

Home Business Websites

Introduction to Search Engine Optimization

Getting Started With SEO

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Part 2 - Introduction to SEO

Off-Page SEO

Compared to on-page SEO, off-page SEO can certainly be more difficult to execute. Off-page SEO entails building relationships with other websites through the creation of attractive content, or reaching out to the people who run the websites. This process of building relationships is called **link building**. Who is linking to you, how they are linking to you, and how your content is shared in social networks and across the web are all factors that can have a significant impact on your ability to rank on the SERP.

Who's Linking to You?

Do you know? As discussed in the What it Takes to Rank section of this book, you can use free tools to determine what websites are already linking to you, something the search engines are very concerned about. Although twenty inbound links from your friends' websites may be a good start to link building, garnering one link from a major publication or educational website (with a .edu address) could be worth more than the power of those twenty links combined. Since the Internet is essentially an inter-linking network of pages and websites that make up the World Wide Web, not every link is created equal. Links from major publications and blogs usually provide more link juice because they are visited by millions of people each day. Therefore, they have an incredible impact on the ability for webpage to go viral.

It is in a newspaper website's very nature to link to authoritative websites that relate to current stories and trends. Therefore, these websites are most likely more valuable than others. The same goes for education websites with a .edu domain, since these are reserved for educational institutions. As such, the search engines realize that links to your website from these websites equate to you having more authority.

How are they Linking to You?

Just like when anchor text is used to link an internal webpage to another one of your web pages, the use of anchor text when another website links to you can be extremely helpful in creating relevancy to certain keywords and phrases. If you have the option, always request keyword-rich anchor text for a link that uses your domain. That said, if you have no other option, still take a link with anchor text to your domain. All link juice is good.

A common practice in linking building is link trading, or “I will put a link to your website on my website if you put a link to my mine on yours.” These types of links are referred to as **reciprocal links**. Since all link juice is good link juice, reciprocal links are not prohibited, but their value is certainly not as good as a one-way link to your website. There was most likely a time when reciprocal links were just as good as any other, but the search engines are always getting smarter in determining how much juice a link should receive.

If you don't have the time to do your own link building there are SEO firms that you can hire to help you with this task.

Using Social Media to Spread Content

Use of social networks like Facebook, Google+ and Twitter has exploded over the last few years. In fact, the latest figures from ComScore suggest that 16% of all time spent online is spent on a social network. With hundreds of millions of users across these social networks sharing content they find online with their friends and followers, search engines have begun to take notice.

According to SEOMoz, the amount of social activity that a webpage has on social networks (shares, recommendations, likes, links, etc.) is an important factor in that page's ability to rank on the SERP. Simply put, search engines have realized that content shared on social networks is extremely influential, and should therefore rank higher. Beyond using social networks to engage new prospects, drive leads, and build brand awareness, businesses should consider all of the SEO benefits they miss out on by not having a brand presence.

In order to capitalize on the boost to your SERP rankings from social media, you need to make your content easy to share. Implementing social network buttons such as a Facebook Like Button is an easy way to accomplish this.

Using Email to Spread Content

Almost any business these days uses email to nurture relationships with their current leads and customers, and utilizes promotional email blasts to attract new ones. It is no surprise that with the death of direct mail over the past few years, email marketing has exploded. It has never been easier to communicate with your customers and newsletter subscribers by simply sending them an email.

However, there is so much noise out there that you need to make every email that you send, count. Your emails should have clear calls-to-action to nurture and engage your customers. Offering them incentives such as discount coupons will keep them returning to your store.

Identifying Keywords

How to Identify Long-Tail Keywords

As discussed in the Long-Tail Concept & Theory section of this ebook, the key to successful SEO is concentrating on long-tail keywords. Although these keywords get less traffic than more generic head terms, they are associated with more qualified traffic and users that are most likely further down their path of intent. The good news is that choosing the right long-tail keywords for your website pages is actually a fairly simple process.

Relevance is the key factor to consider when choosing the right keywords for SEO. Remember, the more specific you are, the better. For instance, if you own a company that installed swimming pools, which keyword do you think is more likely to attract qualified prospects for your business?

“swimming pools” vs. “fiberglass in-ground pool installation”

Obviously if someone is searching for “fiberglass in-ground pool installation,” his brain is in research mode. They are looking for information on installation or someone to perform the installation - that could be you! Optimizing for “swimming pools” has its place, but there is no doubt that this keyword will attract a much more generic audience that may not be looking for what you have to offer.

Figuring out where to start when it comes to keywords can seem challenging. There are many ways to research and find long-tail keywords that are right for your business. We'll cover these in the next few sections.

Search for Keywords

Besides looking at your web analytics data or using a keyword research tool, there is a lot to be said for simply going on the search engines and conducting a few searches yourself. Using the search engines can help you answer critical questions like:

How much competition is in the space? See how many search results there are. If there are hundreds of thousands or millions of results, ask yourself if it is really worth the time and effort to play in that space.

Where do your competitors rank? Pick a keyword you would like to optimize for and look at the top 20 results. Are your competitors anywhere to be found? Where do you rank? Are you ranking at all? This information will guide you in making a decision to carve out a niche for yourself with keywords where your competitors are not playing, or you may find a keyword you think is worth picking a battle over.

Is Google providing other recommendations? When you type a keyword into Google, it will automatically populate the search results as you type. This feature is called Google Instant. This is Google's attempt at trying to anticipate what you are searching for. Google is giving you results based off of previous search data. You can use this data to your advantage. Simply start typing in a keyword and see what keywords Google populates under your search result. This is a quick way to get keyword ideas.

Measuring Success

SEO can take a lot of time and effort. What good is spending all this time and effort if you can't see the fruits of your labour? There are many metrics you can track on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis to keep your SEO plan on track and measure your success.

Traffic

Measuring overall traffic to your website from organic search is something you should look at on a weekly basis. This will help you determine if the changes you made in the previous weeks or months have started to have an impact.

Keywords

Keep a list of the keywords that are driving traffic to your website from organic search. On a monthly basis, dive deeper into your organic search traffic and analyze what keywords were responsible for driving the traffic. Your brand keywords are usually going to be responsible for the bulk of it. If possible, separate out brand keywords and pay close attention to the non-branded keywords that are driving traffic to your website.

Rankings

Select a list of the top 10 keywords for which you want to rank. Every month, go in and conduct a search on Google and see where you rank. Record your rank and you will be able to see if your SEO efforts have helped you improve. Make note of jumps of over five spots, because those changes are usually not the result of normal search engine updates and changes.

Now What?

By this point you should have a firm understanding of what SEO is, and why every online business needs to recognize how critical it is. Developing and executing an SEO strategy can be a daunting task. However, this process is completely manageable if you dedicate adequate time and resources to it. There are several things to consider when getting started with SEO.

Make a List of Keywords

Do some keyword research and make a list of all the keywords for which you would like to rank on the search engines. Rank this list in order of priority or relevance to your business. This should be a living and breathing document that you review and update at least on a monthly basis. This will ensure you continue conducting keyword research and allow you to make note of the keywords for which you are already ranking.

Create a Link-Building Plan

Link building is the primary objective of off-page SEO. Dedicate some time to brainstorm the many different ways you can go about attracting inbound links to your website. Start small – maybe share your links with other local businesses in exchange for links to their sites.

Final Word

If you don't have the time to dedicate to doing your own SEO, you can engage the services of an SEO specialist to assist you or you may like to consider using Google Adwords - paid advertising.

You should always conduct your own research prior to engaging the services of any SEO provider.

Adwords

There is the option of using paid advertising in place of organic SEO, which produces a much faster result. Using Google Adwords you can buy yourself a position at the top of Google for your chosen Keywords.

Your website can then appear at the top of Google for any keywords that you select, almost immediately. You can find further details of using Adwords in your 'Advertising' document on this CD.

SEO Software

We highly recommend SEO Profiler which you can sign up for, for FREE using the following link.

http://www.seoprofiler.com/#a_aid=homebusinesswebsites

You can also find basic SEO keyword monitoring software on your CD, called CuteRank.

Small SEO Tools also have some fantastic Free Online SEO Tools & Utilities

<http://smallseotools.com>