The Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT)

EVALUATING YOUR BRAND'S HEALTH AT THE ZMOT

WEBSITE AUDITING, BRANDING, AND MARKETING FOR TODAY'S BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS

EMPOWERING Your Brand

SEO & ZMOT

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Evaluating Your Brand's Health at the Zero Moment of Truth

When clients come to us for help managing, strategizing, and delivering their digital marketing one of the first things we almost always recommend is a website audit.

The reason we do so is simple.

A website audit is the fundamental first step in determining where a client's current digital marketing strategy is at, and provides the foundation on which to set targets for the future.

To anyone interested in developing a digital marketing strategy it's an essential element, but from time to time some clients have baulked at the idea of a website audit. Their focus is on the future, on growth, and on developing a plan that works. Perhaps understandably, there is little motivation for focusing on what is *not* working.

In such cases, we explain the three most important reasons that every business needs to undertake a website audit.

Reason 1: Understand Where You Are Starting From

Try a thought experiment: imagine for a second your perfect holiday destination.

Maybe it's a beach on a sun-drenched island, maybe it's Yellowstone in the middle of a crisp, snowy winter, or maybe it's a bustling big city, say Chicago. Got it in mind? Good. Now here is a question: how long does it take someone to travel to that holiday spot? The answer, of course, is that it depends on where that someone is traveling from.

It's the same when it comes to crafting a digital marketing strategy. Whatever the ideal end-point is for your business and your branding and marketing efforts, the time, effort, and cost to get there is going to depend on where exactly you are starting from.

And this is the first and most important reason you need to undertake a website audit.

A website audit allows you to identify exactly where you stand, where your digital business assets are. A website audit will analyze penalties already applied to your site, the potential for penalties to be applied by search engines for everything from mobile compatibility to duplicate content, it will analyze each and every tag on every page of your website, and it will check and re-check every image you have used for its impact on site design, site speed, and Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

Performing a website audit offers a clear account of where a website is starting from, and this makes targeting that island retreat, Alpine chalet, or big city, less of a daydream and more of a realistic goal.

Reason 2: Strategize with SMART Goals

You've probably heard it before, but it bears repeating again: it's not enough to set goals, you need to set SMART goals.

SMART is the mnemonic that is used to remind goal setters to make their targets Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Goals with these five qualities have been proven to be far more effective targets than the general, "Gee, wouldn't it be great if everything was better" type goals. In other words, it is the difference between a goal of "make more money this year" and the goal of "make 5% more profit in the next 12 months, than in the previous 12 months, to provide funds for expansion".

A website audit helps a business set these SMART goals in three ways.

First, as explained above, a website audit lets a business understand where they are starting *from* and thus determine whether a particular goal is achievable or not.

Second, by assessing all elements of a website piece-by-piece a website audit allows a business to make very specific goals. For example, a goal based on a website audit can specify what pages and what tags on those pages need to be addressed to further SEO efforts, a far better goal than "improve on-site SEO" in a digital marketing strategy.

Third, by offering an overview of the entire website, a website audit allows the business and the marketing team to assess what is possible to address in the time available. Some elements might be addressed quickly – literally within hours – while other elements might take days, weeks or months to address. A good website audit will identify the parts of a website that should be addressed, and prioritize such actions to help a business make better decisions about where to spend their most precious resource, time.

Reason 3: Prepare for More Extensive Audits

Do a website audit, set goals, make changes, hit targets – that's it, right?

No, that's not it. Actually, that's just the beginning.

A website audit provides a foundation for building a better "home base'' or "tribe" for a business, but it is far from the end of the auditing process. In today's digital marketing world there are important channels that businesses and brands own (their website, their product catalogues) and other channels that they "rent" from others (social media streams, streaming video platforms). While the primary website of a business is a great place to start an audit, and while it is essential to get the primary website dialed in, these other channels need auditing, too.

A website audit, then, is the essential first step in the digital marketing strategy process, coming as it does before the essential second and third steps: a social media marketing audit and a user experience audit. Whether conducted concurrently or sequentially, these additional audits are the necessary *next steps* once the audit process on the primary website is underway.

Summary

It should be no surprise that, in the light of solid reasons like these, our clients almost always choose to conduct a website audit before moving forward with their digital marketing strategy sessions. Whether it's a two-person startup looking to gain traction or a corporate enterprise seeking an entry into a new national market, a website audit is the first step towards transforming the imaginable into the possible.

The Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT) for Businesses – Influencing Online Decision Making

The Zero Moment of Truth — ZMOT — is about marketing you, your business, and your product and service in today's 2.0 digital economy. And if your online presence — your branding, design, marketing, and website — are not optimized to win at The Zero Moment of Truth...you lose!

Today's digital technology provides consumers with the power to be smarter and more informed than ever before. Product information and choice has never been more accessible and accessed then it is right now. This gives consumers an undeniable advantage in the marketplace. No longer do consumers have to wait for print media or television to inform them of their choices for goods or services; with a few simple keystrokes or screen taps, consumers can find a wealth of information about multiple products or services they are interested in and that will be beneficial to them. And in due course, Google has defined this process of online engagement as the **Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT)**.

The ZMOT

In July of 2011, Google introduced us to the Zero Moment of Truth, or ZMOT, which describes a revolution in the way consumers search for information online and make decisions about brands. Seven years later, search and ZMOT have continued to grow in importance and scale, and as consumers' behavior evolves, so must the ways in which brands engage those consumers. The ZMOT established a new understanding of how product and service is bought and sold in today's online economy and that consumers have adopted as their primary means in their purchasing journey.

Branding, marketing, and website content for capturing consumers at the Zero Moment of Truth needs to be self-serve information regarding your product, industry, category and service. You need to understand the needs of your audience, and then present this in a format they can easily access.

How Does The ZMOT Change The Game for Businesses?

Understanding the Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT)

Google Research Study Overview
- 90% of consumers searched online during their buying process
- Product and service related searches on Google.com grew 253% over the past 4 years
- Buyers use specific online tools during different phases of the search process
- It is crucial that business professionals and companies have websites that are optimized for winning the Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT)
- Marketing and branding must be directed specifically to your targeted consumers

- "Local" search terms and local websites are vital for both buyers and sellers
- Mobile technology is critical to the buying and selling process
- Professional and company profiles with online reviews are a "must"
- Videos satisfy consumers' research needs

But that's not the half of it…there's a lot more to know.

According to the Google Research Study, the ZMOT is now a more important factor to driving consumers to purchase and companies to sell than any other initial stimulus a shopper or seller receives from any advertisement from print, radio, or TV. Ultimately, this means that companies must have a website presence that "pulls" their audience directly to them, and a marketing strategy that brands their products and services based on the benefits it brings to their consumers.

Furthermore, a consumer's experience becomes the next consumer's ZMOT. The more people who write online reviews, provide 5-Star ratings, and/or mention your professionalism and services online, the more information the next consumer has to consider in their own ZMOT purchase process.

The Numbers Can't Be Ignored:

According to the Google Research Study, before a purchase decision was made:

- 90% of consumers searched online during their buying process
- 86% used videos to find out more about a specific product or company
- 69% of shoppers who took action on a company website begin their research with a local term, i.e. "Iowa City *product or service*" on a search engine
- 52% of actions on a company's website come directly from a local search on a search engine

How Do Businesses Win At The Zero Moment of Truth?

In order to win at the Zero Moment of Truth, business professionals must synergize their branding, marketing, and website messaging with their consumer profiles. Essentially, businesses must focus on optimizing their website and website language for the information their customers are looking for and want. And, it is vitally important to track and trend as much of your website analytics data as possible to ensure you understand how your website visitors are using your website properties and digital assets.

Consider the following questions below as a guide to measuring your health at the Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT).

► **Stimulus:**
- Are your traditional advertisements (e.g., company brochure, TV, radio, print, etc…) stimulating buyers to seek out your product and services in the ZMOT?

► **Content Strategy:**
- Do you understand the language that your consumer's are using to find you online?
- Does your online content change to reflect changes in your consumer's language, wants, and needs?
- Are you studying trends in your consumer's language and behavior, and prioritizing your website content accordingly?
- Are you hosting marketing strategies and consumer benefits information on your site?

► **Search Engine Marketing:**
- Are all of our website pages, product/service listings, and digital assets optimized for organic search?
- When consumers search for your product or service in your market, are you findable?
- Are you encouraging click-through from search results? And are you tracking it?
- Does your website's organic search results stand out from your competitors?
- Are your paid search ads visible when consumers are searching for your product and service?
- Have you synergized your "organic" search and "paid" search strategy?

► **Comparison Search Engines:**
- Is your company profile information available on comparison search engines?
- Are you leveraging the technology necessary to ensure that comparison search engines consider your website as a choice for consumers?
- Are you using Google as a comparison search engine? What about Bing?

► **Social Media:**
- Are you leveraging Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and other social networks to be digital advocates for your company brand, products, and services?
- Are you nurturing your social communities?
- Do your social networks return in organic search results?
- Are you listening to what others are saying about you and your brand?
- Are you responding to what others are saying about you and your identity?
- Are you proactive or reactive to social conversation?
- Are social influencers advocating on your behalf?

► **Website Design and Development:**
- Do you have a website that targets your consumers?
- Is your website mobile friendly?
- Can your audience easily find information they are looking for on your website?
- Are you monitoring analytics to ensure you understand who is visiting your website, and where they are coming from? And what they are looking for or want?
- Are you synergizing your social networks with your website branding and digital assets?

- Are your website and digital assets scalable/expandable?

- Does your website encourage engagement?

► **Aggregators and Affiliates:**
- Are you listing your website, company profile, products, and services on popular aggregator sites?

- Do you have an affiliate referral network that syndicates your website, company profile, products, and services to major affiliate websites?

► **Reviews and Ratings:**
- Are you utilizing company reviews and ratings on your website?
- Are you leveraging your company reviews and ratings across all of your referral networks?
- Are your company reviews and ratings visible on search engine results?
- Are you using your reviews and ratings on your marketing materials?

► **Target Marketing Strategy:**
- Do you know who you should be target marketing to, and is your website optimized to capture them?
- Are you developing synergized marketing strategies with your affiliates and is the affiliate's website optimized to work for you?
- Does your affiliate's website target market your company profile and product/service to your consumer base?
- Are you in control of your marketing messaging?

► **Mobile:**
- Is your website and digital assets easily usable on mobile devices?
- Are you leveraging mobile friendly social communities and networks to market your profile, products and services?
- Are your marketing emails and graphics mobile friendly?
- Is your website content easily shareable via mobile device?

► **Search Engine Optimization (SEO):**
- Is your website and digital assets optimized for search engines to find you and your product and services?
- Is your SEO strategy tied to your Search Engine Marketing (SEM) strategy?
- Is your website SEO content optimized to capture the Zero Moment of Truth?

► **Website Auditing:**
- Do you know all the factors that determine your site's visibility and performance in search engines? Especially Google?
- Does your website have Domain Authority and Page Authority? And what are their Rankings?
- Is your website and digital assets missing critical Meta data, Markup schema, SEO tags, and anchor text?

- Is your website optimized and structured for Voice search? On mobile and desktop?

- Do you know what errors exist on your website that hurts you with being indexed in the 6-Pack and Snack Pack for showing up on page one (1) in search results?

- How does your website and business stack up to your competitor? Do you know your competitor's website problems?

- Have you ever undertaken a Competitor Analysis? Do you know what their deficiencies are, and if there are opportunities you can deploy to get better search results?

Every Website Audit we perform includes at least the following items:

- Technical Audit – making sure your site is well coded and runs fast

- On-site Audit – full review and analysis of all pages for proper keyword use in all pertinent areas (H1-H6, title tags, content etc.)
- Off-site Audit – analysis of back links and anchor text and authority and trust

- Social Audit – review current mentions and visibility

How Do You Measure Up To The ZMOT?

If you like to know how to win at the ZMOT, when consumers are making their purchase decisions online, connect with us at 319-936-7704.

We offer a ZMOT Score, which provides:

- ❖ A baseline of your brand's ZMOT health, and your competitor's health if you   so choose; including full website audit and content optimization, rank tracking, keyword research, in-depth backlink research and anti-penalty link audit
- ❖ Solutions geared towards improving your ZMOT score and increasing your Return on Investment (ROI) from your digital assets
- ❖ Consumer profiles and target marketing to understand and capture your buyer audience
- ❖ Website design and branding incorporating the ZMOT to enhance your business in today's digital 2.0 economy
- ❖ And, much more…

Call us to set up your "free" initial consultation...we're people...we'll work with you!

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Visit our website www.EmpoweringYourBrand.com to learn more about all of the things we do…***to make you successful!!***