

YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

Hi, I'm Annette Welsford, champion of hard working honest tradies.



In today's Tradie Success podcast we're going to talk about your digital footprint. This is not a new app for measuring up for a pair of boots!

This refers to mentions of your name or your business name online.

Why should you worry about this?

Because the first thing that the majority of people do these days before deciding to pay money to a business is to make sure they're dealing with someone they can trust, someone who holds similar values to them.

If they're going to let you into their home to fix something or build something, they want to know who they're dealing with.

So they'll google your name or your business name and see what they can find out about you. And sometimes they won't just use google – they'll search for you on youtube, facebook, twitter, linkedin, picasa, instagram and other search engines like Bing or Yahoo.

Remember; you can only control what you say and add, what others say about you is uncontrolled.

You need to ensure that you understand the bad implications and the good implications of your digital footprint.

The Bad Implications of Your Digital Footprint

- Most of us don't know everything that's published about us online. As well as the content we publish, friends and colleagues sometimes share about us, too. Are you sure everything out there is appropriate?
- Use multiple search engines, and [search for your name and see what comes up](#). A picture can speak a thousand words, so make sure you **search for text and pictures**.
- If you find something that could damage your reputation, take steps to have it removed.
- This is an easy fix if you know the person who's responsible for posting it. Ask them to take it down immediately.
- However, if the content is on a site hosted by someone you don't know, **contact the site owner or administrator with a request to remove it**.
- Deleted material may still appear in search results for a short time, but will disappear as Google updates its search results.
- However beware, reviews of your business are very hard to take down. The best way to deal with a bad review is to publicly respond online with an apology and ask them to contact you by phone so you can address and rectify their issues. If you establish a good relationship, then they may take the bad review down.

If you'd still like to keep some of those risqué images online, make sure you check your privacy settings.

1. Remember, what you post online becomes public information. It is no longer under your control.
2. Be strategic about what you share with the world. Consider the long term.
3. Think before you post. Today's rant or practical joke may come back to haunt you.
4. Think before you pose. Your private video, photo or Snapchat may go public.
5. Regularly review your contacts, circles, friends and followers. They may not be your BFFs. They may be disgruntled clients bad mouthing you, or competitors keeping an eye on what you're up to online and copying.
6. Protect your online reputation and create your personal brand. Your future will thank you.
7. Create a Google Alert on your name, and another one on your company name. You will receive emails daily or weekly containing links to the latest online postings about you or your business.

How to Setup a Google Alert

Google Alerts are e-mailed (or you can subscribe to the RSS feed) alerts of Google results.

Step 1: Go to <https://www.google.com/alerts> and type in the search term (ie: your name or business name)

Step 2: Pick which kind of search type you want: News, blogs, Web, video, groups, or comprehensive (which includes all of the above search platforms).

Step 3: Pick how often you want the updates (As it happens, once daily, or once a week)

Step 4: Pick the e-mail length (up to 20 results or up to 50 results).

Step 5: Pick whether to deliver it to your e-mail inbox or as a feed.

Step 6: Hit subscribe.

The Good Implications of Your Digital Footprint

Okay, now that we've reviewed what we don't want online about us, let's look at the enormous opportunities that a widespread digital footprint can bring.

Here's some interesting stats about Australians' internet habits

- 63.9% of Australian Internet users use search engines as the first step in making a buying decision.
- The top 3 listings on Google account for 60% of click through rates.
- When finding businesses online 74% of users have read, or do read reviews before purchasing
- Studies have shown that Internet users read up to 4 reviews/blogs online before making a purchase decision.
- 61% of mobile searches are product information.
- 86% of Smartphone searches are for local businesses.
- Of that 86%, 88% have gone back to take action and contacted a business, with 39% going back to make a purchase.
- Only 1 in 5 websites are mobile optimised.
- Only 30% of small businesses are online, despite the fact that integrating digital media has been proven to make you more productive, and generate a business and revenue increase.

So this tells us that you need to have a good digital footprint if you want to attract more business. And I don't just mean a website.

You need a professionally presented, search engine friendly presence in lots of places, so that you capture people's attention wherever they're hanging out.

Here's a starter list of places we suggest you need to be. And not just a basic presence – a professional look presence. First impressions really do count.

Google My Business (formerly Google Local)

For this you need a free Google Plus account, and then you need to find the free listing that google may have already given you, and claim it. This involves clicking the Claim link and following the steps. They'll send you a postcard with a code on it to the business address, and this is how they confirm that you are the business owner.

If you can't find your Google My Business free listing – you can always create one. Go here and follow the steps: <http://www.google.com/business/>

Here's a useful tip. If you run your business from home, and you don't want to publish your private address to the world, you can hide your address.

Another tip. If you live in one area and work in another, and that's the area you want to show up for searches: eg: you're an electrician and you live in Surfers Paradise but your work area is Tweed Heads and you want to show up for searches Tweed Heads Electrician, then you need to have a

business address there and that's what you list in your google my business listing. It might be your mum's address if she lives in Tweed Heads!

Once you've got your Google My Business account setup, then you need to really optimise the google plus page that comes with it. You need a professional cover image and to optimise the information presented. If done correctly, it will have a very positive effect on how you showing up in google searches.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the business-to-business version of Facebook. If anyone googles your name, usually your LinkedIn profile will show up in the first few results at the top of page 1. They will then go and look at your profile, find out about you. It's a very important Social Media platform to be on.

We suggest you write your profile in such a way that it is professional, interesting, and customer focused. You don't want to just list your life work history, like you do in a boring resume.

You will also need a quality business headshot – not that nice shot of you in your boardies or out fishing.

Then it's time to start connecting with people, getting recommendations, joining relevant groups and contributing articles.

I know several trade business owners who have secured business through linkedin by hooking up with target customers, or customers have found them.

I myself have generated over \$30,000 in business from people who've contacted me on LinkedIn.

True Local

A great directory for local businesses, and one that's used extensively by people looking for tradies. You need to have a well written profile and to encourage people to review you there.

WOMO

Stands for Word of Mouth Online. Another well used review site which lots of Australians check before deciding who to call.

Facebook – Business Page

Need to have a professionally designed cover image, a well written profile about your company, and regular posts. You also need to promote it so you build your Likes and your posts get seen by people.

Twitter

Once again I suggest a professionally designed cover image and background design, and a strategy to build your followers. Twitter can be a good source of leads if you keep at it and quickly respond to questions.

Pinterest

A great site if you have visually appealing products or services – eg: painters, landscapers, home builders, pool builders, etc. Very popular site with women and can be a great source of leads and traffic to your website.

Website

Finally, you definitely need a website. Whilst it's imperative to have a good professional digital footprint on all the sites I've mentioned, at the end of the day, they are owned by other people. So if they go bust or change the rules – there's nothing you can do and you could lose it all. Look at how quickly Myspace disintegrated!

And your website needs to be professionally designed and to follow the key principles of form and function. So well written, customer focused, easy to navigate, lots of interesting and relevant content, quick to load and responsive – which is geek talk for automatically resizes and displays perfectly on tablets and mobile phones.

After all 86% of Smartphone searches are for local businesses.

Summary

To sum up the key points

1. The search for local trade businesses starts online, in most cases.
2. You need to have a professional digital presence – where people are looking for your type of business.
3. You need to be careful about what you do put up online, and be aware of what others are putting online about you or your business
4. Online is where you need to dominate if you want to grow your business. After all if only 30% of Australian small businesses have a website, this gives you a fantastic opportunity to get ahead of your competitors if you act now.

Want some help? Our company Commonsense Marketing has helped many Australian small businesses – including tradies - to develop and manage their online presence. Click on any of the images on tradie success – at right, to find out more about our web design and social media services. Simply shoot us an email on the contact page here at [tradiesuccess](http://tradiesuccess.com.au) or at [commonsensemktng](http://commonsensemktng.com.au) or give us a call.

We'll help you build your professional digital footprint so that you get found and create the right impression.

If you have any comments or questions about this episode, we'd love to hear from you – simply enter them in the comments area below this episode on the website tradiesuccess.com.au

I'm Annette Welsford and thankyou for listening!

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