

# Secrets of Successful White Hat SEO

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*Successful, White Hat SEO depends on a thorough knowledge of sales funnel design. Most SEO service providers have a limited view of how their efforts fit into the larger picture of your sales funnels. And, because they have limited responsibility in the work they do for you, it's up to you to ensure that the money you're spending on SEO is creating maximum results for your business. This introductory module is designed to expand and clarify your perspective on what Search Engine Optimization is and how it relates to sales funnel design and execution. From there you can more effectively manage your business's SEO as well as begin to correctly identify where your own sales funnels need improvement. You'll also be able to more successfully manage the work that SEO service providers are doing for you.*

## Reframing SEO

Knowing how *successful* sales funnels work and making sure yours are constructed effectively is the best way to ensure an effective ROI when applying search engine optimization to your business. Your website is nothing more than part of your sales funnel. The most successful, White Hat SEO focuses on *optimizing from the perspective of the entire sales funnel.*

To repeat: optimize your sales funnels, not just your website. Section 4 below (Website Optimization) is what most people consider SEO. The purpose of this document is to help you see how the way most people approach SEO is quite limited and how, by expanding your perspective, you can achieve extraordinary results for your business.



**The major key to having a successful online business and effective, White Hat SEO is understanding how to effectively design sales funnels and how to continue improving on them over time.**

So let's look at sales funnel structure and how it relates to search engine optimization...

# Sales Funnel Structure

The components of a successful sales funnel are (in order):

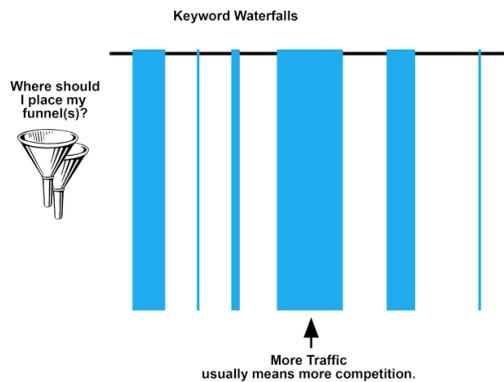
1. Research
  - a. Keyword Research - Where do I place my sales funnels?
  - b. Competitive Analysis - What do my competitors' funnels look like? What am I up against?
2. Branding - What kind of *experience* do my users have as they pass through my sales funnel(s)? Am I communicating the right things to my customers as they pass through the funnel?
3. User Interface Design (Website Design) - Do my funnels look and work the way they need to?
4. Website Optimization (SEO) - Is my website content arranged in the way that search engines prefer?
5. Marketing - Do I want to speed up the process of bringing traffic into my sales funnels?

Real, effective "search engine optimization" includes all of the above. All these components work in concert and need to be done effectively to create exceptional success for your business. So let's break these down one at a time.

*Note: in this bird's eye view overview, if you're already familiar with the principles involved in a particular section, that's great; keep reading. The purpose here is to identify areas where you can improve and to then give you the opportunity to go into more depth where you need it.*

## Sales Funnel Part 1: Research

### Keyword Research



Keyword research is about knowing *where* to place your sales funnel(s). If you're in charge of the business you work with, I recommend that you do keyword research yourself rather than contracting it out. It's so crucial to have a firm handle on your sales funnels and, if your website is a profit engine, understanding your keyword traffic is like knowing where the gas pump is. The purpose of keyword research is to discover and identify *keyword traffic* that is relevant to your business and that can be directed into your sales funnel(s) and converted into sales for your business.

Two available tools for keyword research are:

The Google Keyword Tool (free)  
[SEM Rush](#) (paid)

While doing keyword research, you want to get clear about:

- Who your existing and potential customers are
- What they're looking for
- How they are looking for it (*very important*)

In the past decade of doing website development, design, and SEO, I've developed what, for me, is the fastest method of conducting effective keyword research. If you need help understanding how to do your own keyword research, or making sure that the people you hire are doing it correctly, you can save a lot of time and money by quickly learning that method; [check out the "Market Research" module](#).

## Competitive Analysis

Competitive Analysis is about looking at the competition. This is the short road to success. There's no need to reinvent the wheel when you can quickly take advantage of all your competitors' hard work and money spent. As part of the keyword research process, you can easily see exactly who the top competitors are for the keyword traffic you are interested in. By looking at their sites and landing pages for particular keywords, you can see exactly what you need to do to gain a competitive advantage. *And this will have positive repercussions further down the line of your own sales funnel.*

A simple way to do competitive analysis is to start typing the keywords into Google and looking at the ads and search results that come up. This is not the most effective way to do it however, and not what I would recommend. The fastest and most effective method I've discovered through years of trial and error is also covered in the ["Market Research" module](#).



Essence:

The essence of the "research" portion of your sales funnel design is to:

a) understand what keyword traffic you want to harness (feed into your funnel) and then  
b) to look at and make a note of what the competition has developed as a means of converting that traffic into sales. You don't necessarily need to understand everything they're doing yet. Just look over their sites and landing pages and see what jumps out at you. The following sections will help you begin to identify the different pieces of what you're looking at.

## Sales Funnel Part 2: Branding

Branding can be a very vaguely used term and I find a lot of people don't really know what it is or what it's for.



**Branding is your customers' *experience* of your business.**

You might want to read that sentence a few times and let it sink in.

For the purpose of this module, I'm going to break branding into two sections:

1. Awareness of Your Users' Experience
2. Brand Communication

### Awareness of Your Users' Experience

Putting yourself in your customers' shoes is a very important skill. Businesses that struggle seem to have a hard time doing this. The goal is to create the best possible experience for people visiting your site, whether:

- clicking on a search result
- viewing or reading an ad
- viewing your website for the first time
- *using* any portion of your website
- seeing/following a social media post
- watching a video you've created
- purchasing your product or service
- experiencing/using your product or service (different than purchasing it)
- receiving an invoice or receipt from you
- needing/using any customer service you might provide (i.e., returning a product or asking a question about a service)
- understanding/experiencing your unique selling propositions

...and any other experience that is part of your business. All these experiences make up your branding.



Notice that I've distinguished between *viewing* your website and *using* your website and that both are included as part of branding. This highlights a distinction that many people fail to make: branding is not just the colors and images and logo on your site and products - though it does *include* those things (those are actually design elements). Those design elements are part of the (visual) experience of your business and that is only part of the total experience of your business (your brand).



The reason a great experience is so important is that a really happy customer is going to bring you more business. That's why properly executing the whole sales funnel is so important. You're actually focused on the *next* customer by ensuring the current one doesn't hit any roadblocks or speed bumps in your funnel.

So, put on your customer hat often and look at the various aspects of your business from their perspective. If you feel stuck, [I offer critical point analysis](#) to assist you.

## Brand Communication

Brand communication is about saying the right things at the right time within each part of your sales funnel. Generally, my advice is to be very direct.

Here are some general tips:

1. Show Your Products

Make sure that your product offerings are front and center. This alone will increase sales.

## 2. The Brand Promise

Be aware of your brand promise. What promise is your business willing to deliver on? (Note: a great brand promise is measurable.) If you're clear about that, you can hold that in mind as you examine how each part of your users' experience (each part of your sales funnel) relates to that promise. Are you delivering?

## 3. Unique Selling Propositions

A very important part of branding is what are called "Unique Selling Propositions" or "USPs." Do you offer a money back guarantee on your product or service? If so, make sure that this is clearly visible where your products are displayed. Are your products available for immediate download? Make sure that is clearly communicated. Can a customer get your product next day or in 2 days? Make sure it's *very obvious*. I've seen businesses that have great USPs but fail to communicate them. For one client of mine, simply placing a money back guarantee badge in the right places in their sales funnel played a significant part in increasing sales by 100%!

## 4. Use Your Research Data

In sales funnel design, the key is to let your keyword research guide your branding efforts. Make sure that, when a user is landing on a page on your site, that you are speaking as directly as possible to that person - in this case by literally using the same words they are using.

So good branding is about being able to execute successfully on all the parts of the sales funnel - because they're all part of your customers' *experience* of your business. If you need help in any particular area, the [Branding module](#) will allow you to become an expert very quickly in everything you need to know about branding.



Essence:

The essence of the branding portion of your sales funnel is to design great *experiences* (*note: simple is often great*) for your website visitors and

communicate directly to them in the language they are using to find you (using your keyword research). Clearly communicate your unique selling propositions. And remember that every aspect of your business is part of delivering your brand promise. Creating the best possible experience for your customers in *each* part of your sales funnel is well worth the investment. To state that another way, invest in your customers and they will invest in you.

## Sales Funnel Part 3: User Interface Design

### (Website Design)

This part of the funnel is particularly important and can be challenging to get right - because it has to successfully integrate the preceding steps as well as the following one. It's in the website design that all the parts coalesce into a successful format for converting keyword traffic into sales.

I call this section User Interface Design to emphasize once again that the design is customer focused. When I do design work for clients, I'm always asking, "how does this part benefit the user?"

And I can't say this enough: your website is nothing more than a part of your sales funnel. Hopefully that takes any abstraction about what a website's purpose is - to do its part in funneling people to completing a sale!

Here are the principles involved:

#### I. Make the Connection

As stated in the branding section above: show your products as clearly as possible. The person visiting your site should instantly be able to *clearly see* what you have to offer, how much it costs, and how to buy it. In most cases, if you are selling something, it should be on the home page of your site, above the fold, and have a clearly visible purchase button.



The equation that is set up for the customer should be:

**You have what I want and I get the sense that you can successfully deliver it to me. I see how much it costs and making the purchase is a simple, straightforward process.**

Unsuccessful businesses make the mistake of complicating that equation into something like:

Look here, click here, read this, scroll down, click here. Can you gather that we might have what you want? Call us for more info. Curious how to buy our product or service? Read this guide.

Instead of trying to convince someone to buy your product, *make it easy for them*. Assume they already want it. If you've done your keyword research, branding, and user interface design correctly, then someone who wants or needs your product should feel no resistance to quickly making a purchase. For more information and specific design examples of this principle in action, please [check out the User Interface Design module](#).

## II. Trust

Your user's experience of your website (here again, branding), is like a first date. If it's in any way frustrating or confusing, then that sends the signal that doing business with you is going to be frustrating and/or confusing. By taking the time to ensure that a customer's movement through your site is smooth, you build trust. The customer just has a good experience and subconsciously they begin developing trust in your business. That trust is very, very valuable. It's actually the root of your financial relationship with the customer.

The pitfall here is that successful user interface design is often lost somewhere between the business owner and the website designer or developer they hire. Often, a business owner knows they need a website, but don't really understand exactly how it needs to function. Then, the website designer, if they are not extremely strong and skilled, will end up focusing more on giving the business owner what *they* want in the website design rather than a design that effectively relates to the keyword funnels it is addressing.

## III. Flow

Get out of the way. Great online design is minimalist, direct, and allows your customer to move through the sales funnel as quickly and effortlessly as possible - while providing the necessary messaging to facilitate the purchase.

I was on a website yesterday trying to purchase bone broth and in order to get to the cart, I was required to create an account *first*. And in that process I had to enter a password and then re-enter it. The page kept telling me that the password re-enter was incorrect. I tried it three or four times and finally left the site. As a first time visitor, I was really just trying to get to the cart to see if they offered a quantity discount and couldn't get there for a simple piece of information. That's an example of a lack of flow.

#### IV. Efficacy

When all is said and done, your website has to just work. This is another area where much can be lost between the business owner and the website designer. Particularly if you are using cheap, offshore labor. Most designers don't have the much needed combination of sales funnel awareness and a sense of ownership in terms of making sure that the whole process is completely dialed in. And one glitch in the sales can really hurt your sales (like the bone broth example above).

What that means is that you must be responsible for checking every step of the sales funnel. Put on your customer hat and go through the process. Go to Google or Facebook or wherever your funnel starts and walk through the entire process. Do the keyword search. Click on your ad or search result. Land on your site. Compare what you see with the competitive examples you researched in the research phase. Then make a test purchase. Is it effortless? It should be. Do this process on a desktop computer, on a mobile phone, on a tablet. All three need to be clean and easy and it's important to check the user experience on each type of device.

#### V. Desktop, Mobile, Tablet

More than 50% of all internet searches are now on mobile devices. That means that your sales funnels have to be designed for desktop viewers and mobile viewers. Having a [responsive template \(affiliate link\)](#) is a good start, but again, you need to run through each of your sales funnels on each device (desktop, tablet, mobile) and make sure all the elements are coming together successfully on each platform. I find that a significant amount of adjustments have to be made to get the sales funnel to flow on mobile devices and often use CSS media queries to determine what design elements show on which device. For examples of this, [please see the Responsive Design module](#).

## Sales Funnel Part 4: Website Optimization (SEO)

This section will discuss what most people commonly refer to as SEO. However, by now, hopefully you understand that successful, White Hat SEO is about addressing each part of the sales funnel and is not just about the techniques discussed in this section. You can employ the techniques and tools described below - all to *little or no avail* if you haven't got the preceding sections executed correctly (particularly the user interface design)!

That being said, let's take a look at website optimization or what's commonly referred to as "search engine optimization" or "SEO."

The basic principle is to manage the following correctly as they relate to your sales funnel design:

- URL
- Page Title
- Meta Description
- Headings
- Image Alt Tags
- Google Analytics

To do this, you'll need your keyword research from your research stage. If you haven't done that yet, refer back to section "Sales Funnel Part 1: Research."

I recommend installing a free browser plugin called SEOquake. You can use this tool to see pretty much everything you need to be cognizant of in terms of what's called "on site" or "page" optimization. If you're handling your own optimization, this tool will tell you exactly what you need to do or, if you're hiring an SEO service provider, **this is an important way to check their work**. Simply load the SEOquake plugin in your browser and then run it's "diagnosis" on each page you need to check. Make sure to read the SEOquake "tips" to learn more about each SEO topic.

If you happen to be using WordPress on your site, you'll want to install [Yoast SEO](#) which will allow you to manage the SEO components of your site.

Essence:

Follow the guidelines and tips that the SEOquake tool gives you to optimize each page that is part of your sales funnel. Use this tool to check the work of your SEO service provider and make sure that all the parts you have given them control over have green check marks (i.e., title, meta description, headings, image alt tags, text/html ratio).

## PAGE SEO AUDIT

✓ Passed: 11    ⚠ Error: 4    ⚠ Warning: 3

### Page analysis

|                  |   |  |   |
|------------------|---|--|---|
| URL              | ✓ | 26 characters – optimal.<br>whitehatseoconsultant.com/   | <b>Take a look at these:</b> <a href="#">Tips</a> ▾ |
| Title            | ✓ | 31 characters – optimal.<br>SEO Consultant - SEO Consultant  |   |
| Meta description | ⚠ | 0 characters – try to enlarge description to 20 characters.  | <a href="#">Tips</a> ▾                              |
| Meta keywords    | ⓘ | 0 characters, 0 words.   | <a href="#">Tips</a> ▾                              |
| Headings         | ⚠ | We see your page implements HTML headings but <H1> through <H3> headings do not appear. This should be corrected.<br>H1 (0), H2 (14), H3 (8), H4 (1), H5 (0), H6 (0)<br><br><H2>: Grow your business effectively with powerful, white hat SEO techniques:<br><br><a href="#">View others</a> ▾ | <a href="#">Tips</a> ▾                              |
| Images           | ⚠ | 1 images without ALT.  | <a href="#">Tips</a> ▾                              |

## Sales Funnel Part 5: Marketing

Now that your sales funnel is in place, you're ready to begin marketing. A synergy exists between the work you've done above and the marketing you're going to do. By carefully developing your sales funnel(s), your website is now optimized to begin converting paid traffic to organic traffic. Paid traffic refers to visitors that come to your site as a result of advertisements you've placed. "Organic" traffic is traffic that finds you through search engine results (and is therefore free). If you're reading this, you probably already know you want to be at the top of the search results for certain keywords. By creating excellent content that is delivered as part of a well executed sales funnel, you will get there; however, to speed things up, and also to begin testing your sales funnel design, you may want to do some marketing.

There are three types of online marketing:

1. Search Engine Marketing - paid advertisements on search engine results such as Google or Bing. These may be text advertisements or graphic, banner ads.

2. Off Site Optimization - keyword optimized links from other websites (backlinks) that link to your website.
3. Social Media - using Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumbler, etc... to promote your business. Social media plays a double role in that you can:
  - a. advertise on it (i.e., Facebook ads)
  - b. it acts as part of the communication channel between you and your customers for sales inquiries and customer service. Note: as discussed above, these points of contact are critical parts of your branding. Think about your customers' experience of interacting with you when replying on social media. Can they get an answer within a few minutes or does it take days?

The good news is that since you've already done your keyword research and competitive analysis, you have the foundation in place to begin placing ads and bringing traffic in to your funnel.

*A critical part of this process is having Google Analytics in place.* This is a snippet of code that is placed in your website which tracks everything that happens on your website. That's a whole subject in itself and is covered in the [Google Analytics module](#). For now, the important thing is to make sure it's installed on your site. Once installed it begins collecting data that will be very valuable to you over time so I tell clients (and I mean this), "***install it today***" - because it simply sits there in the background collecting data that you will use later.

And importantly, since you have a sales funnel, you need to have what's called eCommerce tracking enabled within Google Analytics. This gives you specific data about your sales funnel and perhaps most importantly, how sales happen on your website. If you need help getting Google Analytics and/or eCommerce tracking setup, [click here »](#)

Here's the essence of each of the three types of marketing (more, in-depth information is available in the [Marketing module](#)):

1. Search Engine Marketing: Google text ads (Google Adwords) are a relatively quick and easy way to start feeding traffic into your sales funnel. Create a Google Adwords account and start creating ads to bring visitors to your site. With Google Analytics now installed, you can watch what happens and begin making adjustments as needed.

2. Off Site Optimization: Perhaps the most efficient way to do this piece is to generate a backlinks report on your competitors' websites. This will give you a list of websites that have linked to your competitors. Go look at these links and think about how you can get them to link to you. [SEMrush allows you to generate backlinks reports on your competitors.](#)
3. Social Media: Social media plays four roles for your business:
  - a. A place where you can do targeted advertising
  - b. An easy way for people to tell their friends about your business
  - c. It gives people a quick and easy way to get in touch with you (i.e., if they have questions or need customer service).

## A/B Testing

If you're serious about developing your sales funnels, consider setting up A/B testing for the advertisement you place. This means that you create two versions of your sales funnel - an A and a B - each being slightly different. Then you feed traffic to the two versions and using your Google Analytics eCommerce tracking, you see which performs better. This way you can keep iterating until you're happy with the conversion rate you are getting from your funnels ("conversion rate" refers to the % of traffic coming through your site that converts to actual sales).

# Integration

1. Which part(s) of your sales funnel could use improvement (circle all that apply)
  - a. Keyword Research
  - b. Competitive Analysis
  - c. Branding
  - d. User Interface Design
  - e. Optimization
  - f. Marketing
2. Of the items you circled above:
  - a. Which is the low hanging fruit? For example, can you more effectively communicate your unique selling propositions by adding a graphic to your website?
  - b. What is the weakest point in your sales funnel? Why?
3. What is your brand promise?
4. Identify your top 3 sales funnels.
  - a. What are the top 3 keywords or keyword phrases that each funnel is designed to convert?
  - b. Which of your competitors' have a stronger sales funnel for these keywords than you do?
  - c. What unique selling propositions (USPs) do your competitors' offer? How are they being communicated?
  - d. Using your competitors' landing pages as examples, how can you improve your own?
5. Are there any areas of your website that don't work perfectly? Have you personally run each of your sales funnels all the way through? On each platform: desktop, tablet, and mobile?
6. Are you still delivering on your brand promise even after the sale is successfully completed?