

Is your brand suffering from small town syndrome?

 By [Fourie Rossouw](#)

12 Dec 2017

We hear it a lot: "Why is my competitor's name showing up when I search for mine?" "We used to be at the top of the page on Google, but now there are all these other brands showing up first?" "What is this SEO thing everyone is talking about?" Usually, when we hear these questions during pitch meetings, we detect early signs of "small-town syndrome" (STS). The good news is that STS is curable and so are your underperforming marketing campaigns.



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STS is what happens when you get your daughter's boyfriend to build you a one-page website, but you're too cheap to pay for your own domain. STS is what happens when you ask your PA to create your company's Facebook page, but instead of a page, she creates a profile. STS is what happens when you, late one evening, decided to boost a post on your page and the next morning, the whole of Pakistan liked it. STS is what happens when your marketing manager spends more time designing leaflets than researching digital marketing trends.

STS happens more often than not to small business owners trying to do their best with limited capacity and resources. The challenge for most small businesses is managing their cash flow: seeing hard-earned money leaking through the expensive cracks of marketing campaigns is a tough pill to swallow. The kneejerk reaction is to put the new world of digital marketing on hold and stick with the traditional stuff that you know works. Like a sponsoring a 4 ball at a golf game, or an ad in the local newspaper.

For those who have ventured into the new unknown, the gap between managing your digital marketing internally and hiring a smart digital agency on board is massive. So, the company ends up doing it themselves and, most of the time, it happens on the side or gets dumped on the youngest person in the office who has the most active Instagram account. This is a foolproof recipe for STS.

Before you start your Adwords adventure

Digital marketing for the small business owner usually plays out like this: You finally decided to try out Google Adwords. After all, you're a clever guy - how hard can it be? After 50 minutes, you're all set. Search campaign, keywords, ad group and an ad or two. That first week, you Googled your company's name like crazy, highly impressed to see your little ad showing at the top of the page. Three months later, you've spent R15,000, but have nothing to really show for it, except a

sudden spike in website traffic.

What you should have actually done first was put the metrics in place to help you to scrutinise every little action on your account, so that you could make real-time campaign adjustments and take steps to improve your website's conversion rate. In fact, even before you started your Adwords adventure, you should have taken the time to put a higher-level strategy in place, do the research and understand if your business actually needs it and in what way. Instead, you're stuck with an underperforming ad campaign and very little appetite for round two.

As an agency which manages social media and ad campaigns for a range of small to medium size businesses, we've put together 10 things to know and 5 things to do that will take your digital marketing activities from small-town to uptown.

Ten things to know

1. If you're still considering whether you should go digital, you are at the tail end of the bunch. Your competitors are already doing it and are getting better by the minute.
2. "SEO" is Search Engine Optimisation, or, helping Google to find your website by ensuring good content on your site. Adwords is Google's advertising system to show clickable ads in search results that will take people to your website.
3. Your website is star of the show. Don't bother creating ad campaigns if you're not prepared to improve your website or build new landing pages. If you are not a Wordpress wizard, prepare to spend some money. You do not need an expensive or complicated website, but don't expect magic for less than R10,000.
4. You might love your office PC and still surf the web like Meg Ryan in *You've Got Mail*, but the rest of us are on mobile.
5. Thought blogging is so 2000 and late? Think again, blogs are back. So, start writing.
6. Whether on Google or Facebook, targeting is key. Take your time to get your audience narrowed down and your keywords spot-on.
7. You can never add too many negative keywords for your Adwords Search Campaign. This helps you block out the unwanted search queries and show your ads to the right audience at the right time.
8. UTM tags, it's a thing. Google it.
9. People respond better to stories than to announcements.
10. Your budget is in your control and what you spend is trackable.

Five things to start doing

1. Take time to develop a digital marketing strategy with clear business goals.
2. Make your website a top priority; do not let it gather dust.
3. If you need to bulletproof your SEO, focus on creating good website content over a sustained period of time.
4. If you need to bulletproof your Adwords campaign, focus on improving its quality score.
5. If you've got campaigns running and you are keen to do it on your own, let an expert take a look at your accounts and help you to get off on the right foot.

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