



## Interview: Nick Jervis on online marketing for freelancers

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For the latest in our continuing series of interviews, Tom from 3Desk sat down with Nick Jervis of **Small Business Sat**, who helps small businesses and freelancers with their marketing campaigns.

### I'm a freelancer wanting to market myself online - where do I start?

First, I want to allay people's fears about website marketing. Anyone can do it with some basic tools - it is not some 'black art'. If you are a freelancer, all it takes is regular, consistent action.

I think the Internet actually favours freelancers over larger companies because it allows them to be much more personable. The old saying 'people buy people' is true - so a freelancer with pictures and information on their website will usually be far more approachable than a cold, corporate website.

Because it is "their" business, freelancers are generally far more passionate about it than the IT teams of the large corporates. Whereas the large corporate business might target higher volume search terms like "telesales", the freelancer might be more targeted and go for "telesales Bristol" and other lower volume but high value search terms.

### What are some website "quick fixes" that anyone can undertake?

Take a "client first" approach. When it comes to any aspect of your marketing, examine it from your client's point of view. Does your website speak all about your prospects and the issues or challenges that they are currently facing, or is it all about you?

Does it address the problems that have led them to find your website and hint at the solution that awaits them if only they make contact? Or is it focusing on the year the business was established and some of the qualifications the business owner has achieved? Make sure you are not making the "Enough about me, what do you think of me?" error.

Next, make sure you are ticking off all the client's questions.

Make sure that every page of your website says what you do. Too many websites make the fatal mistake of assuming that their prospects will visit seven or eight pages to find the information they are looking for. Your prospects are busy people just like you. They do not have the time to traipse around your website, enjoying every last turn of phrase, clever imagery and feature.

Make sure to include:

- Your prospects problem (related to the page they are on)
- Your expertise in helping people just like them
- Success stories relating to the service they are reviewing
- Testimonials from satisfied clients
- Your credentials for helping them
- Your costs (usually just that initial contact is free - displaying full pricing usually stops the telephone from ringing as you are then used as a comparison site)
- Methods for getting in touch with you (more on this next)

Try to include as much of this on each page as you can.

### How can you make sure people get in touch?

One of my highest traffic websites generates leads for solicitors. 40% of leads use the telephone to make contact, 80% would rather fill in a short contact enquiry form. If you do not have different methods available for your prospects to make contact, you are missing enquiries.

You need to repeat these contact options (your calls to action) at the foot of every page of your website. Do not assume your clients will go off on a hunt for your contact form, or even scroll back up to the top of the page.

### What are some good rules of thumb for generating leads through your website?

For every 100 visitors to your website, 98 are going to leave, having taken absolutely no action. This is an almost universal phenomena.

Now imagine if you could change those figures, so that perhaps only 95 of them leave without taking any action. One tip is to offer something of value to your prospects that is relevant to your service and that you will provide to them in exchange for their name and email address.

If you're a marketer like me, offer a free report, or a video presentation you have prepared. As long as it conforms to my "clients first" mantra and provides something of real value to your prospects, it will help you to break the 98/2 rule!

There is so much software out there to use for email capture and email marketing that this is very easy to achieve now, and for very little cost. The beauty too is that once you write your report or record your guide you can programme the link for it into the email software and when a client downloads it will automatically be forwarded to them.

### OK, so how can we make Google like our website as well as people?

Google's primary mission is essentially: "To provide people with the best results for their search terms in the fastest period of time possible." Whatever you do with your website, it has to be genuine - do it for humans first, Google second - and you will usually end up pleasing both.

Google does need some help from you to achieve its mission - enough content on each page to work out what you are actually talking about. Generally, this should be at least 400 words on every page. This really bugs website designers. However, I would much rather have a less elegant website with thousands of visitors each month than a beautiful website which nobody ever found.

### Explain all this "back-end gubbins."

Search



Tom Savage

Tom is an award-winning social entrepreneur who has started a number of businesses, most recently 3Desk, a marketplace for freelancers

Author's website: 3Desk

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### Recommended Reading

- Agency Workers Regulations guide
- Free Invoice Templates
- Guides
- IR35 Guide
- Limited Company Expenses
- Reviews
- Sample contracts for freelancers
- Sole Trader vs Limited Company
- Working From Home
- Working Time Directive
- Your Rights

### Reader Offers

- 50 Free Business Cards from Moo
- Downloadable Go Freelance Guide
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**Confusion reigns ahead of IR35 business test**  
HMRC were due to release details of their IR35 business test, designed to help contractors and freelancers "self-assess" their status, on April 6th. As this date fell on a public holiday the release has been delayed. HMRC and IR35 Forum members have variously said the delays would be "a week or few".

**Contractors left out in the cold in 2012 Budget**

The "pro-business" 2012 Budget may have provided many boons for large businesses in the form of an extra 1% cut in the Main Rate of Corporation Tax (which will now fall from 26% to 24% in April), increased R&D tax credits, and a 5% income tax cut for their wealthy executives, but there was little meaningful change for contractors, freelancers and small businesses.

**AWR fails to cool demand for contractors**

The Agency Workers Regulations have been in effect for almost six months now, and despite predications of 500,000 contracts being axed, the temporary work sector - including most contractors and freelancers - has been remarkably undamaged.

You must at least know how to view the code that Google uses. The most important part is to be able to view the 'source code' of your website. Look at any page of your website, then right click the content. Click on the "View page source" option and you will see your page as viewed by Google's robots.

The most important things to look at are your 'Title tags'. These are usually very close to the top of the page and will look something like this:

```
<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN"
"http://www.w3.org/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd"
>
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml" xml:lang="en" lang="en">
<head>
<title>Marketing Tips for Small Businesses - Small Business Marketing Company</title>
<meta name="description" content="Looking for SME Marketing Tips? Free SME Marketing Guide - 8
Ways To Instantly Attract New Prospects And Increase Your Small Business Profits."/>
<meta name="keywords" content="sme marketing tips, sme marketing, sme marketing strategies"/>
```

Ensuring that you have unique title, description and keyword tags on every page of your website can instantly increase the amount of visitors. Every page should have a title tag, a description and a choice of two or three keywords or phrases that you are targeting on that page. Changes like this account for approximately 40% of search engine marketing results!

To find keywords or phrases that work for your business, use [Google's Adwords Keyword Tool](#) - type in the service you provide and you will be presented with a range of keywords similar to those you entered. Google will also show you how many searches there are for every keyword it lists. So you can see if 10 people a month or 1,000 people a month are typing in, for example, "Freelance Copywriter Bristol".

The next part that is really important is your H1 tag. You will find this further down the source code you revealed earlier on. It is important that this H1 tag matches the search terms you are targeting, as Google will check this.

You can see below that my H1 tag is targeting "SME Marketing Tips" just like the Title tags, description tag and keyword tags above:

```
<h1>SME Marketing Tips</h1>
<p>struggling to generate all of the new client leads you want and need?
Does marketing seem like some form of black art that you just cannot get to grips with? Well
```

Finally you need to ensure that the keywords that you are targeting are repeated in the content on the page. This is where you must talk to your human prospects first.

Photo by [Michael Himbeault](#)

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