

Effective search engine optimisation and online visibility



Thomas Jones
Digital Coordinator
Globe at Hay



Published 2013.

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/uk/)

Supported by



Created and managed by



In partnership with



Background

The Globe is a rural arts venue based in the book town of Hay-on-Wye. It's mainly used for live music, theatre, art exhibitions, community groups, debates, workshops and as a general cafe/restaurant.

The venue is also used during June to host the HowTheLightGetsIn philosophy festival.

From a digital perspective the Globe was some way behind similar venues in larger towns and cities and lacked the online presence needed to firstly sell tickets for events and second to engage with its audiences and customers.

Objectives

- To increase the percentage of online ticket sales
- To increase the geographical reach of the venue to those living in Powys and Herefordshire
- To engage with the local community and to provide useful information about events/groups/workshops

Target Audience

- Parents
- Tourists
- Local Residents
- Community Leaders
- Arts & Culture related groups
- Anyone interested in the offbeat!

Process

The globe had operated a website for four years with little analysis or thought about how the site was being used. It was evident from looking at this historical data that the site suffered from poor user experience, a poor site structure as well as inconsistency of on-page SEO practices. Bounce rates were high and exit rates for the site were unusual. There was no implementation of goal tracking or e-commerce conversions and the success of the website was being measured on site hits and the SERPs of a few badly chosen keywords. Social media was also being used to poor effect and drove little traffic to the site. The site also performed inadequately on smartphone and tablets, which resulted in it losing traffic from those devices.

It was decided that, as a first step, a new website with a new focus would be the key to achieving the objectives. We undertook to do the following:

- 1) Analyse the drop off points from the old website
- 2) Reduce the number of clicks to purchase a ticket and remove unwanted pages.
- 3) Make it easy to use the check out
- 4) Collect the data from the purchase for future marketing efforts



From an SEO point of view we took a much more organic approach for what will rank in Google. We felt that if event information was structured properly and included links to useful content that we could potentially rank for the event and also for lasting content with organic long tail keywords.

On the new site we included a blog and this has been used to provide a platform for staff and promoters to give more of an insight into their lives. It's this type of content that ranks on its own merits.

Another area that we addressed from a digital marketing viewpoint was to increase the referrals from event listing sites. We decided to use a lot of the local tourism websites such as visitherefordshire and visit mid wales (who provide a fantastic bulk upload service which ports to number of other local tourism sites). Not only did this help increase traffic during the tourist season but also gave us some useful high authority backlinks. We feel that local listings mixed with a few of the national music listings site (such as Ent 24 who often include our events in their localised mailouts) gives the right balance to our online event marketing.

We also worked to encourage promoters, groups and acts to give the Globe a mention and a link and this works even better if it's a direct to checkout ticket link.

In order to increase the effectiveness of social media we increased our activity and worked hard to encourage discussion and communication. There's always going to be an element of promoting events but we use social networks to start discussions whether it's about an upcoming event or something silly like how we should serve our chips! Being visual on sites like Pinterest and Instagram have really helped show people what the venue is like on a day-to-day basis. More importantly this has also helped with our social referrals over the last 12 months.

Finally geographically we've worked to ensure we're properly listed on Google as an arts venue with an associated Google+ page and being verified on Google places, similarly we've done this with Foursquare and Facebook as location based social networking does help with footfall.

Outcome

Firstly our audiences have grown over the last 12 months, not only physically into the venue but online. We've seen a lot of growth to our Facebook accounts, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram followers.

In the past we've been a bit of a secret but more and more people are coming across the Globe thanks to an increased online presence and optimising the site for local search. We've also seen an increase in visitors outside of our surrounding areas with audiences travelling from Cardiff, Bristol, Gloucester, Worcester, even London.

Our ticket sales online now account for an average of 75% of all tickets sold, this is a massive improvement on a year ago when the venue was suffering from around 10% of tickets being sold online and attendances being at an all-time low.

The organisation itself feels more welcoming online that it has before. If you've never visited the venue you can find out plenty about a particular group or act. The staff are all happy to contribute to site and we often work together to improve where we can. Quite often we test to see if we can do simple things, or navigate to find a particular piece of information.

Key points for effective practice

- Get friendly with analytics, look at who is using your site, what device they use, where they go and what they do. Use e-commerce tracking and set goals for email sign-ups and contact form submissions. Use the historical data to find the flaws of your current site.
- Don't always focus on increasing web traffic, try instead to improve the outcomes from the traffic you already have.
- Make it easy to get to the checkout, if you can get there in 2 clicks rather than 3 or 4 you should see an increase in the online sales.
- Think about local search, optimise your site to cater for the local area and make sure you appear on Google places and location based social networks.
- Don't focus all of your efforts on chasing keywords. Try to include basic search terms on specific pages but instead let your content do the work for organic ranking and increasing long tail.
- Bring your audience into the conversation, ask questions over social networks and try to produce content that will excite, inform or educate your followers.
- Ask for backlinks from the performers and promoters and look at ways you can expose you listings or event details.
- Be helpful; if you can market your venue digitally then help the promoters and groups who use the venue to do the same.
- Optimise your website for smartphones and tablets.
- Get everyone in the organisation involved in the website. Look to continuously improve the content of your site and ask people for their thoughts.

Conclusion

The Globe has seen a dramatic change in its online presence over the last 12 months and has reached its objectives for improving our search engine optimisation, user experience and digital marketing practices.

We've been pro-active in our approach to bring our audience in and make them feel a part of what we do.

Our online revenue has increased massively and more importantly our reach into the local community and the wider world has improved.

Additional information

<http://www.globeathay.org>

twitter: @globeathay