Simplifying Effective Website Strategies

Cheat sheet

Goal Optimization

Focus on gaining targeted traffic, especially in PPC (pay-per-click)
Reduce time and effort required by the user to complete a goal / conversion.
Offer a little extra incentive for call-to-actions
Focus your call-to-actions; don't distract users with too many focal points per page.
Have a call-to-action on each page, consistently

Design

First impressions matter, and are initially based on aesthetics & usability
Quick loading times are important
Minimize learning curve of website interface.
Users must be able to understand your website's purpose in less than 5 seconds.
Intuitive navigation and layouts increase the chance of further browsing
Hide complexities, reduce overwhelming or intimidating pages. E.g.: Dropdown navigation, tooltips, rotating content, expandable/collapsible content.
Every page should have a title, prominently displayed.
Links to pages should match or be very similar to the title of the page.
Unless you're in the business of offering free services on your website for the purpose of generating high amounts of traffic, don't put ads on your site.
Because screens have different resolution, it's important that your site is designed with compatibility in multiple size screen resolutions.
Ensure your website displays the way you want it to in your visitor's most common resolutions.
You can easily see the popular resolutions in Google Analytics [google.com/analytics]
Unless you're in the business of offering free services on your website for the purpose of generating high amounts of traffic, don't put ads on your site.
A user's screen resolution directly effects where the page fold will be.
Ensure you're aware of where the page fold is, especially in the resolutions that are most popular for your users.
Ensure call to actions are visible "above the fold"
If you're redesigning your website, ensure all pages on the previous website redirect to "new version" of the page on the new website. 301 permanent redirects are usually preferred.

Accessibility & Usability

Problems users typically have are: can't find what they're looking for and unclear messages. Typically due to poorly designed/worded navigation.
Strive for simplicity in overall layout.
Breakup sections into smaller, more "scannable" sections.
Ensure the website looks and functions correctly in all popular browsers.
Google webmaster tools provides great information relating to how Google is reading your website, including crawl errors and search positioning. [www.google.com/webmasters/tools/]
W3C validator will expose invalid code on your website, a quick tool to use. [validator.w3.org]
Adobe has cancelled further development of mobile flash.
Try to avoid requiring flash if possible.
Search engines use page load times as a signal for website quality. High load times will decrease your value in the search engines. [developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights]
Visitors expect immediate results. High load times increase bounce rates.

Landing Pages

A landing page is the first page a user views.
Landing pages should be topic focused.
Landing pages should focus on converting visitors.
Landing page traffic must be monitored regularly and measured for conversions.
A landing page's headline should be short and entice the user to stay.
Keep headings short
Landing page content must be simple to consume by the visitor, video is a great tool for this.
The primary call-to-action should be simple and obvious.
Offer a guarantee on call-to-actions to increase user confidence.
To encourage action, an element of scarcity or time sensitivity to the offer.

Content

Content should be "chunked", broken up into easy to consume content. Headings, lists, short paragraphs.
Create "evergreen content". This is content that is relevant for a long period of time. (E.g.: Why you should stop rust early)
Convey expertise in the content you publish.
Publish only quality content.

Mobile Web Design

Ensure you have a mobile version of your website which is quick to load and contains the necessary information for users on the go (contact, hours, location info)
It's more difficult to enter large amounts of information on mobile websites. Ensure forms are short, and minimal information is required by the user to submit a form.
Mobile websites render differently on different devices. Ensure your mobile website renders properly on the popular devices.
Focus on the most important information/features on your mobile site, and allow a link to the full version of the website.

Internet Marketing

Ensure your website has great content and excellent usability before venturing into pay-per-click campaigns as they can be very expensive.
SEO obstacles include: code errors, duplicate content, broken links, poor load times, poor content and spammy inbound links.
Use Google's keyword tool to gauge popular keywords [adwords.google.ca/o/KeywordTool]
The title and description tags are used to populate your search result listing. Ensure they are not too long and cause statements to be displayed incomplete.
Video is a great tool to get complex or complicated information to the user. It's also the easiest for users to consume.
Make use of microdata like the author tag in order to have your search results display with more snippets of information. This will help you stand out.
Backlinks are links to your website from other websites. The best backlinks are ones from reputable and relevant sources.
Build great backlinks with good content that users want to share, social profiles and review websites.
Search engines read social sites as well, if your content is shared more then they will see it as more popular content.
A basic content strategy would be to publish a blog (e.g. weekly) on a schedule. Post it to your website and use social media as a delivery method to get the content exposed. Try to avoid sales pitches in social media, as they will become quickly ignored.

Measuring Performance

Install Google Analytics ASAP to begin logging traffic.
Setup weekly analytics reports to be emailed to you so you don't have to remember to check them.
Using Google Webmaster Tools, if you notice you're ranking on page 2 for a specific keyword, consider focusing on optimizing for that keyword to help push it to page 1.