

How Often Should I Update My Website?

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Q: How often should I update my website?

A: I take it your question is rooted in the buzz over how best to boost your search engine ranking. It's true that a steady stream of new posts and content can attract links from other websites and boost your search engine optimization, but let's be honest: For many businesses, maybe even the majority of them, daily updates just don't make sense--especially if fewer than 50 people a month are visiting the site. We asked Vanessa Fox, author of *Marketing in the Age of Google*, to tell us more.

Won't a lack of updates hurt my company's online exposure?

Not necessarily. But what you must do is list your business on the free search engine maps products and fill out your profile completely, so when customers do search for you online, they can find you. Go to Bing Places for Business, Google Places for Business and Yahoo Local online, then follow the directions. While you're at it, check your business listing on review sites such as Yelp and address any complaints immediately, because these profile pages often rank well in search engines for business names.

What information do I absolutely need to have on my site?

At a minimum, make sure your address, phone number and hours are prominently displayed. Otherwise, you can update the site when you're having a sale or get new merchandise, but you don't have to.

What tactics produce the most benefit from search engines?

Make a list of questions your customers might have or problems they may be trying to solve--issues that your business can address. From that list, you can create an editorial calendar. You don't need to update your site every day, but posts based on a questions-driven calendar (monthly is fine; weekly is better) give you greater opportunities for visibility. For instance, if you own a hardware store and you blog about house-painting tips, then those potential customers using Google to find out about DIY painting may see your page and visit it.

But don't create content just for the sake of having new content. It's useful content that absolutely leads to more customers. You can always ask a couple of your customers to help you figure out the difference.