

**THE FASHION DESIGNER'S GUIDE**

**CREATING  
FASHION WEBSITES  
THAT SELL**

**YOUR STEP BY STEP MANUAL FOR  
ECOMMERCE SUCCESS**

**NICOLE GIORDANO & SYAMA MEAGHER**



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*Your Step by Step Manual  
for Ecommerce Success*

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## **EXPERT INTERVIEWS:**

Anshey Bhatia, founder of verbal + visual

Genevieve Morganstern, co-founder of sadie.co

Jim Powell, founder of Gadabout Digital

Erika Miller, founder of ELM Consulting & Senior SEO,  
Strategist at Adobe

## **Congratulations!**

About StartUp FASHION

About Scaling Retail





# HI THERE!

So glad to see that you've taken the important step of creating a fashion website that sells.

Why?

Because the care and quality you put into your website is a direct reflection of the care and quality you put into your collection.

You may not agree with this statement, but the customer does, whether they realize it or not.

Your fashion brand, your entire fashion business, is judged by what people see online. When customers arrive on your website, they want to be inspired, excited, and impressed. When they're none of these things, they simply leave.

But when they're *all* of these things, you have just welcomed a new customer, with the potential to be a loyal and raving fan!

We have created this book to be your guide to building your fashion business website in a way that will, without a doubt, help you build that community of loyal raving fans.

It's meant to be a book you use whether you have a website you want to improve or you're just embarking on the website building journey.

We want it to be your manual; something you refer to often, and review every now and then to make sure you're still on track. It will help you get the most out of the work you're doing and the money you're spending.

So, go on, open it up, have a read, and start creating a website your business will be proud of!

To your success,  
Nicole & Syama



# CHAPTER 1

DESIGNING AND BUILDING  
A PROFESSIONAL WEBSITE

One of the biggest mistakes emerging brands make when it comes to designing and building their websites is to think that they can do it all themselves.

Whether you're on a tight budget and need to DIY your way through a large portion of it or if you've got a budget set aside for the design and development of your site, you need to acknowledge and accept that *some* money needs to be spent.

Maybe you have \$7,000 or maybe you have \$700 (most likely you've got something in between); but based on your budget you're able to set the right expectations for what your site will look like and do.

So, before you do anything else, take a good long look at your finances. Ask yourself the following questions and answer honestly:

**How much money do I have to put into my website?**

**What can I comfortably spend?**

Once you feel that you have a good idea of your budget, you can begin collecting your ideas and inspiration for the website.

You will look at things like your target market, your brand identity, your marketing plan, and your core revenue streams in order to determine the style of website you want.

**In this chapter we talk about...**

- How to source a designer to create your website
- How to communicate with your designer to get the site you're envisioning
- How to bootstrap the design and build of your website

**LET'S GET STARTED!**

# DESIGNING AND BUILDING

It's tough to know where to start when it comes to designing and building your website. Most emerging brands are on a budget and the price tag that comes along with a professionally designed site is at best-scary, at worst- impossible.

So what is the first step in creating your website? Look at your budget.

Ask yourself, "What can I reasonably afford to put towards the creation of my website?"

When you answer that question, you're going to have a better idea of whether you can afford to hire someone to create the site for you or if you're going to have to bootstrap your way through it.

Regardless of whether you plan to hire a designer or build it on your own, do yourself a favor and check out the many free and low cost themes that are available to you.

Resources like ThemeForest, WooThemes, DIYThemes, and StudioPress are great places to start.

Keep in mind many designers will start with a theme and make changes and adjustments based on your brand and specifications. This is a good thing because it keeps costs down. Chances are you don't need a fully customized website, unless you have a very good budget and want lots of innovative functionality. The more you know about what you want the easier it will be.

## HIRING SOMEONE TO DESIGN AND BUILD YOUR WEBSITE

Congrats, you're in the very fortunate position of being able to hire someone to build you a beautiful website. This is a time consuming task that requires a lot of different skills so being able to hire the right person or team, should feel really great.

With that said, just because you can hire someone, doesn't mean that you should make the mistake of throwing some money at the project and believing that everything will be perfect. There are several things to consider when hiring a website designer:

- Are you hiring an agency or an individual?
- What skills does the agency/individual have and what skills will they need to outsource?
- What questions should you ask your potential designer before hiring them?
- Once hired, how will you manage the relationship?
- What are your expectations and what are the expectations of the designer?
- What are the specific deliverables and when can you expect them?
- How do you communicate your brand and company values to the designer?
- How do you share details about your customer and his or her needs with the designer?
- What do you do if you don't like the direction the designer is going?

No designer who creates anything for you is going to do it without a lot of direction from you. At least they shouldn't. Never underestimate how much over direction will help you to get what you have envisioned.

### SOURCING A WEBSITE DESIGNER

Start by emailing your network and letting them know that you are looking for a web designer, and that all referrals are welcome. Word of mouth and recommendations from people you trust is the best way to go.

You can also use sites like LinkedIn and Behance to find qualified, professional designers.

The ideal situation when sourcing a website designer is the one in which you pay what you can afford and work with a designer who can deliver on time and exactly what you want. In building your site you should expect to do about two to three revisions before you are happy. Only on a rare occasion will your designer hit it out of the park on the first shot. This is why communication is so important.

When starting your search it's good to already have done the homework on what you want. This is very important in getting an accurate quote from your prospective designer. Do you want a basic site or one with some bells and whistles? Do you want a blog (you better!)? A shopping cart? Remember the more complicated the site the higher the quote will be.

And don't forget, you get what you pay for. We can try to own the process as much as possible, but don't expect to pay \$700 for a highly dynamic site.

If your developer promises what seems too good to be true, it just might be.

## 25 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR POTENTIAL DESIGNER

When it comes to interviewing your potential website designer, there is no such thing as too many questions.

### 25 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR POTENTIAL WEBSITE DESIGNER

1. Have you worked on fashion websites before? Can I see some examples of sites in a similar price range?
2. What content management systems have you worked on?
3. Have you implemented shopping carts on websites before?
4. Can you please share your references?
5. What is the process like when working together?
6. Who will be my point person; you or someone on your team?
7. {If they have a team} Can you tell me a bit about the people on your team?
8. How often and when are you available to answer questions and discuss issues?
9. How do you handle deliverables? Do we plan to speak a certain amount of days after I've had time to review?
10. How long after signing on will it take to receive the first draft?
11. How many revisions are included in your fee?
12. Does your fee include finding and buying images?
13. Do you have graphic design experience as well as web design experience? If not, can you recommend a talented graphic designer?



14. Do you provide website hosting and email configuration as part of the proposal?
15. What content management system will you decide to use for my website?
16. Will you implement an automatic backup system?
17. Will you help to set up goals and reporting within Google Analytics?
18. How will you make my website SEO friendly?
19. Will you design a responsive website?
20. Will you give me all working files after the project is complete?
21. What is the project cost to build my website? Are there any additional costs that could present themselves?
22. Is payment broken up by deliverables?
23. Will I have complete ownership of the website once I make final payment?
24. Will there be training on how to make changes and update my website?
25. Will you be available to help with changes and updates if needed and what is the cost?

### COMMUNICATING YOUR VISION TO YOUR DESIGNER

Make sure you have a creative brief ready; it should include a detailed list of sites you like and screenshots of specifics, as well as sites that you don't like and details of those specifics.

It should also include notes on your brand identity, who your customer is, who else may be visiting your website (editors, buyers, investors), and the goals you have for your website.

# FULL CREATIVE BRIEF TEMPLATE YOU CAN USE IN YOUR FASHION BUSINESS.

**YOUR LOGO**

**Date**

## **CREATIVE BRIEF**

### **Company Name**

Place your company name here

### **About Us**

This is where you tell the designer what your company is all about and share your values and philosophy, as well as what makes your brand special and different from the competition.

Add as much detail as possible so that they can create something that will accurately reflect your company.

### **Project Title**

Place title here

Examples: Company blog header image or Sidebar ad for promotional purposes

### **Project Purpose and Target Audience.**

Write one or two sentences about the what the project is meant to do. What is the Call to Action; what do you want your audience to do when they view this graphic.

Also clarify who the target is, including gender, age range, geographical location, etc.

### **Deadline**

Include information on the deadline; including any breakdowns. i.e. “First draft due date” “Final draft due date”

### **Point of Contact**

Include name and contact info for yourself or someone from your team who will be managing the project.

### **Dimensions**

Fill in the required dimensions and resolution for the images

### **Content**

Include everything that needs to be included in the images, including any written copy, brand logo, specific colors, taglines, etc.

## Visual Layout and Design Elements

Use these images as a basis for your design.

HERE YOU PLACE SCREENSHOTS OR IMAGES THAT SHOULD INSPIRE THE DESIGN DIRECTION FOR THIS PROJECT.

- Note one about aesthetic
- Note two about aesthetic
- Note three about aesthetic
- etc.

*Be as specific as possible.* In addition to a creative brief, create a timeline for milestones and deliverables to make sure you're on the same page. Create it in Google docs for easy-to-update sharing.

Another thing you can do to ensure smooth communication, is create a schedule at the start of your working relationship with times that you plan to connect. Will your designer call you after sending you a deliverable? Will you plan to speak on the 15th of each month? Whatever it is, try to get a schedule in place to avoid a lot of back and forth emailing and missed connections.

Finally, make sure you request a list from your designer of exactly what they need from you in order to complete the project on time. That means images, copy, testimonials, blog content, and whatever else they need.

## BOOTSTRAPPING YOUR WAY THROUGH BUILDING YOUR WEBSITE

Bootstrapping your website is not necessarily a bad thing, but you have to be smart about it.

The first thing you need to understand is that you cannot do it all yourself; you will have to put some money towards your site in the form of photography, graphic design, and possibly technical help. The good news is that all of these things can be done by freelancers at a reasonable cost.

When it comes to finding freelancers, there are so many options out there: Elance/ oDesk, TaskRabbit, Behance, LinkedIn, and even Craigslist. These are all good places to start.

And just like with sourcing a website designer, you should email your network and let them know you're looking for freelance help with {photography, graphic design, or whatever your needs}

## WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT TO SPEND ON A LA CARTE SERVICES? WHAT IS THE PRIORITY OF HIRE?

### **Graphic Design**

First impressions are everything. Your logo, color scheme, and user experience are very important elements of how your customers view your brand and your business. The cost associated with graphic design help will range between \$500 and \$1500. Depending on how much you need, you can often customize the front end of a template design to make changes that are more you, without breaking the budget.

## Photography

Good photography is going to cost money. There's no way around that so stop huffing and puffing and accept the fact. However, you can find creative ways to keep the cost under control.

Consider contacting the head of the photography department at local universities, to see if there are some students interested in freelance work. Another option is to purchase the equipment yourself. While the initial output could run you \$3,00-\$5,000 (or more for the really fancy stuff), it's a one time cost. Things like white paper background, a DSLR, and a good light, can be set up in your studio and used for each new collection.

If you decide to go the college student route, expect around \$1500 for a 10 piece collection with various angles and basic post production work.

## Technical Help

Try to use forums and the friendly help desk at your hosting site. Your issues might be changes a little Googling could solve in about an hour or so.

If you are running into issues that you can't seem to solve via Google, you can find good freelance IT people starting at \$75/hour in the USA, and starting at \$25/hour in India/Pakistan/Philippines.

## CHOOSING YOUR CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Some of the most common content management systems available are Wordpress, Joomla, Magento, and Drupal.

The one you choose really depends on the complexity of your website and the number of SKUs you plan to have, but it's safe to say that Wordpress is a really good option.

Wordpress is the most user-friendly and easy to update of the CMS options. It also has thousands of available design templates, and a plethora of drag and drop plugins that can turn an otherwise basic site into an awesome branded, user-friendly, inspiring destination.

## CHOOSING YOUR DESIGN TEMPLATE

The first thing you want to do before choosing a template is make a list of all your needs. What do you want your website to be able to do? Will you have a shopping cart? Will you have an email sign up? Will there be a blog? Once you have this list, you're able to immediately rule out template options that don't fit the bill.

Then think about your primary call to action (CTA). What do you want people to do when they land on your home page? Do you want them to read your blog? Immediately shop? Sign up for your mailing list? The answer to this question will help you choose a template with the right type of focal point.

Also think about your brand identity. Are you a clean and sophisticated brand? A luxury brand? A streetwear brand? You want to choose a template that complements your brand aesthetic without having to do too much tweaking on your part.

Next think about your customers. Who are they? What kind of websites do they already frequent? How can your website stand out from those sites? Is there a template that has something a little special going on?

## IMPLEMENTING BASIC SEO

Search Engine Optimization and conversion optimization is (to be completely honest) something that is best handled by the experts. It's

a specialized skill that is constantly evolving and updating based on the whims of Google.

However, with that said, there are some things that you can do yourself when setting up your website in order to cover the basics with SEO.

First, have a blog. {We talk all about that in chapter 5}. A blog is the very best way to create consistent searchable content that helps you get to and stay in the top ranks of the Google search. Without one, you are at a disadvantage.

Second, be active on social media and implement social sharing buttons all over your site.

Next, do a keyword and key phrase search through the Google Keyword Planner to come up with the right terms to sprinkle throughout your site. {More on this in Chapter 6}

Make sure you have an FAQ on your website, packed full of helpful information, as well as review capabilities, which give a lot of opportunity for keyword rich information provided by your customers.

Disqus Commenting- This will help you to build community; allowing your customers to leave comments, and engage with your product. Oh, and it's also Free!

Finally, if you're using Wordpress, add the plugin Wordpress SEO by Yoast, it's a great way to find out if your blog posts are super searchable.

Google Analytics is another important aspect of SEO, because it helps you monitor your results. Install it. It will tell you how your customers are browsing through your site, your conversion rates, how your visitors are being referred to your website and so much more amazing information. It's easy to use and it's Free. (For a much more detailed look at SEO, read chapter 6 of this book.)



# CHAPTER 1

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Have a budget in mind for your website and try not to go over. It's easy to get lured in by bells and whistles.
- Know what you want for your website before talking to any potential designers.
- Know what you pay for: not all designers are created equally. Take your time to vet and make sure you have hired the right person. If you are paying an art student \$500 to make a site for you - temper your expectations accordingly.
- Manage the process. When you hire someone, you don't just pass the baton on to someone else. Have a game plan and timeline to make sure you get what you agreed to.
- Make sure to ask your potential website designers a lot of questions. Never feel as though you're being a pest; this is your business.
- Once you hire a designer, have a creative brief, timeline, and list of deliverables all set up from the start.
- If you decide to bootstrap the design and build of your website, understand that there is still cost involved. Make sure your budget allows for it.
- When sourcing freelance help for elements of your website (like graphic design and photography), start by tapping into your network and asking for referrals.
- Do your research and make sure you're choosing the best possible Content Management System (CMS) for your website needs.

- Choose a design template that takes into account your needs, your brand identity, your customer, and what action you want your visitors to take.
- Make sure you implement basic best practices for search engine optimization for your website.

# TAKE ACTION!

Now that you've learned what goes into designing and building a wonderful website, here are ways to take action in your business...

## ACTION STEP 1

*Have you...*

- Created a financial plan for your website development?
- Weighed the pros and cons of hiring a designer vs. bootstrapping the project?
- Researched websites that you love and don't love and made a detailed list of your thoughts and opinions?
- Decided on the primary purpose of your website based on your business needs and your customer needs?

## ACTION STEP 2

*If you plan to hire...*

- Have you made a list of the questions you plan to ask the potential designer?
- Have you put together a detailed creative brief to give to the designer?
- Have you made a Google spreadsheet with deliverables and timelines to share with the designer?

*If you plan to bootstrap...*

- Have you looked at your competitors and complementary brands and made note of how you can be different?

- Have you researched content management systems and chosen the one that best suits your needs?
- Have you researched templates and chosen a few possible contenders?

If your answer to any of the above is “No”, then add those tasks to your marketing to-do list and make them a priority!

# CHAPTER 2

CREATING A WEBSITE  
HOMEPAGE THAT SELLS

**A** well designed website is an essential element of a successful fashion business. Whether you're designing it in house or hiring an agency to design it for you, it's important to know what you should be thinking about and best practices.

When it comes to your website as a whole, you need to think about your brand identity and your customer identity.

Who are you as a brand? It important to know your brand values as well as your brand voice and tone.

Who is your customer? Knowing who your customer is, inside and out, is essential. You should be able to answer the following questions about your customer:

**What does your customer value? What does your customer love and hate? What keeps your customer up at night?**

Once you feel that you have a solid handle on your brand and your customer identity, it's time to think about how that translates to your website.

Your homepage is arguably the most important element of your website because it is often the entryway for your customers. Time spent perfecting this page is time well spent.

#### **In this chapter we talk about...**

- Improving customer perception of your brand
- Creating user flow on your website
- Important homepage structure and aesthetic
- Fun and effective homepage extras

**LET'S GET STARTED!**

# HOME PAGE

Think of the homepage of your website as the first impression you're going to make as a brand. If you met someone at a party would you talk only about yourself all the time? Of course not.

It's no different with your website. Talk about your brand in a way that conveys *what your brand can do for the customer*. You want them to perceive your brand as a brand that “gets me”.

## IMPROVING CUSTOMER PERCEPTION OF YOUR BRAND

### **Tell your brand story**

By sharing your brand story, you are increasing the probability that your potential customers will identify with you and therefore feel more connected. Remember that people do business with people, not businesses.

It's important to remember that your brand story is about *why* you do what you do, not how. This means, in sharing your “why” (your brand identity and values) you are able to attract customers who share those values.

In addition to sharing your “why”, you can share your “how”, as long as it's delivered in a way that entertains or delights your customer. Things like product development, behind the scenes, and day to day are the “how”. They are great ways to tell your brand story as it relates to the customer.

### **Build trust**

With trust comes loyalty. It's important to build a community of loyal customers who believe in what you do and trust that you will hold

their best interests at heart. Honesty, even when you've screwed up, is incredibly important in building trust. But so is truly believing in what you're doing. Authentically sharing your passion and enthusiasm for work and life also impacts the trust that consumers have in you.

## **Inspire**

It's important to think about sales from the perspective of *inspiring the customer to buy*, rather than the ol' sales pitch. Create imagery, both photography and video, that creates a lifestyle around not only your brand but also your products specifically.

Think about who your customer wants to be and make sure that your customers see how your brand can help them be that person.

## **Keep it fresh**

Though it may not seem like it, your willingness to update and improve your website on a regular basis has an impact on how your customer perceives your brand. Finding ways to repurpose your content to feel new is very important.

## **CREATING WEBSITE USER FLOW**

The home page of your website and any light boxes (those funny popups that ask you for your email) that appear, are your first opportunity to make your customer feel welcome, and take them down a path of your choosing.

Sure, you might have customers who know exactly where they want to go, but generally speaking this is your chance to walk them through your brand and your website. You need to make the path obvious, or they will never find it.



How then do you show your customer everything? You do this through simple and clear communication; both written word and visual imagery.

Remember that you potentially have three different kinds of visitors to your website every day. They are:

- consumers who can buy directly from your website
- buyers who can place wholesale orders with you
- press who want to expose their audiences to the amazingness that you create

Each of these visitors has different needs. So the more you know about who is coming to your site, the better.

### **Prioritize your visitors**

Is your business model built around an emphasis on direct to consumer sales? If so, the consumers who visit your site are top priority and the content you place on the home page should be directed more to them than anyone else. Everything should click or lead to a place to buy what they're seeing on the home page.

If your business model focuses more on gaining wholesale accounts, you want to think about the needs of buyers. Lookbooks should be prominently displayed and you should find ways to incorporate the “want to carry Brand Lovely in your store or marketplace?” call to action loud and clear.

Regardless of your business model, you probably wouldn't mind a little (or a lot!) of great press, right? So think about an editor's needs when he or she lands on your home page. Having that brand video on the homepage is definitely a good idea, as well as a clear link to your “About” page (not hidden in the footer of your website) and a clear “Contact” page link.

When it comes to the contact page, don't just have one general email but personalize it by creating a specific email address for editors (and buyers too). This makes them feel special and like they are in the fast lane to getting your attention.

Also consider having a phone number for press to contact. This may make you a little skeptical and worried that you'll have everyone under the moon and stars contacting you, but the thing is, press don't like to wait. Deadlines dictate and if they can't get in touch with you fast enough, they'll move on to the next designer to use in their story.

**Email Tip:** Funnel all email addresses through a service like Airmail or Google so you don't have to login to multiple email accounts every day.

## Identify “Other” Visitors

Remember that there are other types of visitors that will visit your site, as well. Create a content plan for your home page that speaks to them.

One such type of visitor is the “gift giver”. Creating a series of gift guides, whether holiday specific (Valentine's Day, Christmas, Graduation, etc.) or receiver specific (mother, brother, girlfriend, husband) and making them accessible from the home page, helps capture those sales that you may otherwise miss due to lack of direction.

Another type of other visitor is the local vs. domestic/international. Be careful what you share on your homepage in terms of location-specific content. While it can help to solidify your relationship with local customers, it can alienate customers who aren't so close to you geographically.

**Geography Tip:** If you plan to market your brand internationally then make sure to incorporate currency exchange on your site and don't forget to have clear shipping and return policies displayed.

And finally, think about your repeat customers. Remember what we said about keeping things on your homepage fresh? It's for these visitors. The ones who think what you do is amazing and want to come back regularly to see what you're up to. In addition to changing up the banner regularly, include an image and link to your latest blog post as a way of keeping things feeling new.

**Organizational Tip:** Create an editorial calendar with ideas and add reminders on your personal calendar to change the homepage content.

### IMPORTANT HOMEPAGE STRUCTURE AND AESTHETIC

When it comes to designing the structure and look of your website homepage, there are certain “rules” you need to keep in mind.

These are important guidelines for building a website that will help to drive sales.

**Navigation-** all important information should be above the fold (your customer shouldn't have to scroll down unless they want to make a return!)

**Calls to Action-** have clear CTA's on the homepage. Do you have free shipping on all domestic orders or orders of \$50+? Let your customer know by having a banner on the top of the page.

**Traditional headers and footers-** yep it's a little obvious, but it's really funny how many brands forget the simple things. If you specialize in women's handbags and accessories, then you need to have two distinct headers - one for handbags and one for accessories.

If you offer a wider variety of product you may need to have drop down menus.

Footers can be your enemy if not done properly. Make sure you have a privacy statement and terms of use, especially if you are collecting information from customers.

Lastly, use your brand bible and pick navigation words that are reflective of your brand. Who says your “About Company” section must be called “About Us”. Reflect your brand’s voice and tone everywhere possible.

**Color Scheme-** pick colors that are part of your branding but don’t overdo it. There is something to be said for a clean and simple background that allows the pieces in your collection to stand out. Too much additional color and pattern can be distracting.

**Copy-** avoid writing too much on your homepage. Instead, keep it focused and to the point with large, bold titles and CTAs that catch attention and drive action.

Also be sure to reference your brand voice and tone. Use words and phrases that your brand would say, while avoiding stiff “business” language and industry jargon.

**Tell a Quick Story-** What makes your brand so great? Answer this question and find ways of graphically representing this on the homepage. If you produce domestically and this season you are inspired by Africa, show your customer. Use the body of the homepage to highlight your pieces, your collection inspiration, and important things about your brand ethos.

**Styled Editorial Images-** when it comes to inspiring the customer to buy, there are very few ways to do this that are as effective as using

beautifully styled editorial images that paint a real picture and display a desirable lifestyle.

**Pro Tip:** Lifestyle images with your product can be costly so outline the editorial direction before hiring the photographer so you can get both product and lifestyle shots done in the least amount of time possible. If you can't afford to do lifestyle images just yet, never underestimate the power of illustrations and sketches to bring your customer visually into your world.

**The Socials** - Add your social media links to your homepage, just make sure to include only the social media channels that you actually use- not all the channels that exist.

Are you active on Instagram and Twitter? Put those icons up. If you haven't yet launched Facebook- don't list it. Otherwise, your customer may be disappointed when they go to your page and nothing is there.

Not only do you need to include all the links to your social media platforms, you also want to make sure that all the images on your homepage can be shared on the customer's social media.

**Email Signup**- email addresses are the phone numbers of today. Meaning, people tend to be leery of giving them out to just anyone. So you must give them a good reason to do so. Don't just ask them to sign up for your newsletter, tell them what they can expect to receive for doing so.

Also, remember that while it's important and wonderful to create a sense of community on platforms like Facebook, ultimately you want to create community on your own platform. Why? Because you own that platform. You don't own Facebook. So work hard to collect email sign ups via your website and be creative in your language.

**An Inside Look-** Including a video on your homepage that gives your customer an inside look into your brand is very powerful. This will tell your customers about your brand in a way that offers value through delighting and entertaining them. Post a small thumbnail on the homepage and let your customers have an inside look into your brand.

**Curated Content-** adding a feed to your homepage of mentions and shares about your brand and products from customers is a really persuasive way to make a sale. Consumers love to read reviews and a social testimonial that is visible on your homepage can help to give you “peer cred”.

**Press Coverage-** including a visual of how and where you’ve been in the press recently is another great way to share your credibility. People love to see that others find your brand irresistible.

**Pro Tip:** If you don’t have press yet, don’t push the Press section live. Have it in the background of your site ready for when you do get some.

**Other Stockists-** This might seem a little counter intuitive but it’s important to let your visitors know where else they can find you. You’re probably asking, “Why would I list other retailers when I want my customer to purchase on my site?” Listing other stockists achieves credibility in brand distribution – other customers and buyers love your product. You don’t have to link directly to the product page on the other site, but just the name of the store.

At this point you have shown the lifestyle of your brand, some product, and perhaps offered some incentive to purchase. This is enticing and yet not pushy or sales-y.

When you're thinking about the graphics and images to use on your home page, work to take cues from your inspiration board, patterns and prints from the recent collection, great Instagram photos, and behind the scene glimpses in the making.

The overall theme here is: your brand lifestyle.

### FUN AND EFFECTIVE HOMEPAGE EXTRAS

Besides the home page elements that are absolutely necessary, there are cool extras that you can include to really take your website to a level of professionalism.

**Crowd source-** this is a great way to get your customers involved in your business. Include them in certain elements of decision making whether that's the color of a new piece, the addition of accessories to an apparel brand, or their opinion on how the piece can best be worn. By making them feel involved, you are proving how much you value them.

**Event Coverage-** this can be a fun way to share your brand personality. Showing snapshots of events you've participated in is a different (but still cool) way to give a glimpse of behind the scenes and who you are as a brand.

**Style Guides-** showing your customers how to wear your products is another great way to inspire. Can your wrap skirt also be worn as a shawl, scarf, and head wrap? Share that through a style guide. Can you pair that top both with jeans and sandals as well as a pencil skirt and heels? Share that through a style guide. By demonstrating the options the customer has and inspiring them to think creatively when it comes to their style, you are bringing a lot of additional value to their lives through your work.

## CHAPTER 2

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Your homepage is the entryway into your brand, tell a good story.
- Build trust and inspire your customer by demonstrating that you “get them”.
- Make it a priority to update your website content every few months (more if you can) in order to keep it fresh.
- Pay attention to user flow and include clear CTAs to direct visitors to the places you want them to go.
- Don’t skip the traditional navigation and important menus; visitors have certain expectations, you don’t want to confuse them.
- Make sure your home page design is branded but not overwhelming or distracting; you want your work to shine.
- Speak your customer’s language; your brand voice and tone will reflect your customer as much as it will reflect your brand. So get good at “real talk” and skip all the business blah blah blah.
- Remember that building a community is important; include email sign ups, social media links, and insider access to help make your customers feel special.



# TAKE ACTION!

Now that you've learned what goes into making a great homepage for your website, here are ways to take action in your business...

## ACTION STEP 1

*Does your homepage...*

- Tell your brand story? Share your enthusiasm for your brand values and beliefs?
- Inspire your customers by demonstrating that you understand them?
- Prioritize your visitors' needs?

## ACTION STEP 2

*Does your homepage have...*

- All the important information above the fold?
- Clear and bold calls to action?
- Well-organized navigation, headers, and footers?
- A branded but not distracting color scheme and design?
- Limited long form writing like paragraphs and tomes?
- Your brand voice and tone throughout the copy?
- A story about your latest collection told through visuals?
- A great brand video and editorial images?
- All of your social media links?

- All of your images made sharable?  
*Epecially a Pin It button!*
- A place for people to sign up for emails?
- A good reason for them to give you their email?
- A place where people can see what others have to say about your brand?
- A place where you list all the press you've received?

If your answer to any of the above is “No”, then add those tasks to your marketing to-do list and make them a priority!

# CHAPTER 3

CREATING AN ABOUT PAGE THAT YOUR  
CUSTOMER WANTS TO READ

**T**he single most important thing you need to remember when it comes to your About Page is that it's actually a sales page.

Just like with your website as a whole, the About page needs to keep in mind the identity of your brand as well as the identity of your customer.

Your goal with your About page is to get your visitor to progress past the first line. If that first line doesn't grab their attention, you're done.

In order to create an About page that will really resonate with your customers, you need to answer the question:

### **How does your brand solve a problem for your customer?**

If you can answer that question while simultaneously conveying what your brand values and why your customer should care, you're on your way to a great About page.

Your About page is the place where you get to share an insight into your brand and yourself, as the brand owner. The key is to find a balance between all about you and all about your customer.

#### **In this chapter we talk about...**

- Creating your brand identity
- Creating your customer identity
- Important About page structure and flow
- Elements that make your About page something special

## **LET'S GET STARTED!**

# ABOUT PAGE

When it comes to your About page, the most important thing that you have to remember is that it's actually a sales page.

People click the "About" button to learn about you but, more importantly, to learn about what you can do for them.

With that in mind, just like the other elements of your business, you will need to have two bodies of research close at hand before you start to write your About page:

- Customer identity
- Brand identity

## YOUR BRAND IDENTITY

Before you can start writing anything, you need to really understand who you are as a brand.

It's important to ask yourself:

- What are your brand values?
- What does your brand believe in?
- Why do you do what you do?

Understand that the answers to these questions can't be something along the lines of "We value clean, modern design.", "We believe in luxurious design at affordable prices.", or "I launched this line because I've loved fashion since I was a kid."

Your answers need to go deeper than that. Think hard about your answers, write them down, walk away, and do it again.

For every answer, ask yourself “why”, until you’ve got nothing else to say. Don’t be lazy here!

At the root of your work, there is a reason that matters. Find it and use it in all of your communication.

## **Brand Value**

What are the reasons why someone should buy from you? What value do you bring to the consumer?

Be careful here; make sure you differentiate true value from added value.

Examples of True Value include: reversible garments for multiple looks, one-of-a-kind or some-of-a-kind, machine washable work wear, hands-free bags, season-less apparel...

Examples of Added Value (meaning those things that don’t necessarily solve a problem for the customer) include: made in the USA, charitable contributions with purchase, 100% organic...

It’s not that “added value” brand characteristics aren’t important; it’s just that they shouldn’t necessarily be what your brand leads with, or your main message. Unless, of course you have done the proper research on your customer and are targeting a very niche community that say, only buys vegan. (We share more on customer identity below) If that’s the case, then by all means, make it your main message. But if not, think hard about making an added value your main message. Added value means “bonus”. It means it’s a great extra but is not what makes a customer buy.

## **Brand Voice and Tone**

Once you understand your brand values and beliefs, you then want to think about your voice and tone.

Your voice is what you say and your tone is how you say it.

What characteristics make up your brand? Are you funny? Sarcastic? Exclusive and luxurious? Down home? Gritty? Edgy?

A luxurious brand communicates a lot differently than a down-home brand. The words it uses and the delivery of those words vary greatly.

Understanding this is essential because these characteristics determine how you communicate.

Remember that you need to *show* this brand identity, not say it. Meaning, you're not funny until you make someone laugh, you're not edgy until you do something like use colorful language on a marketing campaign.

You have to fully understand who you are as a brand before trying to communicate who you are.

### BRANDING HOMEWORK:

Read up on your favorite brands and be a branding detective. How do your favorite brands speak about themselves? Sometimes it's subtle and sometimes it's bold and obvious.

### **Target Market Research**

Understanding your customer inside and out is essential. How can you connect with someone if you don't know anything about them?

Who is your customer?

Ask yourself:

- What is it that they value?
- What do they believe in?
- What do they care about in life?

- What makes them happy and excited and inspired?
- What do they do in their spare time?
- What are 10 adjectives that describe them?

Pull this information together and reference it constantly as you write your About page.

Remember, people love to identify themselves in the brands they are loyal to so be detailed in your description of them.

If you say that your line is created for the “woman on the go”, it may not resonate, but if you say this line was for the “woman who works hard all day and parties all night”, you’re getting much more specific.

A “woman on the go” can be a busy mom, an adventure traveler, a partier, or a plethora of other “busy” things. But a “woman who works all day, parties all night” is a very distinct woman.

Remember to use the language of your customer; this is not the time to demonstrate your Greek literature major.

As a side note, if you think your customer is “everyone”, then go back to your customer analysis. Your customer is the person who bought your product at full price. Not your mother, brother, or best friend, but the stranger who saw your product and converted to purchase.

## **Writing Your About Page**

The first thing you’re going to do is just start writing, don’t think about the dos and don’ts, just write as if you are journaling. Spend an hour or so just writing about why you started your brand and don’t hold back or judge yourself during the process. No one is going to see this. It’s for you; a way to practice your writing and get your thoughts on paper.

Once you’ve done that, go back and start highlighting the things that are important to you, the themes or words, or sentences that you



really like and may want to include in your completed About page. Then open a new document and start fresh.

You want to start your About page by thinking about your customer; with something that grabs their attention.

Create a sentence, statement, or proclamation that your customer immediately identifies with, and that makes them want to read more.

Think about it this way, if you met someone at a party and immediately said,

*“I graduated from fashion school in 2013, with a passion for making clothes, and have recently launched my contemporary women’s wear collection. I launched this collection because of my wonderful memories of making clothes with my grandmother at her kitchen table”*

...the person you’re speaking to will immediately zone out and wonder when they can get away from this self-involved person.

Why? Because it has nothing to do with them.

The opening line of your About page should grab them and cause them to say “Yes! That’s me.”

Examples of great opening lines:

*Have we met before?* You’re all about that playful collision of classic and contemporary topped off with a shock of bold, quirky charm.

-Bizi Buenos Aires

You appreciate thoughtful design, easy luxury, and a reflection of new experiences; both in the way you live your life and the way you express your style.

-Danielle Sakry

Helping the eternal free spirit escape the everyday to explore a world of fresh, modern design.

-Parcel & Journey

After you grab your reader with a great opening line, don't stop talking about them there. Focus the next few sentences on your customer.

Continue to write about the things that both your brand and your customer have in common and value, in order to continue creating that bond.

Once you've built that bond, then you start to introduce what your brand actually does. It is around here that you should start using the words "we or I", not before. This is where you're going to reference your first journaling exercise, since it will more likely than not, be all about your brand, and not so much about your customer.

After you've written roughly a paragraph about what your brand does and why you do it, then you can decide to add a backstory.

The thing about a backstory is that, yes people care about it, but they only care about once they feel some kind of connection to you. The backstory solidifies that connection.

Your backstory can be told in any way you choose; an actual story, a timeline, or a video are all great options.

Remember to tell your story in a way that forms an emotional connection. Share specifics like your cat's name, the way your favorite coffee shop smelled when you spent long weekends planning and building your business, the rushing floods of excitement and disappointment that you've inevitably felt along the way.

Your backstory should include ups and downs, conflicts and resolutions, dilemmas, forks in the road, inspiration, and emotion in that way that your favorite novel does.

Voice your story with so much honesty that your readers cannot help but want to be a part of it.

### IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF AN INCREDIBLE ABOUT PAGE

- A photo of you
- An opening paragraph about the customer
- A lot of “you”, instead of a lot of “I or We”
- A well told backstory
- A brand video

## CHAPTER 3

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Your About page is really a sales page so make it about your customer as much as it's about your brand.
- Spend time creating your brand identity; your values, beliefs, voice, and point of view.
- Create detailed customer personas in order to understand who your customer is and what they care about.
- Start writing your About page like a journal entry in order to remove some of the pressure of writing “an amazing About page”.
- Create an opening line that is all about your customer in order to grab their attention.
- Make sure the first few sentences support that opening line and are still focused on your customer.
- After the few sentences or paragraph, it is time to start talking about your brand.
- Finish up your About page with a well-told backstory about you in order to build that emotional connection.

# TAKE ACTION!

Now that you've learned what goes into making a great "About" page for your website, here are ways to take action in your business...

## ACTION STEP 1

*Does your "About" page...*

- Focus on your customer first?
- Demonstrate your brand's value?
- Communicate in your brand's voice and tone?

## ACTION STEP 2

*Does your "About" page have...*

- An opening line that grabs your customer's attention?
- A paragraph that is focused on your customer's values?
- A paragraph that introduces your brand and communicates why it's special?
- A well told backstory packed full of emotion?

If your answer to any of the above is "No", then add those tasks to your marketing to-do list and make them a priority!



# CHAPTER 4

BUILDING PRODUCT PAGES  
THAT DRIVE SALES

**I**t would be an incredible understatement to say that the product page of your website is important. This is the page where your hobby becomes a business because this is the page where the revenue comes from.

When it comes to your product page, you want to find the balance between being creative with your content and sharing important searchable content; both will help to drive sales but in very different ways.

Just like with every other aspect of your website, you have to know who it is you're selling to and what they value and need.

Understanding the concerns and questions that your customer may have that could keep them from making the purchase is critical. You should know:

**What reason does my customer have for wanting this product?  
What do they hope this product will do for them? How do they  
hope this product will make them feel? What factors would keep  
them from hitting the “Buy Now!” button?**

If you can confidently answer these questions, you can build a product page that will effectively drive more sales. Your product pages are the very last thing a customer sees before making a purchase. If you've managed to get them this far, you don't want to risk losing them because the product page is uninspiring and lacking the right information.

**In this chapter we talk about...**

- Important components of product pages that sell
- Answering your customers' questions before they ask
- Finding the balance between inspiration and information
- Making the purchasing path an easy one

**LET'S GET STARTED!**



# PRODUCT PAGES

Awesome product pages take time and creativity to build. But this is something that emerging brands rarely do; for most designers the product pages look pretty standard. Customers see somewhere between one and four images, the product description states a few lines about the design of the piece, and there are some bullet points about dimensions, materials, and care instructions. Blah.

As a consumer, I want to land on a product page and be inspired; I want to believe that I am going to look and feel a certain way once I own this product, I want to feel utter and complete excitement and anticipation about being the owner of this incredibly fantastic piece of fashion.

The only way to make your customers feel this way is make sure your product pages are saturated with great content.

There are 5 must-have components to great product page content:

- High quality images
- Several images covering various angles, the interior, close-up details, and the piece on a model
- A product title and description that tells a story about the customer, not the product
- Search terms and keywords woven into the description
- Clear, easy to find product information like dimensions and fit, materials and care instructions

## PRODUCT IMAGES

Incredible product photos are one of the most important tools in your arsenal. Below we talk about the importance of well written

product titles and descriptions, but all the beautifully written stories in the world won't help to sell your product if the photography isn't well done.

Product photography is not a place to skimp or cut corners. If you can't afford both an editorial photo shoot and a product photo shoot, start with product photos because they are most often requested by editors and will also be absolutely necessary for your line sheets.

If the customer can't really see your product, she's not going to buy it. Details, quality, and consistency are the most important aspects of your product photos.

Here are 7 things to remember when planning your product images:

- Make sure your photographer shoots all items with similar lighting/aesthetic
- Shoot your pieces on a model as well as against a white background
- Upload images onto your product page that are all the same size and dimensions
- Shoot each product from multiple angles and don't forget to include an interior shot of handbags
- Include close-ups of the fabric, lining, pockets, seams and stitches, buttons, and other details
- Get a few images of the packaging you use to ship your product to demonstrate what a treat it is to receive an order from your brand
- If you can include a model in your shoot, take shots that show proportional size; i.e., just how big is that envelope clutch when you're holding it

These are tips for product photography but don't completely write off editorial shoots. Save your funds and plan an editorial shoot as soon as it makes financial sense.

Editorial shoots tell the story of your collection as well as create a feeling of closeness with your customer; if she can see herself in that scenario, she is more likely to buy.

Editorial images are used to create your lookbook and should be used on your website home page, as well. They are great marketing and PR collateral and can do wonders for connecting with your customer.

## **PRODUCT TITLE AND DESCRIPTIONS**

The titles and the descriptions that you use for your pieces in your line are incredibly important. They also happen to be things that get completely overlooked.

### **Your Product Titles**

It's really easy to create a title that simply describes your product. But come on, that's boring! Customers are not into boring; their eyes glaze over and they forget about you almost immediately.

What happens when you meet someone who is boring?... Exactly. Don't let your brand be the boring guy at the party.

Instead, spend some time getting creative with your titles. Just like with your About page, use that target customer research you've spent time on to craft a title that catches their attention and makes them want to read more.

### **Your Product Descriptions**

When it comes to creating your descriptions, think less about the product and more about the customer.

## HOW TO CREATE AN AMAZING PRODUCT TITLES AND DESCRIPTIONS THAT WILL GET FOUND

There is a process to creating product descriptions that inspire and ignite the need to purchase. Once you have the process down, the whole thing seems a lot less intimidating.

Important Note! : SEO (search engine optimization) has to be taken into account here. You never want to get so crafty with your inspiring product language that you lose search results.

### **Step One: Search Term Research**

Start with the search terms, then you can get creative.

The first thing you have to do is research what keywords and phrases your potential customers will be searching for when looking for a product like the one you're describing. You can do this by using Google Keyword Planner to get an idea of the most-searched terms, with the least amount of competition. (You can find more SEO guidance in chapter 6)

This list can also be created with a bit of common sense. Ask yourself, "What would I search for if I were looking for this product?"

Once you have this list of words and phrases, you need to make sure they are incorporated into your descriptions (and titles).

### **Step Two: Add Some Creative Umph**

But just because you have this list of boring search terms, doesn't mean you can't add a little umph, right?

Think about it this way; let's say you make green sunglasses. What sounds more enticing?:

Green sunglasses  
or  
Paris Poet Jade Green Cateye Sunglasses

Doesn't the latter have you picturing yourself sitting in a cafe on the corner of rue (something French) and rue (something else French), sipping a coffee and people watching, while scribbling the beginnings of what will surely be some really prolific prose?

The second title has your potential customer imagining herself in a world she would love to be in, and she will inevitably go on to read the product description in order to continue this wander lusting fantasy.

### **Step Three: Write a Little Story**

Now that you have the lovely Paris Poet Jade Green Cateye Sunglasses in your product range, it's time to move into the description. This is not the place to get lazy; a title alone won't do the trick.

Can you imagine if after reading "Paris Poet Jade Green Cateye Sunglasses", the next thing your visitor reads is:

- Translucent Acetate
- UVB protection
- Measures 8" across
- 

Her dreams of Paris will immediately come crashing to halt and you'll be the bozo who hit the brakes. She closes her browser, sad and uninspired; upset that she is not, in fact, people watching in Paris but instead sitting at her desk on a dreary Tuesday afternoon, no change of scenery in sight.

Awful, right? Instead, continue the story.

Sitting open air on the corner of rue des Archer and rue de la République, you sip un cafe, while observing the delightful laziness of this perfect Sunday afternoon. As you slip your jade green cateye sunglasses from atop your head, you quietly thank yourself for not rushing out of your flat without them.

The streaming mid-afternoon sunshine, while lovely, could prove distracting if not for the UVB protection of your translucent shades. As you relax at your tiny table, scribbling your latest thoughts into your calfskin journal, you feel content in the knowledge that with your one gorgeous green accessory, you have effortlessly managed to style yourself into the quintessential chicness that is “the French woman.”

Sounds better, right?

It’s really not that hard to do. When you’re writing your description, just keep a few things in mind:

- What does your customer care about?
- Who is she now and who does she dream of being?
- What scenario would she love to see herself in?
- What activities does she do; how does she spend her time?
- What questions could she possibly have about your product?
- What words and phrases would she be searching if shopping for something like your product?

Use the answers to these questions to craft a descriptive and emotional story that can easily be found by your potential customer.

Once you have all the amazing and inspiring content created for your product description, you need to make sure that you also have the important, searchable stuff too.

## Step Four: Add the Important Product Information

Once you've told your product story, then you have to back it up with facts and information. All the creative writing in the world won't work if you don't also share the absolute must-know stuff.

Include the following in bullet form under your product descriptions so that it is easy to take in and digest:

- Dimensions/Sizes available
- Fabric/Materials used
- Fit Information/Size Chart, Note: Is there a model wearing the piece? Its great to give model dimensions and the size they are wearing.
- Care Instructions
- Social media sharing capability

By the time your visitor gets to this point of the product description, she *wants* those sunglasses. She just needs to be able to justify the purchase. So provide her with all the necessary information to do that, and she's sold.

Fantastic imagery, a killer product title, an inspiring story-like description, search friendly terms, and key product information are all essential elements of your product page.

But there are also great extras you can add to make it extra special and really drive that sale.

Here are 8 additional elements of incredible product pages:

- **Wear This With-** have a section at the bottom of the page with suggestions on what to wear with the product; it's a great way to upsell.

- **Delivery and Return Information-** offer free returns or flat rate expedited delivery? Share that on the product page, it could be just the bonus your customer needs to finish the purchase.
- **Add to Wish List-** sometimes a customer arrives on product pages with no intention of purchasing for themselves but instead because they are creating a list to pass to him/her/mom/dad; make it easy for them.
- **Review Capabilities-** reviews are fantastic for things like SEO, peer to peer sales, and market research. You can learn so much by having review capabilities on your product pages.
- **Pre-answered Questions-** otherwise known as FAQs, sometimes it's best to list the questions you anticipate your customer having and clearly answer them, right there on the page.
- **Product Testimonials-** making it possible for your customers to upload a picture of themselves wearing your piece is a wonderful way to drive sales. The bonus is that your customer feels special and closer to your brand.
- **“As Seen In” the press or “As Seen On” a celebrity-** nothing surprising here; celebrity endorsement or editorial validation almost always have a positive impact on sales.
- **Video-** tell an even better story with video. Showing customers how a piece hangs or how it moves on the body is a fantastic sales tool and something an image simply can't do.



## CHAPTER 4

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Your product pages are incredibly important and deserve time and creativity when building.
- Product images absolutely must be very high quality; no exceptions. Poor photography will kill the sale.
- Include multiple images from various angles, as well as close-ups, and at least one model shot.
- The only way to create product pages that sell is to inspire your customer and tap into the person he or she wants to be.
- Write creative titles and story-focused descriptions that take the customer to a place they want to go.
- Balance all the creative writing with keywords and phrases that your customer will search for.
- Make sure to include a bullet point list of all the important information about the product, under the description.
- Things like review capabilities, picture testimonials, and “as seen in” press mentions are fantastic extras to add to the product page.

- Video of the product being made or video of the model wearing the piece during the photo shoot are exceptionally awesome extras that can have a major impact on the conversion to a sale.

# TAKE ACTION!

Now that you've learned what goes into making great product pages for your website, here are ways to take action in your business...

## ACTION STEP 1

*Have you...*

- Researched your customer and what makes her happy?
- Done keyword and phrase research to see what your customer will be searching for?
- Hired a professional photographer or taken a product photography class in order to create high quality images?
- Practiced your creative writing skills and gotten friendly with the thesaurus?

## ACTION STEP 2

*Do your current product pages have...*

- Several high quality images including close ups, detail shots, and a model shots?
- Creative and exciting product titles?
- Well written stories about the person who wears your products?
- Product descriptions that include keywords and phrases?
- Bullet points with all the important information about the product?
- Your brand voice and tone throughout the copy?
- Review capabilities and picture testimonials?

- Information about fit and/or a size chart?
- “As seen in” press mentions about the product?
- All of your images made sharable? *Especially a Pin It button!*
- A place for people to add to their wish list?
- A video about how the product was made or a video of the model wearing and moving in the piece?
- A thoughtful FAQ section with helpful answers?
- Information about your shipping, delivery, and return policies?

If your answer to any of the above is “No”, then add those tasks to your marketing to-do list and make them a priority!

# CHAPTER 5

CREATING A KILLER BLOG TO BUILD  
A COMMUNITY OF LOYAL CUSTOMERS

**T**he single most important thing you need to remember when it comes to your blog, is that though it seems like a lot of extra work, it's one of the best ways out there to increase brand awareness and build a loyal community.

There are a lot of designers out there. The only way you'll be able to stand apart is through building a brand that connects with its customers on a deeper level than sales pitches. A blog is a great way to do that.

Your goal with your blog is to create a branded experience that is entertaining, informative, helpful, and worthy of repeat visits.

In order to create a blog that will really connect with your audience, you need to ask yourself the question:

**If this wasn't my blog, would I want to visit it daily or weekly;  
do I enjoy the content I'm finding here?**

If your answer is "yes", that's a great starting point. But don't stop there. Ask your friends (or customers if you already have them) what they'd like to see as well. The more information you're able to take in, the better you'll be able to create a starting strategy for your blog. Your blog is the place you get to share things that are really focused on your customers' interests. It's a place that is less about selling and more about relationship building. The key is to review your content regularly to see what's working and what's not, and rework your strategy when necessary.

#### **In this chapter we talk about...**

- Building your blog strategy
- Creating content your customer cares about
- Setting goals and measuring the effectiveness of your content
- Staying on track with an editorial calendar

## **LET'S GET STARTED!**

# BRAND BLOG

A lot of emerging brands tend to overlook or rule out a brand blog for a number of reasons. They are often:

1. There's no time- I'm doing one million three hundred and forty seven things each day and keeping up with a blog just cannot take priority.
2. There's nothing to talk about- nobody cares about what I have to say, they just want to shop.
3. I tried it- I did create a blog but nobody paid attention and nothing happened. So I stopped.

Well, guess what, these are not valid excuses. There are so many brands out there, so many designers making beautiful things for people to buy that you absolutely have to find ways to create a community. Blogging is a perfect way to do that.

Think about this for a second. A blog...

- Provides a direct communication channel to stakeholders, customers, prospects
- Demonstrates your expertise, your talent, and the lifestyle of your brand
- Builds awareness, interest, and trust in your brand (so important!)
- Enables you to write the articles that you wish were written about you
- Gives you a place to feature media, bloggers, stylists, and models in order to build relationships
- Improves your SEO (search engine optimization) and domain authority through article keywords, links, and backlinks
- Offers you a creative outlet and a fun place to build your brand

Creating a blog and updating often (along with having an already strong web and social media presence) is a solid way to achieve customer loyalty and ensure you stand out as something special in a crowd of ambitious designers.

The more you can tell your customers about who you are, what you stand for, and how those things relate to them, the more you build trust. This leads to them really appreciating all that your brand has to offer.

Remember, publishing is no longer just in the hands of magazines and newspapers; brands have the opportunity to provide valuable, entertaining, and informative content to consumers through blogs.

## CREATING A BLOG STRATEGY

Like anything else in business, you have to start with a strategy when it comes to blogging. Without a direction, ideas, focus, and goals, your blogging will never bring you the results you want.

Remember that you can *and will* adjust your strategy as your brand grows, so don't feel pressure to make it absolutely perfect right off the bat.

Something that you must remember as you build your blog strategy is...

**Your blog strategy is dependent on your marketing/business goals so it's important to ensure your content strategy for your blog is in line with those goals.**

Then, whether you have a one person team or a five hundred person team, you need to do a few things to make sure that you're putting out valuable content:



- Evaluate what your competition is putting out for content and what content buckets they are focused on. Is it lifestyle content, industry content, sales content? What mix?
- Evaluate what your audience is clicking on, what they spend most of their time consuming, and what keywords drive them to your website.
- Where are the gaps? Fill them in.
- Determine the 2 to 4 kinds of content your brand will focus on and try it. This will help you to learn and optimize the content as needed.
- Always make sure your content is optimized for SEO in order to drive traffic to the blog.

## Creating Content

Coming up with content ideas can seem tough, it takes time and time is something you're already short on. But it really isn't as difficult you may think.

The smartest thing you can do for yourself when developing a content plan is to listen. Whether it's your customers or the customers of your competitors, pay attention to what they are saying.

Are they offering feedback, giving constructive criticism, or asking questions about fit, production processes, shipping, packaging, colors, styling or any other aspect of the product or business?

Are they complaining on social media about something in their life or wardrobe that is missing or they wish existed?

The more you make it a habit to listen (and record what you're hearing), the easier it will be to create content that your customer cares about.

The cool thing about blogs is that the comment section makes them interactive. So once you've gotten things started with your

blog, you'll be able to listen through it as a means of improving it! Giving your customers the opportunity to talk to you directly about what they love and what they would like to see improvements on is the best way to focus your energy in the right direction.

Knowing you're listening to what they have to say provides your customers with a great sense of satisfaction and the perfect reason to continue to do business with you.

### **Here are 10 kinds of content you should consider for your blog**

**Tell a Story About Your Brand:** Who are you? What's your background? What makes your business different from other designers and retailers? The more customers feel they can relate to your struggles or successes, the more apt they are to form a connection with you and want to support you along the way.

You could make your story into a weekly series, for example, something for aspiring retailers or students studying fashion to keep them up to date. Leave out the business jargon and keep it lively though. Customers aren't interested in reading your business plan, they want a voice they can connect to.

**Tell the Story of Your Products:** Giving your customers insight and understanding about the merchandise you carry and the story behind the garments gets people excited to shop. Choosing an item and writing a quick description about its origin and materials and talking about why you think it's perfect for your customer really assists in building a personal relationship with your clients as they're left feeling like you truly care about their needs.

**Show People What Happens Behind the Scenes:** With celebrities tweeting live details from photo shoots and fashion bloggers Instagramming from behind the curtain at fashion shows, things that were off limits or not available to the general public as few as ten years ago are now making headlines. And internet savvy, fashion connoisseurs can't get enough of the VIP access.

Make this work for your business by blogging about where your travels may take you. What happens while you're on a sourcing trip? Can you describe a showroom experience? Do you have a studio renovation planned for the new year? While it may be "all in a days work" for you, customers love when they feel like they're "in the know" about what's happening behind the scenes.

**Team Member Spotlights:** Showing off the amazing people who help make your business a success, is a great way to build a community around your brand. It shows off more personalities than just yours and gives your customers a look at who's on the other side of the computer.

It's also a great platform for you to celebrate employee milestones and success stories. A simple "thank you" takes on a whole new meaning when it's out there for the world to see.

**Styled Looks:** Showing people how to wear your work is always a good idea. There may be a piece she loves but can't quite figure out how to work into what she has in her closet. Show her.

**Announce Special Events or Promotions for Blog Readers Only:** Readers will be excited to subscribe to your blog when they realize the potential of being invited to 'blog follower only' parties and

events, or when they'll have advanced notice of an annual sale that they can preview before anyone else.

**Photos:** Sometimes, a picture is worth 7 hundred thousand words. If you're having an extra busy week or just can't find the words to pull together a full written post, add interesting photos that relate to your business, your brand, or even general interest things like your city. People respond when they're visually stimulated. Use your blog to inspire.

## SETTING MEASURABLE GOALS

There's no point in starting a brand blog if you're not measuring the success of the blog. You need to set goals, measure those goals, and then make changes when something just isn't working.

Start by asking yourself a few questions:

### **1. What is the purpose of your blog?**

- What kind of focus will you have?
- Do you want to boost visibility?
- Do you want to increase sales?
- Do you want to create relationships?
- Do you want to highlight your brand expertise and credibility?

### **2. How will you measure the success of your blog?**

- Set goals for your blog as a whole over a period of time
  - a) Increase sales by 25%
  - b) Increase mailing list by 500
  - c) Increase social mentions by 30%

- Set measurable goals for your individual posts
  - a) Sell 3 pieces
  - b) 12 new mailing list sign ups
  - c) 15 new social mentions
  - d) Stick to one call to action for each blog post

By laying out specific expectations, you are not only measuring what needs to be changed or adjusted but you're better able to see the little successes, which keeps you motivated to continue!

## Creating an Editorial Calendar

There's no better way to stay on top of your blogging efforts than to create an editorial calendar. A calendar helps you plan, visualize what kind of content is being posted when, and remind you of your deadlines.

If you take a few hours at the beginning of each month to the plan out the month's content, and maybe even write and schedule it, you will find yourself much less overwhelmed by the concept of maintaining an active blog.

*Here's how to create an editorial calendar for your blog*

**Choose a Format-** Decide which format would be best for ease of use. Remember that though it may be just you right now, the goal is to eventually have help in your business, so create something that is clean and easy to read and navigate. It can be as simple as a Google spreadsheet, which makes it easy for multiple people to view and edit and have different admin privileges.

**Schedule Topics Ahead-** It is a good idea to plan out at least 1 to 3 months ahead with evergreen topics (topics that are not timely but instead stay relevant for a long time) and allow room for real time topics that pop up due to current events, news, and experiences.

**Plan Deadlines-** Your brand's editorial calendar should also include due dates (even if that's just for yourself!), review dates, publish dates, and social media dates to spread the word. By including this information in your editorial calendar you remain focused and know what needs to happen and when.

**Collect Keywords, Tags, and Sources-** In addition to having your topics laid out, it can be helpful to have keywords and tags listed in your spreadsheet. That gives you something to consider incorporating into post content for optimal search results.

**Set Aside Time-** Most important is to remember to give yourself enough time to actually write, allow yourself to review, and to revise where necessary. If you're dealing with guest bloggers, it's especially important to make sure to give them enough time to create.

## CHAPTER 5

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Your blog is a way to connect with your customers and build brand loyalty.
- Create a blog strategy in order to get the most out of your efforts.
- Though it may not seem like it, there are endless possibilities for blog topics that will resonate with your customer; you just have to listen.
- Remember that blogging is part of your overall marketing strategy so make sure your strategy reflects your business marketing goals.
- Set specific goals for each kind of content you create and make sure that you measure those goals to see what's working.
- Strategies and tactics are never set in stone; always feel comfortable adjusting and tweaking your ideas as you learn more about your customer.
- The best way to stay on track with your blogging is to create an editorial calendar; that way you can plan and prepare content early and schedule it for later in the month.

# TAKE ACTION!

Now that you've learned what goes into making a killer blog for your brand, here are ways to take action in your business...

## ACTION STEP 1

### *Ask yourself...*

- What are my marketing goals and how does my log fit into them?
- What kind of content do I think my customers would enjoy?
- What would I like to accomplish with each type of content I create?

## ACTION STEP 2

### *Create...*

- A strategy that specifically states what kind of content you will create, how often you will create it, and what goals will be measured.
- A place to capture information, feedback, questions, ideas, constructive criticism, and other communication from your customers that can be turned into blog posts
- A simple editorial calendar where you list when you'll publish each piece of content in the upcoming month.
- Once you have these things laid out, you'll be all set to start creating the incredible content that will connect with your customer and build a loyal community.



# CHAPTER 6

SEO TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES

**W**ithout putting some time and attention into SEO (Search Engine Optimization) for your ecommerce website, you'll never see the growth and sales results you want. SEO can seem intimidating and “techie” and like something we just don't want to think about. But that outlook is fatal. When you're building an ecommerce website, the success of the website is based on getting people there. If they don't know who you are, how are you going to make any sales?

While growing brand awareness is something you can do offline, you also need to be doing it online. Because you're just one person or a small team, so building your brand exclusively offline does not scale. So do your SEO due diligence. Ask yourself:

**What keywords and phrases best describe my products and my brand as a whole? What would people be searching for if they were looking for the kinds of things I have to offer?**

Once you feel that you have a solid handle on your brand and your customer identity, it's time to think about how that translates to your website.

With a well-planned SEO strategy, you will greatly increase your brand awareness and {hopefully!} sales. It's a key element in your overall webs strategy.

#### **In this chapter we talk about...**

- What SEO actually is
- Choosing and using keywords and phrases
- Optimizing your website for SEO
- Creating content to improve SEO
- Measuring your success

**LET'S GET STARTED!**

# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Most business owners these days have heard of SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and know that it's the key to getting your website to rank highly in search engines. By following the guidelines and understanding the algorithms that search engines use to rank all websites for relevance, you can help to influence your rankings.

However, SEO encompasses more than just making changes to your website to improve your rankings. It's also about figuring out what to do with your visitors once they're on your site. So things like optimization conversion, user interface design, public relations, customer satisfaction and more, also play a role in modern SEO.

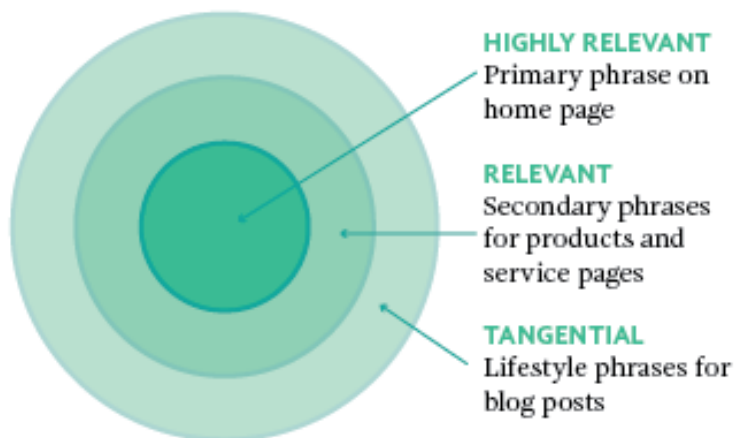
While it can seem overwhelming and at times confusing, it's something that can't be ignored if you hope to have a successful and effective website, especially when you consider that your competitors won't be ignoring it.

While not everyone can afford to hire an SEO expert, there are some basic things you can do that will help make sure your brand doesn't get left behind.

## THE FOLLOWING IS AN SEO CHECKLIST FOR BOTH YOU AND YOUR WEBSITE DEVELOPER TO FOLLOW.

### **Keyword Phrases**

The first thing you need to do is determine the primary and supporting phrases that you want to rank for.



**Step One: Brainstorm a list of keyword phrases that are commonly associated with your product and brand.**

When choosing your phrases, don't be too broad. Chances are good you'll never rank high for a word like handbag or clutch, because there is just too much competition. Leave that to companies like Nordstrom and Saks. Instead, be more specific, like eco-friendly handbags instead of just handbags. Being more specific with your keywords will help you better target your specific audience too.

Your primary keyword will be used on several pages throughout your site, so it should be something that applies to your brand. This probably will not be your business name. You will likely already rank for your business name, but you need to rank for things that people will search for if they don't know about your business.

You also want to identify alternate phrases that branch out from your original idea, like try using environmentally conscious rather than eco-friendly. Or if you're a jewelry designer, you could try something like modern luxury accessories, rather than luxury jewelry.

You may also want to consider modifiers like geographic location (if it applies), price points, or style, to expand your results, like San Francisco Vegan handbags.

Make sure you focus on words and phrases that your customer will use if they're searching for your product, not industry jargon that they don't know. A phrase like "crepe de chine cut on the bias", means nothing to most consumers.

Your secondary keywords will be keywords that you want to target with your category pages and service pages. They may not be good for describing all of your products, but they'll be good for a specific group or category of your products.

Category pages tend to be some of the easiest pages to rank in search engines, and while these are likely to be ranking for secondary keywords, they can still prove quite valuable, so make sure you're picking good keywords when choosing your categories.

Finally, don't forget to keep your keywords in mind when choosing your product names. If you have a category page filled with products that all have a similar keyword, you're more likely to rank for that keyword.

## **Step Two: Assess the competition that exists for your chosen keywords**

You do this by using the Google Adwords Keyword Tool (you might need to create an account, or sign in with your gmail account, but it's free). Use this link, and select the option that says "Search for new keyword and ad group ideas". You can also use this for discovering keywords that you may not have thought of on your own.

You should grow comfortable with this tool as you'll want to use it regularly as you constantly look to choose new keywords for new products, categories, or blog posts.

## What would you like to do?

### ▼ Search for new keyword and ad group ideas

#### Enter one or more of the following:

Your product or service

San Francisco handbag designer, sustainable designer, eco-friendly handbags, eco-friendly fashion, vegan handbags

Your landing page

www.example.com/page

Your product category

Enter or select a product category ▼

#### Targeting ?

United States

English

Google

Negative keywords

#### Date range ?

Show avg. monthly searches for: Last 12 months

#### Customize your search ?

##### Keyword filters

##### Keyword options

Show broadly related ideas

Hide keywords in my account

Hide keywords in my plan

##### Keywords to include

Get ideas

Next you'll need to plug your key phrases into the tool, and hit search. Select the "Keyword Ideas" tab to see what kind of global monthly searches that phrase gets. And don't forget to scroll down to view their suggestions for alternative keyword phrases. You can find some great ideas there!

Ad group ideas		Keyword ideas				
				Download	Add all (805)	
Search terms		Avg. monthly searches ?	Competition ?	Suggested bid ?	Ad impr. share ?	Add to plan
vegan handbags		1,900	High	\$0.92	0%	»
eco-friendly handbags		260	High	\$1.29	0%	»
eco-friendly fashion		210	Medium	\$2.07	0%	»
sustainable designer		20	Medium	-	0%	»
san francisco handbag designer		-	-	-	-	»

While choosing your keyword phrases, be sure not to ignore that “competition” column. This gives you a rough indication of how much competition there is for that keyword phrase and how difficult it will be for you to rank well for that specific term. (Don’t worry about the bid or ad impr.share column. That’s for paid advertising.)

Go through this process a few times and pick out your Primary Keyword Phrase, as well as your supporting phrases.

### USING YOUR KEYWORD PHRASES FOR SEO

Once you’ve got your words and phrases researched and chosen, you will want to keep these phrases in mind at every stage of building your business, from picking your website name, to using them in the content on your website and social media.

You have to start to use these keywords in places of importance, like

- Page titles
- Header tags (H1 or H2 tags)
- Meta descriptions
- Image file names
- Image alt tags
- In your site content, and more

**The above list is one of the most important steps in your SEO effort.**

Page titles in particular are important for search engines and for users, because the page title will appear in the search results. Google understands that this is important and weighs it heavily in determining what your website is all about.

So, use page titles that will draw a customer's attention, but don't be too sales-y. Try to use these keywords phrases in your page titles, but also make sure you use unique and relevant page titles for each of your pages. If you can't logically use your primary or supporting keyword phrases in each page, use your keyword tool to look for phrases that will be helpful.

In addition to the page titles, make sure the keyword phrases are used in the page URL too. If a URL reads <http://example.com/san-francisco-vegan-purse.html>, it's going to be a lot better than a url with code, numbers, or other unreadable text showing as the URL. They're very common on the internet.

For example <http://example.com/shop/item.aspx?itemid=1068>

Just looking at that URL, a user would have no idea what the page is about, so neither will Google. Make sense?

## **Optimizing Your Website Images for SEO**

It's important to remember that when people search for a product or company, they won't just see links, they will see image results too.

So get those images on your site ranked highly! By properly naming, and providing the right descriptive alt tags for your image, you're helping Google understand what the content on your page is about, which will help improve the ranking for that page.

### **Important things to remember about your website images:**

Your images should be high quality and visually appealing. This might not sound like SEO, but it relates to conversion rates. If you



have poor quality images, people will think your company is not professional, and it will hurt your chances of gaining their trust... one of the most important factors of completing online sales.

Don't name your images with irrelevant words, numbers, dates or anything else that makes little to no sense. The names should describe your image, and should use relevant keywords. If you have a picture of a pink purse, name the picture something like hand-made-pink-purse.jpg. and keep your image file names to about 5 or 6 words maximum.

When you upload your images to your website, make sure that you add alt tags with relevant keywords. Most website platforms will offer an easy to find place to provide this information.

You can use different words in your alt tags if you like, and you have the opportunity to be more descriptive. You can expand to 10-12 words in your alt tags rather than just 5-6 in your image file name.

Don't forget to keep your image sizes small. We know, you want to show the detail, but if it takes too long for your image to load, you'll lose the customer. Not only that but Google knows your page load times and it will penalize you if you have a long load time. Not cool.

Finally, be sure to use the correct image format to properly keep the file size as small as possible. Photographs are usually best when saved as a .JPG, whereas logos, graphics, or other simple images are best saved as .PNG or .GIF

## CREATING YOUR WEBSITE CONTENT FOR SEO

Content is one of the most important parts of your SEO efforts. Creating useful and compelling content will likely have a greater SEO impact than all of the other tips here.

That's huge.

Without content, there is nothing for search engines to find and there is nothing for your customers to see and share.

Content is what will get people spreading the word about your website, and what will keep them coming back.

What counts as content? A lot of things. Pretty much everything we've discussed in this book! Here's a recap:

- Blog Posts
- Pictures
- Videos
- Infographics
- Informational Resources
- Tutorials
- Product Descriptions
- "About" page
- Forums
- Podcasts
- Ratings/Reviews

But remember, you don't want to create content just for the sake of it. Content needs to have a purpose.

## **Build a Blog**

We have an entire chapter (chapter 5) in this book dedicated to teaching you how to build a killer blog. That's because having a blog is one of the best ways to boost your SEO through content.

So let's talk a bit more about blogging from the SEO perspective.

Search engines want to see new content constantly. A stagnant website isn't going to attract anyone, and having an active blog is a way to connect with your customers, while also providing rich content to search engines.

When it comes to SEO, try to publish a new blog post a minimum of 1-2 times per week. The more you post, obviously, the better but being consistent is also important so don't overcommit.

Don't forget about all that keyword research you did. Use these keywords and phrases often in your posts, but make sure to use them naturally! Nothing is worse than reading a blog post that is so obviously created with SEO as the driving factor instead of writing for your customer.

If you use WordPress, use an SEO plugin like “**WordPress SEO**” by Yoast for your blog and make sure to fill out the required fields before publishing your post. This tool grades each post to tell you if you're forgetting any important SEO stuff when publishing a post.

Create an XML sitemap; it's easier than it sounds. It's a 1 page document with a list of every page on your website that helps the search engine to understand the structure of your site, and find all of your pages. There are free plugins, and free tools which you can install to do the job automatically. If you install a plugin, most will automatically update it every time you add a new page to your site.

## **Get Backlinks**

Backlinks are links to your websites, from other people's sites. It's one of the most important factors that search engines use to determine how important your website is. If no one is linking to your site, search engines will assume no one really cares about the content you're offering, and therefore they won't show your website when people are searching.

Not all backlinks are created equal though. If you get a link from a large website that has a strong reputation regarding fashion, it's far more valuable than, for instance, getting a link from an unknown blog about cupcakes, or something else irrelevant.

purple-leather-heels-with-strap.jpg



Edit Image

Caption

Alternative Text

purple leather 4 inch heel with ankle strap and buckle

Most inbound links are good, but you'll get far more credit if it's on subject, and even more if it's from a well-known site.

Getting valuable links is one of the most difficult aspects of SEO. There are different ways of approaching it, but make sure to do it in a genuine way. Don't simply send out unsolicited emails asking if people would please link back to your website.

One of the things that makes it difficult to obtain backlinks is, Google specifically wants it to happen organically. They don't want you to be able to game the system by getting links in a way that will inappropriately alter their rankings. It makes things more difficult, but it also keeps the game fair and gives you a chance.

*(Check out 10 Top Tips for Gaining Backlinks in the Appendix.)*

## Use Social Media Regularly

Having an active presence on social media sites is very important for SEO. Social platforms will relay your significance and influence to search engines.

This doesn't mean that you have to run out and join every possible platform. Start with one or two and build as you grow. It's better to run one effective social media platform than have three or four that you are never really updating.

YouTube and Google+ are properties of Google and therefore hold a lot of weight in SEO. Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Vimeo, and LinkedIn all have a major impact as well.

Also, if they're right for your brand, consider niche-specific social platforms like Polyvore.

## **Pay Attention to Website Speed**

The speed of your website is important. If it takes too long for images or pages to load, it will have a negative impact on your SEO.

Make sure your images are properly sized and compressed with Photoshop, or another image program. And as we mentioned in the image section, make sure you use the correct image format.

You also want to implement a caching system. This allows frequent users of your website to avoid having to reload the entire website each time they visit. For example, instead of having to download your logo every time they visit your website (which never changes), a copy of that graphic is stored on the visitors computer, saving the time it takes to download that graphic. There are plugins for this, such as **W3 Total Cache** for WordPress.

Remove unnecessary plugins, or poorly optimized plugins, you don't need them slowing down your website. If you're using WordPress, try installing the plugin **P3 - Plugin Performance Profiler** and use it to measure the speed and resources of all of your other plugins (after you run the test, you can disable the P3 plugin).

Consider implementing a Content Delivery Network (CDN). This is a service that a 3<sup>rd</sup> party will offer where they host copies of your files on multiple servers around the world. This is helpful because if your website is hosted on a server in California, and someone in London visits your website, typically they'll have to download the data all the way from California, which takes a lot longer than downloading it from a local server in London. A CDN automatically copies your files to a server in London so your customers there will be able to view your website a lot faster.

This is actually fairly simple to set up. A popular and affordable CDN service to check out is [MaxCDN.com](https://MaxCDN.com).

## MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS WITH GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Create a Google Analytics account and start measuring your success. This is a crucial step! Google Analytics provides an unbelievable amount of metrics on your website visitors for free. Without actively monitoring this information, there is no way to know how effective your efforts are.

This is a very in-depth subject itself, and there are entire courses dedicated to this subject of using Google Analytics, but at the bare minimum, create an account, and post your tracking code to your website so you can start recording the information about your customers.

All website platforms should give you a straightforward and easy way to insert your tracking code into your website. In some platforms it'll be managed with your theme settings, but you can also just download a Google Analytics plugin to help you with this if needed.

Once you've got this installed, you can see which pages are performing well, where your website visits are coming from, demographic and location information about your customers, your KPIs and much more.

If you have an online business, this is one of the most important tools you can have to measure your success. Without it, you're flying blind.

## Keep Going

There are many more things that you can do to increase the probability that your site will rank well in search engines, but this covers many of the basics of SEO and will go a long way towards helping you succeed.

**You can keep tabs on your specific keyword results by using one of these tools:**

- <http://tools.seobook.com/firefox/rank-checker/>
- <http://www.mikes-marketing-tools.com/ranking-reports/>
- <http://raventools.com/>
- <http://moz.com>

Keep track of where you stand, and watch your results grow.

Remember, SEO is not a one-time effort. If anyone could make these changes and see overnight success, everyone would. This takes time and persistence. It's a long term project.

Also keep in mind that the algorithm that search engines use to rate websites changes regularly. Try to keep up with major changes by doing some research once in a while.

Keep working on it... especially the link building, and in several months you will start to notice an improvement in your website traffic.

## CHAPTER 6

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- An SEO strategy is an important element of ecommerce success. It deserves time and attention in order to do its job properly.
- Spend the time creating a list of your desired keywords and phrases.
- Analyze your list for competition and adjust as necessary.
- Don't choose vague keywords and phrases to focus on; you can't go up against the big guys (Nordstrom), it's better to be more specific.
- Use your keywords and phrases in every area of your business; from blog posts to image alt tags.
- Make sure to optimize all the images on your website for SEO by doing things like resizing, properly naming, and saving in the correct format.
- All of the content on your website needs to be optimized for SEO, not just your images. Remember that having a blog, getting backlinks, and actively using social media all have an impact on the effectiveness of your SEO efforts.
- Nothing you do in your SEO efforts {or any business efforts, really} will matter if you're not measuring your success. Google Analytics is your friend.



# TAKE ACTION!

Now that you've learned what goes into building a strong foundation for a search engine optimized website, here are ways to take action in your business...

## ACTION STEP 1

*Have you...*

- Made list of keywords and phrases about your products and your brand?
- Researched your chosen words and analyzed the competition?
- Implemented these words and phrases into every aspect of your website?

## ACTION STEP 2

*Does your website have...*

- High quality images that demonstrate the level of professionalism in your business?
- Image names and alt tags that reflect your keywords and phrases?
- Small image sizes in the proper format that will not slow down the speed of your site?
- An active blog with keywords and phrases naturally worked into titles and headers?
- An SEO plugin for your blog that will tell you when you haven't quite reached your SEO potential for a post?

- A content plan that includes blogs, video, reviews, and ratings for improved SEO?
- A plan for gaining reputable backlinks? This most often falls into your PR plan and getting blogs and online magazines to write about and link back to our website.
- Links out to your very active social media platforms?
- A caching system plugin to improve the speed of your website?
- How about a CDN, which also greatly increases the speed of your website?
- A Google Analytics account in order to properly track and measure your efforts?

If your answer to any of the above is “No”, then add those tasks to your marketing to-do list and make them a priority!

# KICK ASS INSIGHTS AND EXPERT TOP TIPS

YOU KNOW, ALL KINDS OF TIPS AND GUIDANCE  
FROM A GROUP OF INDUSTRY EXPERTS FOR BUILDING  
A WEBSITE THAT SELLS

# 5 TOP TIPS FOR CREATING YOUR BOOTSTRAPPED WEBSITE BUDGET

**S**tarting off with a budget in mind can be scary, especially when you are strapped for cash and looking to bootstrap your way through your first couple years as a new brand.

So if you decided that rather than hiring a professional website designer, you will bootstrap your way to building your site, here are ten tips for creating your budget.

If you are just starting out, meaning season 0 or season 1, you have picked up this book at the right time. It's always better to start off with a strong plan.

1. It's hard to know what you don't know. Start with a personal analysis of your own budget and build from there. If you know you can safely put aside \$500 a month to invest on your business then that gives you \$6,000 for the year.
2. Think about what your business will be like in the next year and a half to two years. Do you anticipate focusing heavily on direct to consumer sales? Do you envision having an active blog? Do you think there is a chance that you could want a community component to your website? If you anticipate that your business is heading in these directions, invest in a platform and shopping cart that will support your growth.
3. Compare the platforms in the checklist below to understand the pricing structure around each of these popular options.

## The Starting Off Check List

WooCommerce (Wordpress shopping cart)

- Domain Name: \$12.99
- Setting up your WooCommerce or other API for ecommerce

Shopify (can be added to a Wordpress website)

- Domain Name: \$12.99
- Monthly Fee: \$29- \$179 per month + Standard % and \$ on each item sold for CC processing

Squarespace (can be added to a Wordpress website)

- Domain Name: \$12.99
- Monthly Fee: \$8- \$24 per month + Standard % and \$ on each item sold for CC processing

Bigcommerce

- Domain Name: \$12.99
- Monthly Fee: \$30- \$200 per month + Standard % and \$ on each item sold for CC processing

Wix

- Domain Name: \$12.99
- Monthly Fee: \$12- \$16 per month + Standard % and \$ on each item sold for CC processing

4. Take into account the following additional costs for building a website that sells.

- Shipping Costs: research your shipping providers, can you get a good rate? This is a cost that often times get over-

looked in the beginning. Are you able to offer free shipping or flat rate shipping? Whatever the cost, it needs to be factored into the bigger picture.

- Returns: Build in a 5% return rate monthly, just to pad in your operating costs.
- Paypal + Credit Card Fees: this will depend on how many units you are selling, so create sales projections and factor in the processing fees.
- Website Hosting Fees: This is sometimes just one lump sum each year, or can be broken down to monthly payments. You often save if you can manage fronting the yearly fee, it's worth it.
- Your Branded Packaging: Things like tissue paper, ribbons, stickers, insert postcards, thank you notes, and boxes is how you create your branded customer experience. Don't forget to factor this into your budget.
- Inventory: Let's not forget this all important cost. Whether you are selling your own product, buying wholesale or drop-shipping you need to take inventory costs into account.

5. Photos and Copywriting: These are important costs for the development of a website. The cost can range from \$500 to \$10,000 and above. Before you jump into building your website, research photographers and possible copywriters and factor in their costs.

**Bonus Tip! (And perhaps the most important of all)**

**Don't spend a dollar without thinking about where its going  
and what it will do for your business.**

# 12 TOP TIPS FOR MERCHANDISING YOUR FASHION ECOMMERCE WEBSITE

**M**erchandising your website is important, you may not have a collection of 20 styles, but anything you can do to organize your collections and make it easier for your customers to find what they're looking for, is a great thing.

1. Keep your category pages to a minimum 5 styles.
2. If you have 5 or fewer styles when launching then stick to 3 product images per row, and make them large images. This way it will extend to two rows.
3. If you have only a few styles but they come in multiple colors, show them. Customers want to see all the options they have.
4. Always think about how your customer will want to shop.
5. Create fun categories (in addition to the basic categories) like :Sweet & Simple, Comfy & Cozy, Party Time, Favorite Holiday Gifts. This is where you can push forward your points of view and curate a more editorialized space for your products.
6. Offering items within a certain price point? Gifts under \$100 is always a good idea to have if it's within your brand strategy.
7. Best Sellers. Have you sold certain products from your brand over and over again? It's always great to showcase the products that do well.
8. Sale Section. Do you have markdowns? Products that are going to be on sale for a limited period of time? This is where you

can house them. It makes more sense to keep your sale items in their own category than to merchandise them with products on the regular merchandise pages.

9. Add a prominent “view all” to each category page if you have more the 2 pages of products. There is fatigue if you have to click through more than 3 pages.
10. Categories are to be used to help customers find your products, so don’t create too many just for the sake of it.
11. Color Filter. Unless you have a wide variety of products on your site, don’t bother adding this.
12. If you prefer to sell by collection, not product category, be consistent and list the names of the collection on the side bar.



# 6 TOP TIPS FOR COLLECTING AWESOME TESTIMONIALS FOR YOUR FASHION BUSINESS

**I**t may sound obvious, but recommendations can be an absolute goldmine for your fashion business. There are very few things that can have as much impact on a sale as reading recommendations and approvals from peers. Think about it, Amazon built its empire with reviews and testimonials as a major factor.

As powerful as testimonials can be, they only work if you actually display them, right? When someone says something great about your brand or collection, why are you not putting it on full display?

Collecting testimonials is easier than you might expect. Here's how:

- 1. Ask for them.** That's right. It can be that easy. Ask members of your family (those who don't share your last name!) and your friends who wear your collection to share what they love most about it. The key is to ask them to be as specific as possible. What exactly do they love about it and why? Rather than saying something like *"Brand X is so beautiful! I love to wear my Y dress on Saturday nights out!"* Try to get something like: *"My Y dress from Brand X is the perfect silhouette for accentuating my curves. It's my 'confidence' dress every time I wear it!"* See how one is vague and not too exciting, while the other tells potential customers exactly why the

dress rocks. The great thing about tapping into friends and family is you can ask them to be specific. You can't really do that with strangers.

2. **Twitter Screenshots.** Set up a feed on twitter for your brand name and monitor it regularly. Whenever someone says something awesome about your brand or collection, screenshot it! What a perfect testimonial- there's a picture, a name, and a statement all displayed in a neat little box.
3. **Instagram Love.** Set up a hashtag for your brand and search regularly to see if customers are snapping pictures of themselves in your pieces from your collection. Again, take a screenshot. There's nothing like someone loving your stuff so much that they feel the need to take pictures of how good they look and feel, right?!
4. **Surveys.** Consider sending out a survey to your customers every now and then (don't overdo it!) Ask them if they mind sharing their thoughts on your pieces. Maybe offer a discount on future purchases for doing so. Surveys are a great way to not just collect testimonials but also collect valuable criticism and other feedback.
5. **Follow up with Customers.** Wait for a little while after a purchase is made and then follow up with the customer. Ask her how she likes the new piece and if she's been getting a lot of use out of it.
6. **Blog Comments.** Blogs are a great way to connect with your customers. As your blog grows, you will notice that suddenly your readers start to come out of the woodwork, sharing opinions, ideas, feedback, and praise within the comments. This is awesome! Don't forget to capture these comments. They are absolutely testimonials that should be shared.

A good tip is to create a folder on your desktop and store them, as they come along so you have easy access. Once you have a nice collection compiled, consider adding a page to your site to show it all off.

Another tip. Keep in mind that if any of your testimonials are item specific (not just about your brand in general), you want to slap that bit of praise right there on the product purchase page, not just the “testimonial” page.

# 6 TOP TIPS FOR INCREASING SEO THROUGH QUALITY CONTENT

**T**he best possible thing you can do to increase the probability of growing brand awareness, website traffic, and eventually sales, is to create quality content.

Follow the below guidelines to see whether your content is reaching its full SEO potential. If not, it's time to review your content strategy and update it to work harder for you.

- 1. User Experience** – Create content to enhance the experience of your visitors. Don't create something just to create it. Ask yourself, what will this do to improve the experience my potential and current customers have when visiting my website.
- 2. Keep users engaged** – Create content to keep users interested in your site and keep them there longer. What can you create that will get them to spend more time on your website? Videos? Podcasts? Styling Tips?
- 3. Ask yourself, are users sharing my content?** – This is a metric that Google can and does measure. Highly shared content does better in Google search rankings.
- 4. Interaction** – Are you getting comments in your blogs? This is another ranking factor for search rankings. Not only does it show that your content is interesting, but it keeps the site fresh, and keeps commenting participants coming back to stay involved in the conversation.

5. **Are you linking to quality websites within your content? Being** – a part of the internet means linking from your site to other quality websites. You don't want to overdo-it with links, but it's important to have some. And Google can tell how engaging your links are and where you're linking, so choose wisely.
6. **Avoid over-optimizing content** – Target keywords naturally. Don't create content just for the sake of targeting a keyword. Don't stress about putting your exact keyword in your content. If your primary keyword is eco-friendly clothing, feel free to use that phrase out of order, like our clothing is eco-friendly. If you use the specific keyword/key phrase too rigidly, your readers will know it, and so will search engines.

# 12 TOP TIPS FOR GAINING BACKLINKS TO YOUR WEBSITE

1. If the visitors you get are seeing great content on your website that they want to share, this will help spread the word. If you have nothing worth sharing, you're going to have a tough time getting links. While this is by no means a quick method for building backlinks, it's a solid long term approach to building success.
2. Next, seek out websites that welcome contributing writers and share your insights on a topic related to your niche. (Accessories, Eco-Design, Small Business Development, etc.). They will often include a snippet about you and include your website.
3. Another way to gain backlinks is to pitch to your products to blogs that fit your aesthetic. But be sure to follow [these guidelines](#) when submitting the pitch.
4. Work with a PR company. Good publicists will have relationships with those well known, established companies that, if you can get a link from them, it'll be a very valuable link. While this is not a free option, it's often one of the best options to getting the high value backlinks.
5. Have a contest – There are many ways to go with this, but offer something you make as a prize. It can be for sharing your site, for being active on your site, or on a social media platform. Get creative and ask people to spread the word about the contest.
6. Become active in forums and very selectively leave links to relevant content on your site. It is extremely important to re-

member that this should not be overdone and you should only leave a link if it is truly helpful or specifically answering a question or request.

7. This same thing can be applied to blog commenting. Since you're already pitching to blogs, you should be actively commenting and engaging on them. But again, don't be spam-y.
8. See where your competitors have managed to get links. Some websites like Moz.com provide tools that allow you to see all of the incoming links that your competitors have, and you can use this as a great starting point to see where you might also be able to get links.
9. Use internal links. While these have less value than external links, internal links still have value. As you build your blog, reference past posts and link to them when writing new posts.
10. Use Social Media to help get the word out about what you're doing. The more people who know about you, the better chances you have of getting backlinks. This is a more passive approach, but it's still important.
11. Avoid paid links, link exchanges, or anything else that might provide you links unnaturally, or you might find yourself penalized, or removed from Google entirely.
12. One of the things that makes it difficult to obtain backlinks is that Google specifically wants it to happen organically. They don't want you to be able to game the system by getting links in a way that will inappropriately alter their rankings. It makes things more difficult, but it also keeps the game fair and gives you a chance.

# EXPERTS INTERVIEWS



# EXPERT INTERVIEW:

## ANSHEY BHATIA, FOUNDER OF VERBAL + VISUAL

A well designed website is an essential element of a successful fashion business. Whether you're designing it in house or hiring an agency to design it for you, it's important to know what you should be thinking about, the questions you should ask, and best practices.

With that in mind, we asked Anshey to share his expert insight on essential elements of a well made website.

### **When a designer is creating a website, what are the questions they need to be able to answer before starting?**

Here are some key questions we always ask:

- Who is your target audience?
- What kind of budget do you have specifically for the website, and also for marketing?
- Do you have great content (photography and copy) ready, or is that something we'll need to handle?
- What kind of resources do you have internally, in order to review statistics, manage orders, update site content, etc
- Do you have all of your branding together?
- Who handles your marketing, both online and offline, and how do you promote the brand in general?

Many of the questions we need our clients to answer are not just specific to building a website, they are focused on using the eCommerce site as a platform for your business.

So many of the questions are business-centric and related to your vision, your operations and your resources, and you as the business owner need to be able to handle those questions.

If you've ever watched Shark Tank, imagine yourself in the position of pitching your business. If you can't answer any question thrown at you from a business perspective, you're not going to do well.

### **What questions do you think a brand should be asking a web designer before hiring them?**

You should be asking us (and any vendor) about things like:

- What resources we have on staff
- Our experience within the industry
- Preferred styles for the design side of things
- eCommerce platforms of choice and why
- How they can manage the site following launch
- What if something breaks following launch and how will it be covered, etc.

That's specifically for the site, then on the operations side you should be asking:

- About order fulfillment and how that will be done internally
- How will they track orders, process them and see the overall health of the eCommerce site

Beyond that, you should make sure that the site will work well from a marketing side: sharing products via social networks, sharing

favorite lists, logging in with Facebook, email sign ups and integrations, discount code integration, etc.

Lastly, from a budget side, ask

- How can we make something that works well with your desired budget range
- How can it fit into your company, from a branding side, an operations side, and a marketing side, in relation to your resources on hand?

### **What are the three most important components of an e-commerce website?**

There's definitely a lot more than 3, but if I had to pick I'd say:

- Customer ease of viewing and finding products
- Customer ease of checkout
- Administration management (order fulfillment, stats tracking, etc.).

You want to make it easy for people to find it, look at it, and buy it within a few short minutes.

If you don't lead them into buying right away, they will lose interest and go somewhere else. If you make it hard to buy in any way shape or form, you will lose the sale. Period.

And if you can't handle the order fulfillment process on your own end, no one else will buy from you when they hear about someone else's poor experience on the site.

## EXPERT INTERVIEW:

GENEVIEVE MORGANSTERN,  
CO-FOUNDER OF SADIE.CO

**A**s a fashion business owner, there are very few things as important to your marketing and sales arsenal as an aesthetically beautiful and well-made website.

**There are a lot of important components to a well made website:**

- a great design with a clean layout that really lets your work pop
- top notch photography that shows off your work in its best possible light
- an experience that pulls your potential customers from exploring your homepage to clicking that “add to shopping bag” button on your product page
- a fully functioning and easy-to-use shopping cart system so you can rack in those sales without a hiccup

That’s a lot to make sure of. As if you don’t already have plenty to do to get your business on a path to growth.

Here we sit down with Genienvie Morganstern, co-founder of Sadie to hear her expert tips on building a website that sells.

## **What are some of the biggest marketing or branding mistakes you see brands make when they're starting out?**

The biggest marketing mistake that brands make is not investing in the things that really matter. Early on their brand and how they are portraying themselves to the world is crucial.

Many designers will get someone to build their website and shoot their photography for free, or just “throw something up that’ll work for now” and end up with something that does more harm than good. You can always tweak and make changes as you go, but you can’t change a first impression.

## **When it comes to building a website, what are some things that emerging brands must consider before clicking that “make live” button?**

There are a couple things, the main one is a lot of designers come in with great ideas for their website, but they forget that the number one thing their site needs to do is get people to shop and click buy!

We also see a lot of people trying to piecemeal things together, their images don’t portray their products well, they are using a website platform that’s not really designed for eCommerce, and then adding in a random cart and payment processor, and overall it equates to a bad experience and more hassle to deal with.

Finally, we see a lot of people biting off more than they can chew, sometimes people are using technology that is way too much, and they have to spend a lot of time and money working with website developers just to do simple tasks on their site. Websites really aren’t that hard, unless you make it hard!

**What kind of photography should a new designer absolutely invest in prior to launching either their brand or a new collection? Can you tell us why?**

Get good quality professional product photography, hands down this is the best investment a new designer on a budget can make because product photography is selling photography!

Great product photography alone can go a long way. The same images can be used over and over for line sheets, catalogs, and ads. You can use them on 3rd party sites like Amazon, Svvply, Etsy, Pinterest and Polyvore, and give them to bloggers and journalists, other re-sellers and showrooms.

# EXPERT INTERVIEW:

## JIM POWELL, FOUNDER OF GADABOUT DIGITAL

### **Can you briefly define SEO in real people words?**

SEO technically stands for Search Engine Optimization. But in real words, it's about helping Google (and other search engines) to understand what the content is on your site, and to convince Google that your site is worth showing to people when they are searching for a product. These days SEO also expands into developing ideas for content, conversion techniques, site speed, and more, because once you get the visitors to your site, you need to turn visits into sales.

The fundamental idea is getting Google to put you at the top of the list when someone searches for a product you sell (not when someone searches for your company name because no one searches for that except you).

### **What are the most important things a fashion designer with an ecommerce website needs to understand about SEO?**

I've seen far too many people starting a business that believe in that line "If you build it, they will come". Unfortunately these days that just doesn't cut it. Anyone can put together a great website and sell a great product, and thousands do. But if you want to stand out, you have to do far more than that. You need to draw visitors, and that's the challenge. If you want people to actually find you, you need to market your site.

That's what SEO is really about, it's marketing. It certainly shouldn't be your entire marketing plan, but it's a critical part of it. An effective SEO company will work with you, your marketing team, your social media team, your PR team, and others to help you discover effective ways to draw visitors to your site. Just like your marketing strategy, your SEO strategy should evolve with your company as it grows.

Ultimately, incoming links is one of the biggest factors that Google uses to rank your website. No matter how well your website is optimized, people won't find your site if you don't get links pointing to it from other sites. That's the basic idea behind how Google works. The more sites that it sees linking to your site, the more Google understands there is a value in your site's content, and it understands other people will want to see it too.

Getting an incoming link from another site has 2 benefits. First, is the short term benefit of people visiting the link and exposing your site to new visitors. But the second benefit is long term, and that's that Google sees that someone thinks your site is important enough to link to. The more links it sees linking to your site, even if they're old links, the more authority it assigns to your website. So over time, you can continue to gather links, and although people might not be clicking that link anymore, Google still sees it, so it's still of value to you.

### **Product Pages are kind of a big deal, right? What must absolutely be addressed in the product pages of an ecommerce website?**

Ideally, you will want a good product name and description that both contain your target word or phrase. You will also want to be sure that phrase appears in the URL for the product page and the main header tag. But, you don't want to write your product names and des-



criptions only with SEO in mind. Websites are for people, not search engines, so write the content for people. Write something interesting. It'll go further towards making sales for you than a perfectly optimized product description will. Also, Google will penalize you if it thinks you're writing content for a search engine. It doesn't want to see that, and it's getting pretty good at figuring out who you're writing for.

As important as product pages are, your category pages are just as important for SEO, if not more. For example, try searching for something like "black wedding shoes" in Google. The top results won't be a page with one product. It's going to be a category page that shows lots of products that fit the same description. It's practically impossible to rank a product page, unless it's an extremely unique product.

Did you also notice that everyone on the first page for that search was a big company? That's because they have big marketing departments, with massive PR efforts, huge social media campaigns, and they have the budgets to back it all up. That's going to make it extremely difficult for a small or mid sized company to ever rank on the first page for anything as broad as "black wedding shoes".

That's not to say it's impossible, but you need to understand your goals, and ranking for broad words/phrases shouldn't be one. Don't start working with an SEO company who tells you anything about "first page guaranteed". It's a lie, so don't be fooled by it. It takes a long concentrated effort to rank on the 1st page for any phrases aside from your business name. And until you are as big as Nordstrom, you probably won't outrank them for something like "black wedding shoes"

The good news is that's not actually what most people are searching for anyway. These days people are getting far more specific with their searches. That means, instead of searching for "black wedding shoes", far more people are searching for things like "high end black wedding shoes with straps and silver buckles".

Why is this important? Because big companies aren't bothering to optimize for those long phrases. They're too broad, and there are too many variations. Also, someone like Nordstrom has too many products to be too specific. This is your opportunity to get some traffic too.

This is also where category pages come into play. Don't be too generic with your category page titles. Sure, far fewer people are searching for "high end black wedding shoes", than simply "black wedding shoes", but ultimately, "black wedding shoes" isn't really narrowing down your target audience anyway. There are many different kinds of black wedding shoes. Some will be great for a person who is focused on comfort, or price, and others will be great for someone whose only concern is the style. So narrow it down more and describe your product and your categories that real people will use to search for your product. Include those words in your product descriptions, and in your categories.

And don't forget a blog. That's one of your best opportunities to rank for long keywords, and to write plenty of content about it. These days SEO is all about content. That's what draws links, and ultimately visitors. Get creative... write something people will want to read and the traffic will come.

## EXPERT INTERVIEW:

ERIKA MILLER,  
FOUNDER OF ELM CONSULTING & SENIOR SEO  
STRATEGIST AT ADOBE.

There are essential rules you need to follow when you are redesigning and developing a website. If you are changing URLs, making a change from one blog to another, or expanding your e-commerce platform, this set of rules is a must-read to ensure you are prepared and do not lose your search engine traffic or keyword ranking.

These top three rules have been hand plucked from experience, not only coming from numerous missteps by clients but elaborated and confirmed by search industry experts and pros.

**Here are the top 3 rules to know in order to keep search traffic after redesigning and launching a website:**

### **Rule #1: Make Sure You Ask for 301 Redirects of all Old (Legacy) URLs to New Yummy URLs**

**Problem:** This is the biggest misstep. Surprisingly developers are not thinking about what to do with your old website pages when you move to a new server, or launch a new set of category folders, such as changing “/designer dress” to “/designer-dresses”. If you launch a new URL, and your old URL still lives online (meaning you can pull it up in your browser), then you have a problem; often referred to as a 404

error. These errors cause a red flag in search engines, and often too many 404 errors can cause Google to stop crawling.

**Solution:** 404 errors can easily be resolved ahead of the launch if the developer, or even you, know to simply say “we need to redirect the old site to the new site; can you use 301 redirects for that?” of course a good developer does know what a 301 redirect is, and will be able to execute this, but often they are then left to decide where the old URL should redirect to. It is really best left to you to define the URL redirect path. We call this a “URL mapping.”

**Why Google Likes It:** When you relaunch a website, always tell your developer where you want the new pages to be, and then how the old pages should redirect. This not only solves the 404 problem, but also keeps the search traffic flowing, because a 301 redirect is a pathway to tell Google, and other search bots that “this page has moved” without disrupting their user experience.

## Rule #2: Avoid Duplicate Content Caused by Out-of-the-Box Blogs and Some Ecommerce Platforms

**Problem:** Launching a website with pages that share the same content and different URLs, or different URLs and no content need to have a solution. If you are hosting a publishing site that syndicates content or you have an ecommerce platform like Magento, then listen up because this solution is for you.

**Solution:** Duplicate content can be resolved in several ways, depending on your website platform and goals. For example, if you are a publisher that syndicates 3<sup>rd</sup> party content, the best way to resolve duplicate content would be to use a rel=canonical tag. Here is a formal list of the best ways to resolve duplicate content on your new website:

- To prevent a site from being penalized when sharing content that will or has been shared on many sites, the use of a rel=ca-

nonical tags should be applied. Using the tag in a page heading helps control the search engine crawl, letting the bot know the origin of the source – this technique works.

- Using a META NOINDEX tag in the heading of a page will also prevent a search bot from indexing it – this allows for duplicate content to live but prevents it from harming the site.
- If you're using an out of the box platform, like WordPress or Magento (for ecommerce) you might want to ensure the developer configure less plug-ins than more, and be careful with product pages that share refinements

**To prevent duplicate content, here is an SEO tip for e-commerce owners:** not all refinements need a URL.

**Tip for bloggers:** tags should not be used outside of a fixed list.

**Why Google Likes It:** Google does not like duplicate content and any time you have duplicate content URLs they need to be resolved. Since there are several methods to fix this issue, listed above, Google and other search engines will not index your pages if they have duplicate content.

### **Rule #3: Be Practical Not Pretty; Choose Text Based Navigation Over Image Navigation**

**Problem:** Many in the fashion space want to be pretty like ELLE, in the gloss. Although this is nice, it typically is not a web standard that is supported by all browsers, the hearing impaired, and growing mobile & tablet users. Having image based navigation or heavily Flash based web pages is pretty, but if the business needs to keep web traffic coming and increasing after the relaunch, then you want to be practical and choose a text based design. Of course a good developer can always bring the two together, but that always in the budget.

***Solution:*** Use text based navigation links. Nowadays so much can be done with CSS to design a template that has background images, or using HTML5 to make things float and style differently. The need for image navigation is nice when you are not interested in getting traffic from search, like Burberry, or Louis Vuitton, but for those of us without 22 million in advertising ever 6 months, it still matters.

***Why Google Likes It:*** If Google can't get to the deeper pages of your site because your pretty image navigation is a hindrance, then really your probably not going to get much new traffic, and the traffic you might have once earned, will slowly decline and others will start to outrank you; those Google finds prettier, and easier to read!

## SEO Resources for Further Education

- Google Analytics – (Monitor Your Traffic / Campaign)

[-http://google.com/analytics](http://google.com/analytics)

- Webmaster Tools - Register your site, see keywords driving traffic, monitor site issues

[-https://www.google.com/webmasters](https://www.google.com/webmasters)

- Google Adwords – search for new keywords, and find the amount of monthly searches and competition for each one

[-https://adwords.google.com/](https://adwords.google.com/)

- Moz - Blog, and Tools

[-http://moz.com/](http://moz.com/) - many tools for helping you advance your SEO efforts

[-http://moz.com/blog](http://moz.com/blog) - a fantastic blog for learning SEO, and keeping abreast of changes in SEO

- <http://raventools.com/> - Many SEO tools available.

- Open Site Explorer – Check out some of the backlinks your competitors have earned

[-https://moz.com/researchtools/ose](https://moz.com/researchtools/ose)

- YOAST –SEO Blog and the most popular WordPress SEO plugin

[-https://yoast.com/articles/](https://yoast.com/articles/)

- GT Metrix – Check your site speed and look for technical issues

[-http://gtmetrix.com](http://gtmetrix.com)

- Alexa – Check the website statistics of your competitors

[-http://alexa.com](http://alexa.com)

- Search Engine Land – SEO Blog

[-http://searchengineland.com](http://searchengineland.com)

- Rand Fishkin Blog – one of the foremost authorities on SEO

[-http://moz.com/rand](http://moz.com/rand)

- Matt Cutts Blog – The head of Google's webspam team – This guy knows what google does and does not want to see, and what will get you penalized for over-optimization

[-https://www.mattcutts.com/blog/](https://www.mattcutts.com/blog/)

- AllTop Articles – Great resource for many different industry articles on SEO

[-http://seo.alltop.com](http://seo.alltop.com)

- Lynda Tutorials – fantastic resource for video tutorials on almost any subject you can think of. There are great Google Analytics and SEO tutorials on this platform.

[-http://lynda.com](http://lynda.com)

## CONGRATULATIONS!

You've done it. You've gotten through the book and have not yet thrown your kindle out the window. That's good.

Listen, building your website should be a fun part of your business. This is a place you get to show your brand personality, make meaningful connections with your customers, and showcase the work you love to create.

So don't allow yourself to feel overwhelmed. Take one chapter at a time, and you'll be fine. Enjoy the journey, right?

## YOU GOT THIS!



# ABOUT STARTUP FASHION

HAVING A FASHION BUSINESS IS DAMN HARD.

But it's not impossible. You can do things differently. *You can do it your way.*

Decide what you want, set your terms, and work really hard to get it.

This is a call for all of you out there who know that you have something to offer this world, who believe that you have the right to have total control of your life, and who know that you can build the life and business you want on your own terms.

StartUp FASHION is an online community where independent designers and emerging brands are helping one another, forming friendships, collaborating, letting off steam, sharing victories, and belonging to a network of people who get it; who are doing it too.

We're a place to discover the limitless ways you can build your fashion brand by helping you create your path and giving you the guidance and resources to follow that path.

We promise to always support you in your goals, cajole you into committing to your work, push you to have more focus, remind you to embrace your edginess and celebrate your weirdness, and to do whatever is in our power to help you build a business and create a life that make you happy.

**You can do this.**

We are on a mission to help you, independent designers, to thrive at doing what you love!

To Learn More About StartUp FASHION Visit Our Website:

[www.startupfashion.com](http://www.startupfashion.com)

# ABOUT SCALING RETAIL

Thousands of brands launch each year, but great collection or amazing idea is only beholden to the strategy that makes it so in the eyes of the consumer. At Scaling Retail we coach creatives and brand innovators on how to launch, scale and create profitable business models.

Perhaps you need a secret weapon. A weapon that is the firm sounding board to guide your business decisions and critical reasoning as you let your wings fly and focus on creative merchandising and product development. A weapon that takes your ideas streamlines them and creates executable plans. If you are in need of such a weapon then Scaling Retail is the solution.

We are behind the scenes with an eye on your long-term vision and the bottom line.

Merchandising, Ecommerce, Sales and Marketing- we do what we do best, and so should you.

To Learn More About Scaling Retail Visit Our Website: <http://www.scalingretail.com>

# THE CARE AND QUALITY YOU PUT INTO YOUR WEBSITE IS A DIRECT REFLECTION OF THE CARE AND QUALITY YOU PUT INTO YOUR COLLECTION.

*Your fashion brand, your entire fashion business, is judged by what people see online. When customers arrive on your website, they want to be inspired, excited, and impressed. When they're none of these things, they simply leave.*

*But when they're all of these things, you have just welcomed a new customer, with the potential to be a loyal and raving fan!*

This book is a guide for any emerging or independent fashion brand that is getting ready to take on the task of launching an ecommerce website or for any brand that has one but can't seem to figure out why it's not actually making many sales.

Whether you're DIY-ing your website or whether you have a budget to hire someone, this book will guide you through the process of building a website that sells.

Covering everything from design and copy to marketing and SEO, consider this your go-to manual for building an incredible and effective ecommerce website for your fashion brand.