

## 5 Keys to Building Business: How SEO Can Prime a PR Firm's New Business Strategy

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When we started [Landis Communications \(LCI\)](#) just over 25 years ago in San Francisco, we targeted new business prospects the old-fashioned way: a lot of face-to-face networking, actively responding to referrals and participating in countless speaking engagements.

Boy, how times have changed! These days, *90 percent* of all new business prospects reach us through Google — even when searching something as simple as “San Francisco public relations.” Now more than ever, customers and clients from myriad industries are finding and vetting potential new business partners through online search — and the communications profession isn't any different.

How can you make the most of that in order to buzz past your competition and increase business? Through SEO, or search engine optimization. The right people may never find those who are not engaged participants in SEO. Understanding SEO through quality content, paid, earned, shared or owned campaigns, and other approaches that leverage and balance traditional PR plus digital channels, is the key to success.

For more than a decade, LCI has worked with [Lisa Bishop](#) from New York-based [Mannix Marketing](#) to help optimize our website in order to lead (or at least rank highly) in relevant online searches. Through this years-long process, we've become experts in this strategy and believe that an integrated mix of organic and paid search creates the best outcome.

Here are some helpful tips for using SEO to build up your business:

### 1. Realize that organic search trumps pay per click.

Did you know that organic results are 8.5 times more likely to be clicked on than paid results? While incorporating both will increase your chances of landing on Google's front page for targeted keywords and in front of potential customers, it's the organic results that are seen as the more respected resource by users. True SEO takes time, so don't be fooled into thinking there's a fast and easy fix.

### 2. Know that consistent, quality content is king.

No matter what strategies you're implementing, remember that a website's *content* is what attracts people to a site — even more so than the products or services that it's promoting. If you don't consider yourself a pro at developing good content, then work with someone who is. Not only should it be well written and typo-free, but it should also contain the right keywords so that prospects feel good about learning something while they're there. This content must also be regularly updated in order to entice people to visit again. Be sure to add new content on a steady and consistent basis, since an all-at-once approach won't have an impact.

We produce a wide range of complementary content that truly defines who we are and what we're about. For example:

- **“Backtalk” blog** — We regularly create fun and engaging blog posts, which not only encourage repeat site visits, but also highlight various facets of our team's collective skill sets.
- **Free informational content** — From “the top social media dos and don'ts” to “a beginner's guide to media training,” we make a lot of useful content available for site visitors.
- **Press releases** — We're in the business of selling words and ideas, so no agency is better than the writing it produces. By publicly “exposing” our team's writing chops, potential new business prospects can immediately see concrete examples of our work.
- **Secured client coverage** — From a media relations perspective, all of this work is for naught if the efforts don't produce results. From print to broadcast to everywhere in between, we consistently upload every new piece of client coverage to our site as soon as it's available.

Combined, these efforts (and many others) are part of an integrated strategy, which helps us sell ourselves to prospects while also aiding our SEO efforts as well.

### 3. Understand schema markup.

Schema markup is code (semantic vocabulary) for your site, which helps search engines return more informative results for users. Although schema has been around for a while, few actually know what it is or how to use it. It's important to keep in mind, however, that including schema in your website's code shouldn't be thought of as an easy SEO “hack” but rather as a best practice to make it easier for search engines to find and display your (amazing) content. It's expected to become increasingly important as Google (and others) make progress in moving toward a truly semantic web.

### 4. Localize your strategy and find a niche.

LCI is a member of the [Public Relations Global Network \(PRGN\)](#) and serves as its San Francisco affiliate. This internationally curated group of nearly 50 independent PR and communications agencies shares expertise and resources, while providing broad-based comprehensive communications strategies to clients worldwide. In addition to taking advantage of the breadth of expertise afforded by PRGN, we also leverage our local-to-San Francisco aspect by targeting a local and regional niche audience through SEO. Furthermore, we ask our PR partners to promote us while we also promote them.

### 5. Humanize your brand via social media.

In addition to localizing SEO, a well-run social media strategy will also aid in these efforts. Over the years, we've developed and constantly maintain a strong social media presence — everything from Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to Google+, LinkedIn, YouTube and more. We spend a great deal of time nurturing our following across each channel, which, in turn, helps us connect with our audience and attract more followers. The bigger and more active one's social media presence is, the more likely you can use those accounts to drive traffic to your website. And from an SEO perspective, we're still able to incorporate the age-old tactics of networking and attending/speaking at local events by promoting our participation online.

In short, there's no quick fix when it comes to rising to the top of the search engine rankings. But armed with a strategy that leverages your geographic location and your ability to be nimble, you'll achieve success. Times have changed and PR practitioners need to change with it in order to achieve the greatest return on their investment — and to continue to find those perfect client prospects.

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