

7 Steps to Strengthen Your Online Brand

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If you haven't already updated your brand's online presence today, you are probably missing out on long-lasting customer relationships and a large audience of potential new customers.

The web hosts billions of online presences from e-commerce sites to informational pages to blogs. In this digital age, one thing is certain: your competition is online.

With more customers online now than ever before, your brand's online presence often trumps word-of-mouth. The web is your digital billboard to market to an audience larger than your brick and mortar home base could ever reach.

A strong online web presence can set you apart from the competition. Customers are able to find you more easily. New customers will be repeat customers as you show up where they are and build a relationship with them. Your brand is defined and strengthened.

Give people the opportunity to find you- and make them want to hang around a while once they do.

Here are 7 steps to strengthen your online brand, courtesy of your friends at GemFind:

1. Before anything else, build your website.

Buy a custom domain and build a clean, user-friendly website with the most important information clearly visible at the top. Include engaging photos, avoid large blocks of text and add additional pages where consumers can go to learn more.

Insider's tip: Make your website mobile friendly to be accessible to consumers on-the-go.

2. Think about SEO.

Three out of four internet searches won't jump past the first page, so make sure your brand shows up near the beginning. Search engine optimization can include keyword phrases, dynamic content, and metadata. Essentially, know the words people use to find your business and make sure you utilize them in your web content.

Insider's tip: Keep it classy and avoid the outdated tactic of hiding text at the bottom of every page, such as 100 key words in white text on a white page.

3. Get social.

More than ever before, consumers are online and they are interacting with brands. Recent studies report smartphone users check Facebook 14 times each day. Make sure your brand is where your current and future customers are. Set your brand up with free accounts with Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, blogging services and Pinterest.

Insider's tip: Use one online name across multiple social channels as much as possible.

4. Engage your audience.

With so many brands fighting for online consumers' attention, nobody wants to hang around a brand who only focuses on self-promotion. Your online audience is not on your homepage or social page to only be sold to. Offer promotions, share news that is not directly about your brand and encourage conversation.

Insider's tip: Respond to comments and fan messages quickly to let consumers know there is a real person behind your brand.

5. Cross-promote your networks.

Most online consumers spend time on one social outlet more than others. Make sure online consumers know you are ready to connect with them wherever they are. Include social icons in your website design. Mention your newest Pinterest board in your next Facebook post.

Insider's tip: Include links to your website and social media accounts in your email signature.

6. Win their attention with photos.

Draw them in with visual content. Keep your text short and your photos clean. Online consumers want their information short and fast with a gorgeous photo on the side. Visually capture your audience and then share your main message.

Insider's tip: The photos don't always have to be your own! Photos shared from other pages can still make a big impact.

7. Keep it fresh.

Update often, but not too often. Be a welcome sight throughout social media, and avoid that fine line of becoming a nuisance. Two to three engaging posts each week will work for many brands while some may shoot for daily posts.

Insider's tip: There are scheduling tools available so your message can be shared even when you can't be by a computer.