TARKETING

The Marketing Guide for Local Business Owners

March 2018

SEO

Does SEO Really Matter?

SEO 101: Understanding How Search Engines Work

SEO In 2018: Content And Links Still Matter 8 Important Reasons to Update Your Small Business's Website

5 Qualities that Grow Your Business's Twitter Following

> E-Commerce Myths That Could Be Costing You

Infographic:

Top Social Media Networks 2018

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Thank you for taking the time to read this month's magazine. We hope you find it full of interesting articles, and more importantly, that you'll be able to learn at least one thing that you can immediately apply to your business.

This month we have a strong focus on SEO, with several articles discussing this important topic. You'll also find informative articles on E-Commerce, growing your Twitter following, and the importance of updating your small business' website.

You'll also find new versions of our popular Marketing Calendar and Infographic.

If you're not already receiving this magazine regularly, we suggest you add your email to our subscriber list. We have some exciting articles already in the works for the upcoming issues. Don't miss out!

If you like the magazine, and know other local business owners that could benefit from receiving our magazine each month, please do us (and them) a favor by forwarding a copy to them.

If you have any comments about this issue or would like us to help you with your marketing please do not hesitate to contact us.

David Akers President / CEO LMS Solutions, Inc.

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A Little About Us

Local Business Marketing Magazine is proudly provided by LMS Solutions, Inc.



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- Social Media
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Marketing Calendar

Plan your marketing messages around these upcoming holidays and proclamations.

March

Irish American Heritage Month Women's History Month

Employee Spirit Month

National Cerebral Palsy Awareness Month National Endometriosis Awareness Month

Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month

Red Cross Month

March 11 - Daylight Savings Begins

March 17 - St. Patrick's Day

March 20 - 1st Day of Spring

1st - Peanut Butter Lover's Day

2nd - Dr. Seuss Day

2nd - National Salesperson Day

3rd - Frozen Food Day

4th - Pancake Day – IHOP

4th - Academy Awards Ceremony

4th - Hug a G.I. Day

6th - Dentist's Day

6th - Oreo Cookie Day

9th - Crabmeat Day

10th - Pack Your Lunch Day

12th - Girl Scout Day

13th - Good Samaritan Day

13th - National Napping Day

14th - Potato Chip Day

17th - Corned Beef and Cabbage Day

19th - Client's Day

21st - Common Courtesy Day

22nd - Goof Off Day

23rd - Puppy Day

26th - Spinach Day

29th - Mom and Pop Business Owners Day

30th - Take a Walk in the Park Day

30th - Doctors Day

31st - Tater Day

April

National Autism Awareness Month

National Humor Month

International Guitar Month

Keep America Beautiful Month

Lawn and Garden Month

National Poetry Month

Stress Awareness Month

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

April 1st - Easter Sunday

April 1st - April Fool's Day

April 7th - Passover Ends

April 25th - Administrative Professionals Day (US)

2nd - Peanut Butter & Jelly Day

4th - Walking Day

5th - Caramel Day

5th - Burrito Day

6th - Sorry Charlie Day

7th - No Housework Day

7th - National Beer Day

9th - Winston Churchill Day

10th - National Siblings Day

11th - Barber Shop Quartet Day

11th - National Pet Day

12th - Grilled Cheese Sandwich Day

13th - National Scrabble Day

13th - Blame Someone Else Day

15th - Tax Day

15th - Titanic Remembrance Day

16th - Wear Your Pajamas to Work Day

19th - Get to Know Your Customers Day

20th - Pineapple Upside Down Cake Day

20th - Look Alike Day

22nd - Earth Day

22nd - Girl Scout Leaders Day

22nd - Jelly Bean Day

23rd - Picnic Day

26th - Pretzel Day

26th - Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day

30th - Adopt a Shelter Pet Day

30th - Bugs Bunny Day

30th - Hairstylist Appreciation Day



Does SEO Really Matter?

In a word, yes. Search engine optimization is valid, and it is an integral part of a website. Search engine optimization is the process of ensuring that a site appears in major search engines. However, it can be confusing with the ever-changing algorithms the major search engines employ. One could spend a lifetime just learning those and trying to keep up. Therefore, the average joe doesn't understand what it takes to rank highly in the search engines.

Since SEO is challenging, people often wonder if it's worth all the time. Title tags, headers, and meta-descriptions can be challenging, and that is before we even get to creating valuable content that people will read. With such a focus on relevant content, people wonder if SEO even matters anymore. Don't fall into that trap! It does matter and here's why.

Search Engine Optimization Is Relevant

Search engine optimization is a strategy that is a vital part of a digital marketing campaign. A robust SEO strategy can be the difference between millions of visitors and being lost in the abyss of other sites just hoping to be found by some pass-through traffic. Even the most valuable content is worthless if people can't locate it. SEO is what helps visitors find a site in the first place, then the efforts behind valuable content can start building trust and repeat traffic.

People Ride The Internet Highway With Search Engines

When people use the internet, they find things with search engines, which is why it is so essential to have your content listed in the results. With over

three billion queries per day, there is a good chance for any site or business to be found if they rank correctly in the search engines. SEO is the best way to connect with end users who may eventually become customers. Search engine optimization is time and energy well spent for a digital business.

SEO Determines Visibility

Since high-quality content takes countless man hours to create, it is essential that it is visible in the search rankings. Quality is useless if it is unseen. There is no way to be successful in the digital marketplace without exposure and exposure depends on rankings on search engines.

It is all tied together. That means that the extra man hours it takes to optimize content for search engines are invaluable.

Keywords Matter

Keywords are still relative to search engine rankings, just processed differently. It is important to know how to use them to be successful. Gone are the days when you could randomly throw a keyword into a site, and search engines would pick it up. Keyword stuffing is a thing of the past and is now subject to penalties. Today keywords must be relevant and strategically placed. Search engine algorithms are constantly changing to provide a better user experience which also means sites ultimately get only relevant traffic. It can be frustrating, but these changes are favorable for the site owner. Here are three tips to help with

keywords.

First, use digital tools to discover relevant keywords. That will help isolate words and phrases for which people are searching. Second, work hard to integrate keywords naturally. Avoid keyword stuffing that doesn't sound the way someone would speak. That may mean fewer keywords, but that's okay if you place them strategically in the headers, title, and meta-description. Then just let them flow naturally in your content. Don't force them. If they sound awkward, take them out.

Last, focus on long-tail keywords. Instead of competing for the most popular words, focus on long-tail keywords relevant to the business. These will have less competition. It may take some time and some internet tools to find the right keywords, but it may just attract visitors who are looking for precisely what the business is offering.

Skip SEO?

Not a chance. Without search engine optimization, a business will die a fast, hard, broke death. Besides that, competitors will outrank the company that no one can find. Even the most reliable websites must be optimized for the search engines so don't even think about skipping this step. The hard work will pay off in the end.

Is Your Website Mobile Friendly?

Over 50% of all online searches are now performed on a mobile device.



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SEO 101: Understanding How Search Engines Work

Search engines provide what they believe to be the most relevant websites through proprietary algorithms that crawl and index websites. Each search engine attempts to sort out the good websites from the bad websites in order to provide the user with the best result according to the users need.

The Not-So-Creepy Crawlers

So, the World Wide Web is astoundingly huge, with information spread across every topic you can probably imagine. In order to find all of this information, someone has to find it, scan it, and index it. In order to do this, search engines use robots, also known as

bots, to programmatically scan websites to see what information they are providing. These bots scan everything that they are allowed to scan; this includes text, images, music, and so much more. In order to find these websites, these bots use links to dig through all the websites. These links can be found from webmaster submissions, link directories, or other trusted pages and networks.

Getting The Right Answers

Search engines primary focus is to provide answers ... nothing else. When someone types in "Why is my dog sneezing?", they do not want a website about dog grooming. In fact, if the search engine provided that

result, the user wouldn't continue using them, as they provided a wrong answer.

So, how do search engines get the right answer? The simple and fast answer is through certain metrics designed to determine relevancy to a specific question and topic. However, there is so much more to it than just that. In fact, many other factors go into determining the best answer based on a specific question. Here are just a few considerations:

- Relevancy
- Bounce Rates
- Pages Linking to Website
- Trust of Links to Website

Of course, this is just the tip of the iceberg. There are many other ranking factors and this article is focused on the basics of how search engines work.

How Do I Get My Website Ranked High?

Every webmaster and marketer has probably asked this question at one point in time or another. And with the complicated algorithms that search engines employ, it seems near impossible to win.

Search engines do this in order to limit manipulation of the search results. Instead, search engines give the basics of what they look for in order to rank a website high. For instance, Google looks for:

- Websites designed for users, not for search engines. Do not try to trick the search engines through "cloaking", which is highly deceptive and discouraged.
- Websites with easy-tofollow link hierarchy.
 Everything should be easy to find.
- Websites full of content, information that a user

- will find attractive.
- Websites that use keywords as necessary, but do not stuff (overload) the content just to get recognized by the search engines.

Should I Try To Rank My Website On My Own?

There are plenty of webmasters that handle their own search engine marketing. And they are extremely successful. But, there are also a lot of webmasters that fail. The reason they fail is they don't follow the rules or they don't understand the rules. Whatever the reason, a website that doesn't rank well is not going to be successful in the long run.

There are plenty of marketing services available for a webmaster to use. These marketing services help to optimize your website for both the user and for the search engines.

They know the rules, the safe tricks, the right way to get websites noticed. They have tested theories, figured out what does not work, and they will not waste money getting a website ranked.

For someone looking to get a website ranked fast, efficiently, they are a great option.

However, for someone looking to control every aspect of their website, marketing services do not make sense. Sure, there is a learning curve, but overall, they control everything. If something is not right, they can fix it right then.

So, now you have a basic understanding of how search engines work. Search engines crawl and index websites using links that connect multiple websites together. The information is stored online, compared using special algorithms, and sent to a user looking for a specific search result. They have special rules that must be followed in order to rank high and they change these rules to keep people from manipulating the results.

Search engines are exceptionally complex, but they are the lifeblood of a website. Simply put, if a user cannot find your website, then you are just wasting space.

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SEO In 2018: Content And Links Still Matter

A website can utilize a whole swath of new and improved SEO strategies to try to up the ranking, but nothing will come of all that effort if the content itself is not appropriate and linked. Without those factors, any site is stuck at zero in the rankings, and zero times anything is still zero. Those two aspects are fundamental to building up the ranking, and without them, a site cannot accomplish anything, no matter what else it tries. Even in 2018, with all of its technological innovation, the fundamentals of SEO are still prevalent.

Google recently confirmed that content and links are

the two most important factors they consider when ranking a website. That means that, until they have addressed these two critical factors, they don't even think about RankBrain's algorithm and mobile-optimization and other factors contributing to search result placement. That's because sites linking to a page with further content is associated with rankings more than any other contributing feature. Content and links have to be the primary focus of any website that wants to rank higher in search engine results.

How Can a Site Improve on Fundamentals?

The first fundamental component of any highranking site is content. Without well-written and substantial content, a website cannot get anywhere. Making sure that every post contains relevant information with the correct amount of critical terms and related phrases used in context is the first step to ensuring better SEO results. Content should be legible and engaging, without sacrificing its educational quality. No one wants to google something only to find that the page they clicked on doesn't have the answers they're seeking.

Of course, without links, no one will click on the site

in the first place. Links are relevant in both directions, and incorporating external links to other sites can be just as influential as having backlinks.

There are a multitude of ways to utilize links to improve SEO, but the most important action a website can take is incorporating as many links as possible. Sites need to have links leading out to other content, links back to their own, and everything in between. The more links a site has, the better the ranking--provided that the links are relevant and lead to legitimate sites. Many websites trade links back and forth with other sites, thereby enabling both

sites to get ahead. This type of networking is especially helpful for sites that are just starting out.

Another way of improving SEO through links is to utilize embeddable images that automatically link back to the site. Visual marketing is one of the most important and influential trends currently in place, and websites can use this to their advantage. With the creation of embeddable images, sites can automatically use content that links back to other sites. thereby stimulating the entire process. High-quality backlinks are sometimes hard to come by, but sites that use embeddable

images are more likely to obtain a more significant number of high-quality backlinks than their imageless opponents.

If that is not enough to make a difference, then websites can also take their content to the next level to obtain more backlinks. By providing different statistics or research information on a site, more and more independent sources will reference that content through backlinks. Everyone loves new studies and original reports, and showcasing such material is a surefire way to encourage more attention and appreciation on a specific site.



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E-Commerce Myths That Could Be Costing You

E-Commerce myths never make a good basis for marketing decisions. Even the best campaign manager will fail if given information based on falsehood. There are many myths about the e-commerce industry and the market surrounding it. Read on to see how to avoid these traps.

1. Revenue Is The Only Indicator

Early marketers were obsessed with metrics, but

they usually didn't have anything to do with the needs of the business. This is probably because web marketing was born out of single person operations. These lone businesses weren't accountable for metrics like rankings and traffic. As the internet became a bigger part of mainstream businesses, marketers began to realize that decisions needed to be based on revenues and profits. Although revenues and profit can indicate the

health of a business, there are other key performance indicators that need to be considered. Some of these metrics include conversion rates, channel traffic and asset lifetime value.

2. Social Media Doesn't Sell

Most people don't shop on social media on a daily basis. However, the twentysix percent of Facebook users who click ads make purchases, and Facebook shows phenomenal growth in year-over-year spending. Social media is also good for brand presence. When people have a positive customer service experience on social media, they are likely to recommend that brand to others. The large size of the social media audience allows a brand to generate demand. Large amounts of targeted traffic can actually benefit visibility in search engines as well.

3. Email Doesn't Work

Email is the tool used most often for communicating on the internet, so it is essential to a marketing strategy to build an email list. Most people read at least the entire subject line and with the right hook, they will read the email too. It is more effective than messaging apps on social media.

4. Compartmentalizing Promotion And Development

All owner action on a site is not development. Marketing should take place on a site as much as anywhere else. Even the biggest brands do this. The best marketing strategy is to continuously improve the site. Audiences change and the way they are marketed to must change as well.

5. The Most Popular Content Goes Viral Because of Social Media

This is just a myth, but many sites try to promote themselves based on this untruth. It damages the reputations of e-commerce sites trying to market on social media because they don't actually understand how viral information spreads. The goal of social media marketing is not to go viral, it's to create conversions and capture a larger audience. It is a source of traffic, not a path to exponential growth.

6. A Good Product Doesn't Need A Marketing Strategy

People are exposed to an unbalanced amount of information daily and a product will not sell itself no matter how good it is. Good products don't replace marketing strategies because they don't sell themselves. Even the most popular products had plenty of money and a well

thought out marketing strategy behind them. It takes intense effort and word of mouth to market a product.

7. Sheer Traffic As A Marketing Strategy

Marketing is all about supply and demand. The best strategy connects the two. Sheer volumes of traffic will not replace marketing. Reaching a general audience is a good thing, but it cannot be the only thing. There must be a well-planned marketing strategy in place for the time that contact is made.

Ultimately, marketing myths do exist and they can be extremely costly if you fall into the trap of believing them. Knowing what is a myth and what is not can help you save time, energy, and money. To stay ahead of your competition, you have to stay away from the traps that can pull away from your available resources. By taking note of these 7 myths, and avoiding them, you can save yourself some valuable time and work on ranking higher than your competition.



5 Qualities that Grow Your Business's Twitter Following

Just about every business has some sort of social media presence. And those who are good at it will tell you it pays off. Growing a large social media following can translate directly into more sales.

But not every business builds a large Twitter following. And unlike huge celebrities or cheaters who buy fake followers, a business must grow its following organically over time. You can get advice from a million places on how to do this, but there are some common characteristics that companies with large

followings seem to share. Here are the five big qualities of business Twitter accounts that seem to attract the most followers:

Personality

Some of the world's biggest companies have Twitter accounts that seem almost human. KFC, it was recently discovered, follows only 11 other accounts - the five spice girls and six guys named Herb. Get it? That's 11 "herbs" and "spices." It's the sort of thing that gives a big corporation a fun, human feel. It's personality.

There's a fairly good corner

of the Twitter world to study in this regard: professional sports teams. Almost all of the organizations with the largest followings are ones that have fun and show personality on Twitter.

Nobody wants to engage with dull, robotic people in real life, and they don't follow dull, robotic companies on Twitter, either.

Persistency

There's no doubt that frequent tweeting is directly correlated to the number of followers an account has. Every single data analysis ever done has shown this.

If you want to build a large following, you probably have to tweet frequently.

Take the Twitter accounts of Charmin and Wendy's, respectively. Both are entertaining accounts with a similar mix of sass and charm. The Wendy's account is two years older, so that's part of the equation, but it has 2.39 million followers compared to Charmin's 80,000.

Wendy's tweets much more frequently. A recent glimpse over a seven-day period showed that the Wendy's account sent eight tweets compared to Charmin's two. That's four times as many. The Wendy's account has averaged about 1,165 tweets per month over its Twitter existence, while Charmin averages 142 a month

Between two entertaining, smart accounts, the one that's more active will have more followers.

Positivity

There are personalities on Twitter with fair-sized followings even though they

complain all the time, go on rants and "troll" others. But similar accounts with similar post frequency who focus on positive messages attract more followers.

Your Twitter account should focus on the positive side of things, especially when you're in business,. You're trying to attract people to your company, and more people are attracted by a positive message than a negative one. On Twitter, you certainly attract more bees with honey than with vinegar.

Professionalism

Even if your business account doesn't take itself so seriously, it helps to have a level of professionalism in order to build a large follower base. This means a professional-looking avatar and well-written bio. It might mean linking to a page on your own site that positions you as an expert in your field.

When interacting with others on Twitter (a must to grow a following), use the same courteous tone with potential clients and



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- Executive Gifts
- Stress Relievers
- Team and Collegiate Items



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customers as you would if you were a customerservice rep in your business. Spell correctly. Use proper grammar. Address questions and complaints publicly and politely. A business'Twitter account can substantially help or hinder its public image, and the companies with the largest followings handle themselves professionally on social media.

Provision

Twitter accounts that provide the most content and information are consistently some of the

most-followed accounts in almost any realm -- news, entertainment, sports, and more. If your business is providing useful, relevant information, people will follow your business just to be sure they keep getting that informative content.

And that includes any information that might be relevant to your audience, even if it's not directly related to your business. Restaurant-goers, for example, are more likely to follow an establishment that provides industry news, local food information and insights into recipes than

one that simply pumps out its daily special day in and day out or posts only when they have a coupon offer.

There are obviously many pieces of advice out there on how a business. can attract social media followers with marketing content. You could probably read hundreds of them online. But the basic formula for Twitter followers (outside of true celebrities) is more about who your account is than about what you can actually do. These characteristics are the ones that seem to help attract the most followers.





8 Important Reasons to Update Your Small Business's Website

When was the last time you updated your small business's website? According to a survey of 350 small business owners by the market research firm Clutch, 46 percent of respondents did not have a site. In today's competitive commercial landscape, business owners can no longer afford to stay offline.

A website isn't something that you can set and forget, however. If you want to present your business as a leading authoritative figure in its respective industry, you'll need to update your website on a regular basis, and here's why:

1) Announce New Business Hours, Prices or Contact Information

If your business has recently changed its hours of operation, product/service prices or contact information, you'll need to update your website to reflect these changes. Keeping outdated information on your site could hinder your ability to attract new customers and grow your business.

2) Fix Mobile-Compatibility Issues

Updating your business's website gives you the

opportunity to make it mobile friendly. If your website isn't compatible with smartphones and tablets, visitors attempting to access your site on those devices may encounter usability issues like hard-toread text, indecipherable images, and broken scripts. And given the fact that roughly 60 percent of all Internet traffic comes from mobile devices, this is one mistake you don't want to make.

You can fix mobilecompatibility issues by updating your website with a mobile-friendly design. According to Google, there are three ways to create a mobile-friendly design:

Responsive web design

Uses CSS media queries and proportion-based units to scale the website based on the user's device. This mobile-friendly configuration is the only one recommended by Google.

Dynamic serving

Uses a single URL but different HTML for desktop and mobile visitors. Visitors on desktop computers see the desktop HTML, while visitors on mobile devices see the mobile HTML.

Separate URLs

Uses a second URL, such as yourwebsite.mobi or mobi. yourwebsite.com, for the mobile version. Of the three configurations listed here, this is the least effective, as duplicate content creates issues with search engines crawling and indexing the two URLs.

3) Install Latest Version of CMS

Assuming your business's website uses a content management system (CMS) like WordPress, you'll need to log in and update it when a new version is released. According to a report by

wpscan.org, roughly 37 percent of all WordPress security vulnerabilities involve the core CMS files. Hackers often target websites running outdated versions of WordPress because they contain exploitable vulnerabilities.

WordPress introduced automatic background updates in version 3.7. However, this only affects minor releases, meaning you'll still have to manually log into your website and update the WordPress files for major releases.

4) Update Plugins and Extensions

Depending on which CMS your website uses (WordPress, Joomla, Drupal, etc.), you may have the option to install plugins or extensions. These add-ons are designed to provide additional functionality, such as browser caching and search engine optimization (SEO). But like your site's core CMS files, plugins and extensions should also be updated when new versions are released.

Developers often push new versions of their plugins and extensions to introduce new features and fix security vulnerabilities. The same wpscan.org report cited above revealed that plugins cause 52 percent of all WordPress security vulnerabilities. Neglecting to update your site with the latest plugins leaves it vulnerable to hackers, and something no business owner wants to encounter.

5) Add Content

You can't expect visitors to keep coming back to your business' website unless you publish new content on a regular basis. In Google's own words, publishing high-quality content is "the single most important thing" webmasters can do. When the world's largest search engine makes a bold statement such as this, it's a good idea to listen.

Fresh content encourages search engines to crawl your site, while also promoting higher search rankings. The more content you publish, the more "real estate" your site will consume in the search engines. If your business's website consists of nothing more than a bare homepage, it won't generate much traffic. But if it features hundreds of optimized pages covering topics that are relevant to

your industry, you'll have an easier time climbing the search rankings.

When creating a content marketing strategy for your business's website, consider your target audience. In other words, who is most interested in your business's products or services?

If your company sells wedding dresses, for instance, your target audience is probably newly engaged women, in which case you should create content specifically tailored to these soon-to-be brides.

Keep in mind that content for websites isn't limited strictly to text. Other forms of content to consider include:

- Images
- Photo galleries
- Videos
- Infographics
- Interviews
- PDF files
- Quizzes
- Games
- Flowcharts
- Surveys
- eBooks
- Podcasts

Don't limit yourself to using a single type of content, but instead diversify your site with multiple forms.

6) Fix Broken Links

Broken links create a poor user experience (UX), which is why you should periodically check your site for them. A visitor who clicks a link expects to go to the appropriate page, not be redirected to a 404 error page instead, as a broken link would do.

Even if you check your links before publishing them on your site, broken links may still occur. If you link to a different website, and that website later shuts down, the link will break.

Several web-based tools will scan your site for broken links, such as BrokenLinkCheck.com and DeadLinkChecker.com. After entering the URL of your business website, it will reveal the location of any broken links, both internal and external.

7) Moderate Visitor Comments

Allowing visitors to comment on your business's website is a simple and effective way to fill it with fresh content. Because substantial numbers of

comments are nothing more than spam, however, you should manually approve comments before making them live. That means you'll have to log into your website's CMS, and either accept or reject new comments.

8) Optimize for Search Rankings

Updating your website on a regular basis encourages increased search rankings, which boosts traffic. Search engines take notice when a site is updated with new content, using this as a ranking factor for their respective algorithms. If you refresh your site with current content on a regular basis, you'll have an easier time achieving a top search ranking for your desired target keywords.

These are just a few reasons that small business owners should update their websites. While it may seem time-consuming and laborious, it's a smart investment of your resources that pays off in the form of a more prosperous business.

Think Outside the Box? We Say... Why Even Have a Box?



- Online Marketing Management (PPC)
- · Website Design
- · Website SEO
- · Website Management
- · Reputation Management
- Outdoor Marketing
- · Social Media Management
- Local Search Optimization
- Ad/Call Tracking
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The word 'March' comes from the Roman 'Martius'. This was originally the first month of the Roman calendar and was named after Mars, the god of war. March was the beginning of our calendar year. We changed to the 'New Style' or 'Gregorian calendar in 1752, and it is only since then that the year has begun on January 1st.

March 17 is widely accepted as the date of St. Patrick's death in A.D. 461.

Blue was the color originally associated with St. Patrick, but green is now favored.

The first St. Patrick's Day parade in the American colonies was held in New York City on this day in 1762.

The odds of filling out a perfect March Madness bracket is 1 in 9.2 quintillion!

A #5 seeded team has never won a championship

Corporate losses will amount to roughly \$1.9 billion as a result of workers whose productivity has been diverted by March Madness.

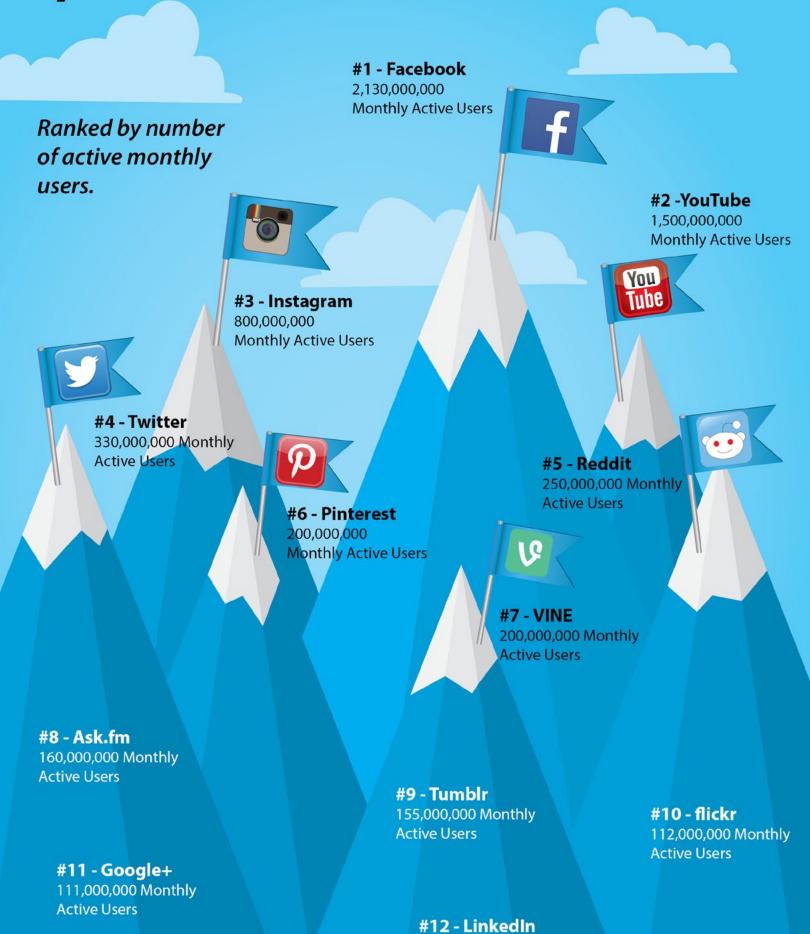
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