

The Inbound Marketing Guide for the Firearms Industry Vol.2

By Garrison Everest and HubSpot



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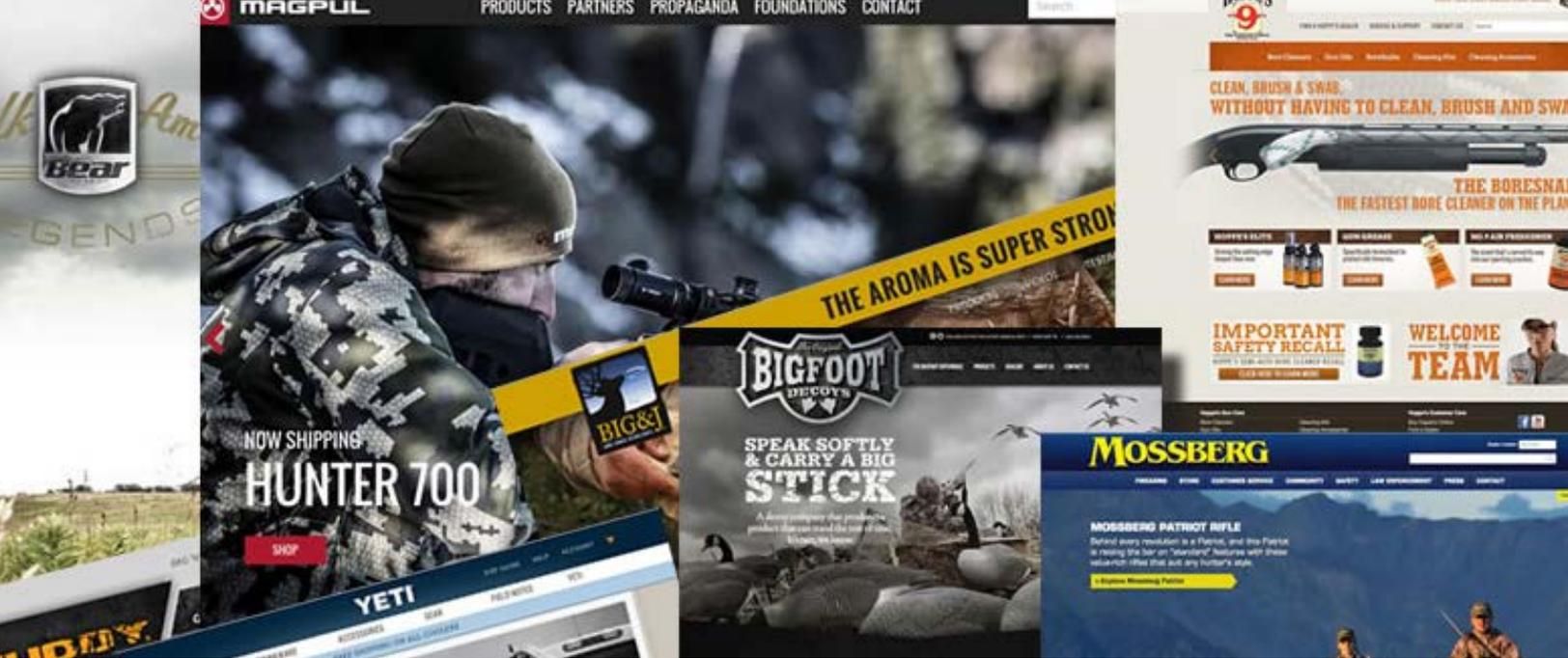


INTRODUCTION

If you're reading this guide, chances are you're either a marketing professional or a business owner who understands the importance of internet marketing today.

You 'get' that traditional marketing methods (print advertising, PR and trade show) are becoming both ineffective and expensive, and you know that by neglecting to market your business online, you're missing out on the powerful business results that an effective internet marketing strategy can bring about.

Whether your business is just getting started with internet marketing or you want to brush up on the basics, this guide will help you set up and implement a successful internet marketing strategy, step by step.



STEP 1: OPTIMIZE YOUR WEBSITE

If You Build It, They Will Come.

That's the plan! However, if you really want to attract visitors (and potential customers) to your business' website, you need to do more than simply build it: you need to optimize it.

Search engine optimization, or SEO, is the key to getting your website discovered via search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo. The traditional approach to SEO involves two sets of tactics: on-page SEO and off-page SEO.

On-page SEO is the strategic implementation of keywords on your website, including in page titles, headers, meta descriptions, and more.

Off-page SEO, in comparison, refers to improving your website's overall authority on the web, which is determined by what other websites are linking to you. The goal with off-page SEO is to attract inbound links (or "backlinks") from relevant, authoritative websites.

SEO for the Modern Age

While on-page and off-page SEO are helpful concepts, they are rooted in an approach that is going by the wayside. In the past, the goal of SEO was to impress (or trick) the search engines so that they'd give you higher rankings -- with the ultimate goal being to achieve the coveted #1 spot in the search results for one of your target keywords.

Today, search engines are smarter. They can tell the difference between spammy websites that are designed to game the system, and legitimate websites that are providing relevant high-quality content. Modern SEO is about optimizing for the searchers, not the search engines.

Getting Started With SEO: 5 Elements to Optimize

1. Page Titles

A page title is the text you see at the top of your browser window when viewing a web page. It's also the title of a page that is presented in search engine results.



Page titles can be found and edited in your site's HTML or WordPress CMS. The text that is surrounded with the <title> tag is your page's title. Here are some guidelines for coming up with effective page titles:

- Write page titles that describe -- and align with -- a page's content.
- Include relevant keywords (which should happen naturally if you follow the above tip).
- Place keywords as close to the beginning of the title as possible.
- Make it fewer than 70 characters long. (Longer page titles will get cut off by web browsers and in search results. If you make the page title too long, it will also dilute the importance of the keywords mentioned.)
- Include your company name at the end of the page title, unless you are a big brand and people search for you through your brand name.
- Use unique page titles for each page of your website.

2. Meta Descriptions

A meta description is a short summary that you can write for a web page, which search engines display in search results.

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html class="no-js" lang="en">
  <head>
    <title>AR15 Rifles | Stag Arms</title>
    <meta name="keywords" content="AR15, AR-15, AR 15, AR-15 Rifles, AR15 Rifles, AR 15 Rifles"><meta name="description"
content="Browse our selection of AR15 Rifles. Our AR15 Rifles are 100% American made."><link rel='canonical'
href='https://www.stagarms.com/ar15-rifles/' />
```

These descriptions don't count toward search engine rankings, but they are still incredibly useful. When creating a description, the goal should be to write compelling copy that accurately describes what's on the page so searchers will be enticed to click.

3. Headings

If a piece of text appears larger or more prominent than the other text on a page, it's probably part of a heading. You can verify this by checking this in the HTML code or in the WordPress CMS tool bar of your website and looking for text with an <h1>, <h2>, or <h3> tag surrounding it.

Both search engines and searchers tend to pay more attention to headings in comparison to regular paragraph text. For this reason, it is good to include keywords in your headings whenever possible.

4. Images

Images on a web page can enhance user experience. When inserting images into your website, however, you should keep in mind the following:

- Don't use images excessively. More pictures can slow down the loading of your page, thus negatively impacting both user experience and SEO. Use a plugin like [Imagify](#) to optimize your images automatically.
- Associate text with pictures. For whatever reason, the images on your site may fail to render. To ensure that visitors can still understand the information you're presenting, use the "alt text" HTML attribute in your WordPress Media Library to provide relevant text descriptions of your images.
- Include keywords in your image file name. This will help you draw in relevant traffic from image searches on Google. Separate the words in the file name with a dash (-).
- Investing in quality photography of your products is an absolute must.



5. URL Structure

The URL of a web page is its web address. For example, Beretta's blog has a URL of <http://blog.beretta.com>. URL structure refers to how the text in a URL is organized, as well as how the different URLs on your website interact with one another.

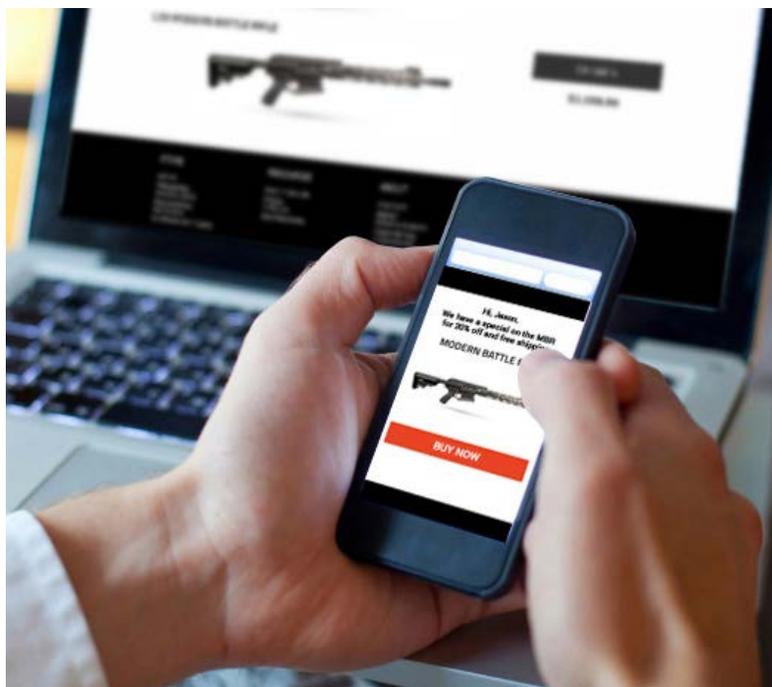
When structuring your website's URLs, there are a few best practices to keep in mind:

- Separate keywords with dashes. For your internal page URLs, separate individual keywords with dashes (-). For example: <http://yoursite.com/ar15-rifles/> is a good URL that captures 'ar15' and 'rifles' as keywords.
- Describe what's on the page. Structure your URLs so that searchers can easily understand what information they're going to find. For example, if you land on a company's products page, seeing the URL <http://company.com/products/product1> will be much more reassuring than something like <http://company.com/1543?/eh?>.
- Use 301 redirects when necessary. A 301 redirect forwards an old URL to a new one. Make sure you do this if you change the URL of a page on your site. (A common mistake is not applying a 301 redirect between yoursite.com and www.yoursite.com. This can be quite a problem from an SEO standpoint, because search engines will give separate credit to both versions of your site.)

Optimizing for Mobile

The topic of mobile marketing is tossed around frequently in marketing circles, often with many different intended meanings. While mobile marketing can mean many things, there is one primary message being conveyed to marketers looking to take advantage of mobile: optimization of websites for mobile viewing.

While there are a few different options for providing a mobile web experience, such as creating a separate mobile site or launching an app, the best option -- from an optimization standpoint -- is using responsive design.



A responsive website uses the same URL and HTML across all devices: desktops, laptops, tablets, and smartphones. The only thing that changes is the CSS, which is a programming language that describes the style and formatting of a web page.

CSS allows the content on your website to adapt to different screen sizes, which means visitors always get a great viewing and browsing experience. What's more, Google prefers responsive design to other mobile technologies because it allows for more efficient crawling and indexing.



STEP 2. CREATE CONTENT

Content is King

Now that you've optimized your website, it's time to create some great content.

Content is the fuel that should drive your internet marketing strategy. By creating valuable, high-quality content that's targeted at specific, well-defined audiences, you'll do more than attract visitors to your website: You'll attract the right visitors, who are likely to convert into contacts/leads (and customers).

What's more, content will help considerably with your website's SEO. Remember "off-page" SEO from the previous section? Creating and distributing content is the best way to earn those valuable inbound links that can boost your search rankings and help improve your website's discover-ability.

Blogging for Your Firearm Business

A blog makes your website more dynamic by automatically injecting new content every time an article is published. Search engines reward higher rankings to websites that consistently add fresh content, and these higher rankings translate into new visitors and leads for your business.

When blogging, take off your hat as a business owner or marketing manager and try to think like a magazine publisher. The goal of your business blog should be to publish valuable, non-promotional posts, much in the way a column or an article in an industry magazine would. Also, think about the words you are using. Avoid industry jargon that only your employees would understand. Instead, think of the words your customers use to describe your business and apply those phrases to your blogging language.

What Do I Write About?

Most business blogs start with a purpose. What are you trying to educate your industry and potential customers about?

This education is not about your product. It's about common industry issues, the problems your potential customers face and, sometimes, the solutions your product or service offer to tackle these challenges.

A great way to start blogging is to answer the ten most common questions you get asked by prospective new customers. Do this once a week for ten weeks and you have the foundations of a successful blog.

Once those first ten weeks are over, check out your blogging analytics to see which articles resonated the most with your audience. If two or three of the posts received a significantly higher number of views and inbound links, try to expand on the topics at hand. Consider interviewing a coworker or industry influencer to reveal their thoughts on the subject.

Remember to let your expertise and passion shine through in your blog content.

Learn More:

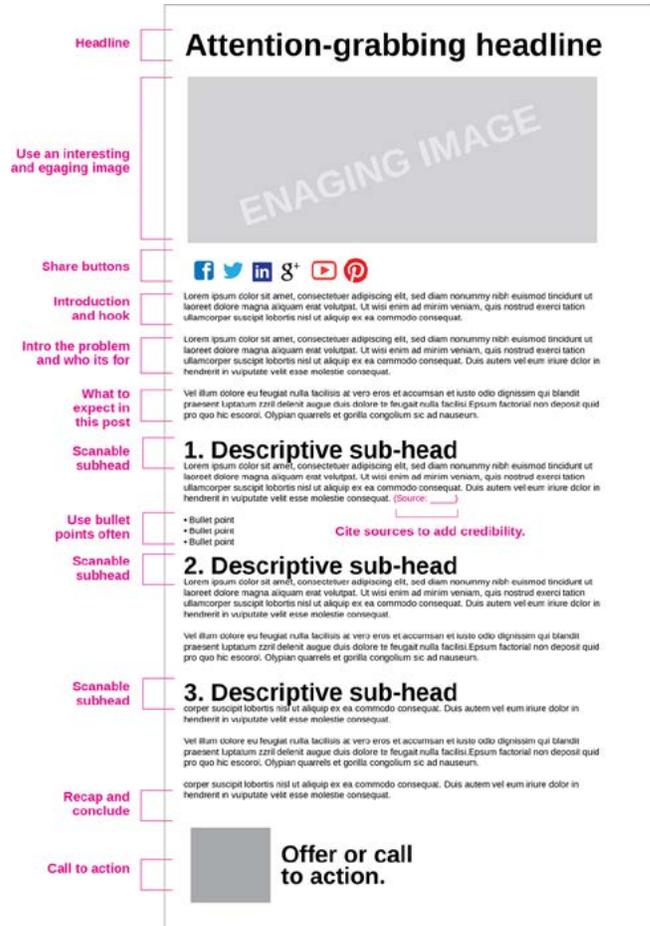
[Stop What You're Doing and Blog Like This.](#)

[The 5 Benefits of Blogging for Your Business](#)

Key Components of a Great Blog Post

- **A compelling title** - A blog post's title is the first thing people will see, so it should clearly indicate what the article is about. Clarity and specificity attract readers and prompt them to share the post with their networks.
- **Engaging image** - An eye-catching image will make your post more interesting and will be used when people share your article or when using content distribution tools.
- **Share buttons** - Add share buttons to your blog post for your readers to easily share with their networks.
- **Well-written and formatted text** - The body of your post should be well-written and formatted in a way that makes it easy to read. Consider using header tags and bullet points to break up the content into sections. Ask a coworker or a friend to review the post before you publish.
- **Multimedia content** - Relevant multimedia content can make a blog post more memorable and fun to read. It also helps to break up the text to make it more pleasing to the eye. Aim to add at least one relevant image per blog post. Slideshow presentations, video, and infographics are examples of other multimedia content you can feature. Adding interactive content like quizzes, surveys and slide shows are also great ways to keep readers engaged.
- **Links** - Include in-text links to relevant content, thus helping readers dig deeper into the resources they are most interested in. Your links can, naturally, point to your own internal pages and landing pages to help you generate more leads from your content.
- **Call-to-Action (CTA)** - Each and every blog post you publish should include a relevant call-to-action in the article to help boost lead generation.

More on that next ...



Generating Leads With Blogging

Business blogging presents a fantastic platform for attracting organic traffic and engaging with your audience. However, the primary goal of your business blog should be to drive conversions and integrate your subscribers into your email marketing if you're running an ecommerce store. To achieve this goal, add calls-to-action to your posts and have them link to landing pages that provide downloadable access to more in-depth learning materials, such as ebooks or videos. You can also offer printable targets and coupons. Make sure to include CTAs both in the sidebar of your blog as well as on every individual post you publish. In addition to image/button CTAs, you can also include text CTAs within the body of your blog content.

Other Content for Generating Leads

While it's a great place to start, blog content isn't the only type of content you can be creating to be successful with internet marketing. You need to produce longer-form content items like ebooks, user manuals, or printable targets as mentioned above that can be used for contact generation. Also consider creating non-text based content like how-to videos, slideshows and photography..

These content "offers" will feed your business conversions. An industry resource that takes some time and effort to put together will provide the type of value visitors are looking for. It might educate, enrich one's knowledge, or simply entertain. In any case, it has the power to achieve an information exchange: the process in which a visitor fills out a lead capture form to access the resource.

The offers you produce shouldn't be randomly selected. On the contrary, there is some precise math behind that decision: the math from your marketing analytics. Reporting insights will direct you to the types of content which attract your target audience. For instance, if an ebook on Concealed Carry brought you more contacts and sales than a video on the same topic, you might want to focus on creating more text-based content.



STEP 3. GET SOCIAL

The Importance of Social

Social media provides a platform for direct communication between your customers, prospects, and employees. What's more, it is a key driver of content distribution and brand visibility online.

While there are a wide array of social networks that you can use to your advantage, we're going to start by focusing on the "big four": Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

(Just remember that when you jump into using these networks for marketing, you need to use the analytics the platforms provide -- in addition to other tools like the analytics that come with [HubSpot's Social Inbox](#) or [Databox](#) -- so you can measure the success of your efforts.)

Facebook for Business

With more than 1 billion monthly active users, Facebook is the most popular social network in the world. From a marketing perspective, Facebook serves as a powerful platform for building a community of advocates and increasing word-of-mouth marketing.

In order to grow your Facebook fanbase, you need to make your Company Page on Facebook as discoverable as possible. Here are few things you can do to help make that happen:

- Fill out your company information completely. Be sure to include an overview of what your business offers as well as a link to you website.
- Invite existing contacts to like your page. Reach out to your friends, family, and

existing customers and ask them to “like” your page on Facebook.

- Integrate Facebook into your other online channels. Use Facebook’s social plugins (including the Like Box and Like Button) to get people to engage with your Facebook page without having to go to Facebook.com.
- Add value by sharing content. If you’re in tune with your buyer personas -- representations of your ideal customers -- you’ll have a good idea of what’s going to resonate with your audience. (We’ll talk more about personas in the next chapter!)
- Pay for new likes using Facebook advertising (non-ffl items only). If you’ve exhausted all of your existing contacts and need an extra boost in the audience growth department, use Facebook’s demographic targeting capabilities to reach people who are likely to be interested in your business.

NOTE: Firearm related items can not be advertised on Facebook. If you try to boost a post, Facebook will decline your ad and can deactivate your account.

[For other ways on how to grow your Facebook Audience check out this post.](#)

Twitter for Business

Twitter is a social network on which people share 140-character messages, and users can “follow” or subscribe to each other’s updates.

Unless you’re a celebrity or your brand is already a household name, amassing a huge following on Twitter isn’t exactly a walk in the park. However, there are a few big levers you can pull to more quickly and effectively attract quality followers for your business’s Twitter account:

- **Create and optimize your Twitter profile.** Let potential followers know who you are, and provide a reason why you’re worth a follow.
- **Tweet 24/7.** Your greatest tactic for growing your followers is to tweet around the clock. Tweet content you create, tweet content created by others, and tweet that content more than once!
- **Curate content like a pro.** Use Feedly, Medium, Quora, Flipboard, Alltop, Twitter (lists), StumbleUpon, LinkedIn Pulse, and what’s hot on Instagram and Google+ to discover great, relevant content to tweet.
- **Make tweets visual.** Take the time to create great visuals and add them to your tweets. It pays off in engagement, conversion, and click-through rates. Remember when I mentioned quality photography above?

LinkedIn for Business

LinkedIn is a social network that you can use to engage with prospective distributors, dealers and customers as well as prospective employees. As such, it is a truly unique space on the web, one that blurs the lines between knowledge-sharing platform and relationship-building tool.

Just like with Facebook and Twitter, the first step when starting out with LinkedIn for business is to make your business easy to find. Your ultimate goal is to build an engaged audience and to position your business as a thought leader in your industry.

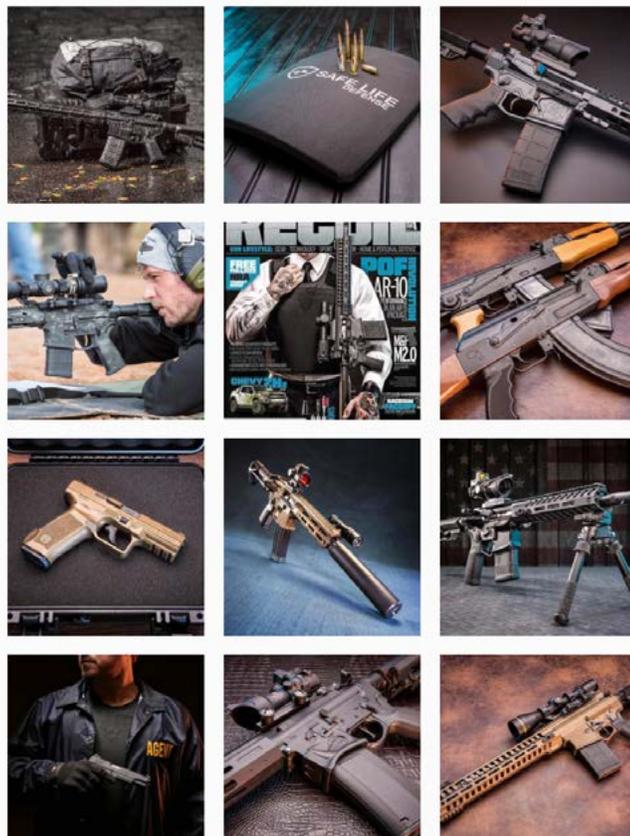
Ready to get started? Just follow these simple steps:

- **Optimize your company description.** Make it easy for the right people to find your Company Page on LinkedIn by adding keywords in the description and 'Specialties' sections.
- **Get visual.** Keep your Company Page fresh with rich cover images that reflect your company's accomplishments, events, and offerings.
- **Use Showcase Pages to highlight different products.** For business lines or initiatives with unique messaging and audience segments, consider creating a dedicated LinkedIn Showcase Page.
- **Share company updates regularly.** Every like, comment, and share increases your reach. Prompt your followers to take action on your updates by asking thoughtful questions.

Instagram for Business

Instagram is a free, online photo-sharing application and social network platform that was acquired by Facebook in 2012. Each post by a user appears on their followers' Instagram feeds and can also be viewed by the public when tagged using hashtags or geotags. (Source: TechTarget) Instagram can only be used with mobile devices, but can still be viewed from a desktop.

Gun enthusiasts love Instagram and this channel can be one of the fastest ways to grow followers. Some of the industry's best products, photographers, and brands can be found on Instagram and should be part of your internet marketing strategy



if you're a manufacturer.

- **Stay on brand.** Make sure the photos you post have a style incorporated into it and are professional. See [Hudson_mfg](#) for a good example.
- **Avoid ads.** I advise against trying to push ads to your audience as you most likely will not acquire any followers but it's worth to test.
- **Humanize your brand.** Offer your followers an inside look to your company and its employees.
- **Use Hashtags.** When you use a hashtag that you've created for your brand you can follow its evolution and start answering important questions such as:
 - Is the hashtag gaining popularity?
 - Do your followers use the hashtag?
 - Is that hashtag gaining you followers?

Here are some most widely used hashtags:

[#ar15](#) [#firearms](#) [#sickguns](#) [#weapons](#) [#weaponfanatics](#) [#2a](#) [#pewpew](#) [#pewpewlife](#)
[#defendthesecond](#) [#gunsdaily](#) [#gunchannels_](#) [#weaponsdaily](#) [#rifle](#) [#americanmade](#)
[#veteranmade](#)

The Art of Social Listening

An important part of leveraging social media for business is to understand what industry-related conversations are happening online and recognizing when you should respond.

Here are a few tools you can use to monitor your business and industry mentions in social media:

- **Google Alerts** - Set up multiple Google Alerts for your company, brand, products, leaders, industry terms, etc. The alerts will get delivered directly to your email inbox at the frequency you indicate (e.g., daily or as they happen) and they are a great way to track mentions of your brand and relevant keywords on the web.
- **Social media management tools** - These tools allow you to save keyword searches as a live stream so you won't miss out on what's being said about your brand, your industry, and your products.
- **Social Inbox** - In addition to providing the social monitoring functionality of a traditional social media management tool, HubSpot's Social Inbox also plugs into your contacts database, color-codes your customers and leads, and helps you prioritize your engagement so you can focus your time on the conversations that are important to your business.



STEP 4. CONVERT VISITORS INTO LEADS

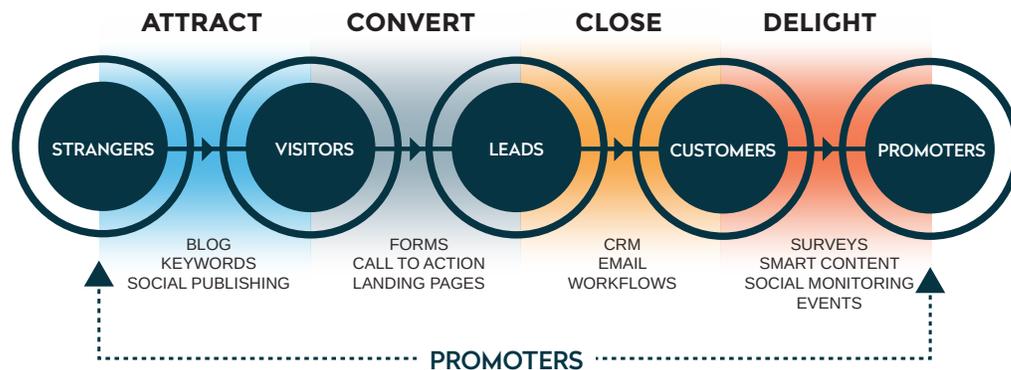
By this point, you should have already optimized your website, launched your blog, and started participating in -- and promoting content on -- social networks. If it's been several weeks, you're probably starting to see a spike in web traffic.

There's only one problem. All of that traffic to your site isn't generating any new business. People are visiting your site, but those visits aren't leading to new customers -- or even new sales/leads. So what do you do? Simple: focus on conversion.

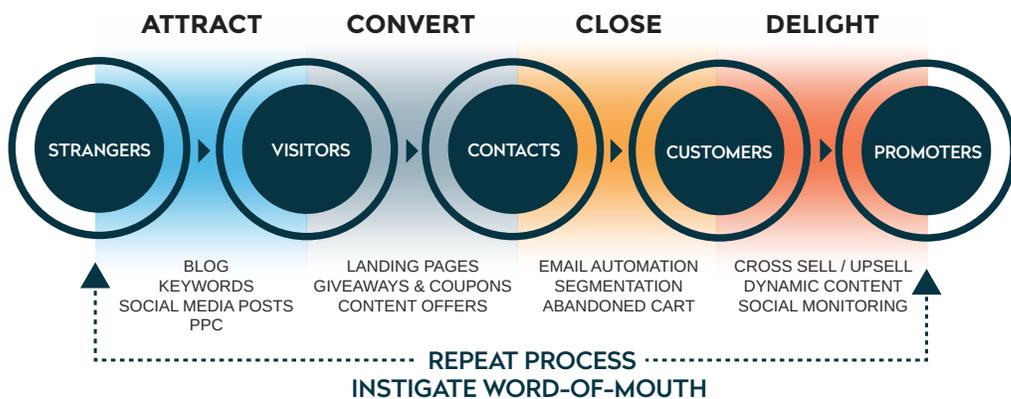
Right now you are still at the top of your marketing funnel. You need to move down and start converting your website visitors into sales/leads. To do this, you'll need to come up with a compelling content offer for your prospects, create a call-to-action to promote that offer, and launch a landing page with a form for visitors to provide their information in exchange for that offer. Finally, you'll need to measure and iterate the whole process.

In this section, we will go over the conversion process in more detail. But first, take a look at how converting visitors into leads fits into what we call the "Inbound Methodology" -- the best way to turn strangers into customers and promoters of your business:

B2B INBOUND MARKETING MARKETING



B2C ECOMMERCE INBOUND METHODOLOGY



PHASE 1: Coming Up With an Offer

The content offer (e.g. an ebook, template, tool, or other gated resource) is the most important part of any inbound campaign. It's the initial attraction that catches the attention of your website visitors and it gives them a reason to fill out the form used to collect their information.

Your offer should target the type of sales lead you're trying to attract. For example, if you're a **B2B company in the firearms industry**, you'll want to create offers that will appeal to executives looking for help e.g. compliance, legal services, IT etc.

If you're a **B2C firearm or gear manufacturer** with an ecommerce store, you'll want to try to use giveaways, newsletter signups, surveys, coupons, apparel offers or other

things (get creative), that appeal to potential buyers and customers interested in your products.

To ensure you have a solid understanding of the audience you're trying to target with your content offer, take the time to develop buyer personas. A buyer persona is a semi-fictional representation of your ideal customer, which is based on actual customer data.

For example, as a beginner shooter, you might have a buyer persona named "AR Arnold," who represents your most common type of customer. And through a combination of research, surveys, and interviews, you know that AR Arnold is in his mid-40s, he shoots once a month, he owns several guns and he prefers watching instructional shooting videos vs. reading about shooting tips. Armed with this kind of detailed information, you'll have a great starting point for creating a targeted content or other kinds of offers.

FREE DOWNLOAD: A Hunting, Outdoor & Firearms Marketer's Guide to Creating the Buyer Persona

The key to maximizing your marketing and branding efforts

In this powerful template — we help you and your team think through and identify who your ideal customer is. This will enable you to set SMART goals that focus your marketing and create better brand experiences.



DOWNLOAD FREE BUYER PERSONA TEMPLATE

Product-based offers

Product-focused offers can include a custom consultation, free demo at a local FFL dealer or range, or a firearm sent to a distributor or dealer to review. Use anything you think will work for your target customers. Also, keep in mind that the offer is a conversation starter for the sales team, so it should be designed to start a conversation that will lead to a sale.

PHASE 2: Creating Calls-to-Action (CTAs)

Once you decide on your offer, create a few compelling calls-to-action (CTAs). As we mentioned earlier in this guide, a call-to-action is a button or a link that grabs a visitor's attention and directs that visitor to a landing page. Calls-to-action are located everywhere: on website pages, in emails and blog posts, within content offers, etc. They are the key trigger behind lead generation.

On the landing page, a visitor is prompted to complete the form by entering their contact information and other details in order to receive what's being offered. Through this information exchange the visitor converts into a lead with whom your sales team can follow up. Naturally, not all conversion events are created equal and, as you become more experienced with internet marketing, you will have to start thinking about lead scoring.

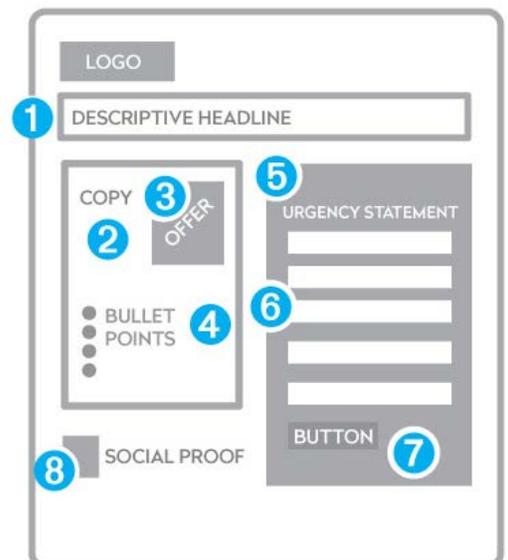
If you have an effective call-to-action, you'll convert a high percentage of your website visitors into leads.

PHASE 3: Creating Landing Pages

The landing page is where your website visitors arrive after they click on your call-to-action, and where they will fill out the form to download your offer. Your sales team will use the information you ask for in this form to follow up ... provided it's a quality lead.

Keep in mind that once visitors submit their information on a landing page (bleft), they should be redirected to a thank-you page where they can access the offer.

Content offers, calls-to-action, and landing pages are the core elements of the conversion process, but you can't stop there. If you just have a single conversion pathway, you have very little insight into the process and the way it performs. In order to improve your



conversion process, you need to constantly measure and experiment.

Some marketing metrics you should watch closely include the click-through rate of your call-to-action, the conversion rate of your landing page, and the number of new leads and sales an offer resulted in.

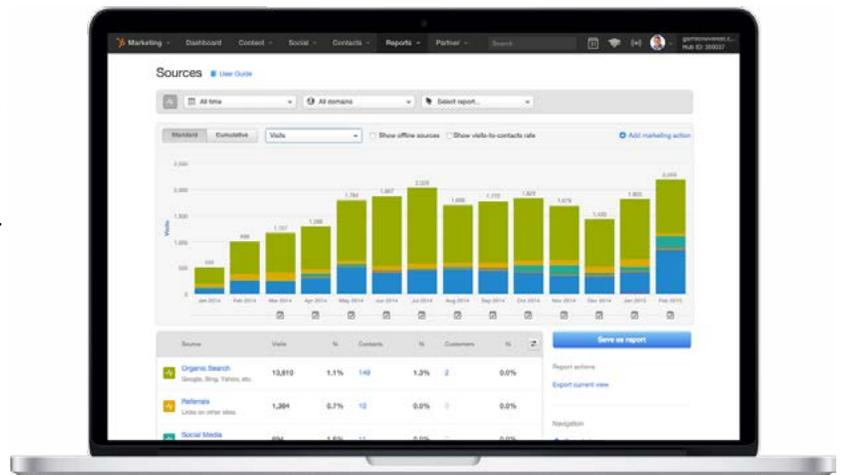
In order to determine which elements best help you achieve your goals, you have to test different CTAs, landing pages, and offers. If a call-to-action has been on your home page for a month, vary the messaging or swap out an entirely new CTA, and after another month, measure which one performed best. If landing page conversions are low, make a change to the page layout and measure the results. Don't be afraid to test different variations you can always switch back if the old version worked better. It will be worth it when you've found the best combination that increases your site's conversions.

For more information, check out [Landing Page Best Practices](#)

PHASE 4: Testing, Measuring, Iterating

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Once you become more familiar with this process, you can grab HubSpot's guide, [Getting Started With A/B Testing](#), which will show you how to optimize different elements of your marketing funnel through split testing.



STEP 5: NURTURE LEADS INTO CUSTOMERS

Lead nurturing is the process of developing relationships with your potential customers by sending targeted, relevant, and valuable messages to them in a timely manner.

The end goal is to get your leads to “raise their hand” and self-select into further engaging with your business.

From a technical standpoint, a lead nurturing system is software that allows you to send an automated series of email messages to early-stage leads in order to pre-qualify them before handing them over to your sales team.

As a marketer, you know that getting contacts/leads is fantastic -- but not all contacts/leads are at the point where they can be considered sales-ready.

Take a look at your existing sales funnel. How long does it typically take for a lead to become a customer after his or her first inquiry? Does the sales cycle vary for different types of purchases? Equipped with the answers to these questions, you can build some effective contact/lead nurturing campaigns and leverage this marketing channel to qualify leads and help your sales organization.

Email Marketing Best Practices

In addition to nurturing your leads through targeted email messages, you should also be looking at the larger email marketing picture, which includes growing your database, closely following key metrics, and increasing conversions.

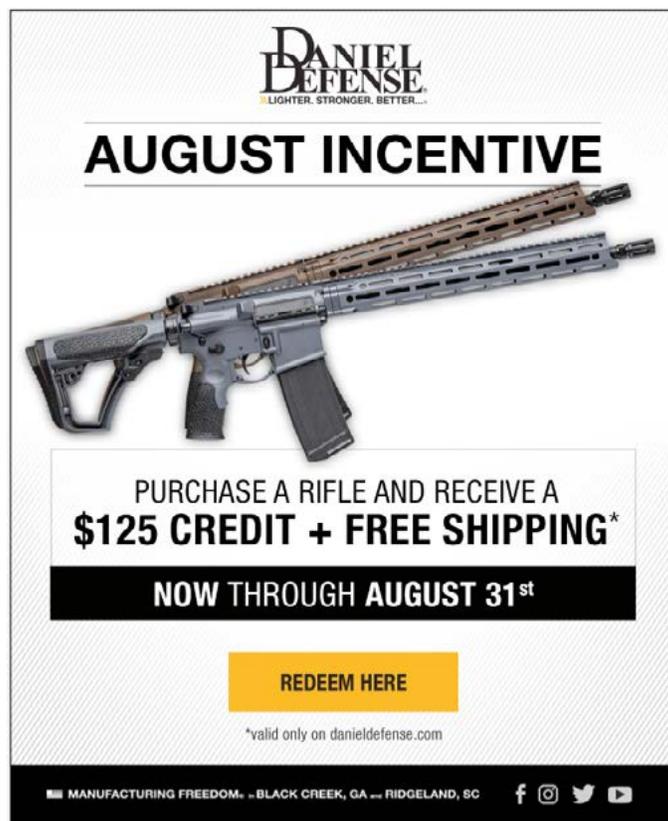
List Building

One of the biggest challenge even for experienced internet marketers is creating opt-in opportunities. Make sure your lead forms allow your website visitors to enter their email address and opt-in to receive your messages. Give them a reason to opt-in. What's so valuable about your emails? What interesting and unique information will they receive in your email newsletter? Be explicit and phrase the benefits in a way your audience will understand.

Only send messages to people who have explicitly opted in. You can follow the extreme principle of [Seth Godin's "permission marketing"](#): would your recipient be upset if they didn't receive your message? If yes, you should go ahead and send your email.

Sending

- **Send emails that are relevant to the interests of your contacts.** What initially brought them to you? How can you follow-up on that interest to further engage them?
- **Be personal in your communication.** Use a real email sender name and add a personal signature. Personalize the message so the recipient remembers how and why they came to your website. For example, start with "you recently checked out our ebook..." or "thanks for subscribing to our blog!"
- **Make sure that your message adds value.** Get into the mind of your recipients and ask, "what's in it for me?" Are you emailing them just to tell them how great your product is? Or are you offering to help them solve a problem? Make the value clear in the email body and subject line.
- **Don't rely on images,** as some email clients don't load images automatically,



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MANUFACTURING FREEDOM. — BLACK CREEK, GA — RIDGELAND, SC

f i t y

so if your email is one large image, your recipient might not have any idea what it's about! Use images as supplementary (clickable) content in your email, and make sure you have enough text to communicate value.

- **Be consistent in your communication to set the right expectations in recipients.** Whether you send your messages daily, weekly, or monthly, pick schedule and stick to it.

(Re)Converting

Each one of your marketing messages should have a goal. Make it clear what recipients are supposed to do once they open your email. Are you driving subscribers to read a product announcement on your blog? Asking them to share an offer on social media? Inviting them to download your new ebook?

If your goal is contact/lead generation, include a call-to-action that links to a landing page on which the recipient can reconvert and self-select to further engage with your company. But these subscribers are already existing leads for my business, you might object. Then, inform them about product-centric offers and let them qualify themselves as more sales-ready. If they are not ready to commit yet, continue nurturing them with broader offers and stay top of mind for them.

Remember, the landing page is part of your email campaign. Email marketing doesn't stop with a click. Your landing page is an extension of your email, and it is where your conversion takes place. Make sure your email offer and landing page are well aligned, using similar language and images.

Measuring Email Performance

- **Click-through rate (CTR)** - Click-through rate measures response: how many of the people you emailed clicked on your link(s)? The CTR can give you a sense of how compelling your offer and email messages are. Experiment with different offers, subject lines, calls-to-action, and timing to improve your email CTR.
- **What about open rate?** Open rate is an unreliable metric, as major email clients do not load the images necessary for tracking who opened an email. Instead of worrying about open rate, focus on the number of clicks your emails receive.
- **Unsubscribe Rate** - Unsubscribe rate measures the percentage of recipients who opted out of your email communications. As with open rates, the unsubscribe rate isn't a reliable picture of your email list's health. Many subscribers

won't bother to go through the formal unsubscribe process but will just stop opening, reading, and clicking on your messages.

Measure how many of those clicks turned into reconversions on your landing page. It's the ultimate measure of an email campaign's effectiveness. The higher your conversion rate, the more relevant and compelling the offer was for your audience.

However, conversion rates are dependent on factors beyond the original email message, such as the quality of your landing page. Test different landing pages to improve the conversion on your website.

Beyond Email

In this section we covered how to use lead nurturing and email marketing to follow up with your leads and engage them on an ongoing basis to push them down the sales funnel.

However, nurturing your contacts doesn't have to be limited to email communications.

After all, you can communicate with your leads via social media or other platforms they use. That is why you should also start thinking about behavior-driven communications, those that get triggered based on your leads' full history of interactions, both on and off your site.



STEP 6: ANALYZE & REFINE

Now you are surely moving to the bottom of the sales and marketing funnel. That means you need to review the performance of your various marketing activities, identify the winning ones, and eliminate or -- drastically modify -- the ineffective campaigns. In this section we will review some metrics to monitor and suggestions for refining your internet marketing strategy.

Identify Opportunities

When you review your marketing activities, figure out what you want to improve. Do you want more people coming to your blog? Do you want to convert more of the visitors on your home page into leads? Get into the mindset of constantly looking for new opportunities.

Set a Metric for Success

In almost all cases, your metric should be quantifiable and involve a set time frame. For example, "Increase website leads by X% over the next X days.

Refine Your Strategy

Analyze how your programs performed. Make changes with the intention of achieving your marketing goals by doing less of what doesn't work and more what works (and by modifying what doesn't work so that it works better).

Determine if you've met your success metric. If so, stick with your change. If you haven't met it, see what you could have done differently. In either case, continue to monitor the metric to make sure the improvement has a long-term effect.

Metrics to Track and Report On

In order for your refinements to have a big impact, you need to monitor several key factors. Before diving into how to improve them, let's first discuss what the relevant metrics are.



Website Traffic



Bounce Rate



New vs. Repeat
Visitors



Contacts &
Email Subscribers



Customer
Acquisition
Costs



Ecommerce
Conversion Rate



Social Media
Network



Influencers &
Earned Media



Dealer Signups



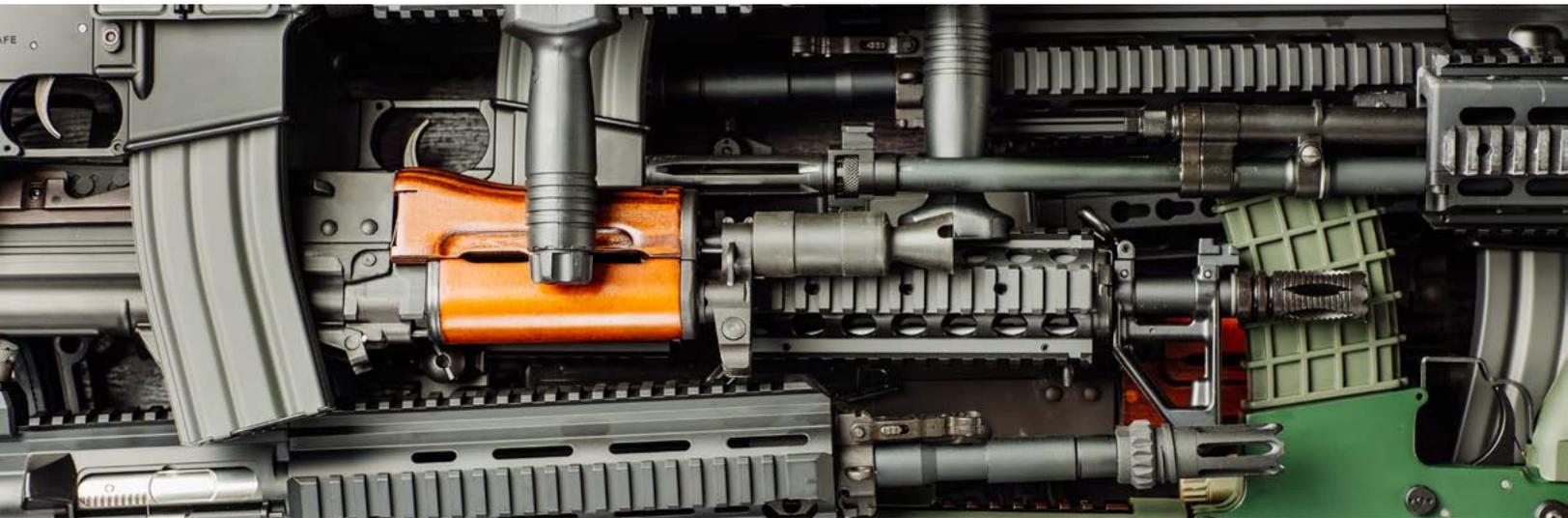
Effectiveness
by Channel



Customers
& Sales

- **Website Traffic** - Overall, how many people are coming to your website? Look into what channel drove the most and least visits. Take that knowledge, make iterations and launch campaigns that will increase visits.
- **Bounce Rate** - Are people bouncing off your website? Bounce rate is the percentage of visitors to a particular website who navigate away from the site after viewing only one page.
- **New vs. Repeat Visitors** - Of your overall traffic, how many visitors are returning to your site, and how many new people are finding you? Both types of visitors are good. Attracting new visitors means people are finding you through search. Attracting repeat visitors means you've given people good reason to come back to your site. The key is finding a balance.
- **Contacts/Email Subscribers** - How much of this traffic are you converting into leads, contacts, subscribers and potential customers? This number should be constantly growing to ensure a steady flow of revenue.
- **Customer Acquisition Costs** - How much are you investing to draw in each new customer? If you rely primarily on outbound marketing methods, like trade shows, print, PR and direct mail, your cost per customer is probably pretty high. If you are following the steps outlined in this guide and focus on inbound marketing, you are saving your company a lot of money.
- **Ecommerce Conversion Rate** - 67.45% of online shopping carts are abandoned before the customer completes a sale. That implies that your sales numbers may only be one third of what they could potentially be.

- **Social Media Networks** - Are your social media channels growing? If not, your content may need to be revamped.
- **Influencers and Earned Media** - Influencers play an important role in any online marketing campaign. Are you able to attract and acquire industry experts to promote your product?
- **Dealer Signups** - Since dealers typically purchase more than one product from you, it's important to track this metric. They also help get your product into the hands of prospective customers.
- **Effectiveness by Channel** - What promotion channels or referring sources are sending you the most traffic? Focus on long-term results, not short-term traffic spurts you might get from news coverage, print ads or press releases.
- **Customers/Sales** - You should always be mapping your campaigns and channels to customer acquisition. How many sales did you close this month? How does that compare to last month's performance? The ability to make this comparison is invaluable to any marketing organization. Not to mention how happy these return on investment (ROI) numbers are going to make you or your boss.



STEPS FOR IMPROVEMENT

KEYWORDS

Try new keywords or variations of keywords to see if they help you get found better. Since each page on your site can incorporate different keywords, there are tons of ways to do this.

SEO

See if changing a simple on-page SEO factor can help boost visits. Examples of on-page factors are page title, meta description, and headings. As a simple test, try changing the page title of one of your web pages to see if you generate more traffic.

CONVERSIONS

Try new things with your conversion forms or landing pages. For example, make a change to the layout by switching up the form placement or featuring an image that's completely different from what you currently have.

CONTENT

Determine which content is bringing you the most traffic and leads. This could be an opportunity to either focus more on that kind of content, or refine your promotion of other content.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Evaluate which social media channels are generating the most site visitors and leads. Again, you can either focus on your successful social media platforms, or try improving your performance in your less successful ones.

LEAD NURTURING & EMAIL MARKETING

Maybe you're sending emails too frequently -- or not frequently enough. Maybe the calls-to-action in your email are not appropriate for your audience. Always keep experimenting and testing!

Conclusion

The firearms industry—like every other industry—is changing. The best and biggest brands are not only innovating new products, but also their marketing. There will always be a place for traditional marketing in our industry (for now), but brands need to begin thinking how they can be more effective online and move where their customers are. We hope this guide has given you a good idea on how to improve your internet strategy and how to move your brand into the digital era of marketing.



About Garrison Everest

Rise Above the Rest

Garrison Everest is a brand development, inbound marketing and professional design agency for the outdoor, tech and firearms industry. We help brands who are struggling to develop their brand, grow, stabilize or increase profits through their websites, increase revenue through online channels, and enter the digital era of marketing.

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