Search Engine Optimization

This lesson discusses what tactics and strategies are used in SEO in order to make your website appear in the search engine rankings!

Once your website starts to appear online, the next thing that you need to take care of is to help more and more people find your website. According to the recent researches, most people only skim through the first page of search results and never bother going on the next pages. Moreover, it has also been studied that usually people only visit the first three links that appear on the search engine. This should be enough to show how important it is to make your website reach there!

💡 **Did you know?**

There exists around 130,000,000+ websites on the internet!

How search engines work?

Ever wondered how the search engines find pages relevant to the user's search when there are millions of websites available on the internet? A short and simple answer to this question would be that it runs a complex algorithm and finds if the keywords entered by user are present in those websites and the number of times that keyword appears on the website, the more relevant it becomes.

But it's not that simple!

Even if we filter the results based on just this approach, the results would still be in millions. Moreover, people would add extra keywords in their web pages just to appear on the top. Today's search engines have been made so smart that they even capture this repetition and ban your page from appearing in the results. This is why it has become a necessity to optimize your website through SEO. To understand SEO, you need to be familiar with a few terms first. Let's have a look!

Web Crawling

Web Crawling is the process when a bot visits your website in order to track the web pages and fetch useful information like keywords in the pages, links etc. and feed it to the search engine for indexing.

Web Indexing

After the crawling process, the search engine calculates the score of each webpage according to the given keywords entered by the user. This process is called indexing.

Web Ranking

Every website has a ranking based on user's searched keywords, this ranking is called "Page Rank".

What is SEO?

SEO is a set of strategies used to obtain a high-ranking on the search engines to increase traffic to your site.

Nobody knows what exact algorithm Google is following now or what factors they consider while ranking a web-page but we do know few of the ranking factors so we are able to make some optimizations. To do that, we need to take care of two things.

On-site SEO:

Make sure the search engines easily understand what your website is about, and find and create content that matches the searcher's intent to help search engine best identify that your website is relevant to user's search. Given below are a few tips you need to keep in mind while optimizing your website content:

1. *Optimize titles, tags and meta description*: Make them specific and relevant to user's keywords. Make sure to add the meat of the content in the first 150 characters of your meta descriptions.

2. *Optimize the actual content on your website*: Add Contact Us section, add testimonials etc.

3. *Optimize main elements*: By adding the primary keywords in the main elements of your site like headings, titles, footer etc.
4. *Optimize URLs*: Make sure to include primary keywords in the URLs of your website and keep them as simple and shorter as possible.
5. *Avoid keyword stuffing*: Don't add the same keyword too many times, in the long run it always causes trouble.

Given below is a random search result from Google to show you what meta description and title tag is.

Meta Description & Title Tag

Off-site SEO:

The next part and the most important one is to show search engines that our website is worthy enough to appear in the top rankings. This is done by adding backlinks to your website from other sources such as social media, articles, blogs etc. The more influential the website is that links your website, the more weightage it is going to add in the search results ranking. Basically links act as votes. The more citations to a source exist, the more trustable it becomes in the eyes of the search engine and hence the higher it ranks!

The point that needs to be emphasized here is that in order to get a higher ranking on search page, you must generate quality backlinks. To generate quality backlinks, look up for websites that already link your competitors. You can do that by using any free tool online, Google Adwords and Ahrefs are the most popular ones. Then you will need to get in touch with them and offer them a pitch that benefits them or their website in any way... lets say giving copyrights to your designs? This outreach campaign would help you get a lot of backlinks and would eventually help you get a higher ranking on search engines!

So in a nutshell, off-site SEO boils down to two strategies:

1. *Use Social Media*: To create blogposts, articles and videos that direct to your website.
2. *Get influential Backlinks*: By getting in touch with influential websites and offering them some sort of benefit.

💡 **Did you know?**

There are free tools available such as Adwords and Ahrefs that let you enter certain keywords and see how many people actually searched for it over a month. You can also see your competitors keywords rankings and find what relevant keywords they used to optimize their website!

Useful Strategies

Given below are some additional tactics that you can follow in order to gain a higher ranking in the search results:

- **Domain Name**: Pick a domain name that carries the most common keywords that the user would intend to search.
- **XML Sitemap**: Generate and submit an XML Sitemap to search engines. A sitemap basically contains a list of all the web pages on your website. The main reason this file is generated is to let the search engine know whenever you make any changes like add a new page, or edit content.

This file help crawlers find all the web pages of your website. Search engine use this file to index your website. This way if your website gets

updated, the sitemap will be generated again and hence the search engine would want to crawl your website again. You can generate the sitemap using any tool online.

- **URLS**: Always structure SEO friendly URLs that are not too long and difficult.

- **Internal Links**: Adding internal links to your website is also a great way of getting indexed.

- **Robot.txt**: `Robot.txt` file is placed in the root directory of your domain that instructs the web crawlers which part of the website they can crawl and index which they can't! The web crawlers, by default, read this file first before crawling any web page on your site. If this file is missing, it automatically assumes that all web pages are accessible for indexing.

Pretty interesting, right? Now let's move on to the next topic and learn how to generate revenue out of your website!