

That Super Girl's Action Plan *Your checklist for a better site tomorrow.*

THAT SUPER GIRL'S ACTION PLAN

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Learn more at www.thatSupergirl.com

INTRODUCTION

Your website is a reflection of everything you do as a business — your brand, your company culture, your offerings, your projects, and your services and/or products. The problem is that most people are so immersed in their own branding, and they have spent so much time looking at their own marketing materials, that visiting their own site becomes a form of autopiloting.

This guide is designed to help you look at your website in a new way — through the eyes of your visitor. As you work through each unit in this PDF, I want you to pretend that you have never seen your site before. This exercises are designed to change the

way you see your site – and to either help you fall in love with it all over again, or to notice the ways in which it could be better with a few small changes.

And now, on with the guide!

WELCOMING VISITORS

Picture walking into a brick-and-mortar store to purchase something. Which would look the best: a nice bright display that invites you to purchase the current specials, or an overwhelming wall of goods with no clear path of action? Keep this idea in your mind as you evaluate your welcome to your visitors.

When you land on your site, what is the first thing that you see? Your welcome and call to action are the most important pieces of your website's landing potential.

- Call to Action. Do you have a clear offer? Whether it is a signup, purchase, or other action, make sure you have a clear action for your

visitors to take.

- Defined Path. Do your visitors have a predetermined journey through your site? Do you guide the visitor to the choices you want them to make through emphasizing some choices and understating others, or does everything appear to have equal importance? Do you have no more than 1-3 major choices right on the front page?
- 3-Second Commercial. Can you tell what the site is about in a few seconds or less? Your visitors only have few seconds to decide what your site is about — make it obvious!
- Organization. Is the front of your site bright, clean and uncluttered? If you wouldn't shop at a shoe store where the shoes are all just thrown all over the floor, make sure your site doesn't look like that.

GETTING AROUND

Navigation and direction are like having your own salespeople on your site 24/7. Bad salespeople leave a negative impression in the customer's mind, while good salespeople give your customers a satisfying shopping experience and positive feelings about your brand. Make sure your "sales staff" are doing their jobs and helping your customers!

- Clear Text Navigation. Are your navigation buttons easy to use and clear to read? Graphical buttons look great, but they may be hard to see on a smaller/mobile device and the text can't be resized. Make sure your buttons are clear at any size and on any screen.

- Logical Navigation. Do your navigation buttons make sense? "Shop Now" makes more sense than "My Products" if you want people to buy from you, and coming up with cutsie names for your Portfolio that may only make sense to you will not help your customers find it.
- About Page. The About page on a website is often the most neglected – and the most clicked on by visitors, if you look at the analytics! Turn your About page into another outlet for you to pitch customers, direct people around your site, and show off your wares. For inspiration, see [this page](#) or [this page](#).
- Turning Around Lost Users. If your customers click on a bad link, does your 404 page ("File Not Found") direct them where to go? Instead of giving your visitors a dead end, help them find their way like these examples from [Apple](#), [Last.fm](#) and

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BMI. You may consider including a sitemap, listing popular pages or posts, listing your products or services, and/or providing a search tool.

- Frequently Asked Questions. Do your visitors seem to ask the same questions over and over? You might consider adding some FAQs to your site! Not only will this help people on your site, but it will drive traffic from search engines when similar questions are typed into Google.

COLORS & DESIGN

You don't have to be a graphic designer to make decisions about the design of your site. By avoiding or correcting some common issues, you can improve your site's look and feel instantly!

- Reverse Text. Do you avoid using reverse text? Reverse text, or white/light writing on a black/dark background, can cause eyestrain, headaches, and difficulty viewing the site in outdoor lighting (ie using a mobile device).
- Whitespace. Do you have plenty of whitespace, or does your site appear crowded? A crowded site can feel overwhelming for your visitors and drive away your traffic.
- Contrast. Are you using contrast to make important content stand out? Varying fonts and colors can help draw the eye to particular content, but make sure you don't overdo it!
- Accent Color. Many designers use a bold color that stands out from the rest of the site as an accent color. Done right, this draws the visitor's eyes to something you want to emphasize. Done wrong, it is distracting and overwhelming. Do you use an accent color sparingly to attract your readers to what is most important?

TYPOGRAPHY

Fonts can quickly change a site from drab to fab, and set the mood for everything to come. This PDF uses several fonts from the [Google Webfonts collection](#) to create an entire look and feel without the use of graphics!

- Font Families. Sans-serif fonts (like the one in header/footer on this page) have no trailing “tails” on the letters, while serif fonts (like the one I am using in this paragraph text) do. You’ll need one of these for your default paragraph text, among other things. (The readability of serif vs sans-serif fonts has been widely studied with [no conclusive results](#), so really the choice is up to you. I would, however, recommend sans-serif for any uses where the text will

be very small, but either is fine for normal body text.) Display, handwriting, and cursive fonts are great for adding character to your headlines, titles, widgets and call-out text – but are generally not good for larger amounts of text.

- Font Size. Are your fonts large enough to read easily? In a recent newsletter, [Chris Brogan](#) stated that he likes to give his newsletters large fonts because his readers are mostly over the age of 35. Large, clear writing also ensures that a site will be readable for the greatest number of people on a wide range of devices.
- Quality Fonts. Are your fonts crisp, clean and easy to read on all browsers and operating systems? Check your fonts as many places as you can, as the quality of a font can vary from one platform to another.

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- Font Variations. Are you using font variations for emphasis, such as bold, italics and size variants? All of these things make your content easier to read and understand. Caution: Some “fancy” fonts don’t include all of these variations, so make sure that any font you want to use can handle font variations!
- Standard Markup. HTML markup tags like em, strong, H2, H3 and H4 not only give your typography a nice variation, but they are important to attach semantics to your content for e-mail, feed readers and other distribution. WordPress (and many other editors) create the markup for you when you apply styles to the text, so make sure that you are using all available semantics like paragraph, heading 1, etc.
- Font Combinations. Fonts and font families are often combined to create an overall style effect, as I am doing

in this PDF document. To see font combinations in action, check out [this article](#) and [this article](#).

COPYWRITING

It's not the graphics, the fonts, the look & feel, or anything else that makes a sale in the end – it is the copywriting! How can you make sure your copywriting is doing it's job? Just check it against these points!

- Plain Language. Does your site use plain language that is easy to understand? Most style guides suggest that you write for a 10th grade reading level, but your audience may vary.
- Specific Language. Are you addressing your reader in a way that makes it personal? Use specific language that would apply to your target audience.
- Make a Strong Offer. Do your offers clearly state the value to the reader?

Copywriting that is beneficial and relevant to the reader will keep your reader's attention longer. Remember, your reader's #1 question is "What's in it for me?" You'll want that offer to be so strong that your reader is instantly driven to act.

- Content Breaks. Do you break up your text with bullet points, subheadings, paragraphs, punctuation, and imagery? Breaking up the text gives the content variety and interest, and makes the articles easier for fast readers to scan.
- Getting The Point Across. Should you be using a image, infographic or chart to illustrate your point instead of text, or vice versa? If the information isn't clear, using another method for displaying it can help.
- Copy Length. Are you selling a convenience item, commonly known product, or lower-priced service?

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Then you can often get away with shorter copy length. If you are selling a big-ticket item, something without high demand, or one of those things people didn't know they needed until now, you will need more copy to have time to persuade them into buying.

- Wording. Talk to your customers, prospects, and people on social media. Read about products in your industry. Try creating a survey with [SurveyMonkey](#) or [PopSurvey](#). Use [keyword research](#). See what words people are using to talk about their needs and the solutions to design your own copy.

IMAGES

What would a website be without images to create mood, add visual interest, and connect readers with your content? While I am not going to go into the details of making images, I will mention a few points here about the legal and technical sides of them:

- Local Hosting. Are your images hosted locally, or are you linking to other servers? Using images off another server is not only considered improper (as you are stealing from someone else's bandwidth), but it can break your own site if the other server goes down. Make sure you are uploading the images directly into your posts.
- Copyright Issues. Do you have permission to use the image? You

can end up in legal trouble from using files that you don't have permission to use, so check with the image creator or licensing. Looking for files you can use? Check out this [awesome guide for finding Flickr images for your posts](#). And be sure to [give credit where credit is due!](#)

- WordPress Featured Images. Do all your WordPress posts have featured images? Featured images are used by WordPress, feeds, Facebook, Pinterest and more to establish the most relevant image for a post. For instructions on setting a featured image, [see this post](#).
- SEO. Are you using alt and title tags on all your images? These are very easy to add in with the WordPress image uploader, and they are important for search engine optimization because they add context to an image (as search engines can't read images).

HOSTING & TECHNOLOGY

You don't have to be a true geek to make sure your website is being delivered in the best way possible. Read on to check how you rate in the hosting and technology department:

- Quality Hosting. How does your web host rate for reliability, service and speed? Check them out on [Web Hosting Reviews](#) to find out. My preferred host, [HostGator](#), gets high marks for uptime/reliability, customer service, and their use of green energy to power the server farm.
- Load Time. Check your load time with a site like [WebSite Optimization](#) or [Website Speed Check](#) to see how fast (or slow!) your site is downloading for your visitors. If you need a comparison for the results you are

getting in terms of what is an acceptable load time, run the analysis on a few of your competitors or sites of similar size and compare the results.

- Code. Have you validated your code? You can [check your HTML](#) or [your CSS](#) using online tools. If you are seeing a lot of errors, your site may not be displaying properly for everyone.

TRACKING & ANALYTICS

Tracking visitors through your site allows you to know what content is most popular on your site, how effective your advertising campaigns are, what the traffic trends on your site are, and more! It's a must for anyone who is serious about doing business on the web.

- Tracking. Are you using a service like [Google Analytics](#) to track your visitors? I consider Google Analytics to be the gold standard in gathering information on your website traffic. If you want to learn more about using Google Analytics, you could consider [taking a course on it](#).
- Stats. If your website setup doesn't allow Google Analytics, you can contact your current host to see if

they offer a stats program. Services like WordPress.com (NOT .org), Weebly, Squarespace, and TypePad have their own stats programs.

- Tracking Plugins. Some themes (like WooThemes) come with a method for easily installing Google Analytics. If you don't have that functionality in your theme, you can try [Google Analytics for WordPress](#). If you don't feel comfortable using Google Analytics on your WordPress site (the self-installed/self-hosted version) you can use a stats plugin like [JetPack for WordPress](#).

CONTACT & CONNECTION

What is the point of a website if your visitors can't connect with you? Make it easy for your potential customers to find you and continue the conversation!

- Contact Info. Do you have your contact information on every page, or somewhere where it is easy to find? Do you have clear expectations for contact, such as the best methods for contact, the office hours for responses, and/or how long a response can take?
- Social Media Accounts. Have you included links/icons to all of your social media accounts? Create accounts for the best social media platforms for your business (such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and/or

Pinterest) and make sure your website links to them.

- Cross-Platform Branding. Have you created branding for your business that continues from your website to all your connections? Use the look and feel of your website for your Facebook, Twitter, newsletter, and other accounts.

MARKETING

A website can't do its job in a vacuum – you need a complete marketing plan to drive sales and create connection. While marketing could be an entire novel in itself, I have included a few main points here.

- List Building. Does your site work to build your list through some sort of newsletter or subscription form? If not, use a service like [MailChimp](#), [Aweber](#), [Mad Mimi](#) or [InfusionSoft](#) to set up a sign-up form today!
- Timing. Have you determined the best time of day to post your articles, social media updates, and newsletters? Do some experimenting to find those sweet spots and monitor them through your social media accounts, newsletter stats and site analytics. When are you most

likely to get the greatest response, shares, or sales?

- Call to Action. Does your call to action push towards a sale or achieve some goal? Make sure every action has its part in your sales funnel before you ask your audience to complete it.
- Branding. What does your site say about you, both outright and in more subtle ways? Does the website experience fit in with your overall marketing vision and goals? Is your branding solid and clear?
- Unique Value Proposition. Does your marketing and website convey value to your readers? Does it clearly state how your products/services fit into the reader's life and make it better somehow? Remember, your audience only cares what's in it for them, so make sure your value is clear!

QUESTIONS?

When reading through this guide, did you have any burning questions that you'd like answered? Please let me know – your question may become the topic of a future guide or workshop! You can contact me through:

- [E-mail](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)

Remember: If you have enjoyed this content, please feel free to send the [signup URL](#) (<http://www.thatSupergirl.com/workshops>) on to your friends and colleagues or [click to tweet it!](#)