



**Presents:**

# **THE DIGITAL CAPITALIST**

**Developing Your Brand for the Digital Age**



# **The Digital Capitalist: Developing Your Brand in the Digital Age**

**:: Web Design, SEO, Audience Development, PPC and Yield Optimization in 2016  
and beyond ::**

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The Digital Capitalist: Developing Your Brand in the Digital Age

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Dustin D. Peterson is the co-founder and CEO of Apex Digital Media, an industry leading Digital Marketing agency headquartered in Beverly Hills, California. Dustin started Apex Digital Media in 2014 out of his garage in Agoura Hills with business partner Anthony Iadonisi, who was similarly fed up with an inherent lack of attention to basic client needs in their industry. The two of them decided to create a full service agency that fused audience development with high quality design.

Dustin has a vast array of experience in the digital media space. He began his career in digital media at a small tech start-up in Panorama City in 2000. The company operated a paywall script and processed credit cards for website owners who sold membership access to their websites. He then spent 2005 - 2010 working for ValueClick Media (*now Conversant Media*), assisting top tier digital publishers like Forbes and RealClearPolitics in getting the most revenue possible out of their online content. After a brief stint with a small start up Dustin was eventually hired as Director of Business Development at Digital Media Management (DM2) where he was instrumental in helping to launch and monetize the Women's Influencer Network or "WIN." WIN is a digital network of female celebrity properties and social media channels. After consulting independently in audience development for clients like USA Today Sports Media Group he eventually founded Apex Digital Media and the company is now entering its 2<sup>nd</sup> year of profitability.

## ::::: Introduction :::::



A few weeks ago I started thinking about how much blogging I was doing. What was the common thread to it all? Marketing & Design was the first thought but I wanted to be broader than that. I wanted to think more conceptually. What it eventually broke down to was - how to make money online by producing your own content be it written, visual, audio, etc. etc.

The good news is it's an amazing time right now. Anyone with an idea and the drive to see it through can build their own personal brand, market it on their own and make money as their own boss. **I like to think of it as a new paradigm - "Digital Capitalism."** In our era rather than work for someone else's company more and more people are beginning to create their own personal income streams. These days it's very easy to write a blog, create videos that entertain or inform, or some other type of content then monetize that content as a source of income. **We live in a time where it's not uncommon to have a self-created livelihood.** That's the goal for not just digital professionals but for anyone - to be able to do something you love and get paid for it. Technology has enabled that landscape today and just about anyone of can create their own personal stream of income on the web if they are consistent.



I also wanted to write something that felt more conversational and less like a manual. This stuff can be pretty tedious so I wanted the read to be fluid and comfortable. As if I am speaking directly to you. Hopefully I've achieved that tone.

Success in the world of digital capitalism is obviously not something that happens overnight. I'm not going to tell you to quit your job tomorrow because I have the get rich quick secret for life, anyone who tells you that is a scam artist. This process takes a lot of work, but hopefully it's a labor of love for you because you are creating something you truly enjoy. If it is then everyone wins. You get to do something you're passionate about, content consumers get incredible content that is driven by real human passion and advertisers get genuinely great venues and audiences to showcase their brands. So that's my high minded introduction to why I'm writing this book, I hope you find it useful.

## ::::: CHAPTER 1 – Your Digital Brand :::::

### **Your Brand is Important**

When it comes to shopping people's habits can vary, but in general most people tend to buy what they are familiar with. Some people are bargain hunters who look for the cheapest price possible. Personally, I will pay a little more for quality, or at least for a brand I have used before that has been consistent. I'll give you a powerful example of how this mentality drives my shopping habits. Detergent – there are 1,000 detergents on the market, but there is only one detergent that no matter how dirty or smelly my clothes are makes them smell like a fresh summer day... I will pay \$5 - \$10 more for that consistent quality. Some of the other detergents are cheaper, but they will not make my clothes smell like my mother washed them. To me and many like me this is important – and this is what it means to have a brand. Building a brand and a brand image are really the first thing a business should think about. It's who you are and perception is reality. This is true not only in the retail world but also in the digital world. If you do things in the digital realm that cheapen your brand it carries over into the real market. So it's good to know what things to stay away from and where to really focus your energy when moving into digital marketing.



### **The Old Way**

When the internet first began to explode as a source of income the ultimate goal was just to make a lot of money quickly. Google enabled this along with several other players, Yahoo! Being the 2nd largest. The money created an incentive not for website publishers to create great sites, but to create sites that made them the most money. This meant slapping several obtrusive ads on sites, creating pages that are thin on content, having poor load time, etc. Eventually Google started to realize that this was causing the user experience to be poor for their users. For this reason in 2012 they altered their algorithm to get rid of publishers who were gaming the system simply to make a buck and began to favor websites with well conceived content. This was likely one of the largest shifts in web economics since the birth of Google.



## Arbitrage

Arbitrage in digital is much like it is on the stock market. A way to generate as much revenue as quickly as possible. The way this was done is simple math. You have a page with ads that pay out a certain rate for the amount of people who see them. You go and buy traffic that is cheaper than your payouts and send it to the page. Then collect a profit on the ads. It's that simple, pay less for traffic than you make on advertising. The problem with this system in it's prime was that it created an incentive for website publishers not to focus on making great content that users would want to consume, but to get as many page views as possible and make a profit from the ads on the page. As you can imagine this resulted in pages cluttered with 100's of ads



sometimes, people hiding ads secretly in "iframes" (*a way to basically embed one page into another if you're unfamiliar with code*) and on and on. The other thing this did was create an incentive for people to find cheap web traffic sources. This resulted in the rise of a lot of fake traffic driven through XML feeds and other shady sources. In some cases this type of cheap traffic was altogether fake as in it was robots that would surf pages and click ads - and in other cases it was forced redirects or even malware that had infected people's computers

doing things silently via their IP address. If all this sounds crazy it is... billions of dollars were exchanged in digital ad revenue over the past 15 years and the best estimates are that at least 20% of it was fraudulent.

## Black Hat SEO

It used to be that you could get decent rankings by simply generating lots of low level inbound links. Even if these links were forced it worked. Not anymore, low quality content, spammy title & meta tags will actually hurt your SEO against Google's evolved algorithms. As a result many of the techniques that once generated fantastic first page results are seriously hurting the performance of many websites today. By introducing the Penguin 1.0 Algorithm Update in April 2012 Google forever altered the playing field. Penguin targeted sites that were using the aforementioned spammy and unnatural linking tactics to bolster ranking in search engine placement.

Since traffic = money anything that drove traffic became prevalent. As arbitrage was the method of buying fake traffic to make ad money, Black Hat SEO is arbitrage's cousin. It's a "take no prisoners" approach to SEO that involved keyword spamming or repeating your keyword as much as possible on your page to try and trick Google.

Backlinking through huge networks of hidden websites and links is now something that is frowned upon. Black Hat SEO was the way that people who understood Google's algorithm gamed the system with that knowledge. Those days are over.



### **Old SEO Techniques No Longer Work:**

When Blackhat SEO was prevalent things like "spider links" and keyword spamming were the way that SEO firms attempted to generate traffic for their clients. If you look at a lot of older, more local business sites that have multiple locations you'll see lists of keyword links in their footer. This type of location spamming now actually works against you. Repeating your keyword too many times for example will flag you as a spammer and knock your organic search ranking down a peg. Hiding "spider links" or keyword spamming links to multiple locations in your footer will get you knocked down a rung as it looks like you are trying to cheat. Old SEO content techniques didn't involve much more than using a keyword phrase three to five times every 100 words in the body of an article and putting the keyword in the titles on the page. These types of "engineered to rank" content writing techniques might still work in some cases but they are dangerous and will be wiped out over time. It is better to write quality content around a theme than to try and trick the search engines through keyword density, frequency and keyword stuffing. Google's A.I. will no longer permit it either.

## ::::: CHAPTER 2 – Generating Revenue With Digital Content :::::



### **A Website**

Where to start... the best place to start is with a website, or in some cases a landing page. In 2015 that website had better be responsive as well since the majority of internet users are going to be on mobile devices. A good website doesn't really need to be too complicated if you're a small / local business, on the other hand if you're a drop shipped, e-commerce storefront your site or at least your product feed is going to be a bit complex. So the nature of the site is really going to be based on your goals.

### **A Social Media Presence**

Like it or not social media is where all the cool kids hang out and share stuff these days. It's also an important part of modern SEO. Having a social presence that is engaging with people on a daily basis shows Google and other search engines that you are a real life person doing real life things and not just a robot trying to generate ad views... that's not to say there aren't still plenty of those robots we just talked about doing the same thing in social media but that's a whole other can of worms. Having a social media presence gives you a direct line to your readers, viewers, listeners, etc. It also gives you a window into what's trending within the fields or subject matter relevant to what you do. It is a very important part of making a living online. Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ are absolutely necessary for any real blog / business / photographer / artist / etc. to exist on. These days we're also seeing the rise of image based social networks such as Instagram and Pinterest. If you're a visual artist of any kind these can be incredible tools to leverage in building a following for yourself. Pinterest for example allows you to link your photo's to a source, back to your own website and works as a recommendation engine, recommending your images to people who have shown an interest in similar content. So outside of the big 3 (*Facebook, Twitter, Google+*) you may want to create a presence on other social platforms depending on the nature of your business, LinkedIn for example is a great one for marketing & media. More and more Photographers now share their work on Instagram, Twitter is great for indie music, etc.



### **Good Content:**

When creating content, you should really take time to think about the quality of what you're doing. It's important to focus on creating content that is relevant and useful over creating large amounts. One of the best ways to structure content around a given theme is to use the principle of the **content pillar**. By using a broad content theme and writing satellite pieces that fall under that umbrella you can capture a variety of organic search results for keywords that are relevant to what you're doing. Keep in mind that users are interested in content that speaks to their specific desires and interests. When you put the user first and create content that is designed to answer certain questions and provides a real value you will earn a trusted audience. Once you have a trusted audience advertisers are going to pay you to reach that audience. Developing great content overall can be broken down to 3 simple rules:

1. Provide real value
2. Earn the trust of your audience
3. Engage with, Learn and Understand the wants and needs of your audience.

### **Elements of Great Content:**

Content needs to be engaging. One of the big mistakes that marketers make is to overtly sell their brand and talk about themselves. Creating great content requires you to consider the needs of your readers and provide information they will find informative, thoughtful and entertaining. While content should be unique it doesn't need to be completely original. It just can't, be copied and pasted directly from someone else's work. It's fine to take an article and re-write it but you should always quote the source. The best practice is to find several different sources of course and write a completely original work using that information. Overall your piece of content needs to have value of some sort, maybe that value is entertainment? Maybe it is a piece that educates the user on a scientific theory or shows them how to fix the hard drive on their computer? Whatever the case it needs to have a purpose and provide value to a user, the more it speaks to these qualities the better you will rank in search results. Overall, the most important quality of good content is that it helps users find an answer to what they're searching for. Create content that helps customers make some type of informed decision and you win.



For most business owners the idea of creating new content daily, weekly, monthly can be quite a task. This begs the question, is there a way to more easily and efficiently create great content? The short answer is no, there are no shortcuts. You can hire a team in India to write massive amounts of content and you will get what you pay for. Content that has no real voice, is in broken English, or flat out doesn't make sense. The only real way to create quality content is to invest time and effort to do the research and write something that is truly useful to a reader and flows in a conversational tone.



## **Traffic**

Traffic is the all important factor in being online. If you're not getting traffic, no one is seeing you. Traffic is also money, if you're a publisher that traffic turns into valuable ad impressions that can be sold to advertisers. If you're selling products and services your traffic is potential customers browsing your wares. Just about everything we do as a company is designed to help publishers get traffic to their website.

## **Advertising / Monetization**

If your site isn't designed to sell products chances are you want to monetize it with advertising. The best place to start for any publisher is going to be Google AdSense but once you have traffic to sell there are going to be a lot of options. Ad Networks are always looking for new sources of traffic to run their campaigns on. Aside from standard banners there are several other incremental revenue opportunities.

## ::::: CHAPTER 3 - Goal Setting & Tracking :::::



### What Makes You Money?

As a Digital Capitalist the first thing to consider is what actions are going to make you money online. Every scenario is different. For example, if you publish an informational blog the amount of revenue you make would be different than someone who sells rare antiques through an e-commerce store front. It's important to consider what actions make you money and how to get users to take them at a large scale. There are several steps you can take to help make sure this occurs.

### Content Goals

What are the goals of the content you create? Do you want to inform your user? Are you trying to sell something? Bring traffic to your site? If the goal is to sell a product you will want to optimize your pages for sales. Make sure you have a strong call to action, phone numbers and emails for the user to show transparency, etc. etc. On the other hand if you just want traffic to make money on ads you will want to do some keyword research and see what topics and keywords are trending for your industry. One useful strategy is to create informative content and position yourself as an influencer in your field. Doing so creates a level of trust with your audience which can be invaluable for the long term viability of your business.

## Setting a CPA Goal

CPA Means "Cost Per Acquisition" just about everyone doing business online should have a CPA goal as part of their model. We'll use an example of iPhone cases. Say Tim runs a store called cheapiphonecases.com - he buys cases wholesale and gets them each for about \$2.00 from China. Tim marks up his cases 400% to \$8.00 so his profit after cost is \$6.00 per case sold. Knowing this, Tim doesn't want to spend more than \$6.00 to sell an iPhone case. If he buys 10 clicks from Google AdWords at \$0.40 per click  $10 \times 0.40 = \$4.00$  if one of these 10 clicks results in a sale Tim made a \$2.00 profit. Therefore Tim's 'eCPA' should be approx \$4.00. Tim doesn't want to spend more than this to sell an iPhone case or he is not making a real profit. This formula can be applied to just about any product or service, and you can play with the numbers and create all kinds of scenarios. It's a lot like "arbitrage" but within a code of ethics.

### Common Digital Strategies



## Optimizing for CPA

Once you have a CPA Goal you want to do what it takes to make sure you can meet it. There are a variety of tools that can be implemented right away to help insure you are working towards your goals but simple things would include: calls to action, large text and images, a visible phone number if you're selling products, etc. There are 2 basic tools we recommend adding to your site as soon as you launch, or even better including them before launch. They are tiny pieces of code that can easily be added by your web team if this isn't something you take care of yourself.

**1. Google Analytics:** Google analytics is one of the most powerful free tools available to business owners. Everyone is using search and you should be able to see how people who find your site interact with it. Google Analytics gives you that ability and more. It's difficult to grow your traffic without knowing how much your getting so analytics really gives you the ability to benchmark your traffic, see which content is the most popular with users, see how users flow through your website, etc.

**2. Google Search Console (formerly “Webmaster Tools”):** Search console has quite a few features that can be extremely helpful but the most important is the ability to see which keywords are producing traffic for you organically. With Google Search Console if you run an informative blog about sea otters for example and "Alaskan sea otters" happens to be a popular search term that's bringing you traffic, webmaster tools will show you exactly which keywords people are searching, which pages on your site are coming up and even how many people are clicking on the pages.



These are the high level basics for setting your goals and implementing tracking. There are a world of different options out there for the savvy marketer and a lot of them are great. It's a matter of experimenting, testing and finding what works best for your brand. Google is always a safe bet and tends to be a good benchmark to measure other similar types of technology companies against.

#### **::::: CHAPTER 4 - Producing & Optimizing Content :::::**

Now that all the techincal stuff has been hammered out it's time to start creating.

#### **Becoming an Authority**

To be seen as an authority online you need to be an accepted source of advice in a particular area. In Joe Pulizzi's book 'Epic Content Marketing' he suggests that finding a niche that you can own is the key to becoming an authority. He gives an example of a pet store owner that decided that they could never become an authority in the Pet Supplies marketplace but could instead become an expert in the "Pet Travel Advice Business." Irrespective of your business there is always some way for you to find something related to it that you can own. To become an authority today, you cannot depend on your website alone. You need to make sure that your brand and advice is promoted all around the web. One of the accepted realities of Search is that quality backlinks to your site remain the Holy Grail. Links from relevant sites validate your brand as a trusted resource, which is why they are such an



important ranking factor. The best way to generate backlinks to your site is to develop great content that your visitors love and in turn want to share with their visitors.



### **Creating Reusable Content**

Creating a long term marketing strategy for a brand is never an easy task, however creating a "content pillar" or umbrella theme helps make the process more simple and scalable. This high level or umbrella theme should be authoritative work that can be dissected and broken out into several other more detailed and in-depth pieces of content. What you're essentially doing is what I'm doing here with this e-book, creating a "source" work that you can write satellite pieces of content around. Other good examples of this source work, umbrella or content pillars include long form articles, evergreen content, eBooks, videos, infographics, webinars and presentations. Each pillar needs a theme. The theme is typically determined by a need that exists for one or more of your customer personas. The pillar should be created not to overtly sell your business, but to establish your brand as an industry leader. So when you create content it shouldn't have a "salesy" tone but be informative and useful. You don't want to "give away the farm" either but you want to give your users some of the value they might receive if they did business with you. You will build a loyal audience and following this way that will translate into real business.

To give you an example, Apex Digital Media recently wrote a blog about how to resize your ads responsively for mobile devices. The article was very popular on Twitter and was re-tweeted and shared by quite a few people at large and respected digital agencies even. Apex Digital Media does web design and this is a service we charge for but by giving that bit of information away we get so much more in return. So you want to be sparing but provide real value to your users. Once you have an informative, authoritative content theme or core, you can create several branches or satellite pieces that will serve to expand your audience as well as strengthen and broaden your original theme.

## Where Do I Start?

If you're anything like me your mind is already racing with the possibilities, "where do I start?" - great question and the answer is - with questions. The best way to start figuring out what type of content you produce is think about the types of questions your customers or clients ask you on a day to day basis. It's a safe bet if you get a question a lot there are people searching it, and chances are if you provide those people with useful information they will call you up later when they have other needs that you may be able to meet. You should always be considering what your audience, customers, prospects, etc. care about and what they are going to be looking for or asking questions about.

Create content that responds to these needs and you will have virtual gold on your hands. I heard a wise person say recently something to the effect that "**cold calling and old school sales is dead because everything is at your fingertips**". Sales today is making yourself visible to the people who are searching for you" -- I don't think any single sentiment sums this up better than that. If you want to sell your product or get noticed you need to make yourself visible. In today's world of convenience everything a customer wants is at their fingertips so you need to make sure that when they reach for that phone and search for what you sell, there's a good chance they'll see you in those results. Which is a great segue to our next section...



## Optimizing Content For the Modern Digital Ecosystem

When you create content or pages for the web the best place to start is by asking yourself the following question:

*"If I were a user searching for information about this subject in Google, what would I type in?"*

The reason you ask yourself this question of course is because you want to optimize the page to the keywords people would use to search. For the sake of optimization it's good to have your keyword in the root domain itself, but not always necessary to achieve great results either. The Yoast plugin for WordPress is probably one of the greatest tools there is if you use that particular platform. Here is a list of some of the major things that Yoast pays attention to when considering SEO for webpages:

- **Keyword Density:** You will want to repeat your keyword a reasonable amount of time throughout your pages but not too many times. Google is kind of like Goldie Locks, they want everything "just right" - but the people who take heed also reap the rewards.
- **Readability:** Yoast uses the Fleisch Reading Ease Test to measure the readability of your content. It's a good idea to use short concise sentences - I have a big problem with that as you can probably tell.
- **Outbound Links:** Google wants you to link up to other sites, try to do it where appropriate but don't do it just for the sake of doing it either. You get the idea.
- **Page Title:** Your focus keyword should be somewhere in the first part of your title for best results.
- **Subheadings:** Make sure subheadings repeat your keyword
- **Image Alt Tags:** Make sure your images are properly tagged – also w/ keywords.
- **Keyword in URL:** Is your keyword in your URL? If not it should be, put it there.
- **Keyword in Title:** A lot of these are no brainers – of course your keyword should be in the title.
- **Meta Description:** The meta description is a bit more tricky because you have a character limit but you want to get as close to that limit as possible without going over. You also want to repeat your keyword – seeing a pattern here?

**Apple iPod / Nano 4G Car Charger in White** - CableWholesale.com  
www.cablewholesale.com > Apple Products > iPhone/iPad Accessories ▾  
★★★★★ Rating: 4.5 - 1 vote - \$2.56  
4 days ago - Save time with this iPhone car charger. Perfect for charging on the go. Simply plug it into a cigarette lighter in your car to recharge your iPod.

**iPod Nano 4th Generation Charger** | eBay  
www.ebay.com/bhp/ipod-nano-4th-generation-charger ▾  
\$1.99 - In stock  
25+ items - Find great deals on eBay for iPod Nano 4th Generation Charger ...  
2 USB Charger Data Cable for Apple iPod Nano 3G 4G 5G 6G 2nd 3rd ... \$3.47.  
3FT USB Home Wall + Car Charger + Data Noodle Cable for iPhone ... \$4.25.

**EZOPower Car Charger for Apple iPod Nano 6G 5G 4G 3G 2G 1G ...**  
www.amazon.com/EZOPower-Charger-Generation.../dp/B004VBJSHA ▾  
EZOPower Car Charger for Apple iPod Nano 6G 5G 4G 3G 2G 1G / 6th 5th 4th 3rd ...  
Save \$2.00 on EZOPower 3.1A Dual-Outlet USB Car Charger - White when ...

- **Rich Snippets:** Rich Snippets are a way of displaying some of your site's content within Google search results. For example, if you are a pizza place with a variety of different types of pizzas you can show your top 5 pizza's in a Google search result for "Best Local Pizza"

Other important things to consider are anything that is a part of the user experience. Poor load time and technical errors are one example of technical elements that can have a big effect on SEO. The quicker your page loads, the better experience for an end user, the better your Google rankings.

## Negative SEO

Negative SEO is defined as external factors hindering your site's performance. It can be malicious and intentional, as in the case of a competitor adding toxic back links back to your site, or innocent and unintentional.

## Negative SEO is Not a Factor

The truth is that negative SEO is almost completely non-existent. Google's Matt Cutts (who is no longer active with Google) has spoken repeatedly about how well their algorithms root these practices out. Just in case things slip through the cracks, they have even added a "disavow tool" in Search Console (Webmaster Tools) that allows you to disavow bad links. Google's take is that the vast majority of sites will not need to use the tool and that their algorithms are really quite good at making sure that these bad links will not affect your site's rankings in any way.



## ::::: CHAPTER 5 - Audience Development :::::

Audience Development is a somewhat new way to say advertising. The reason I like it is that “audience” refers to a specific group of people. With the way that the web has evolved we want to be sure that an audience is as real as it can be. There’s way too much going on to prevent every last bit of robotic traffic out there and a lot of the bigger markets for it have technology that is starting to root the fake stuff out pretty quickly. As we discussed earlier, the arbitrage world created a huge market for traffic so as long as it looked like someone was viewing an ad you got paid. The new paradigm is a little more aligned with reality. **You have to work and invest to develop a REAL audience.** An audience composed of real people who will buy your product. If you have a healthy marketing budget you can develop a real audience relatively quickly. If you do not you can also build organically which takes longer but also usually results in a much stronger relationship between you and your consumers. In this next section we’re going to walk through all the best ways to develop REAL audience.



### SEO

Search Engine Optimization is a long complicated term for a very simple process. SEO is a nice shorthand simplification. In 2016 and beyond, SEO is about keyword optimization, fresh content and social proof. Now a lot of people are probably saying “*That doesn’t sound simple at all!*” but it is... read on for a further break down.

#### Best Practices

The most important thing you can do for SEO is align your website with best practices. The reason this is important is that Google’s biggest deciding factor is user experience. The policies that they have created for organically ranking sites are designed with this single goal in mind:

***PROVIDE THE USER WITH THE BEST AND MOST RELEVANT SEARCH RESULTS QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY***

Rules like the limiting the character length of your title tags, including a relevant meta description, etc. are in place to ensure that the SERP (*Search Engine Results Page*) looks clean and well laid out to a user who is searching for information. So it goes with just about all of Google's "best practices" – they are designed to help create an ecosystem where everyone wins. Content publishers can get the audience they want and the audience can easily seek out and find whatever it is they are looking for.

## **Keyword Optimization**

Probably the most important factor in SEO is keyword optimization. Search is obviously based on keywords so you will want to ask yourself the following question:

*"If I were searching for this, what would I type into Google / Bing / Yahoo! to find it?"*

That is the first step in Keyword Optimization. The next step is to weave these keywords and their synonyms into your content and page layout. This includes the URL string, the alt tags on your images, etc. etc. Aligning the keywords on all these elements ensures that Google's algorithms pull up your page in these searches. There is a delicate balance to maintain in order to avoid what is referred to by SEO's as "keyword spamming". The best way to prevent this is to use common sense. If your sentences or headings don't make sense and are just worded so as to repeat your keywords Google will notice. It's ALWAYS in your best interest to put your best foot forward and create content that speaks clearly to your users and isn't simply designed to crowbar your way into a search result. As you optimize your pages you need to make sure that the copy flows well and uses, but does not overuse the keywords you have selected. Finally, remember that SEO can take 3 – 6 months to start really producing results for you. So it's always more of a long term play.

## **Content & Social Ranking Factors**

SEO is essentially your play at organic search ranking. The "free" kind. It is also the best kind because you need to build real credibility with Google in order to be listed organically. They don't just jump anyone to the front of the line here. As a result, businesses with good intent who follow best practices can share a piece of these search results with multi-million dollar corporations. Google has essentially leveled the playing field for entrepreneurs who are willing to work to show their credibility and are running credible high quality businesses. The way you take advantage of this opportunity is by creating content that is relevant to what you do. Content that has value to a user. As we have stated repeatedly here – Google is out to provide a good experience and useful data to it's user base. If you play to that goal you will be seen.

It's difficult to say how important content & social media are in SEO and organic search ranking but we know they are of extreme importance. Especially in today's market where things are changing and evolving so quickly. By creating content not only do you become something of an authority or a voice in your industry you also increase the chances that you have a particular piece of information that not a lot of other people have. This piece of information could be the search result that brings you hundreds of new customers. Consistently creating, curating and sharing relevant content is a big part of modern SEO. To neglect it is to sit on the sidelines in a game full of massive opportunities for your business. Not only does it give you a voice of authority it also increases the density of keywords on your website. If you are an auto body shop who churns out 5 – 10 paint jobs a day and can blog about 2 – 3 of them think of how many pages worth of content you'll have containing words like "paint job" throughout your site after a year of this.

## **SEM / PPC**

Search Engine Marketing or SEM is effectively buying your way into search results. It's really that simple. With SEO you are at the mercy of Google's algorithms and updates. It's going to take 3 – 6 months minimum after optimization before you start showing up steadily in search results. With PPC you can start showing up in those results immediately by bidding into keyword searches.

## **Finding Your Keywords**

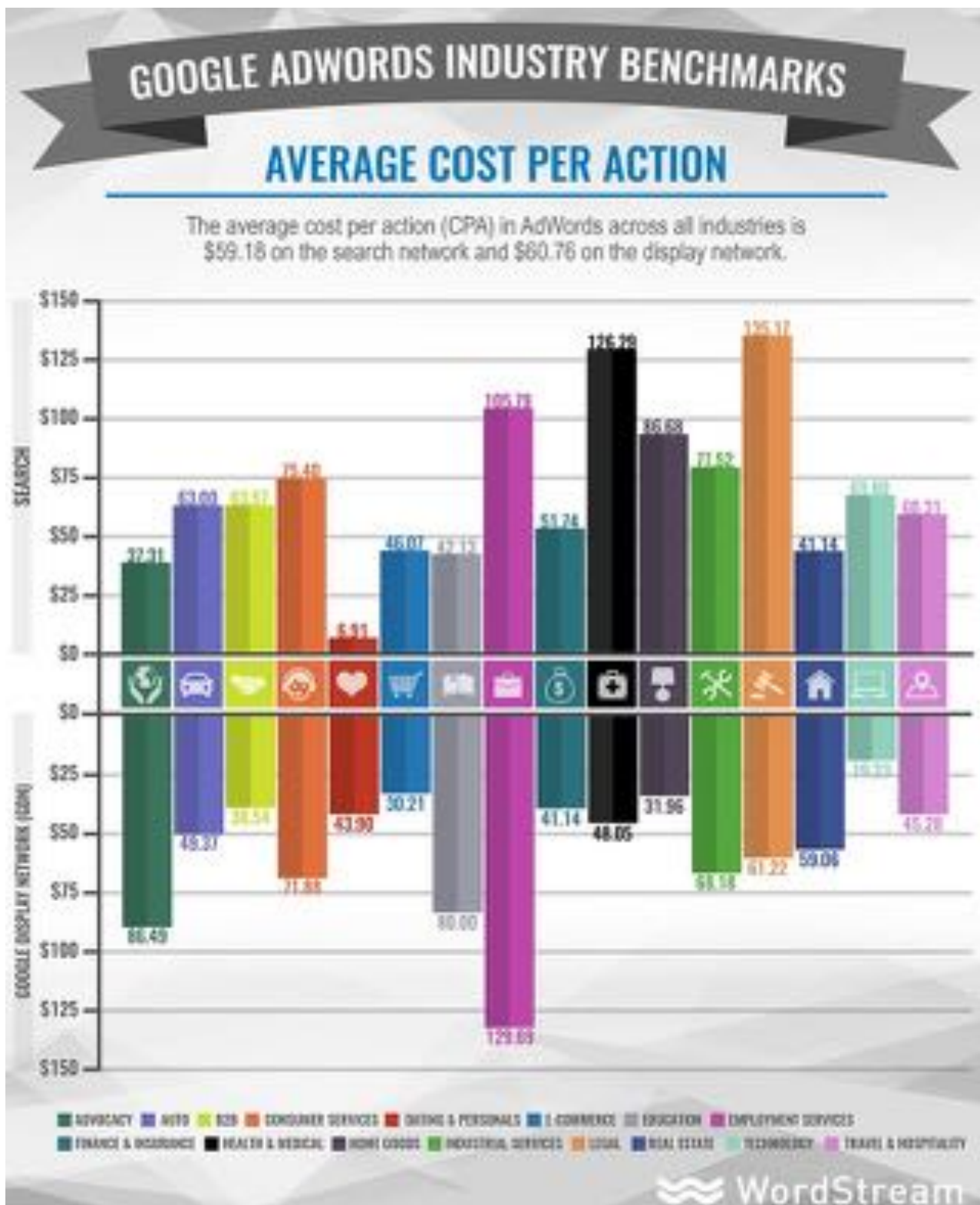
The first step is to find keywords your customers would use and make sure that you have a landing page that uses them. When Google analyzes the page you're sending their users to they want to see that you aren't being misleading and that your page is actually representative of the keywords you're purchasing clicks on. Depending on the nature of your business the types of keywords you will use will vary as will the prices.

## **Bidding Against Competition**

What makes AdWords great, but also expensive in some cases is their biddable system. This system has several upsides for small businesses though. If you have an ad budget you can compete with top tier corporations for the same keyword traffic. This biddable system levels the playing field for everyone so that a huge company can't just come in and monopolize all of the keywords in their industry. Even at the highest bid other clicks are still being sold to other advertisers in the same auction. So it really gives everyone an equal opportunity to take advantage of Google's incredibly valuable traffic.

## Cost Per Action

Click prices vary based on the demand and the level of competition. The below infographic by <http://wordstream.com> shows average click prices by industry as of 2015.





## ::::: CHAPTER 6 – Monetization :::::

Once you have a great website with a ton of visitors how do you make money? Well the best way is to direct sell targeted ads to brands that are relevant to your audience. For example, if you write a blog about camping, hiking & fishing – chances are that Patagonia, Backcountry.com or Cabela's are good advertisers to approach. They have a product your audience will be interested in. In a perfect world this is how every website would operate but it's just not that easy. First, you have to build an audience worthy of a brand that size. Next you have to be able to set up the technology and traffic the campaigns for them. Then you have to think about how much available traffic you have and how much of it they get. It can be exhausting, but have no fear. We are going to try to break it down for you in a simple and organized fashion.

### **Getting Paid for Good Content**

In order to get paid for good content you have to make it. Obviously written content is the simplest and cheapest to make. However, video tends to monetize best. Remember that Google's underlying motive is always "good user experience" – video is the best user experience. Not only is video the best experience but YouTube is obviously going to hold more weight with Google being one of their products. It has a barometer of trust that other video platforms do not.

### **Google AdSense**

Google AdSense is the easiest place to get advertising you can put on your website to start earning immediately. AdSense allows web publishers to make money on their sites by allowing them to show paid advertising. The more ads you show the more money you will make.

Not only is AdSense one of the easiest ad networks to get into, they also do a lot to help publishers understand the system and make the most of it.

<http://services.google.com/fh/files/misc/adsenseaudienceengagement.pdf>

### **YouTube**

As mentioned video is by far the best most highest earning type of content you can produce. YouTube allows you to monetize your film projects very easily by connecting it with AdSense.

**PRO TIP:** *If you create video content, don't put it all on YouTube. Use YouTube to run small 30 / 60 second "feeder" clips that drive people to your site with your own player so you don't have to share your profits with YouTube. You also don't rely completely on their platform this way. It's good to build your own brand on your own terms.*

## **Other Ad Networks**

There are also several other ways to monetize your site with ad networks. Native ads such as Taboola & Outbrain have recently become popular. There's also Yahoo! and Bing, etc.

## **Direct Sales**

Once you have a large enough audience that it is worth an advertisers time you can begin to sell direct opportunities on your own site and cut out the middlemen.



## **::::: CHAPTER 7 – Revenue Optimization :::::**

As your website grows and prospers you will start to have access to all the user data you're collecting and be able to make informed decisions based on it. This is also referred to as "optimization."

Most publishers use AdSense by default letting Google figure out the ads. If you are among them, you probably just slap on AdSense ad tags and set them on cruise control sticking to what you do best of all, being a publisher. With site gaining more traffic and users, it becomes clear that you are losing money relying on AdSense exclusively. Thus you may be asking how to monetize your website to maximize profit. To illustrate the answer we will start by comparing Google DFP and AdSense and explaining the difference between them.

## **Ad Networks vs. Ad Servers**

Google AdSense is an ad network. They give you a set of tags you place on your site that they in turn serve their ads through. You get paid for serving these ads. Google DFP is an ad server. It is simply a technology platform that allows you to serve ads on a website. So why would you need both?

## **Ad Waterfalls**

Once you have a sophisticated ad set up on your site you are going to notice that some networks pay better than others. You will want to set up calls to these networks based on who is paying the highest rate. The top CPM may be \$5 per 1,000 so that's your first call, then Ad Network #2 pays \$3.00 and Google AdSense \$2.50 per 1,000. An ad server gives you the ability to create this ad waterfall and optimize your advertising revenue streams for maximum efficiency.

## **DFP SB**

Google's DFP SB Ad Server allows just about anyone to get into the game. DFP SB is such a great solution you can run direct sales and a small network for no charge whatsoever. Once you set it up though you are going to need to know some of the basics.

DFP SB is a free solution that allows small businesses to effectively monetize their sites free of charge with ads. It's an amazing solution and incredibly powerful. The things it can do require an e-book all their own. Keep an eye on our blog for more detailed posts about DFP SB. In the meantime here is a great resource for those who are truly interested in maximizing the strength of DFP SB

<http://www.dfptutorial.com/>

## **Geo Targeting**

Geo targeting capabilities will allow you to target your customers ads to a given zip code, state, country etc.

## **Day Parting**

Day parting allows you to time your ads so that they only show during certain portions of the day.

## **Frequency Capping**

Frequency capping allows showing an ad a limited number of times to a user within a given time period.

## :::: CHAPTER 8 - Summary ::::

That pretty much covers it. Well, it actually doesn't. At approx. 25 pages, this is just a primer. We encourage you to take anything you've learned here and learn even more. Things like Ad Waterfalls could have e-books unto themselves written. That said, here's a quick recap of what we covered here:

1. **Your Digital Brand** – Developing a digital brand that is high quality and consistent with your offline brand so that users can easily transition back and forth are key.
2. **Generating Revenue Online** – If you sell online or you create video that's monetized with advertising you need traffic. If you build it they will come.
3. **Goal Setting / CPA** – Do the math, set a goal and aim for it. Make sure you calculate overhead and try to get to a place where you're spending less than you are making.
4. **Content** – Every business needs to generate content. Become an authority and create relationships with their customers.
5. **Audience Development** – The art of getting people to your content. SEO, PPC, Programmatic advertising, Native advertising, social media, etc. Anything to get interested users or customers to your property.
6. **Monetization** – Monetizing your content so that you are getting paid for the time you are investing in creating content.
7. **Optimization** – Making sure that you set up tracking and then look at the data of the users that come into your property and make adjustments based on this information until you have a huge profit margin.
8. **Closing Thoughts :: Summary**

These are just the basics. Let this primer act as a roadmap to help you navigate the process of creating and maintaining your digital brand.





Hopefully this was an informative and easy to grasp guide to how you can turn your passion into a viable living. I can't stress enough how incredible the times we live in are. With just a little bit of incentive anyone can be their own boss. To me it's the essence of the amazing system of economics the United States has. "Digital Capitalism" – When you think about all the inventions of the last century that have changed the way the world operates, just about all of them originated from the United States. From television to the airplane to the iPod and Google... Capitalism is an economic system that has brought so much to the world. In it's newest form "Digital Capitalism" gives us all the opportunity to monetize our passions and create the level of freedom we deserve.

We sincerely hope this book inspires you to forge your own, independent path in this new economy!

**:: THE DIGITAL CAPITALIST ::**