SEO 2016

SEO SECRETS FOR RANKING QUICKLY ON THE FIRST PAGE OF GOOGLE

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SEO & WEB SERVICES

SEO 2016

SEO Secrets For Ranking On The First Page Of Google

Introduction

I want to thank you and congratulate you for downloading the book, *"SEO 2016: SEO Secrets For Ranking On The First Page Of Google"*.

This book has actionable information on how to rank on the first page of Google.

If you are the proud owner of an online business, be that business an ecommerce site, an informational website, or a niche site that affiliates to products and earns you a revenue, you are cognizant of how web traffic influences the success of your online business.

You are also aware of this fact: web traffic comes from many sources such as social platforms, direct traffic, other websites, and search engines. Out of these ways, the best way to drive tons of 'free, unpaid traffic' to your website or landing page is by optimizing your web-pages for search. You do this by paying attention to ranking factors that search engines use to rank web-pages, and by employing white hat SEO tactics to ensure your website places in the top 1-3 positions of SERP (search engine results page) for your preferred topic or search query.

For instance, let us assume you webmaster an acne niche site (yes, the acne site is a well-used cliché, but it is an awesome example). To drive tons of traffic to your website, i.e. ensure it is on the top 3 spots of Google result page, you need to optimize your website and content. How do you do that? Well, to land on the coveted first 3 spots of Google SERP, you need to pay attention to specific aspects of a website that Google and other search engines use to crawl and rank websites.

And how do you do that? Well, this book is the ultimate rank-first-on-Google blueprint. This book outlines aspects of a website that

Google pays attention to, and goes ahead to show you how to tweak these areas of your site, make them search engine and user friendly, and easily and quickly climb up the Google rankings to land on the first page.

There is a lot of redundant Search Engine Optimization information out there. This book is cognizant of that and only outlines the most relevant, up to date information. Information guaranteed to help you achieve better website ranking that results in more free (organic) traffic for your website and content which results in more success for your website. Rev your optimization engines because by the time you finish this book, you will be a qualified to work your own SEO….

Thanks again for downloading this book. I hope it helps you fill in any SEO gaps you may have.

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Section 1: Understanding SEO

Unfortunately, 'gurus' in the online marketing field have created the following false notion: search engine optimization is hard and requires a lot of technical expertise. This is not true; the truth is as follows: you do not need to hire a $200 per hour 'expert' (emphasis on the 'expert') to optimize your website for search, or even land on the coveted first three spots of search engine results page.

As this book will later show you, to optimize your website, content, and pages for search, land on the first page of Google, if not the first 3 spots, and drive tons of traffic to your website, all you need to do is pay attention to specific aspects of your website. Aspects this book seeks to show you how to optimize. Before we get to that, it is only right that we commence by cultivating a SEO understanding, its importance, and look at how Google and other search engines rank websites.

What Is SEO?

Search engine optimization, SEO for short is exactly what the name suggests: it is the aspect of optimizing/tweaking web text, images, and videos to affect their organic search engine visibility.

Now, you may be wondering "Why? Why should I bother with SEO?" Well, one of the reasons why SEO is such an important aspect of website traffic and why search engine optimization is a big bucks business is as follows.

Optimizing your website content, i.e. optimizing your text, video, and image content affects how search engine spiders (not actual spiders but a generic term used to refer to search engines algorithms (called web crawlers) that periodically crawl, and index web-pages in order of relevance to search queries) view your website and the position they place it on their index. The more visible your content is to these 'spiders', the higher your website ranks on SERPs. The higher a page or content ranks, the more traffic it receives.

Search engine optimization takes into account what users search for (the keywords they type into their search boxes), how search engines index websites and the content therein, and most recently, how relevant and user-friendly content is to users and user queries.

In general, SEO involves optimizing your website design by making it easier for users to interact with content on various devices, using relevant keywords, creating links between your website and other relevant, high quality sites on the same topic, and as of May 2015, the mobile friendliness of your site. We shall touch on each of these factors and look at how to optimize them for search.

Before we do that, let us briefly outline how search engines work.

How Search Engines Rank Websites, and Important Ranking Factors

The World Wide Web is a vast information forest. Naturally, in a forest, it is easy to get lost: enter search engines. Using the forest as an example, search engines serve two major functionalities: create an index of all trees in the information forest, and provide forest visitors with a detailed path to the tree species they want. This sounds oddly technical so let us simplify it as follows:

Search engines use web crawler algorithms to craw all information placed on the internet and create an index. Then, when users use search engines to search for information, search engine spiders take the keyword, match it to information on their index, and return the most relevant information within a matter of seconds. This resource by Google, aptly named "how search works" should give you further insight into the inner workings of Google search. If you are into visuals, this info graphic by ppcblog.com should demystify Google search.

To determine relevance, web crawler algorithms use a number of factors.

Important Google Ranking Factors

According to backlinko.com, one of the most proficient SEO websites, Google uses over 200 ranking factors; some of these factors hold more weight over others. In this sub-section, we shall outline the most relevant ranking factors Google, and other search engines use to rank websites in 2016 and in the near future. To make this list easier to follow, and to build up on how to rank first on Google aspects we shall look at later, we shall categorize these factors into three: on page factors, off-page factors, and site wide factors

1: On-Page Ranking Factors

On-page ranking factors refer to anything you can physically do to your webpage or content to affect its search ranking. In this regard, some important things you should pay special attention to include:

Use of Keywords

Keywords are the search queries that users type into their search engine boxes when looking for information. Therefore, it makes perfect sense that Google would use keywords as an important ranking factor. While we shall take an in-depth look at keyword research and the subsequent use of keywords on different areas of your website for better ranking, you want to make sure you use relevant keywords in the title meta tag because the meta tag gives Google an accurate description of your webpage or content.

Tip: For better, enhanced rankings, place your intended keywords at the start of the title tag.

You also want to have your keyword, or at the very least, a variation of your keyword placed in the Meta description tag. Further, because search engine spiders (again, not real spiders) crawl your content in its entirety when deciding where to place your website or content on the index, it is best use relevant keywords on the H1, H2, H3, and H4 tags. It is also a good idea to sprinkle a good number of keywords within your content copy. The keyword can be used in various ways within the different sub-headings on a page. (H1, H2, H3, H4 tags) For example, if your H1 tag/keyword is "Carpet Cleaner", your H2 tag could be "Local Carpet Cleaner" or "Experienced Carpet Cleaner" etc. The content following the Paragraph headings (H-tags) should include information supporting that heading and include the same keyword within the content. Using the keyword more than once in sensible combinations increases "keyword density" and increases the usefulness of the page.

Tip: The debate on the ideal keyword density is a hot topic. In the early days of search, keyword stuffing, i.e. the intentional over use of keywords on relevant areas of your copy and website was a dominant ranking factor. However, Google Panda, a Google algorithm launched in 2012 changed that. According to Neil Patel, whom Forbes places on their list of top 10 online marketers, *"The Panda algorithm update changed the SEO world. It changed content strategy, keyword research, and targeting. It even changed how marketers build links, since high-quality relevant links pointing to a webpage ultimately add to its value. By rolling out Panda, Google could now determine more accurately which sites were "spammy" and which sites would likely be deemed useful by visitors."*

Here is the truth, in 2016 and beyond, keyword use in web copy is not as relevant as it used to be (emphasis on 'not as' meaning it still has some relevance). According to this discussion on [Moz community](#), (Moz is a highly influential SEO website and platform) there is no ideal keyword density value per web copy, and if your content is relevant to a user query, you can rank well by having keywords in your title and description tag, and minimal keywords in your copy.

That said, it is a good idea to sprinkle a good measure of keywords within your copy. The idea here is to use keywords in your copy only if the use of such keywords comes across natural and adds value to users (Google search is very user driven).

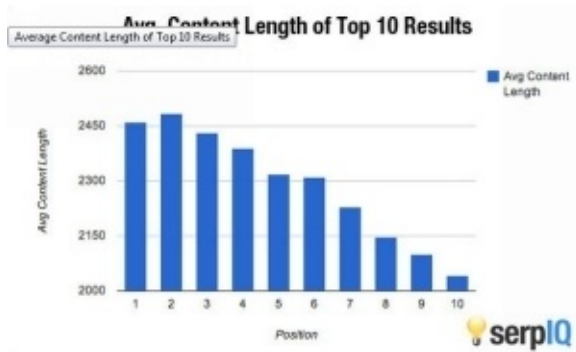## Content Length and Duplicate Content

Google places a lot of emphasis on providing users with relevant and helpful results; something reflected on their [mission statement](#): *"Focus on the user and all else will follow."*

According to a research study by [serpIQ](#) that analyzed content length by domain age, name, new and old blogs, etc. longer content generally ranks higher than shorter content. The idea

behind this ranking factor is simple: longer content= detailed content=equal to better answers for users, which as we saw, Google places a lot of emphasis on.

Google considers longer content more authoritative and informative. Thus, the longer your content is, meaning well-researched and user driven (there is no way you can write say a 5k word article for the hell of it or to rank, you write longer to provide web visitors sufficient answers), the higher your chances of ranking well.

Tip: As is everything SEO, the debate on the ideal content length is a hot one. Nevertheless, while online marketing experts agree there are no hard rules, the info graphic below, courtesy of serpIQ details ranking in relevance to content length.

On the other hand, duplicate content is a negative ranking factor. Having similar content on various pages on your website will negatively affect your rankings.

Tip: Define the nature of each webpage and content you create for your website, and then create unique and original content. There are instances where having two URLs will have similar content. To make sure this does not come off as duplicate content, use a canonical tag. A canonical tag simply tells search spiders that one URL is similar or equivalent to another, which effectively lets Google know that these two URLs are not duplicate content and are in fact one.

Optimization and Content Update

When looking at keywords, we briefly touched on optimization. On top of optimizing your tags and content, you also need to optimize your images and videos. Remember that Google and other search engines index text, images, and video.

Tip: Optimize your images, videos, and other media by using relevant keywords and tags in the alt text, description, and image caption (we shall look at how to do that later in this book).

In terms of content updates, Google and other search engines are very gung-ho about fresh content. According to Neil Patel, *"When you build a site today, you have to consistently write and publish in-depth content. This content must add value, be interesting to the reader, and solve a definite problem. If you fail to do that, you will not engage readers, and the conversion rate will be low."*

Thus, as part of your SEO strategy, it is best to have an effective publishing strategy in place.

Tip: Again, while there are no hard rules on how often you should publish, problogger.com advocates for 3-5 blogs per week, while the info graphic below, courtesy of hubspot.com, indicates that publishing 16+ blogs per month (an average of 4 or more blogs each week) can get you better rankings and 3.5x more traffic.

Internal Links, Outbound Links, and Keywords in URL

Internal links are links that point back to a page or piece of content on your website. While their ranking power is debatable, interlinking pages can increase your ranking. Outbound links are links pointing to external sites. If you include links pointing to authoritative sites, Google takes this to mean your aim is to provide users with more information about a subject and uses this as a trust signal.

Outbound Link Tip: Avoid too many outbound links because too many of them will make your page appear as a bridge site, which will negatively affect your ranking.

Keyword in URLs is another ranking factor you want to pay special attention to; Keywords in URL here means for instance, if your site is permanentacnecure.com, titling your blog post something reflective of your keyword. For example, the title of your blog post could look some like permanentacnecure.com/5-ways-to-permanently-cure-acne

The above are relevant on-page ranking factors. As indicated earlier, Google has over 200 ranking factors. We shall look at other on-page optimization aspects in a later section.

2: Off-Page Ranking Factors

In indexing and ranking pages, Google also uses off-page factors. Off-page factors are factors outside your website. Important off-page aspects you should pay special attention to include:

Links

Google considers links as votes of confidence: when different, high quality sites link back to your website, it tells Google that other webmasters/users find your content helpful. Thus, it boosts your ranking because being helpful is an integral part of Google mission statement.

In terms of links, pay special attention to the following

✗ **The Number of Domains Linking Back To Your Site**: This one is major. Google uses backlinks as votes of confidence: more domains linking back to your site=better rankings.

✗ **Number of Linking Pages:** There are instances where one domain will link to you several times. While this may positively affect your overall rank, it is generally better to have multiple pages linking back to your site. Each backlink from a single page counts as a vote; thus, more pages linking back to your content=more votes=better rankings.

✗ **The Rank of the Linking Page:** Not all websites and pages are equal. Some pages and domains have better rank. It is better for your website ranking if pages with a high PR (better-ranked pages) link back to you. As you build links, aim to have high quality websites link back to you. (we shall delve into link building much later)

✗ **Link Relevancy:** Imagine this, your website is about acne, and then, a site talking about car repair links back to a page on your website; do you think Google would pay any special relevance to that backlink? NO. Links from pages relative to

your subject hold the ranking relevance.

‌✵   **Homepage Links:** According to some SEO theory, links from a homepage carry much more weight compared to links to other pages on the same domain.

‌✵   **Domain Authority:** The authority of a domain linking back to your site is a ranking factor; links from authority sites will boost your rankings.

‌✵   **Link Diversity:** The variety and types of links pointing back to your site matters a great deal. You should aim to create a variety of links. Thanks to Google Penguin, too many links of a similar type may appear spammy and negatively affect your ranking. For instance, having too many homepage links and no other page links may also appear spammy. One thing you should note is that Google does not advocate for link building. Instead, they advocate for natural back linking that provide value to their customers.

‌✵   **DoFollow vs. NoFollow Links**: Google does not count NoFollow links. If you have a ton of NoFollow links and minimal DoFollow links, it is bound to affect your ranking.

‌✵   **Link Anchor and Contextual Links**: Links placed within the body of content hold more relevance when compared to links placed on the side bar. On the other hand, keywords on link anchors can appear spammy and negatively affect ranking.

Social Mentions

Today, any website or company worth its salt has an active social media voice. Social mentions such as Facebook likes, shares, Tweets, re-tweets, Google+ 1s, LinkedIn shares, and shares on other social platforms such as YouTube, Pinterest, and social bookmarks is yet another off-page ranking factor.

Trust and Authority

As a search engine-ranking factor, trust and domain authority have evolved. In the early days of search, domain age was an important ranking factor. Fast forward to today, since Google web crawlers and search algorithm have evolved, so has domain trust and authority.

Today, things such as brand and author recognition have a hand in website ranking. However, it is important to point out that you do not have to be a large brand, or an authority figure for your website to rank well.

To increase website trust and authority, employ author and publisher tags on your content, be active on social media (social mentions), and liaise with influencers and invite them to publish content on your website/platform. Another ideal way to build trust is to have a central publishing voice on your website or blog, i.e. one-person developing content, publishing it, and promoting it on social media platforms.

Tip: According to Google, to nail your off-page ranking, concentrate on on-page SEO by producing great content that others want to link back to.

3: Site Wide Factors

Also known as site-wide optimization, site wide ranking factors are factors about your entire site that negatively or positively affect your ranking. Some of the things you should look at here include:

Sitemap

A sitemap is a simple, yet effective way to let Google know of the number of pages on your website. This makes it easier for Google to index your site.

Mobile Optimization

Cognizant of the fact that most users access the web from their mobile devices, in the week following April 21 2015, Google made mobile friendliness one of their ranking factors. Today, having, or failure to have a mobile optimized site is surely bound to affect a website's rank.

Page Speed

How slow or fast your pages load greatly affects if users bounce off, or stay on your website. If your server location is further away from a user, pages will load slower causing a greater bounce rate. To avoid this, you can use a CDN. (more on this later)

Webmaster Tool Integration

Integrating your site with the webmaster tool, i.e. submitting your sitemap, verifying your site, and using the webmaster tool to monitor your site and implement tips tailor made for your website can greatly affect your page rank position.

As we indicated earlier, Google has 200+ ranking factors. It is impossible to outline all of them here. Nevertheless, we have done our best to outline some of the most significant ones that are bound to have a large effect on ranking.

That just about does it for this section. The next few sections will outline how to tweak different aspects of your website to improve ranking. Let us start with an important aspect: Keyword research.

Section 2: The Ultimate Keyword Research Guide for Better Google Ranking

Any SEO worth the name (SEO is the name given to search engine optimization experts) will tell you this much: keyword research is perhaps the most important aspect of SEO. While Google may not outright state it, their algorithm pays attention to keywords, perhaps not their chronic use, but their placement on different areas of your website elements, and how helpful your keyword-optimized content is to the users.

All user searches start with a keyword: that is the nature of search. For instance, let us assume a user wants to learn more about natural acne cures. He or she will fire up his or her browser, go to Google, or that browser's search window (except IE which uses Bing, most popular browsers use Google as their default search engine) and type "natural acne cures," in this instance, the keyword/s are "natural acne cures".

As we saw in the first section, to appear on the first page of Google SERP (search engine result page) for the keywords "natural acne cures" you have to optimize your website content around this keyword/s to ensure Google spiders pick up these keywords, index and rank your site for them.

Keywords and their use are the epitome of search engine optimization. Without keywords, the Google index would be non-existent. What exactly are keywords?

Keywords 101: What are Keywords?

Keywords are the search terms you type into your Google search bar when hunting down information on the World Wide Web. Keywords, or their use on your website (remember keyword stuffing will result in de-indexing) determine how visible your website is, and how much traffic it generates.

Types of Keywords

There are four categories of keywords: **Head Term Keywords, Informational keywords, Long Tail keywords, and Transactional keywords**. Let us look at each of these.

Head Term Keywords

Head term keywords are short in nature and normally consist of 1-2 words. These types of keywords are often generic in nature; as such, they are highly competitive as thousands of websites use them in one way or the other. For instance, keywords such as "money wealth, health, etc. are head term keywords.

Head term keywords have tons of search volume. However, because of their generic and competitive nature, unless you are ok with appearing somewhere near the last pages of results (especially if your website is not an authority site) DO NOT try ranking for head terms.

Informational Keywords

Informational keywords are exactly what the name suggests: keywords used to discover information on a specific subject. Depending on the niche, informational keywords often have great search volume. However, because they are informational in nature, they are not very good at conversion. Informational keywords contain the following phrases: 'where, how, what', and any other 'question words'.

Long Tail Keywords

Long tail keywords are more like phrases, or sentences. Long tail keywords are very specific and targeted. For instance, using our acne example, an example of a long tail keyword would be "how to cure acne without medication."

Because they are specific, and users using them to search for information are specific about the information they are searching

for, long tail keywords are often the best keywords to rank for because they drive targeted traffic.

Transactional Keywords

Transactional keywords are exactly that: transactional in nature. Users using these types of keywords as their search queries are looking to make a purchase. Thus, on top of being targeted keywords, these types of keywords are ideal converters, and thus ideal for commercial or affiliate sites. Transactional keywords contain the phrases "buy, for sale, bargain, subscribe', or any other phrase indicating someone with the intention to buy.

The Importance of Keyword Research

Having looked at the different categories of keywords, you may be wondering, "Which types of keywords should I aim to rank for?" The answer to that question is relative to the nature of your website. That said, regardless of the nature of your website, it is best to have a healthy mix of all keywords.

For instance, if you own an eCommerce site, it would seem logical to concentrate on transactional keuwords since they have a higher conversion rate. However, if you neglect using informational keywords, it is likely users will land on your sales page, but because it is lacking of product information, they will navigate away.

Although the importance of keywords largely depends on their intended use, the following are some telling reasons why keyword research is such an important part of SEO.

Targeting

As at the end of 2015, the number of reported internet users stood at 3.17 billion people. Regardless of the nature of your website, i.e. no matter how popular your blog or website subject is, it is highly unlikely this exact number of people will be searching for something covered by your website. Enter keywords.

If there is one thing keywords do and do well, it is allow you to target specific users. For instance, according to internetlivestats.com, Google processes over 100,000 searches every second of the day. If you conceptualize this number, that is over 100,000 people using the internet to search for 'something' every single second of the day.

Keywords allow you to target a percentage of people searching for a specific subject. For example, using our acne example, and Google AdWords, when we plug the keyword "acne' into Adwords, as indicated by the figure below, we can glimpse the

keyword's monthly search volumes, acne related keywords, and the keyword trend.
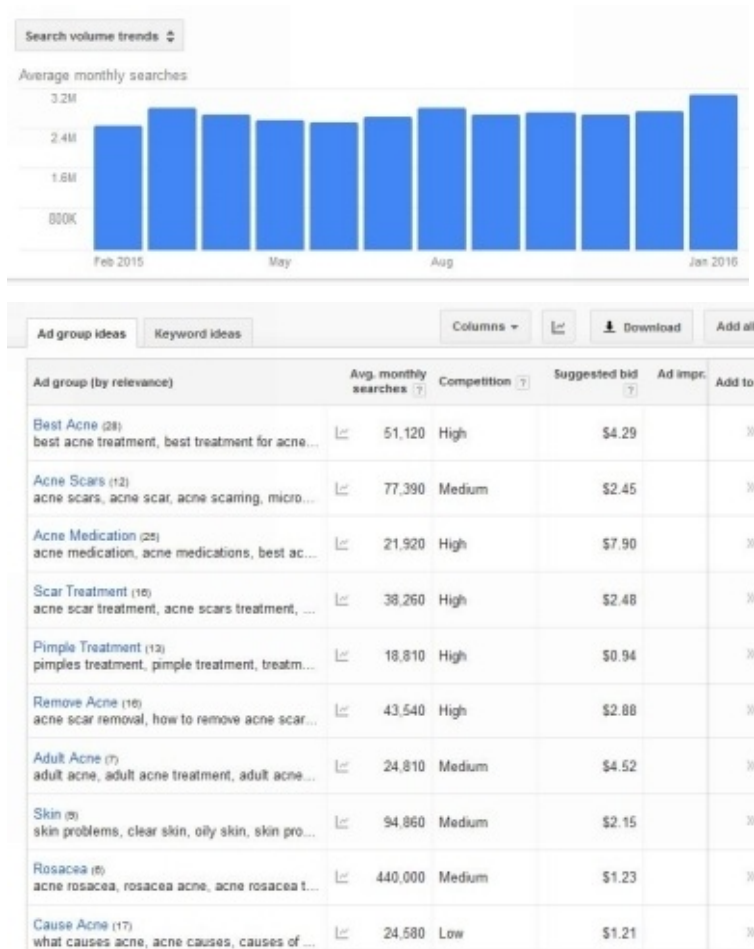
In the above image, we can clearly see the search volumes for specific keywords, as well as the competition on specific keywords. By glimpsing this information, it allows us a chance to target specific keywords.

For instance, in this example, we can see the keyword cluster 'Best Acne' has 28 keywords, i.e. best acne treatment, best treatment for acne, best acne cleanser, etc. (you can view particular keywords in a cluster by clicking on the keyword). We can also see that although the keywords in this category have a

high search volume (best acne is a head term keyword), the competition for that keyword is relatively high.

On the other hand, keyword clusters such as 'acne home, cystic acne, and acne cure' that have 50 combined keywords have low competition and a combine search volume of 156,600.

Acne Home (15) home remedies for acne, acne home remedi...		47,460	Low	$1.67
Cystic Acne (8) cystic acne, adult cystic acne, treating cysti...		93,390	Low	$3.60
Acne Products (26) best acne products, acne products, acne tre...		19,230	High	$4.17
Laser Acne (12) laser treatment for acne, laser acne treatme...		15,840	High	$3.20
Acne Cream (8) acne cream, acne scar cream, best acne cr...		20,630	High	$1.83
Acne Cure (27) how to cure acne, acne cure, cure for acne, ...		15,750	Medium	$2.17

Therefore, by optimizing your website and content around keywords in these clusters, i.e. by creating content and optimizing your website and images around keywords such as 'what causes acne, acne causes, how to cure acne, etc.' we can target the 100+ thousand people using these specific search terms to search for acne related information and products.

Optimization

SEO is all about optimization: without keywords, optimization is impossible. Website and content optimization starts at keyword research. Once you identify the keywords you aim to rank for, to make your website and content relative to those search terms, you have to optimize your content around these keywords.

By employing them within your content and specific areas of your website, which we shall look at shortly, keywords allow you to optimize your website and content for specific search terms, which makes it easier for search engines to relate your website to your keywords and rank it higher for those keywords.

Note: Thanks to Google Panda, Google frowns upon keyword stuffing, and will penalize your website by de-indexing or de-ranking it if you keyword stuff. Instead of stuffing keywords, concentrate on their natural use within your website and content.

Popularity and Competitiveness Analysis

As we saw earlier while looking at our acne example, performing keyword research allows you to analyze the popularity, and competiveness of your intended keywords. For instance, in our acne example, by using Google AdWords, we saw that keywords in the 'best acne' keyword cluster are highly competitive and have a high search volume, while keywords in the 'acne home, and cystic acne' clusters had lower competition and marginal search volume.

Using this data, we can determine that trying to rank for keywords in the 'best acne' cluster would be an uphill task. On the other hand, by creating highly helpful content, it is possible to rank on the first page of Google for keywords in the less competitive keyword clusters. This is what keyword research allows you to do: it helps you determine the search volume and competitiveness of specific keywords. This helps you determine if trying to rank for the keyword is worthwhile.

One false statement peddled by SEO 'gurus' is that keyword research is the hardest part of SEO. While it does require an infinite amount of time on a continuous basis (search data and volumes change on a daily-monthly basis), coming up with a list of good keywords your website can rank for on the first page of Google SERP is not rocket science. In fact, as the next subsection will show, you can easily come up with a massive list of keywords by following a few simple steps.

Note: How much time you put into keyword research will largely depend on your topic. Highly competitive niches will require more time to dig out gem, low competition, and targeted keywords.

A Step-By-Step, 2016 and Beyond Keyword Research Guide for Top Google Ranking

This section will outline a systematic guide you can use to generate a massive list of keywords you can rank for regardless of the nature of your website. As a note, remember what we indicated earlier: it is best to integrate a healthy mix of all types of keywords into your website, i.e. it is best not to concentrate on transactional keywords, or head term keywords, but to use a healthy ratio of keywords in the four-keyword categories. That said, here is your systematic, 2016 and beyond keyword research guide.

Step 1: Create a Spreadsheet and Brainstorm For Keyword Ideas

At this point, we are assuming you already have a subject/niche specific blog or website.

Note: If you do not have a niche specific blog or website, this resource by Stuart Walker, a top earning online marketer will help you [define your niche](#), while this resource by Pat Flynn, another top marketer will help you [set up a blog/website in less than 4 minutes](#)).

This part is important because, no matter how you look at it, the keyword research process always starts at understanding your niche, which helps you brainstorm a list of possible keyword ideas your target audience uses when searching for information online.

Once you understand your target audience and their plight, i.e. their most pressing queries, carve 20-30 minutes of your time, sit down at your desk and come up with a list of 10-30 keywords users searching for your website topic would possibly use to search for relative information.

How to Brainstorm a List of Keywords

At this point, you do not have to be specific; the idea here is to

come up with a rough draft of relevant, popular, and frequently used keywords in your niche. If you cannot come up with a list of 30 keywords on the fly, you can use the Google Instant method to discover what users interested in your topic are searching for.

1: Use Google Instant and Google Suggestion: The Google instant method is easy and straight forward. Head over to Google.com and type in your seed keyword. For our example, we shall use SEO as our head term and use it to discover popular searches for that topic.
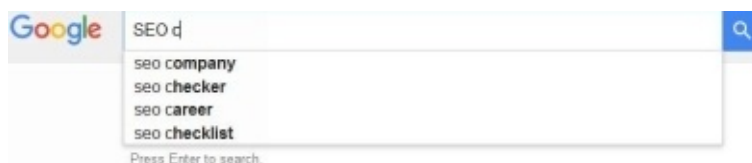
Once you get to Google, type in your preferred keyword topic and then type the letter A.

Then B,
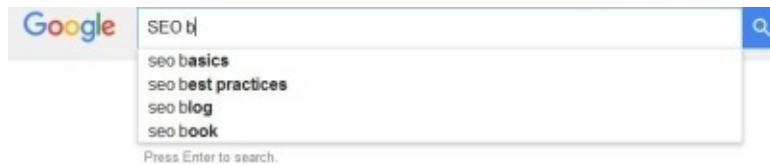
Then C, D….

The Google instant method, also known as the Alphabet Soup method lets you discover, in an alphabetical manner, popular phrases that users type into their search bars. You can use this method to come up with a rough list of keywords. For example, using our SEO keyword example, our list of possible keywords would be:

1. SEO analysis

2. SEO audit

3. SEO basis

4. SEO best practices

5. SEO checklist

6. SEO checker, etcetera

Google suggest on the other hand to head over to Google, type your intended keyword, and once you get the result, look at the bottom of the Google result page for suggestions of possible keywords.

For instance, using our SEO keyword example, we would head to google.com, type the keyword, and look at the bottom of the page for suggestions.

Once you create your rough draft of keywords, plug them into your spreadsheet. You can use Microsoft Excel, or Google Spreadsheet. The latter is better suited for keyword research because of its cloud nature (meaning you can access your keyword research data from any internet enabled smart device).

2: Use Synonyms: Another handy way to generate a massive list of keywords is by using synonyms. For instance, if we use SEO as our seed word, and head over to thesaurus.com and type "search engine optimization" because the topic does not have synonyms, thesaurus will return a web result page that can give us more ideas on topics to cover.
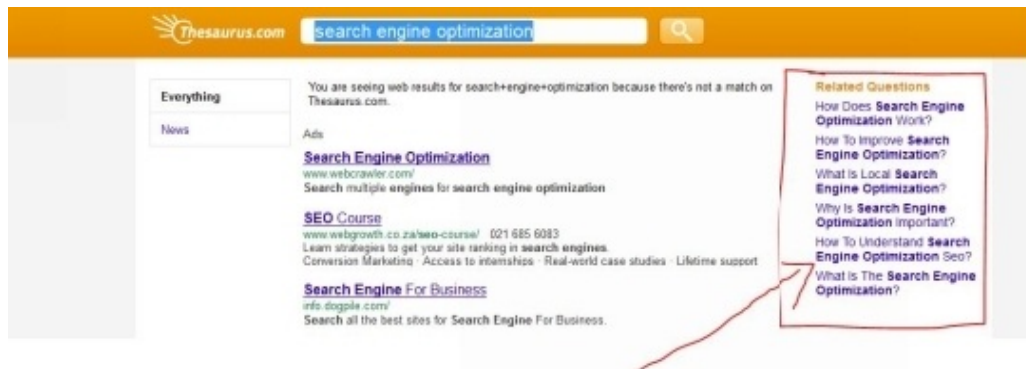
For even better results, we can dissect the words "search engine optimization" by using thesaurus to search for individual synonyms for the phrase. The idea behind using synonyms is to generate a list of alternative seed words users may use when searching for information relative to your keyword. Create a healthy list of keywords and place them on your spreadsheet. Once you have that, move on to the next step.

Step 2: Expand Your Keyword List

Once you have your generic keyword list, the next step is determining which keywords are worth the content and optimization effort. To determine that, you need to focus on your list, expand it, and identify easy to rank for keywords and content ideas.

Here, you can use keyword shitter.

Keyword Shitter: This is a not so nicely named free keyword research tool that produces long tail keyword ideas once you input a keyword phrase. What [keyword shitter](#) does is take your seed keyword, plug it into the 'positive filter' box, then press the 'shit keywords!' option, and download your list of keywords if it so pleases you. For instance, using a 'keyword research' spreadsheet created earlier, by plugging the keywords in Keyword Shitter, as shown by the figure below, we can get a ton of expanded ideas of topics we can create content around.

While this step may seem irrelevant, it is a key step in that it helps you create a sort of brain dump of searches potential clients and target audiences are making. While the list you create will not be your final keyword list, it will give you a firm understanding on which key areas of your niche you should target.

Another way to drill down on your list is by using your website itself. If your website is already ranking for specific keyword phrases, you can use a keyword tool such as Google Analytics to hone in on related keywords or topics.

Step 3: Engage your 'Spy' Mojo

After expanding your keyword list and getting a glimpse of potential content you could create, before you head out and spend the next several hours drafting a 2,500 word, highly helpful article, you want to do one thing: spy on other websites ranking for your intended keywords.

Brian Dean, founder of [backlinko](#), and one of the best SEO experts and online marketers around calls this hack, i.e. spying on your competition, the GKP (Google keyword planner) hack.

How to Use the GKP Hack

Competitor analysis allows you to know the possibilities of ranking for your intended keywords. Here is how to use the GKP method to spy on your competition.

First, equipped with your intended optimization keyword, head over to Google and type your intended keyword. For instance, if we use 'keyword research' as our seed keyword, our top 4 results would be as follows:
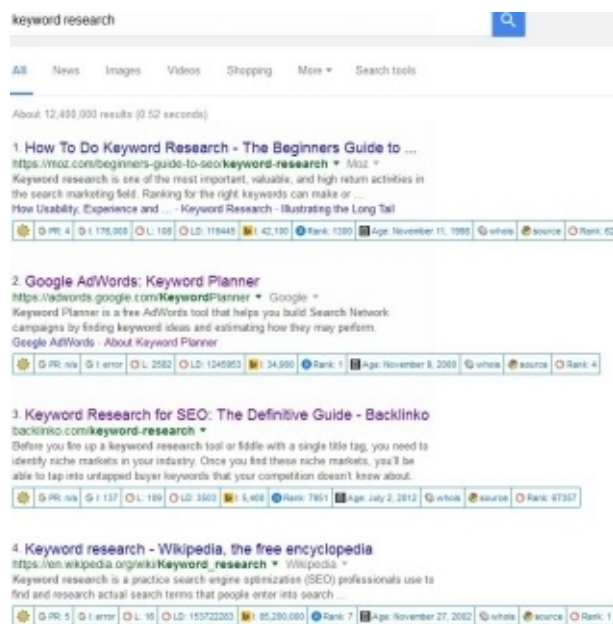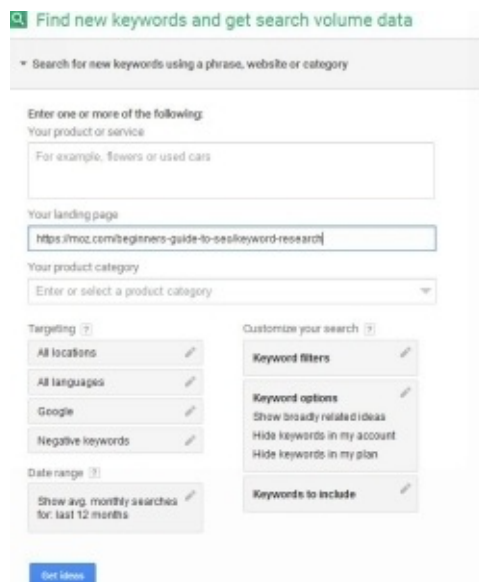

Side Note: As you can see from the image above, my SERP result page for the keywords 'keyword research' has additional data below each result. This is because I have installed the [SEOQuake](#) plugin. The SEOQuake plugin and the [MOZBar](#) Plugin are browser plugins that allow for the 'viewing' of vital SEO stats and parameters on the fly. Brian Dean has a super easy tutorial on [how](#)
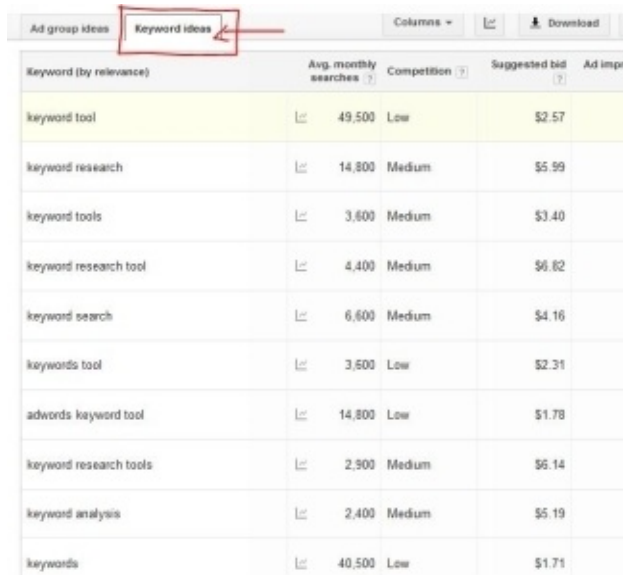
[to install and use each of these SEO browser plugins](#).

If you do decide to use these tools, (they make competition analysis 'on the fly' a breeze), pay special attention to page rank, page authority (shown by the MOZBar plugin), referring domains (LD), and domain authority.

Once at the result page, open another browser tab and go to [adwords.google.com](#). You will need a Google account to log in (a Gmail account). After logging into GKP, you want to click on the 'search for new keywords using a phrase, website, or category', plug in the URL of the competitor page, and 'get ideas'

Note: The resulting default view will be 'ad group ideas'. You want the keywords ideas tab. To get that, simply click on the keywords ideas option as shown in the image above. This nifty hack will allow you a glimpse of keywords your competitor is ranking for and their competition. If there are some keywords you think you can rank well for, grab them and add them to your spreadsheet.

Step 4: Use Your Keyword Research Tool to Focus Your List

The last three steps highlight how to come up with a mega list of possible keywords, analyze their competitiveness, analyze how easy it is to rank for them, and determine how competing pages are using these keywords, as well as discover other low competition keywords the competition is neglecting. In this step, we shall concentrate on narrowing down your list of possible keywords as the last decision-making step before commencing the optimization process.

Using your massive list of keywords, (you surely must have a massive list of possible keywords by now), and the data from the

competitor analyses we performed in step three, it is time to eliminate duplicate keywords phrases, keywords that have too little search volumes, and keywords that are too competitive. To do that, you need a capable keyword research tool.

The debate around which is the best SEO keyword tool is a pepper-hot one, and every marketer is quick to push this or that paid or free keyword research tool and terming it as the best.

The truth is, while paid keyword tools such as [longtail pro](#), [Jaaxy](#),[WordTracker](#), etc provide in-depth search data and analysis, if you have a 'leaky pocket' and are short on budget, free keyword research tool such as Google Keyword Planner (which we have used numerously) are up to the task.

Here is the thing; the role of a keyword research tool is to give you an estimate of the specific monthly searches keywords you intend to rank for have. The idea behind using a keyword research tool is to eliminate keywords that are too competitive, that have minimal traffic volumes, and that do not naturally fit into your blog content.

The idea here is to choose keywords that have healthy search volumes, and are low competition. These keywords meet the following criteria:

Awesome Keywords Are:

While this may be open for debate, good keywords meet the following criteria:

1. **Highly relevant: Good keywords, the ones you remain with at the end of the 4-step keyword research guide should be highly relevant. They should accurately describe the content of your articles because a high bounce rate, i.e. the rate at which users leave your page after landing on it is yet another external ranking factor. By being specific, your keywords and their subsequent use ensures that users find answers to their pressing questions once they land on your page or content.**

2. **Have a Healthy Search Volume: Good niche specific keywords have healthy search volumes. This is very important. Unless specific keywords have low volumes that build up to large traffic volumes when collated, it is futile to waste an infinite amount of time writing content for a keyword that receives 2-10 monthly searches.**

3. **Low Difficulty/Competition: Keywords with a low difficulty rank rate have low authority, or poorly optimized pages or websites on the first page of Google. This makes it easier to, with a backlink strategy in place, de-throne them, and get your page, content, or website on the first page of Google. On the other hand, trying to rank for highly competitive keywords with high quality authority pages on the first page of Google SERP will be an uphill task.**

At this particular point, using the systematic keyword research process highlighted above, you should have a healthy mix of keywords ready for implementation and optimization on your

website. Here is the thing though: although keywords are very important, simply finding the most profitable ones will not guarantee you easy ranking. What will guarantee you easy ranking is how well you optimize those keywords into your content and page.

In the next section, we shall look at on-page optimization: how to use keywords to optimize your pages, content, and media.

Section 3: The Definitive On-Page Optimization Guide

In the last section, you brainstormed a possible list of keywords, went though the motion of determining their competiveness and deciding if you can possibly rank for them and if they are worth the effort.

In this section, we shall concentrate on how to use your list of good keywords to optimize your website, content, and media 'on-page' to boost your chances of ranking. As we have previously outlined, SEO spans different areas; one of these important areas is On-page optimization.

As we stated earlier, on-page optimization is any, direct, on-page changes you make to your website design, content, and media in a bid to affect search visibility. On-page optimization is a very important aspect of SEO and proper on-page SEO means almost effortless off-page SEO.

The image above shows the different areas on-page SEO spans. We have already touched on keyword frequency or density; we will not dwell on it here. To make this on-page optimization guide an easy follow, we shall individually touch on each of these aspects. Let us start with Tags and Meta Descriptions.

How to Optimize Your Meta Data and Descriptions

Metadata fall into three categories: the title tags, Meta tag/meta description, and the alt tags.

When the web crawlers at Google get to your page, the first thing they do is look at your Meta Title tags, Meta descriptions, and the page headings. They do this so they can understand your page/content and the subject it covers. Once they do this, they collate your page information and keywords typed into the search bar by users, and subsequently, using various determinant factors such as the quality of your content, and the sites linking back to it, give your page or piece of content a number on their index.

Your site meta data tells users and the bots at Google what your page is all about; thus, if your meta data is consistent with your blog or website content and topic, you have a better chance of ranking higher. To view this data, once you are on a page, right click on a blank space and select view page source.

In the example above, the <title> tag represents the Meta titles,

and the <meta name= represents the meta-description.

Your Meta Title is visible to users and search engine spiders and it is your first SEO infantry. If you fail to keyword optimize your title tag, you are dooming your content or website to SEO jail. If you head to Google and perform a random search, the Meta Title is the title text in the resulting search results.

When creating pages, ensure that each page has a unique title relevant to the keywords you are targeting. If you are creating a page or publishing a post, ensure that the titles and permalinks are keyword customized.

Add unique and relevant keywords to your Meta data, i.e. exact match, long tail, and LSI keywords (latent semantic keywords are keywords similar to your main keyword) in your Title Tags and your description.

When optimizing these areas, keep the following in mind.

- Because Google and other search engine pare the titles and descriptions, you have a length option limit. For Titles, Google search shows 60-70 characters of your title tags and 150 characters for your Meta description. You want to make sure that you, **this is important**, naturally place your main keywords and LSI keywords (latent semantic keywords are keywords similar to your main keyword) in these tags.

- According to SEO Moz, if possible, and if it does not compromise user friendliness, aim to place your keywords first in each of these tags but especially the title tag. Doing this will give your website a ranking boost and a higher CTR (click through rate) because users are more likely to click on search result links that start with a keyword if the resulting search is highly relevant to their query.

- Be mindful of duplicate Meta data. You can use the [Google webmaster tools](#) search appearance feature (once you

log into your webmaster tool account, click on search appearance, HTML improvements, and then go on to click duplicate Meta descriptions) to discover if your website is guilty of duplicate Meta data violation.

To optimize your Meta data, if you are using a CMS (content management system) such as WordPress, the best and easiest way to get it right is by using a plugin such as SEO Yoast. On the other hand, if your website is not running on a CMS, your best option is to edit your website HTML code and use the Open Graph Protocol to specify each tag as follows in the <head> section of the page.

- og:title

- og:type

- og:description

- og:image

- og:url

Another thing you should pay special attention to is making sure your pages feature search engine and user friendly URLs. Let us take the instance of our acne site.

If you have a website that has the following URL: http://www.acnesiteexample.com/~ articlepage21/ post-entry321. asp? q = 3, it is highly unlikely users search engines are going to understand the nature of your post. Reason being, this type of URL is a complete mess and is a quick way to confuse visitors and search engine spiders. On the other hand, if you have the following URL: http://www.acnesiteexample.com/~5-natural-acne-cures, site visitors and Google bots paying your post a visit will instantly know what the post is about; this will make the bots at Google happy. When the Google bots are happy, they give your post a ladder and a jetpack to climb up the ranks.

Note: Because it will be visible on the search engine results page,

when creating your Meta description, it is a good idea to make it descriptive and enticing to readers; doing so will increase your CTR.

The alt tags, on the other hand, come into play when optimizing non-text media such as images, info graphics, video, GIFs, etc. Essentially, and because Google bots cannot read non-text media, alt tags provide alternative and additional information about medias on your website or content.

Ideally, you should use the alt tag to describe your image or video in 10 or less words. However, because we are looking at enhancing your Google rankings, this is what we shall say about alt tags. Use exact match, and LSI keywords to describe your non-text media. Because you are using media to convey a message and make your content even more user friendly, you should have no problem finding keywords and keyword phrases to use on your Alt tag. We suggest adding one photo on each page of your website or blog using alt tags that match the exact keyword/s for that page.

Note: Images and non-text media are often bulky; meaning, they can cause lags in page load speed. Here is the thing, while a faster load speed may seem irrelevant; [a recent study by KISSmetrics detailing](#) how load speeds affect your bottom line found that a single second delay has a 7% negative effect on your CTR and bounce rate. Neil Patel conceptualized this in numbers by stating that a single second delay in page load speed for an ecommerce site earning $100,000 per day results in an annual $2.5 million dollar sale loss. You can use [Google pagespeed checker](#) to check your page load speed.

A 1 SECOND DELAY IN A PAGE RESPONSE CAN
RESULT IN A 7% REDUCTION IN CONVERSIONS.

If an e-commerce site is making
$100,000 per day, a **1 second page
delay could potentially cost you $2.5
million in lost sales every year.**

As a rule, optimize your images by compressing them and making them smaller as a way to ensure they do not affect your page load speed. To optimize your media, you can employ tools such as shrink o' matic, Jpeg Mini, and a host of other image compression tools.

That is it for the Meta data sub-section. An important aspect of on-page optimization is content. If performing SEO is Google-ranking bread and butter, creating user-friendly, compelling, and helpful content, then optimizing it for search is the bread bakery, and the butter knife you use to layer the butter on the bread: neither can exist, or top rank your page or content as a standalone.

Thus, it is only right that as part of your on-page optimization education, we briefly outline how to write great content for people, optimize it for search, please Google, and receive top rankings on Google SERP for your intended keywords.

How to Write Incredible Helpful, User-Friendly Content, and Optimize It for Search

Earlier on, we saw how a website authority and trust affect Google ranking. We also saw that one of the best ways, if not the best way to build authority and trust is by creating well-researched, highly helpful content that answers user's questions.

Unfortunately, mastering the art of SEO copywriting is a problem most SEO professionals face. Because you are here, here is a little, only whispered secret, SEO copywriting is not rocket science, to hack it, just remember one thing: Create appealing, user driven content that solves a problem or leaves the reader satisfied and happy he or she clicked through to your page.

SEO content creation for better ranking is that simple. How do you create content that please the reader, meets Google mission statement, (thus pleasing the bots at Google), and builds authority? Well, here is a systematic guide:

Step 1: Perform Content Driven Keyword Research

Although we have touched on everything keyword research, and you probably have more keywords than you would care to use, we should mention that since 66% of all SERP clicks go to the top three results, you MUST nail your content keyword research.

In this regard, as we stated earlier, you want to concentrate on long tail keywords simply because they are less generic, less competitive, but targeted. To find targeted Long Tail keywords, refer back to the keyword-research guide section.

Step 2: Understand Important SEO Copywriting Elements

Expert online marketer Neil Patel states the following about SEO copywriting: *SEO copywriting is all about creating useful, compelling, and valuable content, which targets specific keywords*

so that other people will gladly promote it on social media platforms. This increases the authority and relevance of your content and improves its ranking in Google for the selected keywords."

Unless you understand important SEO copyrighting elements, it is next to impossible to follow Neil's advice. Here are the important SEO copywriting elements you should pay attention to:

1. **Site Speed: We talked about page load speed in the previous sub-section. To emphasis the importance of faster page load speed, especially in reference to copywriting, a research study published by [Akamai](#) and this [info graphic by the KISSmetrics blog](#) establish the following: 47% of website visitors expect a page to load in 2 seconds or less while 40% will bounce off a page if it takes longer than 3 seconds to load. [In this April 9th 2010 blog entry](#), Matt Cutts, head of Google Web spam team, clearly states that site speed is one of their ranking factors. If your page load speed is wanting, which as mentioned earlier, you can determine by using Google Page Speed Checker, creating a 10k word helpful article will do you no good and users will bounce off.**

2. **Headlines: Earlier on, we touched on the importance of compelling, keyword optimized title tags. If content headlines and headings do not compel readers to click through, your CTR will take a hit. Compelling headlines are an important aspect of content creation. Ideally, your headlines should grab attention, and compel readers to want to learn more aka, click through. Here is the thing, if you implement everything outlined in this guide, every likelihood is that you will climb to the first page of Google SERP for your respective keywords (of course if the keywords are not**

super competitive, something we talked about earlier). By creating compelling headlines that demand click through, it does not matter if you land at position one or position four: your compelling content headlines will do all the work for you and you will get a ton of organic traffic. While you may have your specific way of doing it, it is best to create your content headline before creating your content body because the former will guide your copy and the content therein. Tip: If it makes sense, and does not compromise readability, include numbers in your headlines. According to **ConversionXL**, headlines with numbers have a 36% conversion rate.
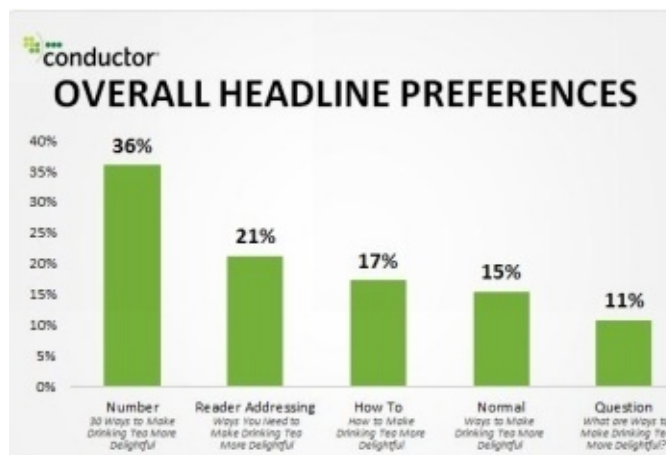
3. **The Content Itself:** The SEO copywriting elements would be incomplete if the content itself was not part of the essential elements. As we have repeatedly stated, Google gives better ranking to user centered content. As a content creation rule, update your website with a minimum of 2-5 new posts each week because Google and users love fresh content. To write awesome content that users and Google salivates upon, create content around keywords and LSI keywords. Nevertheless, remember that Google loathes keyword stuffing;

further, keyword stuffing will increase your bounce rate since users will not find the content helpful. Tip: Before commencing the post writing process, you want to understand your target audience, their pressing problem, and the solution your post offers. Once you figure this out, write your post. When creating posts, create a compelling keyword rich introduction (use keywords wisely).

4. **Keyword Density/Frequency: We touched on this. We mentioned keyword density is not as strong a ranking factor as it once used to be, and that you should use your seed keywords only when they do not appear spammy or compromise user-friendliness, we shall not delve into keyword density. Tip: The best advice on keyword density comes from Copyblogger's Brian Clark where he states:**

"The *only way to tell if your repetition of keywords is super or spammy is to measure that frequency against the overall length of the content. A keyword density greater than 5.5% could find you guilty of keyword stuffing, and Google could penalize your page. You do not need to mindlessly repeat keywords to optimize. In fact, if you do, you are likely to achieve the opposite result.*"

You can use free keyword density checker tools such as the [SEOBook keyword density checker tool](#) to check your content keyword density.

5. **Links: Although we briefly touched on this, and are yet to, in an in-depth manner, dissect it (which we shall do in the off-page optimization section), making internal and external links part of your content is a key way to make content appealing. Remember, Google considers links to authority sites as a user-friendliness metric, i.e. you value your users, and are thus linking to other helpful content somewhere else on the web as a way of**

imparting knowledge upon them and effectively answering their query.

Armed with these SEO content copywriting elements, on to step three.

Step 3: Optimize

Optimizing your content means formatting your content using the H1 H2 H3 and H4 tags, highlighting important parts of your content in bold and italic. As a note, the title tags range from h1>h6 and each of these tags will enlarge your font and make text bolder and stand out at varying degrees. These tags make it easier to structure content for easier reader navigation.

Optimizing your titles is something you have to do if you have any hopes of ranking on Google. When creating your titles, be mindful of the title length, place relevant keywords closer to the front of the tag, leverage branding, and consider readability and emotional impact.

Step 4: Optimize for People

Writing for people is the most important part of writing SEO copies. When you create copies, you should have an aim, and intention. Do you want to drive engagement? Do you want to convert? Words are powerful. How you use them on your copy will determine how well your copy achieves its goal.

Did you know, according to Technorati, every new day sees a publication of over 3+ million blogs?

Blog posts written today:
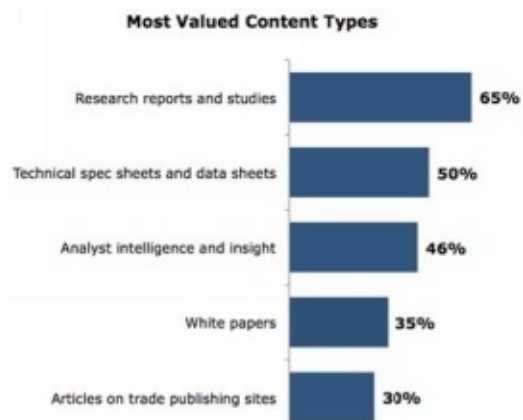
3,457,376

Sources and methods:

The data on total number of blog posts published every day in the world displayed on Worldometers' counter is based on the latest statistics on worldwide blog activity published by **Technorati**. A formula based on the current data available, historical trends, and projections is used to estimate the total number of blog posts published every day on the web.

To ensure your content is user friendly, and receives top-Google rankings, ensure it has the following elements:

- Well optimized
- Create backlinks (more on this later)
- Create content on an expansive topic

To optimize for people, when performing keyword research, pay special attention to user intent keywords. Optimizing keywords can only take you so far. To optimize your content for users, you want to do one more thing: tell stories. **Tip:** Online readers love engaging content. The best way to create content is by using stories to disseminate information. This does not necessarily mean you have to become Shakespeare; all it means is learning how to use story-telling elements such as humor, dialog, and other story telling elements your target audience may respond well to, which is why understanding your target audience, is such an important SEO aspect.

Bonus Tip: A research study by [Content Marketing Institute](#) indicated that one of the best ways to optimize content for users is by using case studies.

Most Valued Content Types

Content Type	Percentage
Research reports and studies	65%
Technical spec sheets and data sheets	50%
Analyst intelligence and insight	46%
White papers	35%
Articles on trade publishing sites	30%

If it fits into your aim, use case studies to connect with users to drive engagement, and increase user value. Further, because, they are seriously helpful to readers, well-researched, insightful case studies tend to rank high on Google. When creating a case study, follow these guidelines:

How to do it

To create a case study, follow this model:

- Write a summary of the study and a preview of the outcome.
- Explain the challenges that you had to overcome or the problem that the client was facing.
- Write out the solution you provided. Make it clear and explain it in a step-by-step way.
- Discuss the results of your solution and the ways in which it was successful.
- Provide a conclusion and a call to action.

Things to keep in mind

- Write your case study in such a way that it doesn't come off as pure marketing.
- Make it a story. "Case study" sounds pretty bland, but a good case study is really an inspiring "success story."

Step 5: Optimize For Search

To optimize your content for search engine bots and web-crawlers, the rule of thumb, which is derived from the fact that Google spiders pay attention to these areas, before publishing your content, optimize your Meta data. Specifically, pay special attention to your content title tag and Meta description and ensure

these two areas contain the keywords you are targeting and their derivatives.

That is it for on-page SEO. On-page SEO covers about 90% of what you must do to rank. If you are feeling a bit lost even after everything we have looked at, this [On-page SEO infographic](#) from Backlinko should remind you which on-page SEO elements you should pay attention to. Plus feel free to send us an email with your questions. Visit www.utechservs.com contact page and as away.

In the next section of our guide, we shall look at the elephant in the room, the one aspect that makes most SEO professionals tremble from the fear of Google penalties: off-page optimization.

Section 4: An Explicit, No-Holds-Barred Off-Page SEO Guide

Let's kick off this section by getting our facts right: while link building is a detrimental factor, and a mainstay of off-page SEO, Off-page SEO does not eat, drink, and breath back linking.

Off-page SEO is more, much more.

Before we explain this statement, let us start by understanding Off-page SEO despite having briefly touched on it.
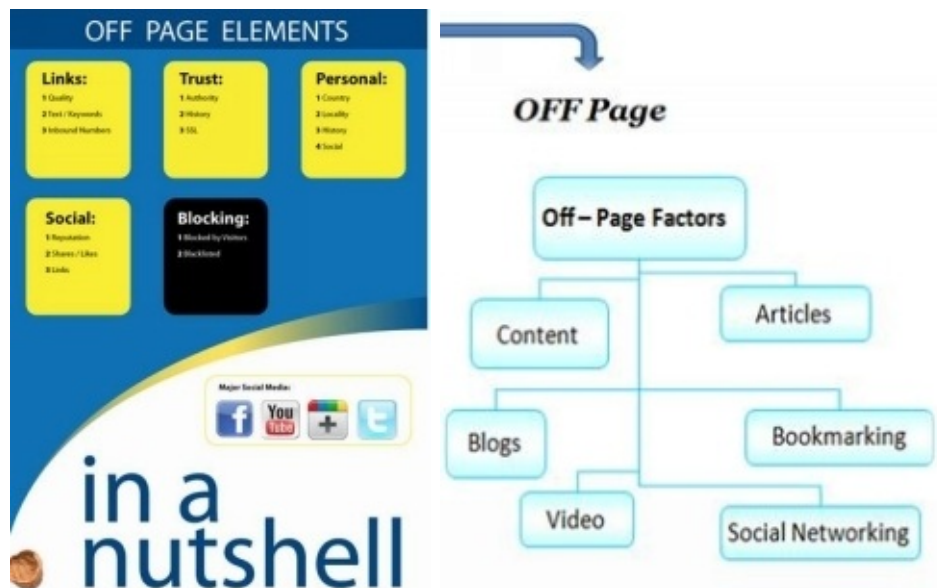
What Is Off-Page SEO?

Any perceptive SEO professional will tell you that although off-page SEO is a major ranking determinant factor, it should only take about 30-40% of your search engine optimization efforts, with the remaining percentage going to on-page SEO.

For a minute, think of a website as a new, built from the ground, city. Every city has skyscrapers and buildings that require a solid foundation to sprout. In relation to building an authority website (websites that ranks in the top positions), On-page SEO is the ground and foundation on which you build your city.

Every city needs amenities such as power, roads, etc. Without these amenities, for instance, roads, it would be impossible for new people and businesses to get to the city's center or suburb for work, rest, entertainment, education, and all the other wonderful things you can expect in a city. In relation to a website, Off-page SEO are the amenities pointing back to your website enticing Google and users to flock to your impeccable, built from the ground city (depending on the nature and aim of your website).

In essence and as we earlier stated, Off-page SEO is anything you do, and in extension, others do to drive traffic to your site and improve its ranking. Examine the Diagrams below.

As you can determine from the images above, Off-page SEO is anything that lets Google know what internet users think about your site or content. Here is what we mean by this: If one piece of content or page on your site has tons of links pointing to it, Google will assume that because other people are linking back to that page or content, it means the content or page is helpful. Google then treats this as a vote of confidence (because lets face it, no one would link to a poorly drafted page), and gives your page a ranking boost.

As we have stated, Off-page SEO is not solely about link building. However, building links is an integral part of it mainly because without links, it is impossible for Google to determine how valuable a piece of content or webpage is.

For this reason, its only right we start with link building as an important off-page SEO factor before moving on to other off-page elements you should optimize to better your ranking.

Link Building in 2016…: The White Hat Guide to Penalty-Free Link Building Google Will Love

First, let's cover the basics:

What Is Link Building?

Link building is the aspect of getting other pages (preferably quality and relevant sites) to link back to your website content or pages. In the early days of search, link building was a breeze. To rank top on first page of Google SERP, all a webmaster had to do was create a ton of links pointing to a page or piece of content without caring if the linking page was relevant to the linked-back-to website page or piece of content. Enter the Google Penguin algorithm update.

Launched in April 2012, the [Google Penguin algorithm](#) served to filter sites that used spammy linking to manipulate ranking. In particular, the Penguin update sought to identify sites that bought backlinks, or used link networks to gather 'votes of confidence' to manipulate ranking.

Google hates link schemes. Don't believe me? Here is an excerpt from their webmaster answers page.

"*Any links intended to manipulate PageRank or a site's ranking in Google search results may be considered part of a link scheme and a violation of Google's Webmaster Guidelines. This includes any behavior that manipulates links to your site or outgoing links from your site.*"

The page then goes ahead to outline examples of spammy link schemes that negatively affect your site ranking. Here is a small excerpt of that (here is a resource to the entire list of [back links Google considers 'schemy'](#)):

- *Buying or selling links that pass PageRank. This includes exchanging money for links, or posts that contain links; exchanging goods or services for links; or sending someone a "free" product in exchange for them writing about it and including a link*

- *Excessive link exchanges ("Link to me and I'll link to you") or partner pages exclusively for the sake of cross-linking*

- *Large-scale article marketing or guest posting campaigns with keyword-rich anchor text links*

- *Using automated programs or services to create links to your site*

This begs the question; what back linking option is available to webmasters, and how can you build penalty-free backlinks guaranteed to help you rank better? Here is how.

How to Build Penalty-Free Backlinks Google Loves

To create quality backlinks that attract zero penalties and tons of Google cheer without paying a dime, use the following guide:

Step 1: Prepare Your Content/Page for Link Building

While Google considers deliberate link building unnatural and spammy (thus prone to penalties), Google still pays special attention to links. To see this in metrics, examine the screenshot below courtesy of Neil Patel.
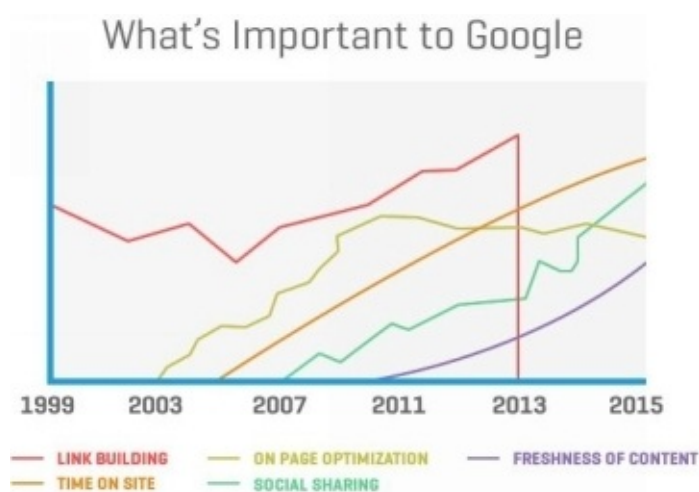
As you can see, since 2013, deliberate link building is on a downward trend while other link building adjacent factors such as social shares (these count as natural links, which Google loves).

Unfortunately, while looking to build natural links, most webmasters often neglect a very important aspect: preparing your site for link building. Preparing your site for link building is one of the most overlooked off-page optimization aspect.

How do you prepare your site for link building?

1: Optimize Internal Links

As you may have noticed, this guide likes to quote authority figures as a way to place emphasis on what it teaches. Remember Brian Dean, whom we mentioned earlier; here is what he had to say about creating and optimizing internal links: *"The number of internal links to a page indicates its importance relative to other pages on the site."*

Naturally optimizing your internal links relevant to your keywords can make a huge difference on your ranking. When building internal links, here is the rule: create silo pages, silo pages are pages that connect to categories and supporting posts and pages. Silo pages aggregate your ranking and boost your search performance because after creating silo pages, when you link back to say, your homepage, the linking juice flows through supporting pages and categories.
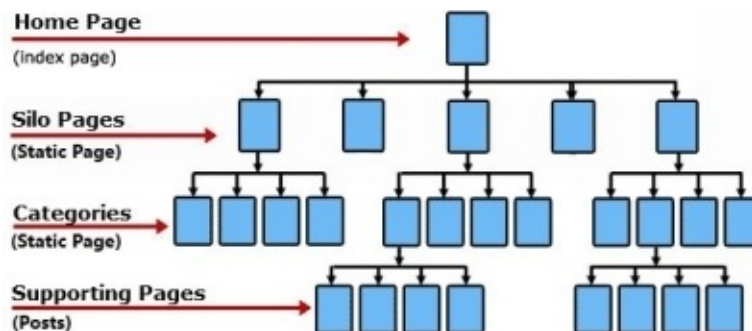
Silo Structure

Ideally, no page internal link should be a standalone. Instead, each page, and essentially, link, should be an interlink and be an integral part of your overall site so that all your pages and content are, in one way or the other, interconnected, which makes page navigation easier. As a rule, from a single page or piece of content, a user should be able to jump to any location on your site. Further, related pages and content should link together to provide a seamless, rich user experience. Examine the image below.
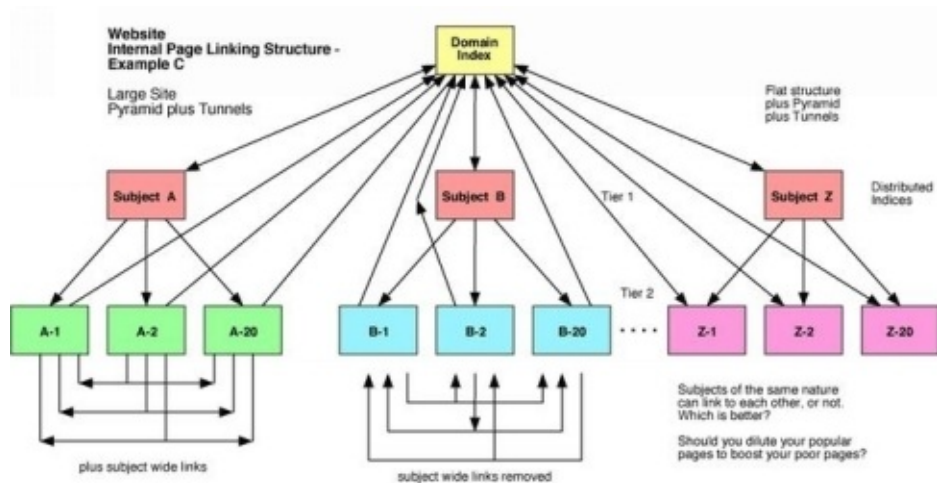

Neglect silo pages and internal link building at your own peril. Ken Lyons, co-founder of Measured SEM, an internet-marketing agency based in Boston, outlines 9 ways to create a well-structured internal linking structure that works.

2: Get Your On-Page SEO Right

We covered how to get on-page SEO right; therefore, other than mention its importance in preparing your pages and content for linking, here, we shall avoid talking about how to get your on-page SEO right. As an additional On-page SEO tip, ensure a well-structured site, use exact match, long tail, and LSI keywords, optimize your Meta data, media, and optimize the other on-page SEO elements discussed earlier.

Another thing, as we saw in section 2 & 3, keywords play a

massive role in ranking. As you perform your on-page SEO and interlink your pages, pay special attention to the use of exact match, and related keywords because they account for 40.75% of your on-page SEO activities as shown by the image below.
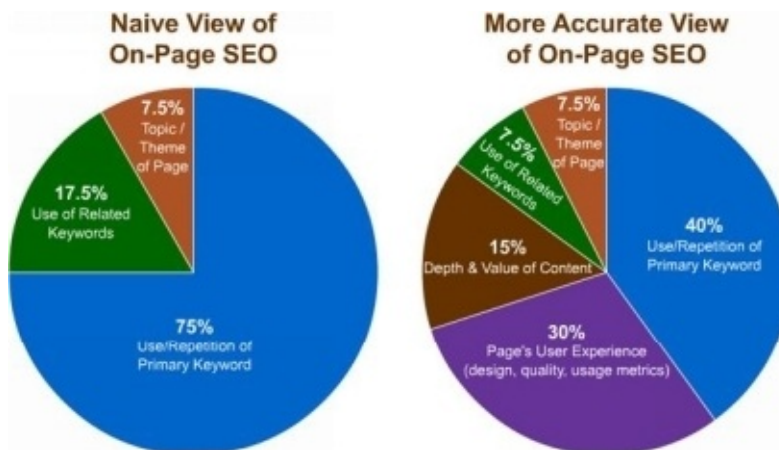
Before we close out step one, I want to point out something because after preparing your site for linking, the subsequent steps are the actual steps you need to engage to get tons of quality backlinks.

Note: As Moz found out in this 2013 link building study, guest blogging, content marketing, resource-page link building, etc. were the most commonly preferred ways to build links.
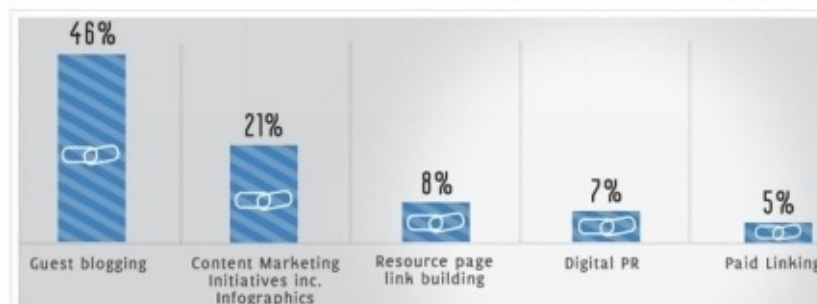
In 2016 and beyond, if **not done in a spammy way**, most of these link-building strategies will work. With that in mind, start building links to your pages and content, on to step 2.

Step 2: The BL Strategy

The broken links link-building strategy is perhaps the most neglected, most potent link building strategy.

Here is the thing, while guest blogging accounts for 46% of most webmaster's link building efforts, creating quality backlinks from high-value blogs is not easy. To use guest blogging to create backlinks, you first have to do a ton of research to find blogs targeted to your audience and keywords. Once you discover blogs in your area, you have to reach out to that blogger, who may, or may not agree to a mutually beneficial link building strategy, once he or she agrees, you have to write the post, making sure to adhere to quality control, submit the post, and wait for the post to go live.

The BL (Broken links) link strategy, on the other hand is simpler, faster, and highly effective at providing high quality links. Here is why this strategy works like a charm.

Google's mission statement is to organize the web. As you would guess, broken links are a sore throat for Google and their bid to live up to their mission statement. The internet has tons of [link rots](#) in the form of errors emanating from expired hosting, messes during site transfers, hyperlink and typing mistakes that lead to the dreaded 404 error pages.

By fixing link rots, Google can love, and reward you with better rankings. Using broken links to build quality backlinks is not a new strategy: it is an age old, tested, and proven link-building strategy that shows no sign of fizzling out.

Using this strategy to create backlinks involves three steps: perform a backlink analysis on related websites, find the broken link, reach out to the webmaster, and inform him or her about the link rot. Your aim here is to inform the webmaster of the dead link and provide an alternative link, your link.

Step 3: The Info-graphic Strategy

Here is a fun fact about info-graphics: if they are compelling enough, and highly relevant to a subject, other bloggers in your niche will link back to them, which results in an instant, high quality backlink. Other than being great engagement drivers, visually compelling info-graphics earn high quality editorial links from high quality, relevant sites.

Further, as shown in the image below, since 2008, the uptake, and demand for info-graphics has increased by 800%.
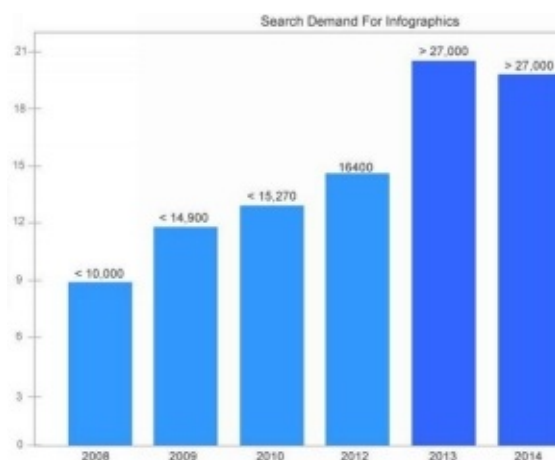
While the above strategies will effectively help you create penalty free backlinks, do not neglect other back linking methods such as guest blogging. In fact, guest blogging is an awesome way to create brand authority, and content marketing will get tons of eyeballs on your content (effectively increasing the chances of backlinks, if the content is helpful).

You can also employ other, lesser-known back linking strategies such as creating a job board, launching a meet up campaign, etc. On a post shared more than 1,572 times on various social platforms (Facebook=766, Twitter=604, LinkedIn=202), Neil Patel outlines 8 almost unheard of back linking strategies guaranteed to rocket fuel your ranking.

Note: In 2016 and beyond, Google also pays special attention to social shares and considers them as back links. Pay special

attention to creating highly sharable content that appeals to readers and creating a social media strategy inclusive of a social share strategy.

As we close this section, let's mention something; at the start of this section, we outlined, through the use of images, the main off-page SEO elements. As we stated, while link building is not the only important off-page element, it is an important aspect. In this regard, and because Google values user engagement above everything else, if you use YouTube videos in your content, you may want to subtly interlink the video on YouTube and your content. This will count as a backlink from a site Google trusts: YouTube.

In the next section, which is going to be short and technical, we shall look at site wide SEO.

Section 5: A Site Wide Optimization Guide

As the name suggests, site wide optimization details paying attention to site wide SEO factors that may affect ranking. Site-wide SEO is a bit technical mainly because it focuses on eliminating any hindrances Google and users may encounter when navigating your site. It does so by focusing on, and fixing issues such as; structural coding issues, usability, reducing bounce rates (through creating compelling content), fixing indexing issues, and a wide range of issues we shall look at shortly.

As the title of this section clearly states, this section is short and precise; this is because most of the elements we shall touch on here require some hands on approach where you have to analyze different aspects of your website and optimize accordingly.

When addressing site wide optimization, below are the areas you want to pay attention to:

1: Optimize Your Site Map and Robot.txt File

A site map, normally in XML format, is the treasure map search engines use to index your website. Without an XML sitemap, Google spiders have to crawl (read) pages individually, something they don't like. A site map makes crawling your pages lightning fast.

A robot.txt file, on the other hand, is simply a file that lets Google spiders know not to index specific pages on your site. While it may seem contrary to the aim of search engine optimization, a robot.txt comes in very handy when you do not want Google to index specific information that may affect your rank.

2: Clean Code and Easy Navigation

As we have consistently seen, Google is very user driven. In an

earlier section, we stated the following: 40-47% of internet users expect pages to load in 2-3 second, if it takes longer, they will bounce off.

Other than optimized and compressed media, your website structure, code, and navigation also determine your page load speed. Thus, your website should have clean, search and user-friendly code, and navigation; this will ensure users stay longer on your site, which Google will treat as a sign of trust and usefulness.

3: Fix Errors and Redirects

We touched on link rots while looking at the how to build back links. As part of your site-wide optimization, search and fix all error 404s, 301 redirects, and other server related issues. **Note:** Although most errors will not cost you ranking juice, they will leave a bad taste in user's mouths, and will increase your bounce rate, something Google uses as a user-friendliness metric.

4: Eliminate Duplicate Content

We talked about duplicate content/URLs and their effects on ranking. Search for, and eliminate all duplicate content on your page. If you absolutely must have duplicate content, use the canonical tag to let Google bots know the nature of this content, and the piece of content or page they index.

5: Utilize Static Pages

If your site has many dynamic pages, especially ones that contain duplicate content, consider converting your content into static pages. Additionally, if your homepage content constantly changes, consider using a static homepage, and then using this page to point to other locations on your site. This is especially useful considering that an index page with content that changes constantly has a negative SEO effect.

6: Capitalize On Analytics

Analytics allow you to know where your users are coming from, where they are going once they get to your site, and how long they are staying on your site. Analytics play a very huge part in SEO and it is thus a very important SEO must do. Fortunately, Google analytics is very easy to set up on all websites.

Tom Dupuis, a Google analytics SEO Pro for WordPress, has an amazing [how-to on site wide optimization](#) and the elements you should pay attention to outline you can refer to for more helpful tips.

Conclusion

Dear reader, as this book has shown you, although SEO may at first glance seem complicated, and ranking your website first on Google may seem like something requiring the services of a highly paid SEO professional, you need not buy into that misconception.

This book has outlined everything you need to climb up the ranking ladder and reach SEO nirvana: first page of Google SERP. As you start implementing everything outlined here, a word of caution: Google places a lot of emphasis on users, so should you.

Pay special attention to keyword research because it is an integral part of SEO and use LSI, long tail, and exact match keywords on your web copy and pages. Aim to create amazing, highly sharable, keyword-optimized, helpful content, and Google will love your website. Get your on-page SEO right by optimizing all the relevant areas.

When creating your backlink strategy, remember that creating too many links within a short period may appear spammy. Instead, aim to create natural, high quality backlinks (the keyword here is natural), and pay attention to your social shares and social

presence. Put in as much effort in social site content as you do your site content.

Eliminate all site-wide hindrances and diligently perform your site wide optimization.

As a parting shot: do not forget to use Google web master tools to diagnose your website and optimize your website accordingly (Google will give you optimization tips relevant to your website). Additionally, do not forget to use Google search console to measure your SEO effort and optimize your pages, content, and website for better rankings.

If you do all these things, nothing will stop you from landing at the top on Google for intended keywords.

All the best in your ranking quest; see you on page one of Google ☺

Thank you again for downloading this book!

I hope this book was able to help you to understand how to work your own SEO in 2016. The next step is to simply implement what you have learned. Again, feel free to email us with your questions. Simply visit www.utechservs.com contact page.

Finally, if you find value in this book, would you be kind enough to leave a review for this book on Amazon?

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Thank you and good luck!