PracticeWeb

How to generate more business from your website

01

Understanding what 'good' looks like

Setting up a pretty website for your practice isn't the painful process it once was, but creating an attractive and user-friendly site that generates leads remains a challenge for some accountants.

This guide provides you with practical guidance on creating a web presence to engage with the prospects you're looking for. In turn, this will help you generate the right kind of enquiries.

Professional services sites share certain things in common with consumer sites, the most significant being that you must show why a potential client should choose you over a competitor.

To help sell the service you're offering, you should give serious consideration to having clear calls to action, with the aim of generating those all-important sales leads.

The journey of someone shopping online may be different to someone choosing an accountant, but the basic process is the same.

Ultimately, a well-qualified lead will be passed on to the sales or business development team, who will develop the relationship and hopefully close the sale.
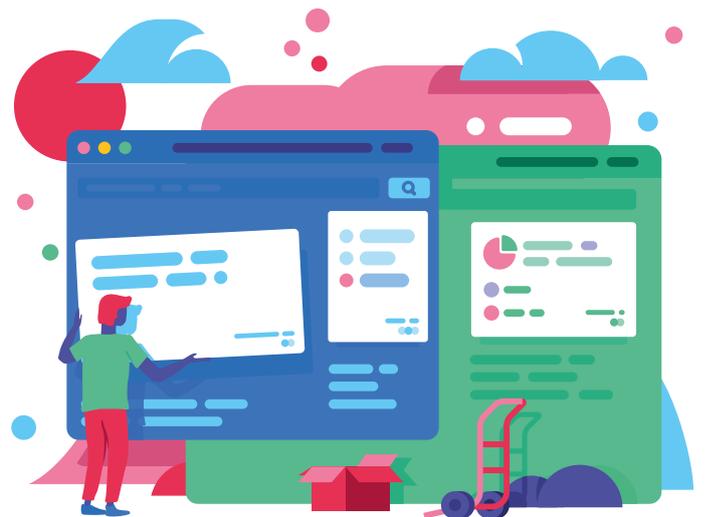
Define your goals

The starting point when developing a successful website is to outline your goals for it and identify metrics to measure its success.

The following benchmarks will help calculate your web targets:

On average, professional service firms turn...

2%

of web visitors into leads

40%

of leads into proposals

30%

of those proposals into wins

To put this in context, the average accountancy firm requires 425 website visitors to gain one new client.

When considering analytics, remember the difference between visits and visitors.

For instance, a single person (visitor) is likely to come back (and visit) several times before deciding whether or not to engage with you.

In its ‘State of Sales Productivity Report’, cloud computing company Salesforce suggests that a prospect will touch a brand between 6 and 8 times before they become a sales lead.

Getting found

Getting visitors to your site is the first step to achieving online success. Paid advertising, social media and referrals are all possible sources of traffic, but your site will also benefit from attention to search engine optimisation (SEO).

Here, the greatest consideration, and the one that you have most control over, is your own content. You need strike the right balance between making it engaging and relevant to your ideal client, while optimising it for search engines.

By incorporating the keywords your users are entering when they search for the services, information or advice you offer, you can improve your chances of getting found while at the same time making your site relevant.

Just don't over-optimise. Write for your users not for SEO, and incorporate keyword phrases in a natural way and avoid keyword stuffing.

02

The purpose of content and why 'mobile' should be a key consideration

Web content is there to do a specific job… at least, it should be!

Now that you've defined your website's goals, it's important to ensure each paragraph, sentence and word on every page supports the task of achieving your goals.

With Microsoft reporting that a goldfish's attention of 8 seconds exceeds that of the average person, it has never been more important to focus on clear communication.

Whatever your goals, when considering the purpose of your content, ask yourself:

What do you want people to...

See?   **Think?**   **Do?**

While web content should address these, simplicity is key.

Firms that are proven experts in a particular field may be keen to shout that from the rooftops to all their website visitors, but what customers really want online is simplicity.

While it can be valuable to include more in-depth or technical content in a downloadable format for readers to digest offline, most web pages should avoid going into too much depth.

Simplicity and relevance

Think about your ideal customer and make sure the content relates to those people (check out our guide on this). It should be noted that this relates to both written content and page layout.

While text should be used to address the key points, it should also be written with the correct tone of voice to reflect your brand and who it is aiming to engage.

In addition, you should give careful thought to images, colours and the general layout when targeting specific personas.

Embrace tablets and smartphones

There should be no doubt about the value of making it easy for B2B customers to engage with your website using mobile devices.

A few stats from [Google](#) highlight why this is the case:

- In 2016, more than 50% of B2B searches took place on mobile devices and tablets.
- Almost half of all users leave a mobile page if it takes longer than three seconds to load.
- 90% of users manage their finances across more than one screen.

If you're building a new website, avoid the potentially complicated, clunky and expensive route of having both a desktop and mobile site. Instead, consider a content management system which builds in a mobile-friendly way.

A system, such as WordPress, will adapt to mobile devices of all sizes, reducing additional work and delivering a consistent cross-platform experience for the user.

According to [Comscore](#), 50% of all searches will be voice searches by 2020. If other trends are anything to go by, this won't just be limited to the consumer world.

When forward-thinking marketeers consider mobile, they should include strategies around tailoring SEO for voice search, whether that's using natural speech patterns in copy or ensuring related synonyms are used alongside common keywords, to increase the chances of traffic from long-tail keywords.

03

Converting visitors to prospects

Getting a visitor to become a sales prospect who submits an enquiry can be the greatest challenge of all. This is the natural conclusion to the 'see, think, do' process described earlier.

For the most part, the conversion goal is a value exchange where the prospect may receive a benefit (perhaps in the form of a guide, a webinar registration or just an answer to an enquiry via a contact form) in return for divulging their personal contact details.
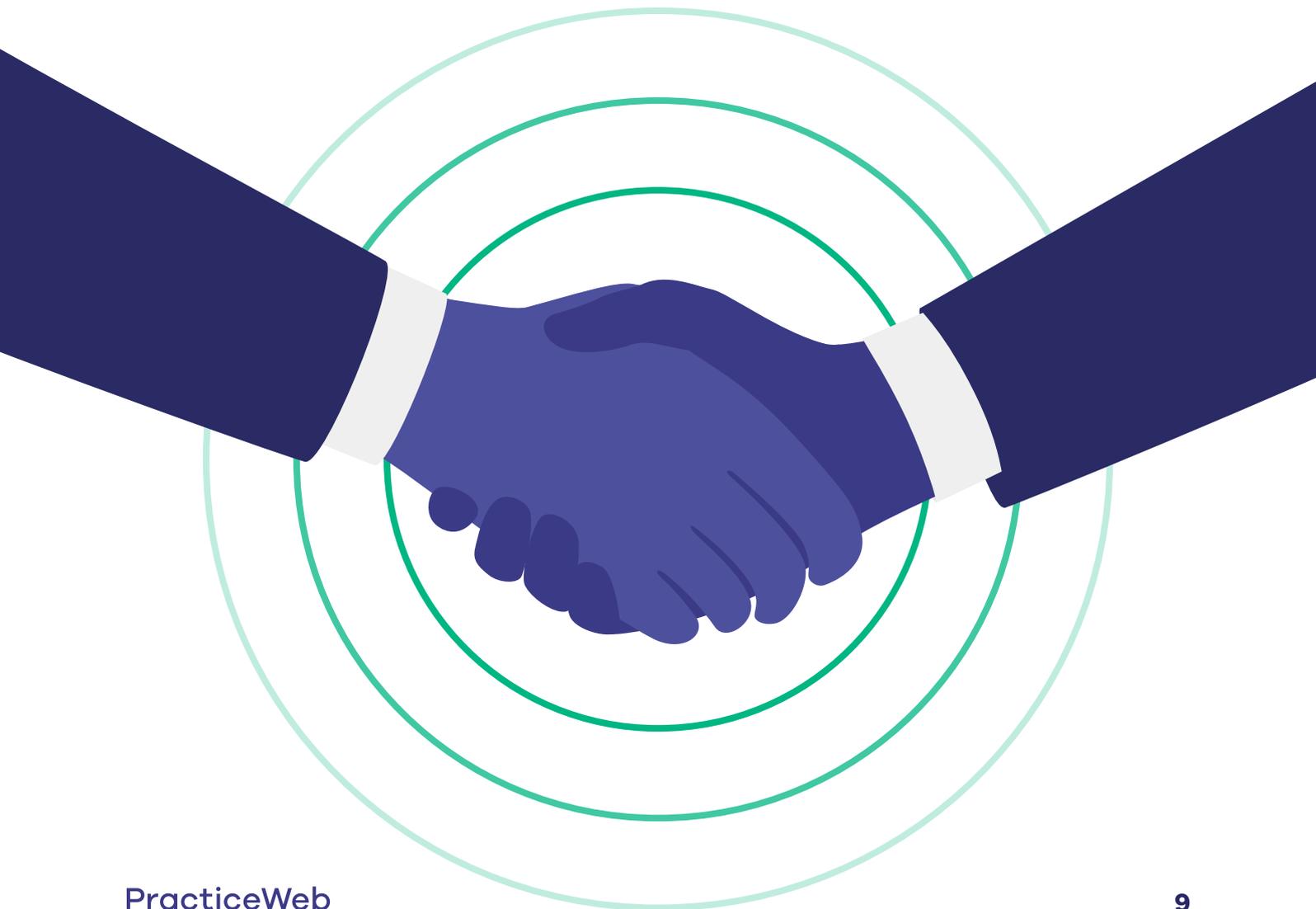
How to get a great landing page

Lots has been written online about landing pages, but the keys to success are they must be simple, user-friendly and leave the prospect in no doubt about what services you offer and how to get in touch.

Keeping any messages as concise as possible will help to ensure greater response, with very few options, links or distractions on offer to the reader.

Testing the effectiveness of web content is recommended at all times, but landing pages are a particularly good opportunity to measure, analyse and amend content until you get the conversions you want.

Nobody understands your customer better than you, so create what you think will work, and then take the time to make tweaks to things like copy, layout and images.

Don't be afraid about being concise with your content. The visitor has clicked through to this page from another page of your site or perhaps a paid search campaign on Google, so while it's nice to get good search traffic, rankings for this page are less vital than others on the site.

Landing pages are less about the variety of keywords or engaging content and more about optimising for quick and effective conversion.

Get your calls to action right

After you've taken your prospect on the perfect journey through your website, your attention needs to turn to your calls to action.

"What is a call to action?", I hear you ask. They basically encourage your prospects to contact you for professional help. After all, you're the experts providing a service they want.

Try something friendly. Perhaps something like 'let's get started', 'save your place', or 'discover how we can help'.

Keep the call to action in line with your brand's tone of voice, which should be clearly identifiable and consistent throughout your website.

04

Never underestimate the About Us page

The humble About Us page is perhaps the most underrated page of many websites, yet it has the potential to provide the greatest opportunity for most businesses.

It's acknowledged by many in the profession that setting your practice apart from others is an ever-present challenge in the world of accounting firms.

With over 22,000 registered accountancy firms in the UK, customers have a vast array of choice as to where they should take their business, so why should they choose you? The About Us page is the chance to answer that.

Across the 500-plus sites PracticeWEB host, the About Us page is consistently the second most popular page after the homepage. This is consistent with findings from other business sectors, but what's more, is this page is generally found to have the highest bounce rate of any page.

This is where it's more important than ever to put yourselves in the shoes of the customers you want to work with.

Are you looking to help newer businesses grow and provide them with the relevant guidance and services along their journey? Or perhaps you'd prefer to support those nearer to retirement?

Clearly, the needs are different and this content should reflect that. Take some time to think what the one thing that matters the most to your customers is, and address that on your About Us page.

Figures from a 2016 study by CEB and Google looking at UK B2B buyers showed 79% are more likely to consider a brand they feel they have a high level of emotional connection with, while 60% are more willing to pay a premium to purchase from that brand.

The influence of an emotional connection between the customer and a brand should not be underestimated, and content on the About Us page is an opportunity to make that connection.

Reaching customers on a human level may have once been the preserve of consumer brands, but there is a shift taking place as the B2B world adopts this approach.

This is why it's more important than ever to get to know your audience and work out what is likely to resonate with them.

While there is a time and place to sell the benefits of your service which may directly play to their pain points, this is where you want to help them relate to your firm and how its personality, people, and culture differ from your competition.

The About Us page is:

- ✔ A chance to sell your firm's
  - ✔ Personality
  - ✔ Ethos
  - ✔ People
  - ✔ Skills
  - ✔ Culture

- ✔ The reason why you're different.

The About Us page isn't:

- ✘ An opportunity to be smug.

- ✘ A place to detail an in-depth timeline of your firm since day one right the way through to putting your latest site visitor to sleep.

- ✘ A repository to dump all the information you really wanted on the site, but couldn't find anywhere else to host it.

05

Getting people to believe in you

Showing quickly and clearly that your firm knows what it's talking about and that you understand your reader's challenges will start them on the journey towards being an engaged prospect.

A major consideration here should be to give a little of your expertise for free. This may be in the form of a blog post which positions your firm as experts, but at the same time leaves the reader wanting more.

While the primary focus is on highlighting your knowledge and ability to help with the readers' challenges, this could also provide a platform to link to a landing page to access more detailed content, thus securing that conversion of visitor to sales lead.

Striking 'content gold' may be easier than you think. The chances are you work in an office (even if it's a virtual office) which includes people who are experts in their specialist area.

You can be pretty sure these people will at some point have documented some of this expertise, perhaps in the form of presentations, brochures, client proposals and a whole wealth of other areas.

It's not a huge leap to extract the relevant content and repurpose for use in an engaging blog post.
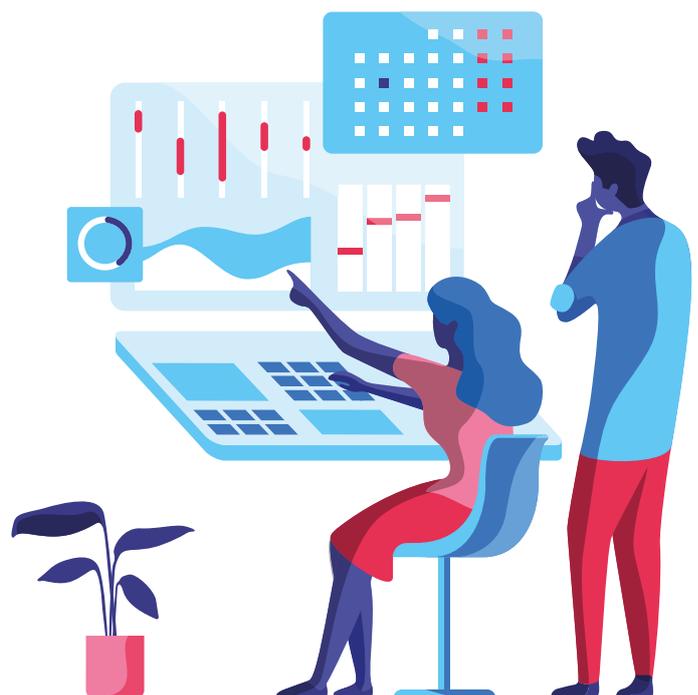
A question of trust and credibility

Putting their livelihoods in the hands of an adviser is likely to be a very big decision for your clients. They may anticipate being with you for a long time and will be keen get the choice right.

There are two ways of building trust:

Emotional connection

This relates to understanding your customer's persona (check out our guide on this) and using emotive content to connect with them as a person and not just a business.

Get to understand your customer and what motivates them, then focus on content to reflect their needs, address them directly in the second person and give the reader a feeling that you 'get' them and can make their life easier.

A logical connection is a little more black and white as it relates to evidence of expertise or experience, and that you can be expected to do what you say.

This is where you include content relating to your accreditations, memberships, and regulations that you meet.

Logical connection

Social proof can go a long way

It's easy to use your website as a mouthpiece to state how great you are, but it's so much more powerful as a site visitor to hear how brilliant your firm is from someone else... almost anyone else, in fact.

Short and snappy testimonials tell a story about how you've helped an existing customer go a very long way to adding a layer of credibility.

If those testimonials can be attributed to a specific name and company then so much the better. Similarly, including stats and figures will make the testimonial even more compelling.

Consumer brands requesting product reviews is very much the norm. Asking a happy client to go public with their advocacy should no longer be a challenging or awkward thing to approach.

Whether you include a line or two as a testimonial, or you choose to host a full-blown, high-impact video case study, a little social proof goes a long way to add some credibility to your brand.

Social proof can go a long way

06

Why bother?

There's huge potential for improving sales lead generation from your website, and getting your site from vaguely functional to highly performing is always worth the effort.

However, getting a site optimised to develop more business is no small investment. Those who still remain unconvinced may prefer to look at the financial value of the opportunities on offer as a result:

Average spend **X** **Average years** **=** **Estimated lifetime value of a client**
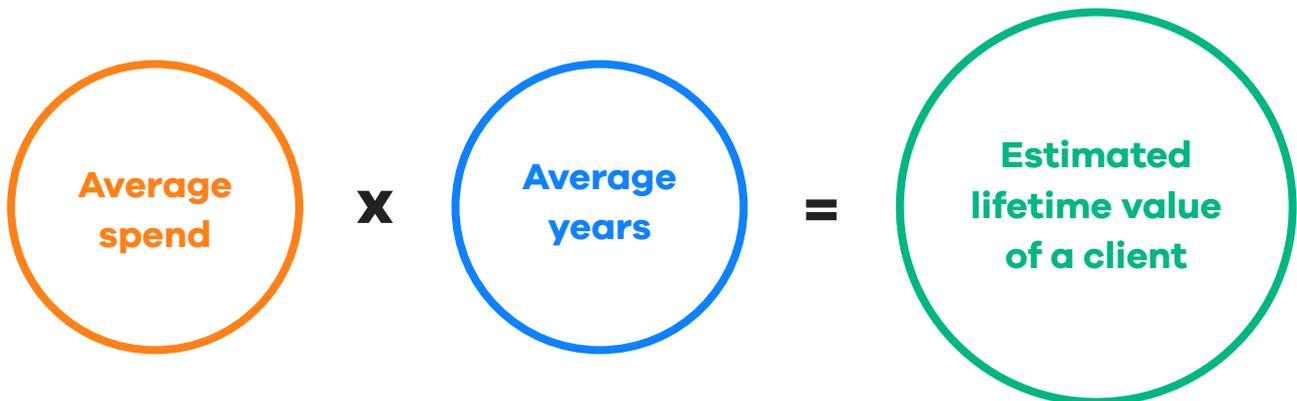
Example

£1,500 spend per year **x 10** years **= £15,000** lifetime value

This example refers to revenue as opposed to margin, but it's not a huge leap to apply that to your firm and still see the value to your business.

Now consider what would be an acceptable cost of acquisition to win a client that will bring in that level of revenue.

Finally, remember that we've been referring to just one single new client here, now scale it and consider how many more customers you'd be likely to get from your website. Furthermore, if they need an accountant, but are not visiting your site, or are not inspired to take action when they do, they'll be going to your competition.

As we've seen, there are some relatively simple actions to be applied on the path to gaining more business from your site.

This may involve making minor tweaks to your landing pages or About Us page, or it could be that you need to take a further step back to better understand your customers' personas then rebuild your site from the ground up. It will largely depend on the current performance of your site and where you want that to be.

Whatever stage you're at and whatever changes you make, be sure to test what works and make changes accordingly to maximise customer response.

07

What next?

You've read the theory and best practice guidance to create a website that will provide a major uplift in new business enquiries. Now it's time to put it all into practice.

Here's a reminder of what to do next:

1.

Clearly define what a lead is for your business

2.

Benchmark to understand what 'good' looks like (use Google Analytics to see how you are performing)

3.

Compare your current layout against the 'See, Think, Do' principle

4.

Get the basics right on mobile (consider fast load times and a user-friendly experience)

5.

Add some compelling, concise and effective landing pages

6.

Write for users but incorporate keywords in a natural language style

7.

Test your pages, calls to actions, copy and language

8.

Have a go at the quick fixes, particularly that About Us page

If you need help
- we're here

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more@practiceweb.co.uk

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