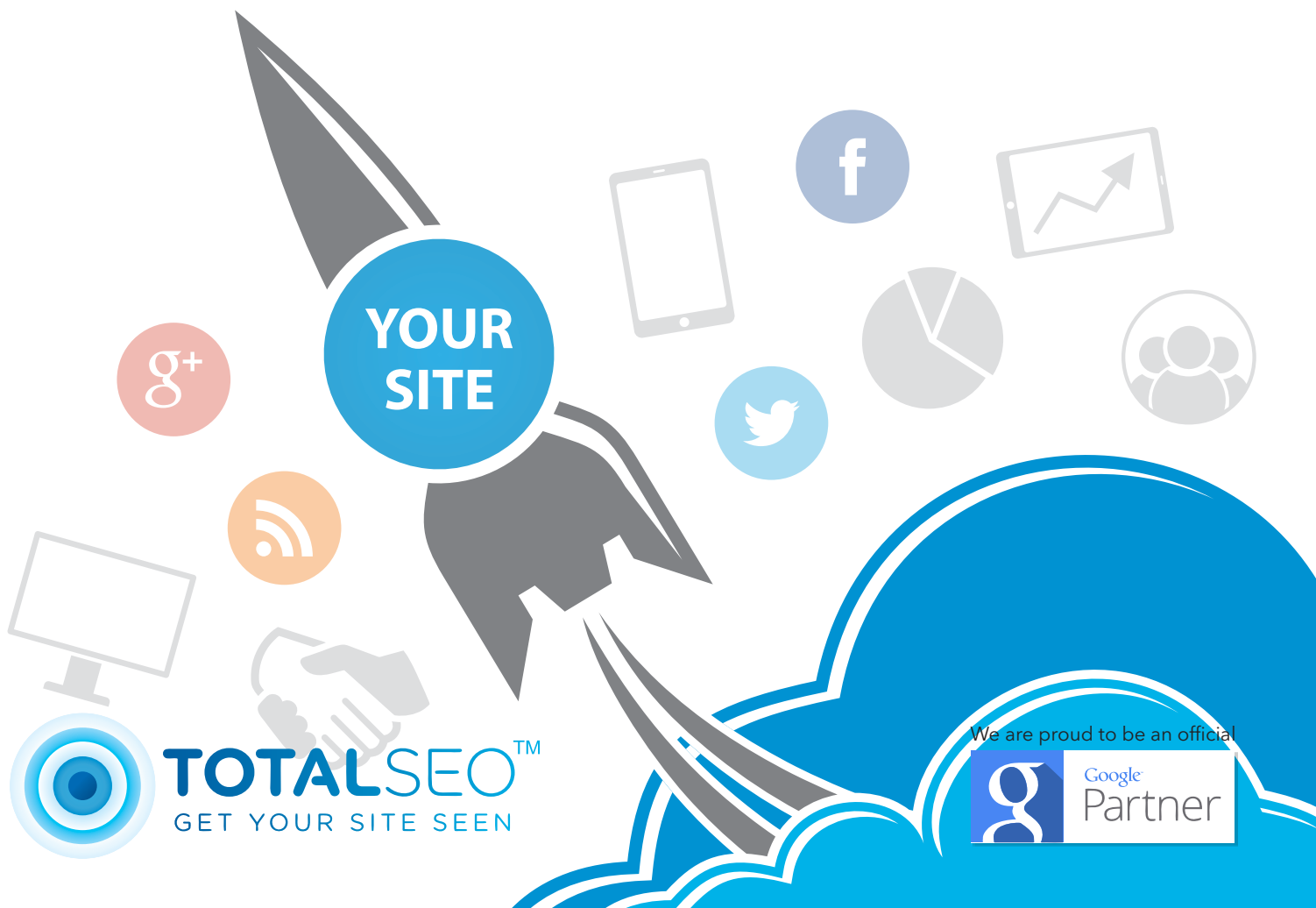


Staying Legal Online

Guide to keeping your business legal online



keeping your business legal online

Whenever you post new content online about your business, or make a comment on social media, there is a chance you could be falling foul of the law, often without even knowing it.

Below are some important tips to help ensure your business stays within the rules

1) Online reviews

Many people believe having a few made up positive business reviews, maybe written by friends and family is harmless, it is actually illegal. There are currently a number of campaigns to ensure website users can trust the reviews they see online and regulators have taken action to get fake reviews cleaned up. The best strategy is to ensure reviews are only written by real customers of the business, if you get any negative reviews, respond to them in a positive manner and keep everything factual and invite the reviewer to contact you directly to resolve any issues they may have.

2) Do not copy and use images without permission

Most major image providers have teams of people who look for websites using their content without permission, if they find them on your site, they will likely take legal action and ask for compensation, often in excess of £500 per image. Did you know you can search Google Images and refine your results to only images that allow re-use without licence?

3) Paid content and endorsements

If someone else is writing content on your behalf and publishes it online (away from your website), if they have been paid, they need to make it clear the content is sponsored. For example, if we were to publish a post on our company Twitter page saying how much we love the new deli in town, but the deli had paid us to promote them, we would need to start the post with #AD or the word Sponsored. The same applies for a blog post or article that has been written to promote a business, service or brand in return for payment.

4) Keep everything you publish online factual

Avoid exaggerations or giving false information in any content you post. This will avoid any accusation of false advertising or potential defamation if something you say is not accurate or true.

5) Don't drop your guard on social media

It can be very easy to use your company Facebook or Twitter accounts a bit like your personal one, but you need to be very careful not to express opinions or make comments about other business or individuals on social media, there have been cases where businesses have been sued for defamation or libel because of a social media post. A sensible strategy is to have an in-house process where all social media posts are approved by a second person before they go live.

6) Don't use logos or trademarks without permission

Using another company logo on your website can also land you in hot water, let's say you repair iPhones and decide to have the Apple logo on your website, you are actually in danger of being sued for trademark violation and mis-use of copyright.

7) Negative reviews

If you have a bad experience with another business you may be minded to leave a negative review about them, do so with caution, there have been a number of cases where businesses have taken legal action against the person who left the negative review. Before leaving a negative review it makes sense to contact the business directly to explain your complaint, if, after you have exhausted the complaints procedure you are still dissatisfied and you feel you want to leave a negative review, make sure it is totally factual, do not rant, if the review only contains the facts, you have done nothing wrong.

8) Make sure your website has a cookies and privacy policy

It is the law that you make your visitors aware of your website cookie policy and have a written privacy policy, if you don't have one it is important to get it in place as soon as possible.

9) Terms and Conditions

Make sure your Terms and Conditions are clearly displayed on your website, failure to display them in a location where they can be easily found by site users could potentially come back to cause you problems if you try and rely on them further down the line.

10) Be careful what you say in your advertising

This could be adverts on pay per click platforms or graphic adverts around the internet, it is important to view the adverts as your target audience would see them and make sure there is nothing misleading in the content, penalties for false or misleading advertising can be severe.

If you would like to speak to us about your online presence, call **01252 329160**, or email **info@total-seo.co.uk**

Please note that any information contained in this guide does not constitute legal advice.

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