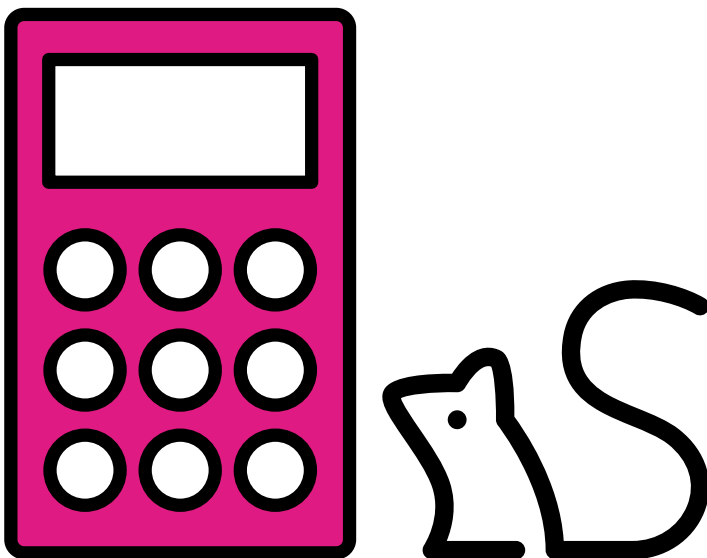


Accountants

A guide to marketing
your business



sensis

Why do accountants need to be online?

These days if businesses don't have an online presence it can really work against them.

Did you know that 86% of Australians look for services online?

If you're an accountant, it's more important than ever to have an online strategy.

Demand for accountants in Australia is expected to grow by 3.9% over the next five years and many have diversified into new advisory services to boost profits further.

In a crowded online landscape, accountants can make their presence felt with an eye-catching website, a business directory listing and a thorough search marketing strategy.

Before you begin on your digital journey you should make sure you're clear about your objectives.

It may seem obvious, but many people begin building their website without really knowing their ultimate aim. Is it to encourage people to call you for work? Is it to show off your range of advisory services? Do you want to show the latest in tax checklists, online tax and financial calculators?

56% of small businesses have a website.¹
Do you?



¹ Sensis eBusiness Report 2015

Marketing essentials – websites

A professional website can play a major role in boosting your profile. It gives potential customers more confidence in your business, it lets people find you 24 hours a day and it can help sell your consulting services after you've gone home for the night.

When choosing a supplier to help create and maintain your website, it should be easy and cost-effective. Now more than ever, website suppliers should be able to give you loads of choice with a variety of website packages and different designs to choose from.

Website must-haves

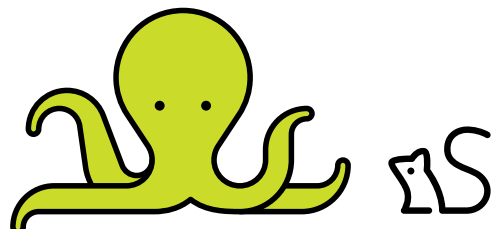
- Simple design – clear information about the type of taxation work you offer is vital. It shouldn't be too distracting.
- It should build trust – how you speak to your viewers should be clear, engaging and true to your business.
- It should work well on all screens including laptops, tablets and mobiles.

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Get found on Google
Track online results

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Simplicity is vital

A simple design helps get all your important messages across quickly and effectively, and the reader is never in doubt about the purpose of your website or how to use it.

While it's tempting to want all the bells and whistles offered by a complicated design, keeping clutter to a minimum is vital so that essential information – such as your contact page – is clearly visible.

Keep it simple to read with easy-to-navigate links and never assume that because you understand your site, others will too.

Also make sure the headlines and body copy on each page mention your suburb and city so that people searching on the internet can easily find you.

Case study

The Practice

Armed with the promise of being able to “liberate your lifestyle”, Melbourne’s The Practice is a very good example of a small operator punching well above its weight online.

Its website features an array of ‘freebies’ designed to promote the company as an expert and ‘thought leader’ in its fields, including a free webinar titled ‘Grow your business’ value by 5X’ and a free eBook – *Grow Your Business with Less Stress*.

With 506 likes on Facebook and 238 Twitter followers, both social media platforms are used to publicise co-founder Jason Cunningham’s media appearances, including his regular radio spot on SEN’s *The Run Home*.

The Practice has also developed a solid amount of material as part of its YouTube channel, with clips covering various topics including wealth creation, budgeting, asset structuring and the like.



What do your customers want?

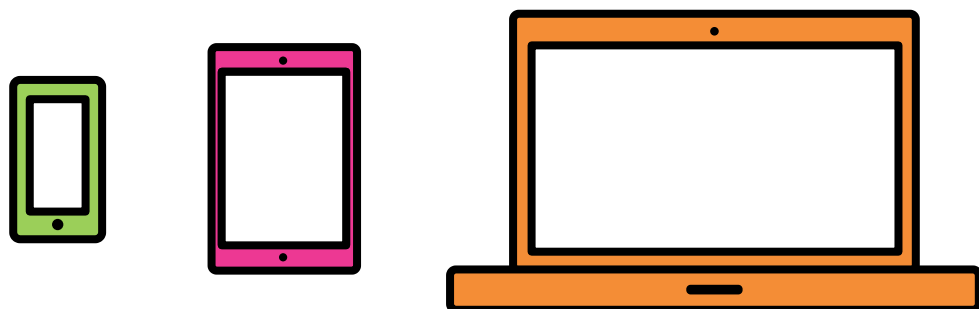
In the always-changing world of digital marketing, new ways of promoting your business continue to pop up, and expectations from consumers rise further year on year.

Nowadays leading accountancy firms are offering innovative online content for their clients. An example is Melbourne firm, Devlin and Co, which offers plenty of free advice.

This includes the latest tax checklists, online tax and financial calculators, and a newsletter known as 'Taking Care of Business'. The company's website also provides clients with the ability to upload and download files securely, as well as log in to cloud-based accounting platform Xero.

Its blog – cleverly titled 'Spilling the beans' – covers industry specific topics such as ATO rulings, changes to superannuation legislation, tax tips and advice on chasing up debtors.

Devlin has a relatively small number of Facebook followers, but makes a concerted effort to post regularly, including links to articles from the business.gov.au and ATO websites.



Good design wins customers

The first mistake many businesses make is to consider what they want to include on their website, as opposed to what their customers want to know about the business.

The experience a potential customer has on your site will be the difference between them leaving in a hurry or calling you to do their tax return. Once visitors land on your site, make sure they can find what they're looking for quickly and efficiently.

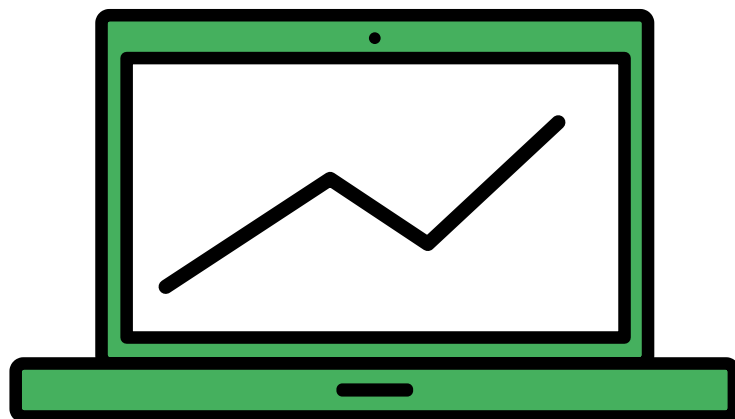
People are used to certain useability features of the internet. These include business logos usually appearing in the top-left corner, an 'About Us' section – which helps them decide whether to engage with a business – and navigations being in the same place on each page.

Websites are read from left to right (in an F-shape), in much the same way as print materials, so put your logo in the top-left corner of the site.

In addition, ensure your site pages are pleasing to the eye and that all the links work. All the pages of your site need to load quickly.

Top tips

- Make sure navigation bars have clear, large links to help people quickly get to the most useful information.
- The 'About Us' section is the second or third most visited page of a website. Make sure it's easy to understand and written in concise language.



Does your website look good on mobile screens?

There's no denying the power of mobile. The mobile phone market is near saturation point, with more mobiles in Australia than Australians.

Mobile sites are often an afterthought for small businesses putting together a website.

Although with 78% of Australian mobile users researching products on their phone, it's essential that your website displays perfectly in the mobile environment.

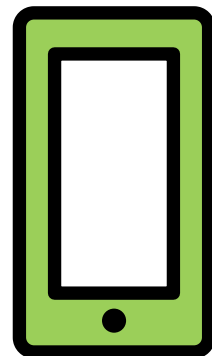
Of course, this also applies to tablets and laptops because often websites built for just a desktop experience will suffer on a smaller, portrait orientated mobile screen.

Typical mobile device users have even less patience than PC users, so just that half-a-second too long and they will move on to another website.

Therefore, you want a website that works on all devices so that your business information can be found quickly and easily by a customer.

It needs to be responsive so that the right information is displayed at the right size for mobile viewing, but most importantly, the site absolutely must load quickly.

35% of small businesses have a website that works well on mobiles.² Does yours?



² Sensis eBusiness Report 2015

Is your website linked in to social media?

No matter what kind of business you're running, social media is a key part of a successful website.

It is the new word of mouth – blogs, review sites and social media platforms are now places for customers to turn to for open and honest business recommendations.

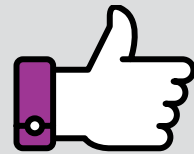
You should give your website a competitive edge by showing your customers you're active in their favourite social media channels.

You don't need to use every medium – pick one or two and use them well. A great example is Mr Taxman, who is a regular *Woman's Day* columnist and TV finance commentator who goes by the everyday name of Adrian Raftery (MBA, B.Bus, FCA, CFP, F Fin, FTIA, MAICD).

Mr Raftery, mainly via digital means, has done a brilliant job of developing a reputation as someone who's transcended the accounting world and become an expert financial pundit through blogs and fielding questions from the general public.

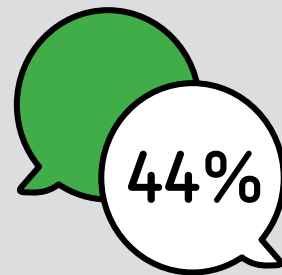
Each blog entry is accompanied by buttons that allow it to be tweeted or Liked on Facebook – a simple and easy way for readers to spread the word on Raftery's behalf. As 'Mr Taxman' he has 1187 likes on Facebook and a similar amount of Twitter followers.

28%



of Australians research products and services on social media

PLUS



of accountants have a social media presence³

³ Yellow Social Media Report 2015

Can your customers find your website?

Search Engine Optimisation (or SEO) is one of those technology buzzwords you may have heard about but not fully understand.

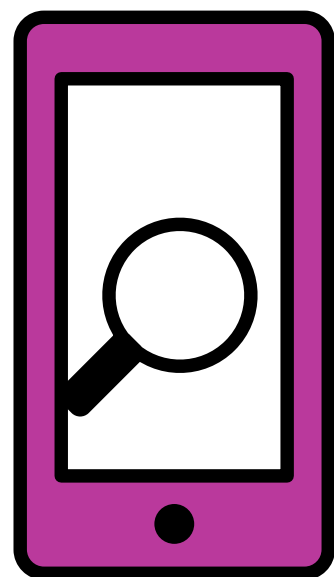
SEO aims to boost your website ranking on the internet by influencing search engines, such as Google, so they find your site and rank it high in their search engine results pages.

The better your SEO strategy is the more traffic you're likely to get to your site and the more sales you make. This is why it's important to have a well-written and well-structured website – so that the search engines can easily access information about your business.

Another way to get more traffic to your page is through Search Engine Marketing (SEM), which involves advertising your website on search engines like Google, Yahoo and Bing.

While basic SEO and SEM can be performed by business owners, many choose to hire professionals in the field to develop a long-term strategy.

Keywords are the terms people enter to perform a search, and they are also the main marker of relevance for search engines. Here's an example: Many banks will advertise 'mortgages', but most consumers will search for 'home loans', so make sure you have the right keywords.



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If you'd like to know more about the benefits of a website for your business or learn about the other marketing solutions we offer, talk to one of our experts or visit www.sensis.com.au

