



FIVE REASONS WHY YOUR SLOW WEBSITE IS COSTING YOU SALES ...AND HOW TO FIX THEM

Speed Kills

40% of people abandon a website that takes more than 3 seconds to load

How fast is your website? If it takes longer than 3 seconds to load, you're potentially losing customers.

We live in a modern world, where Internet users are used to accessing the information that they are looking for fast. Visitors to your website are more impatient now than they have ever been in the past.

Given that you often only have 5-7 seconds to actually capture the attention of a visitor to your website, you need to make sure that they're not spending this time waiting for it to actually display on their screens.

What does a slow website mean in practice?

A slow website costs you sales. It doesn't matter if you sell a product or service directly on your website or if you just have an informational site, a website that loads slowly will cause users to click "Back" in the browser and to visit a competitor's website.

Google introduced changes to their search engine algorithms (the processes that they use to rank websites like yours in the search engines). As of 2018, websites that load quickly gain a boost in their search engine rankings.

You may have had customers complain to you in the past that your website was slow. Perhaps they struggled to load content or if you have an E-Commerce website, their experience at your checkout caused them some issues.

The speed of your website is a trust factor for your visitors and potential customers. If your website is taking 10 - 20 seconds to load, the visitor is going to wonder if you're actually serious about your business. Think about how you use the Internet, would you trust a website that takes that long to load?

We've put together five common reasons that your website is loading slowly in this free guide and what you can do to improve things today. All of these recommendations can be actioned by you or a member of your team, leaving your website loading faster in just a matter of hours.

Don't let a slow website kill your business. Take the time to ensure your website loads quickly for all of your visitors and provide a great experience to them. A faster website will lead to more inquiries and more revenue for your business.

1

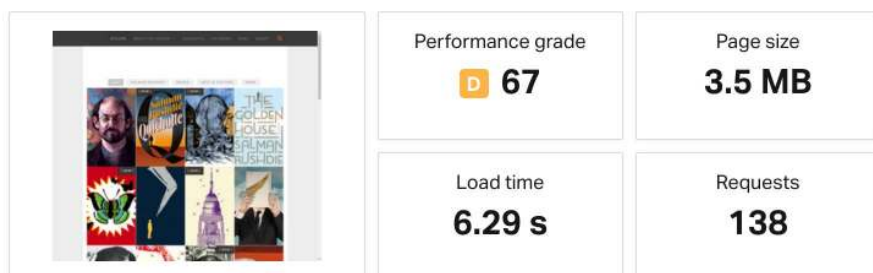
Page Size

Are your web pages overloaded?

Your website is made from a series of scripts, code, files and images. The more of these elements that are on each page, the longer it will take for a visitor's web browser to fetch and render your website on their screen.

The average size of a webpage on the Internet today is about 2.5Mb, mainly due to the number of elements that are used on pages that are not properly optimized. In today's modern world you ideally want to keep the total size of your pages below 1Mb, whenever possible. This allows your website pages to load quickly for the vast majority of your users.

Your Results:

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Example speed test results from the website of the author - Salman Rushdie

As we can see in the example above the Page Size is 3.5Mb, which is quite large for the modern Internet. We can also see that there are 138 requests on the page - which refers to all of the scripts, code, files and image elements. The total loading time of 6.29 seconds means that visitors to the website may not have the experience they crave, as they're left waiting for the content to load and be visible.

TIP: Run a speed test for your website using Pingdom Tools - <https://tools.pingdom.com>. Enter your website URL into the box on the page and pick the server from the drop-down menu that is closest to your location.

Pay particular attention to the Load Time, Page Size and Requests. If the Load Time is longer than 3 seconds, the Page Size is larger than 1Mb or the number of Requests is higher than 100 - then your website needs optimizing.

It's more than likely that your website will be failing in at least one of these three areas, and that's okay. The most common loading speeds of websites in the UK in 2018 (according to Google) were 6 seconds across many different industries.

You can be better than this average. For now, take the results that you've got above and keep these as a benchmark for testing after you've made further changes.

2 Image Optimization

Are your images web ready?

One of the most common issues that we see on a business website are images that have been uploaded and not re-sized or optimized for their specific purpose. If your website has any images on it, then you need to make sure that you optimize these images.

The process of image optimization is where high quality images are compressed into web ready versions, while focusing on the smallest file sizes possible.

An easy example of how large images can be uploaded to your website would be if you or a member of your team has taken photographs that you wish to add to a page or blog post. If you take a JPEG image straight from your camera and upload it directly to your website, it will likely be a very large image. Depending on the camera this could be an image size of between 10Mb - 20Mb.

While that's not a huge size for modern fiber optic or high speed Internet connections to handle, for users who are on slower rural connections or using 3G/4G on their mobile device, this one image can mean the difference between your website loading in good time or being a really frustrating experience.

TIP: If you or a member of your team has the technical ability, it's worth taking a few moments to resize your images before uploading them. Unless the image is going to be using the full-width of the page, you can usually safely save your image with the longest side (width or length) as 1000 pixels.

What about if you already have a lot of images on your website or if you don't have someone who has the technical skillset to modify images before they are uploaded to your website?

You're in luck, as there are companies out there who have created solutions that will help you to optimize images that are already on your website. Even better than this, their tools will also optimize each image that is added to the website on an ongoing basis.

We use and recommend ShortPixel - <https://shortpixel.com>. They have a free plan that allows you to optimize up to 100 images per month, which is ideal for getting started with your website.

TIP: Sign up for an account with ShortPixel and install their WordPress plugin onto your website - <https://wordpress.org/plugins/shortpixel-image-optimiser/>. Use the plugin to optimize the images on your website and check out the results.

Important: Always ensure you have taken a recent backup of your website before making any changes.

3 Caching

Serve the same content faster

Websites have hundreds, thousands and even millions of views each month - depending on the type of content they're showing and their popularity. With each of these visits, the content will be loaded dynamically for each user, which means that they need to wait for each element of your website to be loaded by their web browser. This happens on every single page that they view.

Caching technologies allow you to reduce the number of elements that a visitor's web browser will need to load by serving a static cached version of them. This cached version of your website's elements can drastically speed up your website.

The technology behind caching can be a little complex, so let's look at this in a really simple way. If someone asks you what color grass is, you'll answer with "green". You didn't need to look this up, because it's something you've learned and remembered... it's "cached" in your brain.

This is the way that caching works with your website. It remembers what has been loaded once and then keeps serving this cached content to users who visit the pages of your website, giving them a faster and more vibrant experience.

It's smart too, so you don't need to worry about what happens if you update your content. When you do this, your cache will be cleared and your new content will be visible to your users.

When your website was created, your web designer may have set up a caching system for you, but the chances are that they didn't. This means that your website is likely running slower now than it could be.

There are a number of free and paid WordPress caching plugins that you can install and use on your website:

- WP Fastest Cache - <https://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-fastest-cache/>
- WP Super Cache - <https://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-super-cache/>
- W3 Total Cache - <https://wordpress.org/plugins/w3-total-cache/>
- WP Rocket - <https://wp-rocket.me/> (\$49/year)

Each of these plugins offers similar functionality, with WP Rocket offering a few extra options as a premium plugin.

TIP: Install a caching plugin on your website and check out the speed difference when testing using Pingdom Tools - <https://tools.pingdom.com>. You may need to run the test a couple of times to ensure that your content is properly cached.

Important: Always ensure you have taken a recent backup of your website before making any changes.

4 Content Delivery

Don't forget your global audience

Who is the main target audience for your website and where are they located? You might wonder why we're asking this, but it's important as you need to focus on the speed of your website for the people who are actually visiting and using your website.

If you're a plumber or a locksmith, you likely offer services in a local radius to your location. For these users, your most important task is to ensure that your website loads quickly locally. Whereas if you have an E-Commerce website selling products to users around the world, you will need to think about how fast your website is loading for these users.

If your website is hosted in London (UK), a user in Dallas (USA) or Singapore will have a significantly slower loading time for the website than a local user in the UK. This is due to the way that the Internet works and the distance that the data has to travel. It can often be 2-3 times slower or more.

There is a way to mitigate this problem and to ensure that your global audience still have an enjoyable time when navigating around your website. You need to use a Content Delivery Network (CDN).

A CDN works by having a series of servers around the world that take a copy of the assets used on your website and load them from a location that is much closer to your visitor. This can significantly speed up the loading time of your website and give the visitor a much better experience.

TIP: If you have a global audience or even an audience that spans a neighbouring country or two, you should consider the speed of your website in these countries. You can perform speed tests across multiple locations using Pingdom Tools - <https://tools.pingdom.com> or GT Metrix - <https://gtmetrix.com/> (make a free account here to test across multiple locations).

If you find that your website is a lot slower in overseas countries, then you should consider utilizing the benefits of a Content Delivery Network.

One free option for this would be Cloudflare - <https://www.cloudflare.com>. They offer a free plan that includes access to their Global Content Delivery Network. An additional benefit with the Cloudflare service is that they include some additional protection features that protect your website from denial of service attacks, which is the process of flooding your website with traffic to take it offline.

5 Hosting

How reliable is your host?

Website hosting is one of the areas where you will typically get exactly what you pay for in terms of speed, performance and reliability.

A typical hosting account from a provider that offers hosting services in the \$0 - \$15 per month category is going to be something called “shared hosting”. This means that your website will share a server with thousands of other websites.

All of the websites on a shared hosting server are competing for resources when visitors try to load web pages. This can mean that your loading time and the experience for your visitors can vary wildly.

It's not uncommon for a website on the same shared hosting server to suffer an issue or send out spam emails, which can affect your website as your server's IP address is blocked by email providers. This leaves your emails not getting delivered to your customers.

If you want a fast website that performs well and gives a great experience for your visitors, it's important to try and avoid the typical shared hosting platforms. You should focus on hosting your website with a company that takes good performance as one of their main priorities.

We recommend three WordPress hosting companies that offer great performance and also excellent support. These companies are Inmotion Hosting (<https://www.inmotionhosting.com>), Flywheel (<https://getflywheel.com>) and WPEngine (<https://wpengine.com>).

TIP: Think about your current hosting company and the performance that their hosting service is currently offering your website. Does your website still running slow on their servers, even after you've taken our recommended advice? Have there been any unexplained periods of time in the last year where your website has been offline?

Check out the three hosting companies above and see if they'd be a good fit for your website. You're looking at \$25/month as the starting point for a hosting company that offers better performance and cares about speed.

As a final note, it's also a good idea to separate your website hosting and email hosting on to different platforms. While this might not sound like a smart idea in principle, it's actually a very wise one.

If you have your website and emails with the same hosting company, you lose access to everything if they have any issues with their services. Keeping your website and emails separate means you still have access to one, if the other has an issue. Very useful!

Your website visitors deserve a great experience

We've run through five main reasons for why your website is slow and given you tips that you can action today, to start seeing better results.

The main thing to remember is that you are trying to give your website visitors a great experience. The better their experience when they first load and navigate your website, the more chance you have of them contacting you or purchasing a product / service.

On the first page of this free guide we talked about 40% of users leaving websites that take longer than 3 seconds to load. Well mobile users are even more important. Check out this statistic from a 2018 Google report: "53% of mobile site visits leave a page that takes longer than three seconds to load". More than half of mobile users will leave your website if it's slow.

Unfortunately over the years mobile design has often been somewhat of an afterthought. With web design today, we will often design for "mobile first", meaning that we're providing a really optimized experience for mobile users.

If your website is a few years old (or more), it probably wasn't designed with this mindset. So it's really important that you think about the 30% - 50% of visitors that come to your website on their mobile devices.

Having a faster website will bring you more traffic, higher search engine ranking positions and ultimately more revenue. Can you afford to miss out on this?

Keep an eye out over the next few days as I'll have a few more emails to follow with some additional tips and ideas for you. In the meantime if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out!



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