

## **Is Your Business Website Fast Enough?**

**By Joshua Candamo, PhD**

It is widely known that more than 40% of people abandon a website if it takes more than 3 seconds to load. However, according to a 2013 technical report, median load time for first-time visitors to a retail website's home page is about 7.25 seconds (a 22% increase from 2011). Yes, that means pages are getting slower and customers are becoming more impatient. That is the main reason why, a few years back, Google incorporated site speed as one of the factors used to determine their search rankings.

Optimizing your business website's speed is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity. Speed will offer you a clear competitive advantage on the Web because people tend to engage more and visit more frequently to faster responding websites. So, by optimizing your website's speed, not only are your visitors more likely to spend more time reading your content, but also your site will enjoy search engine ranking advantages compared to slower sites.

There are several useful tools you can use to evaluate your website's speed, such as YSlow and WebPagetest. The tool we prefer to use the most is called PageSpeed Insights. PageSpeed is a free application available as part of the Google Developers tools. Here is the link: <https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights>.

PageSpeed will review how users would experience your website from a desktop as well as from a mobile device. It ranks your site's speed and user experience with a number from 1 to 100. It is extremely important to optimize your website for small electronic devices such as tablets and smart phones. Mobile devices currently account for more than 55% of Internet usage in the United States. Focusing solely on desktop users could pretty much leave out about half of the people trying to search for your business.

As a business owner, you are extremely familiar with prioritizing. Your web optimization is no different. Put more effort into whatever gets the most bang for your buck.

First, start with optimizing the size of all of your images. Anybody can easily do this; just use a tool like <http://tools.dynamicdrive.com/imageoptimizer/>. Second, focus your effort into maximizing the user experience for mobile devices. This is where small and medium size businesses typically need the most work. You can hire a webmaster or search online for "responsive web design," and make sure you at least configure and resize your site's viewport appropriately. The viewport controls the way a user's browser will display a page on different devices. Also, make sure all buttons are large enough to be tapped from a small device, and that all fonts are large and legible when reading with a smart phone. Third, an easy optimization is to minimize your Cascade Style Sheets (CSS) with a tool such as <http://cssminifier.com/>.

By all means, try to optimize as much as you can using PageSpeed. However, do not lose sight of the goal. The point is not to get a score of 100 in every category. It is about finding out where and how you can make improvements. Optimization is a process. You do not have to optimize everything at once. Start with the easier and more meaningful changes and go from there. For instance, if all you can do is just optimize your images, just do that to start. It will make a big difference.

### **About the Author**



Joshua Candamo is the CEO of Candamo Technology Consulting. He holds a PhD degree in Computer Science from the University of South Florida (USF). Dr. Candamo currently specializes in developing personal technology business projects and business consulting work with his consulting firm. He also specializes in business intelligence, digital and social media marketing, online personal branding and reputation management.