

Easy first steps for improving your website

BigWords DIY checklist

Check your page loading speed

One of the surest ways to lose visitors to your website is to have a site that is slow to load. Today's user expects a website to load quickly. Even a one-second delay in page load time yields fewer page views, a decrease in customer satisfaction and fewer conversions. As well as impacting the user experience, site load speed is also one of the signals used by Google in its page ranking algorithm.

To check your page loading speed, clear your browsing history, including cached pages, and navigate to your website, or use someone else's computer that hasn't visited your website.

Images and video are the biggest culprits in slow page loading because they take up a significant portion of a page's overall size. Two distinct factors related to images and video are the size of each individual asset and the number of total assets being loaded on any given page. It's important to address both of these factors.

Reduce the file size of all media assets

- ✓ **Size your images appropriately** – Don't upload a 6,000-pixel wide image if it's going to be displayed at 500 pixels. While retina is a consideration (2x), make sure the photos are sized according to the parameters of the design.
- ✓ **Stick to JPG when possible** – JPG is a compressed image format that maintains the integrity of the image, without wasting unnecessary space. So for the vast majority of applications, JPG is preferred. You should only use PNG when transparency is necessary. Avoid using TIFF and BMP altogether.
- ✓ **Compress all photos** – Even photos that have been appropriately sized are still going to be larger files than they need to be. Make sure that all photos are compressed, as compression can significantly reduce the file size, without dramatically sacrificing picture quality. At a basic level, you can export from Photoshop (or another image tool) using a "save for web" option. Or there are many image compression tools available online, like Imagify – a good option for WordPress websites because of its seamless integration into WordPress.
- ✓ **Compress all video** – Video—especially high definition video—has the potential to be a significant speed hog. Be sure to compress each video using a video compression tool.
- ✓ **Embed using a third party video hosting platform** – It's also a good idea to embed video using a third party video hosting platform such as Vimeo or Wistia to reduce the impact on your hosting server's bandwidth.

Limit the number of total assets on each page

The more images and videos you place on each page, the longer it will take to load. Be mindful of the overall “size” of each page’s assets. Website features such as sliders (or carousels), background videos, large images and background textures may add interest to the website, but they also increase page load speed. Aim for a healthy balance between aesthetics and user experience.

Other ways to speed up your website’s page loading speed

Install a caching/page speed plug-in: Page caching is another way to help improve your page load time. Cached pages are served up as static HTML versions of a particular page as a way to avoid time-consuming queries to your website’s database. A cached web page loads much quicker—while decreasing server load by up to 80%. WordPress users can easily install one of the many popular page caching plugins – it’s a good idea to check with your web designer about any likely conflicts with other plug-ins on your site.

Upgrade your web hosting package: The quality of your web hosting package can have a significant impact on your website’s page load speed. This is more a problem for larger, more resource-intensive websites, and websites that generate a lot of traffic. Using an inexpensive, shared (or grid) hosting platform means you are competing for bandwidth. A high-performing VPS or managed or dedicated web hosting platform will use much faster technology stacks, as well as featuring dedicated resources and a host of important options to fine tune your server, delivering a faster result. Your current hosting provider may have upgrades available.



Sort your webcopy

The words on your website serve two masters: the search engines and the customer. You need to make sure that what your website says is considerate of both.

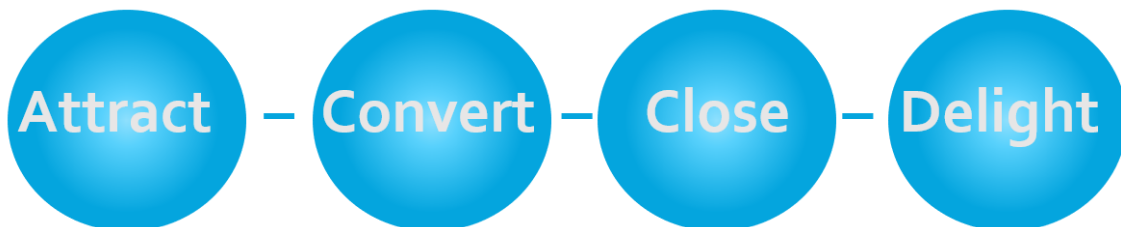
SEO is important. However, if your site is optimised for the search engines but doesn't speak to your target audience, a lot of the extra visitors you attract to your site with your SEO will simply leave without going any further, giving you a higher bounce rate that will undo all your efforts to improve your page rankings.

BigWords recommends you start with appealing to the human audience first. This is where the magic happens in converting visitors to enquiries, leads or sales. Often when the content is crafted well for your target audience, the SEO becomes a lot easier to put together.

Here are our top tips for good webcopy:

- ✓ **Start with your goals:** does your current webcopy align with what you want your website to do?
- ✓ **What is your 'Why':** is it clear to visitors why they should do business with you?
- ✓ **I or You:** Is the focus on your business' attributes or the needs of the customer – also called the WIIFM factor (what's in it for me)?
- ✓ **Clear direction:** is it obvious to visitors where to go next on the site to get to where they need to?
- ✓ **Call to action:** what is the number one thing you want someone to click on and is it clearly visible? A common way of doing this is with a Big Obvious Button (BOB) placed somewhere prominent with Click Here or some other strong label.
- ✓ **Where is the fold?:** Think of the broadsheet newspapers and how the most attention grabbing headline and image was always displayed in the top half of the page "above the fold" so that it could be seen from the pile of stacked copies. You need to view your website the same way, so that visitors can see the most important information, including a call to action, without having to scroll down below what appears on their screen.
- ✓ **Keep it current:** Check regularly for information that might be out of date or no longer in line with your current marketing focus, and get rid of anything old or obsolete.
- ✓ **Everything works:** test all your links to make sure they are working and take you to where they are meant to within your site.

- ✓ **Keep your site open for further browsing:** Any links to external sites need to open in a separate tab or window and not just take visitors away from your site
- ✓ **Breadcrumbs:** if your visitors need to move through a number of pages on your website, make it easy for them to retrace their steps to earlier pages by displaying the breadcrumbs (the string of pages they have navigated through) at the top of the page.
- ✓ **In-page SEO:** ensure you are fully utilising the headings, text and links, image labels and alt text to reflect the key search phrases you have identified for each page of your website.
- ✓ **Metadata:** replace the default page heading and description in your Metadata – this is the content that appears in the search engine results pages (SERPs) encouraging people to come to your website.
- ✓ **The buyer's journey:** think about where in the lead generation and sales process that someone is going to arrive at various points on your website, and make sure the content is aligned with the correct stage of the buyer's journey.



Do you feel you need further assistance with updating your website content to improve how it performs, both with the search engines and attracting and converting your target audience(s), or would you like some help understanding how to align things with the buyer's journey?

Book a 1-hour appointment with our professional copywriter and SEO specialist **Fiona Cole** by clicking the following link.

[BOOK A 1-HOUR APPOINTMENT HERE](#)