, likes and shares etc. your company receives, the more likely you are to receive links. As discussed previously, links don't usually happen by simply having more people to see the content. You need to ensure other content creators receive the links. So it is important to focus on building relationships and connecting with others.

Platforms such as Twitter can make it relatively easy to reach out to people and to begin work on building relationships.

To begin with, follow the people you genuinely want to connect with. Engage with their posts by retweeting, favouriting or commenting. This is the more time-consuming way of making social media

work to help with SEO, but once you have an engaged following and have made some genuine connections, even if it's a small number of people, you will have a foundation you can build on and use over and over. Again, this is something you can always try in-house or simply outsource.

Remember that piece of content we discussed you create in Chapter 3? With a decent following on Twitter, you can promote content and not only drive traffic to it on your website, but also ask for comments and feedback on your posts.

This will create more content on the page, enable you to engage with more people, as well as potentially increase the likelihood of ranking for specific keyword phrases. The strategy is not to get re-tweeted as much as possible. Rather, the strategy is to try to get your content in front of the right people or customers.

It still, however, comes down to content quality. If your content is dull or uninteresting, then people are not going to like it on Facebook, re-tweet it on Twitter, or give it a plus on Google plus. Lots of 'tweets' about your service and how great your company is, I'm afraid, unlikely to be shared across the social media spectrum.

This is often why, initially, we see many business owners in the trade start a Facebook or Twitter business account, only to let these accounts quickly gather (online) dust having sent numerous promotional messages, and then wondered why they didn't receive much engagement.

Your content, the material you want to share with the world must be valuable. That is the first step. It also then has to be relevant to your industry and, metaphorically, blow the competition out of the water. Create valuable reports, short guides, 'how to' articles etc. Once you clear that hurdle, the next step is to build on that popularity and reach out to highly popular people in your industry on social media and have them champion your content.

Number 4: Title Tags and Meta Descriptions

Many businesses focus entirely on how the website looks and functions, without spending much (if any) time on the first thing your customers will see when they search for the services you offer. The search

results!

Part of ensuring you receive a good amount of traffic to your website in the first place is down to making your website attractive in the Google search results page. This is where title tags and meta descriptions come in. So, what are title tags and meta descriptions?

Title tags and meta descriptions are simple portions of HTML code located in the header of a web page. They play an important role in helping search engines understand what the content on a page relates to. Titles and Meta Descriptions are hidden text elements on your page that are used to describe your site on search engines but may not necessarily appear on your web page at all.

These elements are meant to give a small taste of what your business website is about for people who have come across your page by way of a search engine.

The Title Tag

The title tag is the title element of a web page that summarises the content found on a page. It will appear in three key places: browsers, search engine results pages and websites. There's one important thing to keep in mind. Search engines will expect to find in your title tags the relevant keywords and phrases that describe what that specific page is about.

Often, people who have found you on search engines like Google will not be familiar with your company, which means that your meta title will need to provide more detail about your product or service than your business title and slogan on your home page alone.

The classic structure for a meta title for local businesses is as follows: Keyword | Business name | Location, or Business Name | Keyword | Keyword

Google only gives you a limited amount of space to display your title. Therefore, keep your title short, quick and eye catching. It is recommended that you keep your meta title between 50 – 65 characters, including spaces. Whilst the maximum number of characters for a title tag has recently been increased to 70–71 characters, you will need to ensure your title is based on what your potential customers will

likely be searching for. For example: Indoor Swimming Pools | ABC Pools | London.

Here is my company, Choice Digital's title tag as it appears in the search engine results:

SEO Hertfordshire | Hertford SEO Agency | Contact Choice Digital

The Meta Description

Meta description tags, whilst not important to search engine rankings, are *extremely* important in gaining user click-through from search engine results. Meta descriptions are the short paragraphs Google and other search engines display under the title tags in the search engine results page.

As such they are your first opportunity to advertise your services to searchers, as well as to let them know exactly whether the given page contains the information they are looking for.

The meta description should employ the keywords intelligently, but also create a compelling description that a searcher will want to click. The description should optimally be between 150-160 characters, including spaces.

You should always take time to write a compelling meta description and see each as a mini advert. As this description, or call to action, will want to prompt the reader to click through to your website from the search engine results, it is an extremely important part of search marketing.

Meta descriptions can be any length, but search engines generally truncate snippets longer than 160 characters. Therefore, it is best to keep meta descriptions between 150 and 160 characters.

Here is an example of an excellent meta description as it might appear in the search engine results:

“Plumbers Direct one off plumbing, heating & drain repairs. Total peace of mind with no call out fee, no repair no charge. 12- month warranty. 020 8001 2345”

Again, here is my company Choice Digital's meta description:

Choice Digital: Hertfordshire SEO Agency | SEO Hertfordshire

www.choicedigital.co.uk/ ▼

Backed by our 5 client promises, Hertfordshire SEO agency Choice Digital will get your website to the top of the search results. Call free on 0800 044 3776.

Meta descriptions give you a chance to win over users browsing multiple search results, and in doing so improve the CTR (click through rate) of key pages on your website. As we have discussed, meta descriptions should be viewed as short sales pitches for each service your company website provides.

By disregarding meta descriptions as unimportant for SEO, you could be missing out on a *huge* opportunity to improve click-through rates to key areas of your website.

Chapter 7 - How to Maximize the Value of Search Traffic

Many clients I have worked with in the past have had excellent websites, but when first contacting me have had either none or very little traffic from Google's search results. Why is this?

Traffic to your company website alone is not as important as the *value* of that traffic. Don't forget, you are putting in all this hard work creating content, backlinks, citations etc. – all great stuff – however, you might be so focused on quantity that you let quality pass you by.

As the old saying goes, you can get a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink. In the same way, you can drive all this traffic to your business website through search engines, but traffic alone is not the answer.

Therefore please pay attention to the following tips as they will help you maximise the value of your search traffic. It would be a shame to invest all that time, effort and money driving all this search engine traffic to your website only to have very little to show for it.

Focus on Intent

You must focus on the intent of the people that search engines deliver to your web page. Obviously if your company website is all about providing a service or solution, then there is going to be an issue if the clear majority of the people that Google sends to your website are simply looking for general information.

Do you see the disconnect? Your traffic is looking for general information, say, on how to fix a broken boiler, however, your company website is all about selling boiler servicing solutions.

Whilst you might be able to convert a few people here and there, the majority of those people are simply going to click away. In fact, they might spend so little time on your website that eventually this huge 'bounce rate' (people clicking on and then straight off your website) will harm your rankings in the future.

You have to focus on intent. You have to make sure that the intent of the people that search engines are directing to your pages is met by the content on your page.

The good news is that you can focus on building traffic volume *first* and then tweaking your content so you can give people what they are looking for. Now, you are probably asking how do I do that? How do I figure out what their intent is and how do I come up with content that matches certain intent?

Filter Traffic Through the Know-Like-Trust Process

As a business owner – and especially in the buildings and home improvement industry – you know that for people to buy anything from you, they must first trust you. However, for them to trust you, they must first like you or like your company. For them to like you, they must first feel that they know you. These are all interrelated. These all flow together.

As I discussed at length earlier, when people use search engines, their intent can be roughly categorised along that continuum. Either people are searching because they are simply looking to *know*, or they are searching because they are looking for an option to *like*. Finally, people might be searching because they already have a solution in mind, but they are looking for a tradesman they can *trust* to provide that solution.

In most cases, it will be the latter, however these are all totally different intents and they involve different keywords. If you do not pay attention to the intent of the keywords that you are optimising for, your website might be badly optimised to the intent of the people search engines are sending. Put simply, your website is badly equipped to serve the best interest of the people that are flooding onto your website.

Unfortunately, I have seen this many times in the past. Therefore in summary, the key here is to make sure that there is a tight fit between the *intent* of your keywords and the *intent* of the pages you are directing search engine traffic to.

Tying SEO to the KLT Conversion Process

Wherever possible you should use the KLT (Know-Like-Trust) process in segmenting keyword intent.

People who use certain keywords will fall somewhere along the KLT continuum. And therefore you need to craft pages that appeal to where they are in the KLT process.

Ideally you want to engineer your site content in such a way that it acts like a funnel.

You know how a funnel works. It starts off with a wide mouth, and then whatever you are pouring through the funnel proceeds down the funnel, and it gets narrower and narrower until you get a fine stream of material passing through the bottom. Your website should work the same way.

Many marketers refer to this as the ‘sales funnel’, other schools of marketers call this the conversion funnel. Regardless of what you choose to call it, you need to employ it. You need to put something like this together.

You should string out and interlink your content in such a way that you are pushing visitors through a conversion process.

The good news is that the conversion process is not a mystery, and as already outlined in Chapter 1, you need people to trust you, so they can buy from you. That is the end stage.

Now, as I have mentioned, search engines can often send lots of traffic and all these people will be scattered throughout the intent spectrum of Know-Like-Trust. It is important to segregate your pages where some pages are focused on the know stage. Other pages specialise on the like stage and other pages are focused on the trust stage.

You need to look at how you lay out the text and how you lay out your links in those pages. In addition, you have to set up your pages in such a way that they are constantly pushing people further and further down the Know-Like-Trust process.

An example of this is when the search engines send people who are simply looking to know about a specific aspect of your industry or a solution your trade provides.

They are not looking to buy. They do not have any options in mind. They are not looking to compare different vendors. They simply want to know about the general topic that your industry sector focuses on.

So for these people, you want to take them to know stage page, which lays out the key things people need to know about your industry. Maybe it defines certain ‘how to’ tips or explains certain processes.

Even better, create an insightful report or guide that prompts the visitor to exchange his or her contact details for this material.

For example, “The Key Planning Implications You Must Know When Installing Your First Swimming Pool”, or ‘Claim Your Free Loft Installation Project Pack’. Then you can follow-up later, and have a ready-made pool (pardon the pun) of potential prospects.

Whatever educational material you decide to provide, it gets people up to speed regarding the knowledge level they need to truly understand (and value) the service you are providing.

There should be elements on your know stage page that then pushes people who already like a particular solution, or a particular option category, to learn more about that type of information.

When they click on a link, they go to your pages that focus on the like stage. On these pages, they would see that you are credible. They would see that you are trustworthy. An example of this might be a customer testimonial page, or a series of ‘before and after’ customer case studies of work you have carried out.

This is how you convert people. You have to shepherd them through the Know-Like-Trust stage.

People might start off at the Know stage. Others might start off at the Like stage. Even others, quite a few, would start off at the Trust stage. It does not matter what part of the KLT spectrum they are on. You must have a page that specialises on each stage, so you can systematically and methodically work on converting them.

You must remember that conversion is all about sending the right signals that appeal to psychological needs, at the right time.

Look at your website as a conversion machine. It is not some random collection of pages. You should come up with a comprehensive organisational idea that ties all your pages into the Know-Like-Trust stage. This is how you maximise conversion; otherwise, you are simply leaving money on the table. In fact, considering how competitive things are in the building and home improvement industries, you are simply playing the SEO game to lose.

Chapter 8 – The Top 10 Practical SEO Tips You Can Start Using Today

Tip 1:

If you haven't done so already set up a Google My Business account. It is totally free and will enable you to appear in local search results for queries specific to your town or city. This is very important for companies in the building and home improvement sector, especially as they are more likely to be targeting geographically specific locations. Even broad queries with large volumes are now showing local results which is something small business owners can quickly capitalise upon.

Do not forget to optimise your Google My Business account. Make sure you have included a physical address, opening times, images and other useful information. As discussed previously, make sure your business listing is consistent with other business directories you may have used.

Tip 2:

Ensure your website is mobile-friendly. Why? Because people are using their mobiles more and more to search for services online. In fact, as at August 2016, 60% of searches are now from mobile devices (Source: searchengineland.com).

It is now very clear that mobile is now the growth driver, while the desktop is rapidly becoming a “secondary touch point” for a large percentage of digital audiences. In fact, since April 2015, Google Search has been expanding its use of mobile friendliness as a ranking signal. Don't get left behind: make sure your website is mobile-friendly!

Tip 3:

It might also be worth revisiting the copy on your website. Does it contain the keywords you want your website to rank for? Just as importantly, does your website ‘speak’ to your ideal customer? It is a fine balance, but every website needs to appeal to both these audiences: the customer first, and the search engines second. Audit the wording across your website, and think about who is your typical customer,

what are they looking for, and are you doing enough to grab their attention?

Without a thorough understanding of your audience's needs and requirements, you won't be able to make effective use of the SEO strategies and tactics detailed in this book.

Tip 4:

Whatever SEO you do, ensure it is genuine and you provide *value* to the end user. There are many people online that for the price of a coffee can get you thousands of Twitter followers overnight, have your company Facebook business page suddenly gain 500 likes, or generate several hundred backlinks in 24 hours. Avoid. Do things properly or outsource it to a competent professional.

Tip 5:

Beware of agencies that promise everything but (ultimately) deliver nothing. Honestly, unless you're prepared to invest in PPC (pay per click) ads, then nobody can guarantee a Page 1 listing on Google. Also, if you do hire an agency – and especially given that now you know what good SEO practices involve – make sure they are not using suspect link-building strategies. Whilst this might achieve some short-term results, your website could still be exposed to the risk of penalties in the long-term.

Tip 6:

Do not rely 100% on Google. Yes, it is important that you improve your rankings, however, given that Google can change the way it ranks sites and display results at any time, look to implement other digital marketing activities. This can include building email lists and using social media. Just ensure that you are attracting customers from a range of online sources. It can be risky as well as foolhardy, to rely solely on Google in helping you generate customers online.

Tip 7:

Launch a company blog. This is not only a great way to ensure you regularly update your business website with fresh and new content, but it also provides an opportunity for you to demonstrate authority and credibility in the trade.

Remember, whilst many potential clients might need your services, they simply won't know the intricacies of, say, what it takes to install a kitchen, build a swimming pool, or landscape your garden etc. Therefore, a blog is great way to establish your company as the experts.

Naturally a blog is great for SEO reasons, and can help your website rank for your target terms, but a blog also provides an opportunity to create content that prospective customers might be interested in.

You can also begin to build an audience. However, if you do decide to blog, do it regularly. You'll not only be creating fresh content for the search engines, you will also provide a reason for people to visit your website regularly.

Tip 8:

Encourage your customers to leave online reviews. Client testimonials are obviously a great way to build trust and help drive traffic and conversions but, from an SEO perspective, reviews are great for improving your local SEO visibility. How often have you searched online for a local business and clicked on the company listed in Google My Business that has several five star reviews, but ignored the listing with no reviews? I'm guessing several times.

Tip 9:

Ensure your website loads fast. Page load speed is now a critical factor in Google rankings (yes another factor). To provide their users with a good experience, Google doesn't want to display websites at the top of the search results if they take a long time to load. Obviously, if your site takes too long to load, a high proportion of the people will simply click the back button and go back on the search results page.

This will then increase your bounce rate. And a high bounce rate from organic search traffic will lower

your rankings (yes... another factor!). So, again, make sure your webpages load fast. The ideal page load speed is 3 seconds or less. To check your current load speed there is a useful tool over at www.dotcom-monitor.com.

Tip 10:

Be patient. Don't expect to see results that quickly. The tips and tools discussed throughout this book will certainly help your website get found online, but don't expect overnight success. Good and best practice SEO can take time, so be patient and stick with the process.

Conclusion

It is not enough to build an amazing website and then hope people find it. The days of ‘build it and they will come’ are long, long gone. Today you need to ensure you not only offer visitors valuable and helpful content, you must also include elements in the website design that capture the attention of search engines. This is where your SEO efforts come into play.

But, realise that Google has algorithm changes on a regular basis every year, so you never know when your website might take a hit.

As I mentioned at the very beginning of this book, as a tradesman, you already know that having an online presence greatly impacts the success of your business. With hundreds of new buildings and home improvement companies launching websites each week, the ability to make sure your company website – and therefore your services – get found by the right customer at the right time is more important than ever before.

A well-planned SEO strategy can take time to put into place, however once the results start to come in, there is no upper limit to how great your return on investment may become.

If you diligently apply the advice and guidance in this book, and use the SEO tools detailed you *will* ensure your website gets found, builds trust and wins more customers online.

I hope you have found “Trade Up Your Online Marketing” useful and certainly worth the small investment. If you do have any questions, or if I can help you further please email me direct at andrew@choicedigital.co.uk.

I wish you the best of success!

-Andrew Ludlam

www.ChoiceDigital.co.uk

Reader Bonus

Don't forget!

As a thank you for purchasing this book, I would like to give you a free gift.

Simply visit www.choicedigital.co.uk/free-website-audit/ to apply for a free website audit worth £129. Choice Digital's free website audit is a great way to see how well your trade website is currently optimised for the search engines, and the first step towards to helping you win more clients online!

Your free website 'health check' will reveal:

- The key strengths, weaknesses and obstacles to your website's success
- The hidden SEO and technical factors that are stopping your business website from ranking well in Google
- Specific pointers and analysis on what website pages need attention and the actions you need to take to surge up the search engines and gain more online enquiries

Normally priced at £129, the team at Choice Digital will carry out an extensive review of your website and present our results in your own custom-made report. We will also provide a free consultation to explain our key findings and recommendations.

Here is that link again: www.choicedigital.co.uk/free-website-audit/

The Author

Andrew Ludlam

For over 10 years Andrew Ludlam has been helping companies win high-value clients, gain a competitive edge in their market and scale to 6 and 7-figure companies. The founder of Choice Digital, Andrew is a highly respected business growth expert and author.

Using 'real world' marketing insights, and his proprietary Business Growth Reset strategy, Andrew is often hired to uncover those hidden assets and overlooked opportunities to help great companies become even better. However, in truth, what also makes him qualified to help is that Andrew doesn't just 'fix' businesses, he also builds them.

Andrew is also the founder of a number of specialist consulting firms including The Business Plan Writer and Maverick Marketing Consultancy which provides positioning and client acquisition solutions for professional service firms.

Andrew is the author of the Amazon 5-star rated book "*Maverick Marketing: Essential Business-Building Strategies for Extraordinary Business Growth*".

If you would like to contact Andrew direct, please email andrew@choicedigital.co.uk

About Choice Digital – www.ChoiceDigital.co.uk

The online marketing partner for premium service providers, at Choice Digital our goal is simple: **to help businesses get found, build trust and win more clients online.**

The specialist team combine over 10 years of expertise in delivering online marketing solutions and lead generation activities with one end in mind: to get results.

As we only ever engage a handful of clients at any one time, you can expect our complete focus and attention. And everything we do is backed by our 5 Client Promises:

- **Focus on Results:** we focus on results and nothing less. Simply put, we will help you to create more awareness, build trust and win more clients online.
- **No Long-Term Commitment:** we never tie you in to long-term contracts, so you can rest easy knowing that you're in complete control of your monthly marketing investment.
- **Our Complete Attention:** we only ever engage a select number of clients at any one time, so you can expect to receive our full focus and attention.
- **Honest and Uncomplicated Advice:** we always provide honest and 'non-techie' advice, and tell you exactly what it takes for your website to rank, build trust and convert more enquiries.
- **Complete Online Solution:** we provide complete SEO and website optimisation solutions for your high-end service, because Google rankings and traffic are irrelevant if your website doesn't convert.

If your business is doing 'just enough' but you'd like to win more clients online, then please visit www.choicedigital.co.uk and claim a free website audit worth £129.

You can follow us on Twitter: @ChoiceDigitalHQ

You can follow Andrew on Twitter: @AndrewLudlam

Copyright

First published in Great Britain 2016 by RGK Publishing

© Copyright Andrew Ludlam

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the author.

The right of Andrew Ludlam to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

The book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the author's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Disclaimer

Please note the information contained within this document is for educational purposes only. Every attempt has been made to provide accurate, up to date and reliable complete information no warranties of any kind are expressed or implied.

Readers acknowledge that the author is not engaging in rendering legal, financial or professional advice.

By reading any document, the reader agrees that under no circumstances is the author responsible for any losses, direct or indirect, that are incurred as a result of use of the information contained within this document, including - but not limited to errors, omissions, or inaccuracies.