



semantic



Tech Basics for Marketers

Page speed wins

Speed matters – slow websites lose customers so optimising to have a fast load time is vital.

Semantic Website Wins #5

Neil Lewin – April 2020

Welcome

Semantic Website Wins is a new series of mini guides to help marketers optimise their website, learn something new, and make the most of these strange times.

Many of us are working from home or furloughed, so day-to-day work has reduced or stopped. We hope that you can use our guides to find website wins to use now, or in the future and also build your skills so that you're ready to bounce back stronger.

We'll be writing guides with advice, tips and ideas to help you optimise your website in the coming weeks. Of course, we're always happy to help with any questions and provide further support if you get stuck.

Just drop me a line I'll be back in touch:
neil@semantic.co.uk or 02380 111 545.

In the meantime, stay safe, and stay positive.

Neil

P.S. Need some extra support?

We're offering free video-call consultancy sessions for leisure & tourism, sports, theatres and professional bodies impacted by Coronavirus.

We can cover SEO, conversion rate optimisation, technical or critical analysis of your site.

Just give us a call for more details on 02380 111 545.

Page speed wins

Imagine if every page on the Amazon website took 5 seconds to load... Go on, try counting it out loud, then think how frustrating it would be to use their website. You'd soon give up and find somewhere else. What about if Google took 5 seconds for every request. It just wouldn't work.

Mobile web users are used to fast websites, and this is borne out in the research...

According to [Akamai research](#) -

53 percent of mobile site visitors will leave a page that takes longer than three seconds to load

And that was back in 2017. Things have only got more fast-paced since then, and more users are purchasing on mobiles.

We aim for key purchase funnel web pages to load in under 1 second, even over 3G on mobiles.

This guide will take you through the biggest barriers to achieving the best load times -

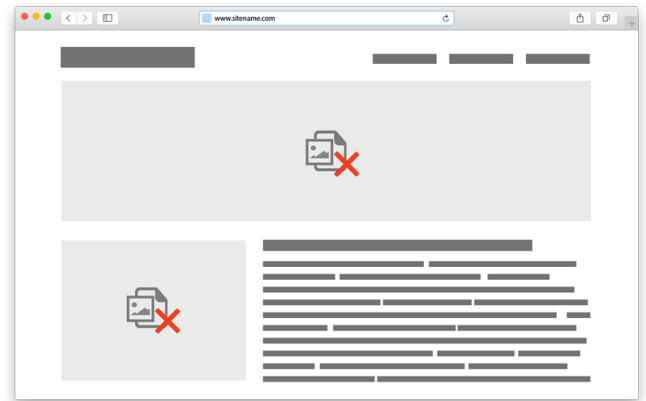
- Think about the load time
- Optimise your assets
- Check your third-party scripts

There's a long list of other optimisations that we help clients with. Some can be retro-fitted if you have the experience, others need more fundamental code changes. Let us know how you get on with the checks suggested here.

Think about the load time

If we're building a high-performing website, then we see it as our job to balance design whizziness, with page speed. It's a constant trade off of features, branding, accessibility and load time.

It's easy to forget about the page speed when browsing sites from fast web connections in an office. See the difference when you visit your site on your phone with the Wifi disabled.



The more that goes onto a web page, the bigger the overall download size, and the harder it is to keep it fast. As a client, there are a number of decisions that you can make that will impact page speed:

- **Branding complexity**
More complex branding that needs more assets to bring to life will increase the overall size of the page, so take more time to load. This includes styling elements, fonts or complex logos.
- **Content complexity**
Without proper optimisation, large images and videos will reduce load times.
- **Animations and interactivity**
Interactive elements like games, maps and timelines can add load time to pages, if not implemented properly.

Of course, if a main objective is to get visitors excited to visit, then it's often worth trading some speed in order to drive the excitement, so long as you can keep the booking process super-fast.

Optimise your assets

If you have a site with a modern content management system, then this *should* be taken care of for you. The easiest ways to check are:

- [Google Pagespeed Insights](#)
... or, if this is too heavy going... try this [Image Optimisation Test](#)

Normally images shouldn't be over a megabyte (1Mb) in size. They should be measured in kilobytes. If they are more than 500kb or so, then your CMS might not be optimising your images, and you should check with your developers.

In the meantime you should optimise the image and re-upload it:

- **Resize**
Check the image dimensions and resize the image if it's too large for the area that it's in (e.g. if it's only a small panel, it doesn't need to be huge. Remember to check the quality on your phone's retina screen though).
- **Optimise**
Use a tool like [TinyPNG.com](#) to compress the image. There's barely any quality difference here, and it saved over 1 Mb on the page download size.



Check your third-party scripts

Now that you're a page load time ninja, it's time to look through the next biggest offender... Google Tag Manager and other third-party scripts. These tools are attractive as they make it easy to add third-party tools to websites... however the challenge is that it's now too easy to add code which causes issues..

We'd recommend you get help from an Analytics/Tag Manager whizz to sort this out (we'll happily help out). To get started, you should work out the scale of the problem on your site. Here are some pointers to bear in mind -

- **Not all tags are created equal**
There are some good companies, where their code snippets are super optimised and don't cause problems, but some aren't.
- **Tag Manager isn't a magic bullet**
There are good ways and bad ways to load tags in Google Tag Manager (and similar tools).
- **Generally, the fewer tags, the better**
That's fewer things to keep track of, and fewer things to break.

Assess your tags

- Make a list of services you know you use on your site
- Access Tag Manager, and list out the tags in use
- Cross-check against your list of services, highlight any unknowns
- Send this to your developers to see if any can be removed
- Get your developers to run full page speed checks on [GTMetrix](#) or [Google Pagespeed insights](#) and report back on updates needed.

Need a hand?

Page speed is a vital area of web development that marketers often overlook. Hopefully this guide has helped illustrate how important it is, and has outlined some quick wins where you can make a difference.

This guide only really scratches the surface, but you'd be amazed how many sites we still come across that are on super-old code, using poor infrastructure, have huge images, or are full of tracking scripts.

Resolving page speed issues may need coding and developer knowledge, as the technology is improving all the time. There's a whole host of updates or techniques that we can deploy to improve load times. The landscape is constantly changing - from best-practice infrastructure through to modern templating languages - tools that are leaps ahead of what existed even a few years ago.

The next guide continues the techie focus for marketers, in the form of an A-Z glossary of key terms. It's tailored to marketers, so we've demystified the jargon and kept it relevant to your needs.

Keep an eye on our blog and LinkedIn for more tips and updates. If you need a hand in the meantime, then we're always happy to help.

- Email me on neil@semantic.co.uk
- Call 02380 111 545
- Book a time in my diary to chat at <https://calendly.com/neillewin/>



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