

SCORE's *Partners In Success* Newsletter

Dedicated to helping businesses thrive and prosper

Welcome to SCORE's monthly *Partners In Success* Newsletter

Dear Reader:

SCORE's *Partners In Success* is a monthly newsletter dedicated to business owners in any industry and market sector. Its purpose is to provide insight to business owners/managers looking for a practical, innovative and a bottom line approach on how to better manage their finances, access SBA loans, leverage social media marketing, better manage human resources and access a variety of digital resources. Each issue of the ***Partners In Success*** newsletter will address a different topic. This issue discusses your website and what consumers want to see on your website, according to recent survey. As always, your feedback and input are welcome and indeed encouraged. We look forward to hearing from you at www.sema.score.org

What Consumers Want to See on Your Website

For many businesses, a website is undeniably critical for reaching new audiences — and is often the first impression someone will have of your brand.

But having a website alone is not enough to reach and convert new customers. It is equally vital that your website is well-designed, or you risk losing valuable leads.

Website design plays a huge role for a few reasons: First, web design can impact your website's ability to rank on search engines for keywords related to your products or services. Additionally, web design can influence whether a user stays on your site once they find it.

And, lastly, web design will ultimately impact how many leads and prospects you are able to convert into customers.

Good website design always begins with the question, "What is the main *action* we want someone to take when they visit our site?"

However, "good" website design can seem vague — what exactly do marketers mean when they say, "That's an impressive website design"?

In a survey by HobSpot to uncover key design features you will want to include in your website, 285 people around the U.S. were asked which elements they feel are most important for a company website. Here are their responses



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To get a free and confidential advice for your business, contact SCORE SE Mass. at

www.sema.score.org



According to 62% of those surveyed, including contact information on your website is critical.

Including contact information seems simple, but a lot of companies miss this. And it is undeniably important — in fact, those surveyed rated "Contact Us Information" as the most important element you can include on your company's website.

You will want to include the phone number, email address, or other contact medium you want people to reach you for sales inquiries — preferably in an easy-to-find location, like the header of the page.

Also, consider including a clickable "Email us!" CTA that either opens an email client or links to your contact form. And, speaking of forms, you might want to embed "Contact Us" forms throughout your site. Visitors do not need to go on a scavenger hunt to find out how to get in touch with you.

19% believe a blog is most important

All digital, social, and other online marketing requires quality content. And a blog is one of the most effective opportunities you have to create and distribute high-quality content related to your products or services.

Out of those surveyed, 19% believe it is actually the most important element on a business' website.

To get maximum SEO benefit, your blog should be listed under your domain (something like www.yourcompany.com/blog) instead of off-site through a third-party service.

Ultimately, a blog can help you reach new audiences, increase brand awareness, and convert prospects through educational, valuable content.

An About Us page is a vital element and can help you share your story

Sharing your story and highlighting core values is critical for your brand's long-term success. In fact, 85% of consumers say they will only consider a brand if they *trust* the brand.

As shown in the poll we conducted, an About Us page is the second-highest rated element, with 31% ruling an About Us page the most important element — overshadowing live chat, product images/video, and even case studies.

Simply put, people care about who they do business with, so tell people who you are and why your work matters. That said, keep it brief. Customers do not have time to read a research paper.

- 1. Use facts, not hype.**
- 2. Seek to inspire trust.**
- 3. Tell visitors what they want to know.**
- 4. Specifics are better than bold claims.**
- 5. Give a peek behind the curtains.**
- 6. Forge a connection.**
- 7. Express your values.**
- 8. List credentials, certifications, awards.**
- 9. Include a photo of you "in action."**
- 10. Be interesting!**

What content elements is most important for a business to have on its website?	
Contact Us Information	62%
About Us page	31%
Social Media Icons	30%
Live Chat Capabilities	28%
Product and Image videos	27%
Physical Address Highlighted	26%
Case Studies and Other Collateral	20%
A Blog	19%
Newsletter Sign-up	10%

Elements of an Effective About Us Page



1. Catchy headline (go beyond "About Us").
2. Body copy that explains your mission.
3. Clear description of how your company benefits its customers.
4. Photos that share your company's history and personality.
5. Videos, interesting statistics, and other visual elements.

Include social media icons to drive traffic to your social pages

We know social media icons are important, but I was surprised to see this element overshadow live chat, customer case studies, and blog as the most important element of a company's website, according to 30% of those surveyed.

Once your website is regularly bringing in traffic, it's important you link out to your social media pages so prospects and customers can follow you.

However, it is important you do not overdo it — when in doubt, go for simplicity over scale. For instance, if you work for an ecommerce company, consider linking to a few visually appealing pages, such as Instagram, Pinterest, or YouTube.

Of course, do not add platforms that you don't update regularly. You are building trust, and that comes by regularly having updated and relevant content and answering queries from customers and leads.

According to 20% of those surveyed, customer testimonials can be very effective

Potential customers need to trust you before choosing to work with you. Fortunately, customer **testimonial pages** can help you effectively build that trust with prospects.

Use your website to build your credibility by sharing your expertise and successful track record with clients and customers. When you do get testimonials, ask your clients for permission to use their real names. Real endorsements from recognizable businesses and organizations means a lot more than an anonymous testimonial or a quote from a fictional persona.

Case study pages should have a consistent, concise format and template to explain what problem a customer had, how your company solved it, and what process you used to get to resolution.



Location details are invaluable for local search SEO

46% of all Google searches are looking for local information, which means if your business is not optimized for local search, you could be missing out on potential customers who are searching for products or services within your geographical region.

And, as shown in our research, 26% feel a business' physical location is a key component of an effective website.

The pandemic has made many of us forget a physical world exists. Most businesses with brick-and-mortar locations rely on customers within a certain geographic area. Fortunately, when many people search for a product or service, they include a location. Including your location information will help your SEO strategy and help people unfamiliar with your region find your business.

For instance, if you need a locksmith, you might search "locksmith in Maplewood, NJ." This is why you should use your location in page titles and other metadata, as well as in the text that appears on your website. If you have several cities you serve, you should consider creating landing pages on your site for each location for easier navigation.

Live chat is an important element of a business' website

According to 28% of our respondents, live chat is a necessary component of a successful website.

Chatbots cannot replace real people with customer service, but they *are* a good alternative for those who do not want to call or email and may be inquiring about services or simple FAQs. To meet customers where they are and provide the instant feedback they require, consider installing a [live chat option on your website](#).

Chatbots are easy to program, and many do not even require code. Artificial intelligence has made this functionality much more feasible for companies of all sizes. In fact, many companies offer live chat as a simple plugin for your CMS platform.

Other reasons to consider a chat bot:

- ⇒ 44% of online consumers say having questions answered by a live person while in the middle of an online purchase is one of the most important features a website can offer.
- ⇒ 63% said they are more likely to return to a website if it offers live chat.
- ⇒ 38% said they made their purchase due to the chat session itself, and 62% reported being more likely to purchase from the site again

27% of those surveyed say its important to use original videos and images of your product and/or services on your website.

Customers like images — but they are weary of stock photos, particularly of products or services. This is where authentic behind-the-scenes videos and photos can help.

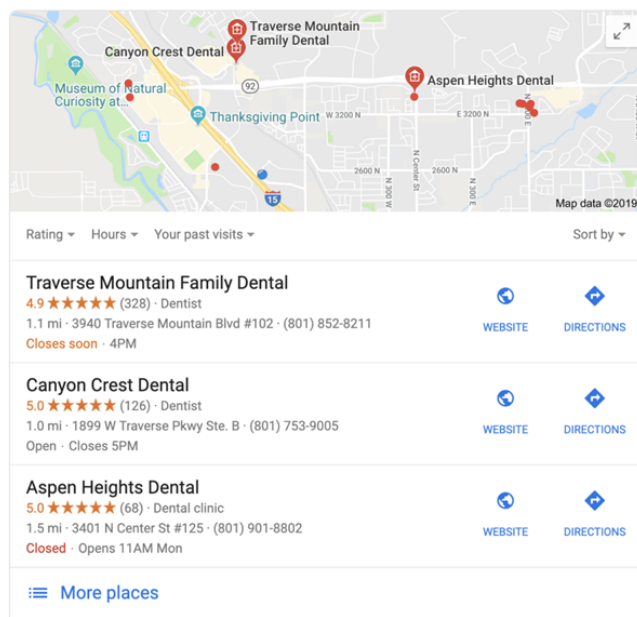
For instance, if your company provides a service such as landscape design or IT maintenance, show before-and-after pictures of your work.

If your service is something less tangible, such as insurance or life coaching, show pictures of your friendly staff and your belief system using visuals. Or, better yet, include video. Videos where you are explaining your business' purpose are powerful opportunities for increasing trust with potential customers.

According to 10% of those surveyed, a newsletter sign up is a valuable component of a company's website

Offering visitors to your site a chance to stay up-to-date via a subscription to your blog posts, newsletters, or product releases is a great way to stay top-of-mind for prospects and customers and increase brand loyalty.

A subscription will let you share information about your company through email marketing and build your email list at the same time. Use this list to share information you think your clients and prospects will find valuable whenever you have it.



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