# How To Build A High Performance Lead Generation Website

## An overview of Web design techniques critical for turning website visitors into prospects and customers.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When a company is preparing to invest in a new lead generation website, it should not underestimate what Web design skills will be needed to build an effective one.

Often, companies focus a great deal of attention on design aesthetics, and not nearly enough on the many other factors that go into turning website visitors into hot prospects.

**This white paper presents an overview of the lead generation characteristics of powerful lead generation websites.**

They fall into five major categories:

1. **Usability** — Ways of making the website easy for visitors to find what they need and interact with the information.

2. **Mobile Design** — Website features specifically designed to convert the rapidly growing base of mobile users.

3. **SEO** — On-site elements imperative for gaining strong organic search engine visibility.

4. **Copywriting** — Techniques that build interest and confidence, and then motivate website visitors to inquire.

5. **Conversion** — Small but massively important techniques that create large gains in conversion rates.

**Important Note** — Because proper **lead tracking** is crucial for evaluating website performance and continually improving conversion rates, we have included supplementary information on lead tracking best practices.

## PART 1: USABILITY

A lead generation website is far from a static sales brochure; instead of being something a person passively reads, the website is a tool a person uses to find information by clicking on navigational links, filling out inquiry forms, zooming-in on details of product images, etc.

If a lead generation website is highly usable, it becomes a tool that is easy to work with and effective in helping the visitor find important information and take action. In contrast, websites with poor usability frustrate users, like a saw with a dull blade. Poor usability drives ripe prospects into the arms of competitors. Here are the key usability features of a high performance lead generation website.

### Usability: Responsive Web Design



Responsive Web design uses various techniques that allow the website to adjust automatically for optimal display on any size screen. Thus, users have a similar, consistent website experience whether they use a desktop monitor, tablet, mobile device, or multiple devices at various times. Because of this display continuity, users become familiar with and remain comfortable with the website regardless of the device used to access it. (In the next section, we review mobile-specific design issues in more detail.)

### Usability: Site Speed



Nothing frustrates users more than slow-loading Web pages. Page-loading speed is so important to usability that Google has made it an important factor in its search algorithm (slow websites have poor SEO results). A wide range of development and design techniques and best practices is required to optimize speed.

## Usability: Image Loading Techniques



Image handling is often the key to attaining high page-loading speed. Image size, resolution, file type and retrieval processes all affect how quickly a Web page loads; if even one part of the image-handling process is off, the results for usability, SEO and conversions may be seriously impaired.

## Usability: White Space
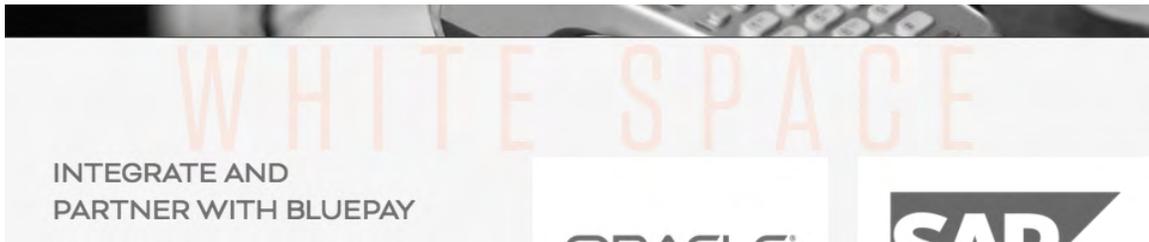


Clutter kills conversions. By using ample white space, Web designers make zeroing-in on navigational links and important content easy for users, as well as conveying an image of efficiency and expertise.

## Usability: Avoid Rotating Carousels in Headers



Rotating carousels are trendy, but not at all helpful for attracting leads. Few visitors interact with them, content is missed, and page-loading time increases. Overall, most users perceive carousels as nothing more than annoying ads — not the impression a company wants to make on a prospect visiting its home page for the first time.

## Usability: Site Architecture and Sitemap



Which navigational links are chosen and how pages are arranged in the website content hierarchy make or break usability. Intuitive navigation enables users of all types to quickly locate the desired information. A sitemap is an indispensable navigational tool, as it provides a reliable backup (or sometimes primary) option for visitors to maneuver around the website.

## PART 2: MOBILE DESIGN

Mobile Internet access now exceeds desktop, and the gap is widening. If a website does not provide mobile users with a top-flight experience, conversions will suffer — not only in terms of quantity, but also quality. When mobile users access the Internet, they are more likely to be in decision mode than research mode, since research is more conveniently undertaken on a desktop, where multiple browser windows and documents can be viewed simultaneously.

Any business interested in obtaining phone leads, scheduled appointments and booked reservations must make mobile-friendly Web design a top priority.  Here are key mobile design features for a high performance lead generation website.

## Mobile Design: Site Speed



With many mobile users working from cellular Internet connections, site speed is more important than ever. Web designers must be up-to-date on techniques for optimizing page load time; for instance, being able to have images load as the user scrolls rather than loading all at once.

### Mobile Design: Sticky Navigation



In a responsive Web design's mobile view, main navigation should be "sticky" — i.e., remain fixed at the top as users scroll down the page. This simple but underused technique keeps critical informational and conversion links in view (such as a phone icon), so users can convert at any time as they move around the website.

### Mobile Design: Phone Display

A phone icon with click-to-call functionality is a necessary main navigation element in mobile display. Pressing an icon to initiate a call represents the maximum in user convenience. As users become more experienced and adept in working with mobile websites, this functionality will be an expectation rather than a bonus.

### Mobile Design: Responsive Web Design Choices



In responsive design, elements visible in desktop view can be eliminated in mobile view. Deciding which information stays and which goes, and further deciding the order in which information displays in mobile view, are difficult but crucial decisions. Current thinking is to retain as much information as possible in mobile view; however, if information overwhelms mobile users, it will deter conversions.

### Mobile Design: Anchor Text

Another small but important mobile design technique is to provide ample anchor text for links, especially in body content. Clicking on one or two words of anchor text in mobile view is difficult; users may give up rather than deal with the inconvenience.

## PART 3: SEO

SEO is a critical component of Internet marketing for most companies. With Google processing billions of search queries every day, organic search is too large a pool of prospects to ignore.

Just because your website is configured for SEO does not mean its content will be visible on Google or other search engines. The ability to not only make a website SEO-friendly, but also to make your website SEO-performing, is one of the most important skills your Web design team must have. Here is how SEO is handled in a high performance lead generation website.

### SEO: Being SEO-*friendly*



For the framework of a lead generation website to be SEO-friendly (but still not SEO-performing), several key elements must be in place, specifically:

- Title tags on every page
- Meta description tags on every page
- Header content on every page
- Body content on every page
- A clean URL structure and custom URLs (see image above)
- A robots.txt file
- An HTML sitemap
- An XML sitemap
- 301 redirects from old Web pages to new ones
- A redirect for non-www to www (or vice versa) URLs
- A content management system (to add and edit pages and content)
- Blog functionality

## SEO: Being SEO-*performing*
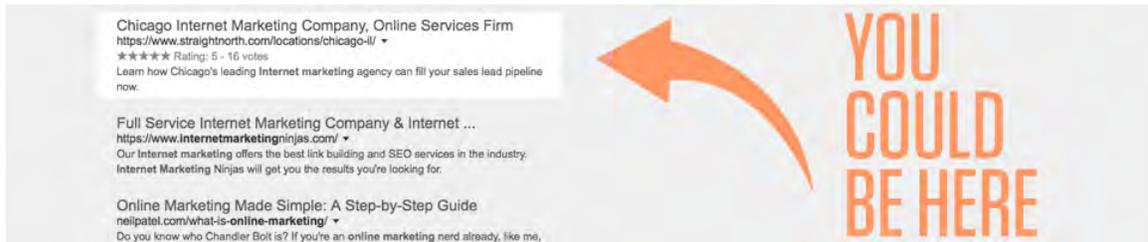


To go from SEO-friendly to SEO-performing, a great deal of SEO work must be done before your lead generation website goes live. If this preparatory work is done, your website will rise in visibility for organic search queries from people looking for the products or services you sell. The key activities your Web design firm must undertake include the following:

### A. Keyword Research and Keyword Strategy



Keyword research identifies all of the keywords search engine users might use to find your products and services. Keyword strategy first narrows the focus to keywords with the highest likelihood of producing conversions. Factors to consider in keyword strategy include search volume, user intent, competitiveness and relevance. Once the keyword field has been defined, keyword strategists organize keywords into themed groups; these groups will influence (and sometimes drive) the content structure and navigation of the new website.

### B. Sitemap

When keyword research is completed, a sitemap is created detailing every page of the new website. The sitemap ensures no SEO issues exist; that is, no overlap, where multiple target keywords are covered in a single page, and no gaps, where target keywords have no page dedicated to them. Seldom can content simply be moved page-for-page from the old website to the new one. Overlaps and gaps are almost inevitable and will crush ongoing SEO efforts.

### C. Custom Title Tags

Title tags are the most important on-site element for SEO, and must be written by an SEO expert. Title tags must be unique for each page of the website, include the appropriate target keyword, and meet various technical requirements and best practices for style, punctuation and character count.

### D. Custom Meta Description Tags

```
<meta property="og:title" content="Internet Marketing Company, Firm — Online Marketing Agency" />
<meta property="og:site_name" content="Straight North"/>
<meta property="og:image" content="https://www.straightnorth.com/sites/default/files/sn-social-badge.jpg" />

  <meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=utf-8" />
<link rel="shortcut icon" href="https://www.straightnorth.com/sites/default/files/favicon.png" type="image/png" />
<meta name="description" content="Get more online leads. Learn how our full service Internet marketing company deliv
<meta name="generator" content="Drupal 7 (http://drupal.org)" />
<link rel="canonical" href="https://www.straightnorth.com/" />
<link rel="shortlink" href="https://www.straightnorth.com/" />
  <title>Internet Marketing Company, Firm — Online Marketing Agency</title>

  <!-- BEGIN Modernizr -->
```

Meta description tags are snippets of text that often appear under the link in Google search results. Because meta descriptions influence click-throughs, unique meta description tags must be written by professional copywriters skilled in conversion optimization. Strong meta descriptions have a measurable impact on lead generation growth.

### E. Header Tags

Header tags (H1-H6) are important places to insert keywords; Google crawlers interpret header tags as significant indicators of a website page's main themes. Because these page headlines and subheads also facilitate scanning, they must be written engagingly and persuasively, as well as to achieve SEO objectives.

### F. Optimized Body Content

SEO-performing body content is not only persuasive, relevant and informative, it is also optimized with the proper use of target keywords and related phrases. Using a copywriter skilled in SEO is essential, since too many keywords, poorly placed keywords, and too few keywords undermine organic search visibility.

## PART 4: COPYWRITING

Professional copywriting is essential for lead generation. If copywriting fails to inform, persuade and present relevant information, conversions suffer no matter how much traffic funnels into the website.

Companies frequently underestimate the difficulty of executing high-level, lead-generating copywriting for their websites. Here are the key components of content for a high performance lead generation website.

### Copywriting: Content Quality Factors



Website content needs to meet several quality criteria to maximize lead generation and branding. In addition, if SEO is part of the marketing mix, all of these criteria affect Google ranking performance. The quality criteria are:

- **Relevance** — Content must be highly relevant to the target audience in terms of subject matter and style.

- **Persuasiveness** — Professional copywriters make copy persuasive by writing from the customer's point of view, storytelling, applying psychological principles for stimulating decision-making, weaving in customer testimonials and a host of other techniques.

- **Authority** — Making content authoritative and credible requires research, fact-checking, proper use of technical terms, and careful editing and proofreading.

- **Usefulness** — Content must solve a customer's problem, make a customer's life easier, or in some other way provide important benefits. A great deal of business content is not useful because it is written too much from the company's point of view rather than the customer's.

- **Sharability** — Exceptional website content is highly sharable, meaning that it is easy and tempting for readers to share it on social media, and forward it to colleagues and decision-makers. Content overloaded with jargon, with no clear point, or confusingly written fails the sharability test.

## Copywriting: Typography

ctetur faucibus pretium. Vestibulum facilisis metus felis, ac auctor arcu ornare et. Cras non sodales nulla, a blandit quam. usce condimentum tempus ante, quis egestas lorem vestibulum eget. Praesent a lorem rhoncus, lacinia risus sed, pulvinar gula. Duis iaculis ut risus nec pulvinar. Proin sollicitudin augue ut tortor vulputate, sed lacinia orci pretium. Donec nunc sem, ncidunt eget blandit et, efficitur nec tortor. Duis non **pay attention**. Sed purus augue, tincidunt sit amet feugiat sed, auctor e sus. Fusce iaculis, sapien eget tempor sagittis, augue erat lacinia eros, et tristique augue risus vel nisl. Integer magna lorem aximus gravida dignissim nec, elementum quis augue. Pellentesque eget neque nec eros mollis maximus varius sit amet auris. Morbi non ultricies magna. Phasellus eu ullamcorper eros, vel commodo leo. Proin eget fringilla diam. Aenean ac mol i. Nunc molestie lobortis tellus. Curabitur at erat id dui interdum interdum id a dui. Pellentesque habitant morbi tristique

Not only is the *substance* of content important for lead generation, but also the *style* in which it is displayed matters greatly. Typographical techniques make scanning content and zeroing-in on important messaging points easy for readers. Key typography techniques:

- **Headers and Subheads** — These content elements should be informative, intriguing, and if SEO is involved, incorporate keywords. Expert copywriters spend as much time composing headers and subheads as they do body text!

- **Bulleted and Numbered Lists** — List formatting enhances scannability and draws emphasis to important information.

- **Bold and Italics** — Used selectively, bold and italic text forces readers to pay attention. (See image above.)

- **Short Paragraphs** — Paragraphs longer than five or six lines overwhelm readers and may cause them to exit the Web page — without converting.
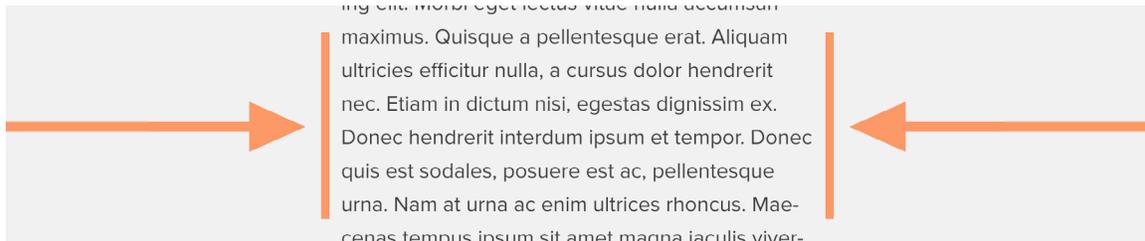


- **Line Width** (above) — Body text width that is too wide or too narrow is hard to read in desktop view, again deterring readers and letting conversions slip through a company's online fingers.

- **Image Captions** — Since reader attention is drawn to images, captions enable a company to position critical persuasive points and calls-to-action where they cannot be missed. This simple technique greatly improves conversions.

## Copywriting: SEO, Substance and Branding



GOOD COPY + SEARCH ENGINE = WEBSITE DISCOVERY

Overall, lead generation website content must meet substantive, SEO and branding goals. Too much of one and not enough of another results in content that appears stilted, incomplete, unprofessional and/or misaligned with brand perception. Common content problems that disrupt the balance:

- **Too much substance** — "Information dumps" are tempting to the internal staff, but produce websites long on information that doesn't speak to customers and prospects.

- **Style inconsistency** — When style shifts from formal to informal, from low key to high pressure, website visitors become confused or come to doubt the company's sincerity or stability.

- **Inattention to keywords** — Even if SEO is not underway, using strategically important keywords strengthens the conversion power of website copy, because they force copy to use the language customers and prospects use when looking for the products and services the company sells.

## PART 5: CONVERSION OPTIMIZATION

Part art and part science, conversion optimization is a broad set of techniques used by Web designers and copywriters to squeeze the most conversions out of every website page's page views.

Even if a website has covered all of the usability, mobile, SEO and content bases, failure to implement sound conversion optimization will stifle lead generation. Here are the key conversion optimization features of a high performance lead generation website.

### Conversion Optimization: Calls to Action



Keeping users' attention focused on the one thing your company wants them to do is important. Using a fixed call to action (CTA) banner at the top or bottom of the page — using the "sticky" navigation discussed in the Mobile section — ensures that your conversion message is always in sight.

CTA button color and text often have a significant impact on conversions. Button color should be consistent across the website and unique to the primary CTA. If secondary CTAs are used, the color scheme should be different.

## Conversion Optimization: Phone Number Placement



Phone number placement for mobile viewing was discussed in the Mobile section. For desktop view, the strongest position for the phone number is in the upper right portion of the universal navigation bar (see image above).

The clearer and more consistently the phone number displays, the better. Phone inquiries are often far more urgent and/or complex than form submissions, so stimulating phone inquiries is arguably job number one for a lead generation website.

## Conversion Optimization: Form Design and Functionality
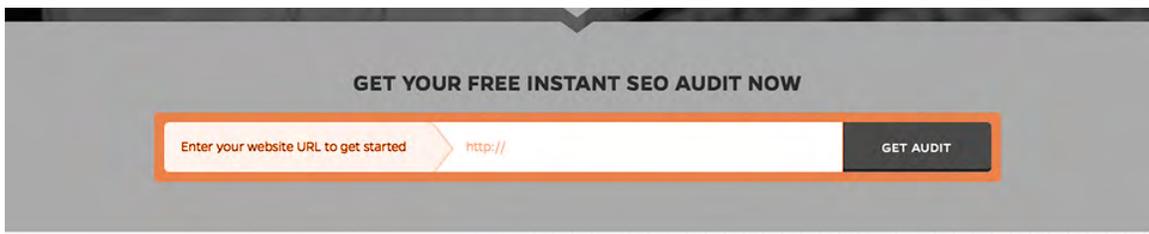


The shorter the form and the easier it is to complete, the better. Anything more than four or five required fields, and the average user is more likely to exit rather than bother to fill out the form. Companies frequently err by trying to capture too much information; they lose sight of the fact they are trying to get prospects to raise their hands.

## SUPPLEMENT: FORM AND PHONE TRACKING BEST PRACTICES

*A high performance lead generation website is built using the techniques discussed in this white paper. However, for a lead generation website to be world class, it must be built with rock-solid lead tracking functionality. These articles by Straight North partner Aaron Wittersheim, originally published on the* **Lead Generation Insights Blog***, present an informative overview of critical lead tracking issues.*

### Tracking: 12 Common Website Form Lead Tracking Issues

When we first start working with new clients, many of them are dropping all of the leads from their website into a single bucket called "Web Leads." This makes informing a client about which Internet marketing channels or campaigns drove those leads impossible. Without complete and accurate information, clients cannot evaluate performance regarding specific channels or campaigns. Furthermore, they cannot accurately calculate ROI or know what adjustments can be made to improve specific channels or campaigns.

1. **Using email addresses on your website.**
   Displaying an email address anywhere on your website is a kiss of death when it comes to lead tracking. Sales leads received over email cannot be tracked back to the marketing source of the lead. Even if you created a single email address and used it only on your website, the best position you will be in is bucketing all email leads as "Web Leads." You will have no idea which Internet marketing channel or campaign produced the lead.

   Also, many companies are not aware that email addresses on websites are a magnet for never-ending spam. Spammers have scripts that crawl the Internet looking for email addresses; once they find your email address, it is added to lists and sold over and over again. You will receive a growing daily stream of spam to that email address — forever.

2. **Not having a form.**
   If you want website visitors to contact your business, your website needs to have at least one form. This can be as simple as a form on a Contact Us page. Many visitors prefer to fill out a form instead of calling. If you don't provide a form, you will miss out on a great number of sales leads.

3. **Hiding your form.**
   Make sure your form isn't hidden in your website. Any business that relies on sales leads should have a page with a form linked from the header of all pages or in the top navigation bar. When your visitors are ready to make contact, be sure to make finding the form easy for them.

4.  **Not knowing the marketing source of your form submissions.**
    Most business websites with online forms fail to track the marketing source of each form submission. Without this data, your only option is to call all of these form submissions "Web Leads." Since you don't know which Internet marketing channel or campaign drove each form submission, you are not able to calculate ROI data or improve your campaigns. You need to know the marketing source of each form submission. This can be done with some Web development work around the referral URL and cookies.

5.  **Relying on an email from your form to notify you of a sales lead.**
    Most company websites have forms that do a single function: send an email when the forms are submitted. These companies assume that every email from their website makes its way to their inbox. Due to spam filters, this doesn't always happen. To be sure that you are not missing sales leads from your website, be sure to use a server side programming language to store all form submissions in a database. Do continual QC checks to verify that emails of every form submission in your database are getting to you.

    The other issue that many businesses forget about is what email address is set up on your website as the email to which all form submissions should be sent. Many times, staff email addresses are used on the website's forms. If that staff member leaves the company, the fact that the website needs to be updated with a new email address is commonly forgotten. One simple solution is to use an email distribution group as the email address on your website. This allows you to manage who gets these emails through your email system instead of having a developer make changes to your website.

6.  **Having errors on your form page.**
    Be sure to test and retest all forms on your website to make sure they are working properly. When you test your form, try to make mistakes so you can see how the form's validation responds. Imagine your visitors filling out your form to generate a sales lead, but your form stopped working. Changes to a website's code or hosting server can break your forms. Be sure to set a reminder for a monthly test to verify that all forms are working correctly.

7.  **Having errors in your form validation.**
    Test your form validation and error messages to make sure they are simple for your visitors. Sometimes Web developers implement complex and/or conflicting front-end and back-end validation that makes successfully submitting your form difficult to impossible for visitors. Things like requiring a phone number field to consist of only10 digits will cause a lot of visitors to receive an error. You would be amazed at how easily a simple form can become difficult for visitors to complete. Sometimes visitors do not notice the form validation errors when they submit the form and they just browse off the page without ever successfully submitting your form.

8. **Using CAPTCHA.**
   Using a CAPTCHA can make completing your form problematic for visitors, which will decrease your form's conversion rate.

9. **Having too many fields in your form.**
   The fewer form fields your form has, the greater your conversion rate will be. Forms with many fields scare visitors away.

10. **Outsourcing your form to a third party** (like WuFoo, Hubspot, Marketo, etc.).
    Many companies outsource their form to a third party because either building a form or integrating a form into another software application seems difficult. Rarely do companies take the time to understand what they are giving up by having another company run the form on its website. A number of issues can occur if you give up ownership and hosting of your form to a third party. Forms are one of the most important parts of a lead generation campaign — be sure you keep ownership and control of all of your forms.

11. **Not validating your form submissions.**
    Most companies classify all form submissions as conversions, which is a huge mistake. Many form submissions are spam, people looking for jobs, sales reps trying to sell their things, etc. Some companies may be surprised to find that over 25 percent of their form submissions are not sales leads at all. The solution to this is lead validation, where each form submission is reviewed by a human and marked as a sales lead or not a sales lead. Validating your form submissions before you consider counting form submissions as conversions or sales leads is imperative.

12. **Relying on analytics platform conversion data instead of your actual form submissions.**
    Many companies rely on analytics to track how many form submissions were received instead of using the actual form submission data. If you rely on analytics tracking for your form submission number, you are left dealing with a count of how many times a form was submitted. If analytics tells you that eight forms were submitted, you have no idea which forms those eight were. Two of them could have been spammers, three of them job applicants, one trying to sell you something and the remaining two are actual sales leads. Using analytics data, you would never know and you would just assume that all eight were actual sales leads. When running Internet marketing campaigns, measuring campaigns using actual form submission data and not simple counts in analytics is very important.

## Tracking: 6 Common Website Phone Lead Tracking Issues

When we first start working with new clients, a huge majority of the time they place all of the leads from their website into a single bucket called "Web Leads." This translates to the client not knowing which Internet marketing channels or campaigns drove those leads. Without that information, knowing the performance of specific channels or campaigns is impossible. Furthermore, the company cannot accurately calculate ROI or know what adjustments can be made to improve specific channels or campaigns.

1. **Hiding your phone number.**
   Many company websites display the phone number only on the Contact Us page of the website. This makes finding the phone number and generating a sales lead for the company hard for visitors. Best practice for a lead generation website is to have a phone number displayed at least once at the top of every page of the website. Some experts recommend displaying a phone number multiple times on each page.

2. **Relying on counting inbound phone calls.**
   Some companies analyze phone company bills to see how many inbound calls they received. Other companies have the person who answers the phone count how many inbound calls he or she receives, which introduces human error. Without knowing the marketing source of these phone calls, a count of inbound phone calls provides no meaningful lead tracking data.

3. **Not knowing the marketing source of your phone calls.**
   Having a phone number clearly displayed on your website is a start, but to track sales leads you need to know what marketing channel or campaign generated each phone call. (See No. 4.)

4. **Not using a call-tracking provider.**
   A call-tracking provider is required to track the marketing source of inbound phone calls from Internet marketing channels and campaigns. Many different vendors are available when looking for a call-tracking solution. The best solutions offer three features: (1) They assign your company a unique pool of phone numbers that are dedicated only to your company. You do not want your phone numbers shared by other companies. (2) They have the ability to assign a unique phone number directly to a single visitor on your website. This allows you to uncover the exact referral URL that was used by the visitor to reach your website. (3) They offer call recording features and remember to turn that feature on, as most disable it by default.

5. **Not validating phone calls.**

   With a call-tracking solution in place, companies can now get a count of inbound phone calls segmented by each Internet marketing channel or campaign. However, most companies classify these phone call counts as conversions, which is a huge mistake. They forget that phone-tracking technology isn't perfect and has a lot of noise in the data. Many phone calls that are tracked come from callers who dialed a wrong number, telemarketers who run auto-dialer software, people looking for jobs, sales reps trying to sell their things, etc. Some companies may be surprised to find that over 50 percent of their tracked calls are not sales leads. The solution to this is lead validation where each phone call recording is reviewed by a human and marked as a sales lead or not a sales lead. Validating your phone leads is imperative before you consider any phone call counts as conversions or sales leads.

6. **Not including phone leads in your conversion data.**

   The fact that many clients disregard phone leads when analyzing their PPC campaign conversions or Google Analytics conversion data is surprising. If a company displays a phone number on its website, but doesn't include those conversions in campaign reporting — sales lead data is flawed. Think about a company that gets 10 leads per day, and one day it receives three phone leads and seven form submissions. The next day, it receives seven phone leads and three form submissions. If the company failed to track phone leads, it would be overlooking 50 percent of its conversions. Then, imagine if this company is modifying its PPC campaign based on only 50 percent of the conversion data; it would be making changes to reduce bids or pause keywords that could have been producing the majority of its phone leads.

**ABOUT STRAIGHT NORTH**

Straight North is an Internet marketing agency that helps growth-minded, small and middle-market firms generate online sales leads and e-commerce revenue. With an in-house team of over 60 full-time marketers, we have an experienced team of Web designers, developers, copywriters, editors and usability specialists.

Our services include SEO, PPC, display advertising, email marketing and responsive websites.

We are the only online agency that validates and reports sales leads in real time. This unique capability gives clients the ability to evaluate campaigns with unmatched accuracy, as well as monitor their leads with unmatched speed.

With clients throughout the United States, we have offices in Chicago, Charlotte, Baltimore and Washington, DC.

Excelling in responsive Web design and development, copywriting, conversion optimization and SEO, we have built highly effective lead generation websites for clients across a wide range of industries. To see our work, please browse our portfolio: https://www.straightnorth.com/portfolio

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