

# Get discovered with search

Search Engine Optimisation might sound like a mouthful, but once you understand how search engines work you'll be on your way to becoming SEO confident. Learn how to develop an adaptable SEO plan, identify the most effective keywords, and which tools can help you measure what matters.

## 1. Intro to search engine optimisation (SEO)

### Key Learnings

Understanding how search engines work can help your business improve its online presence. This video explains: what search engine optimisation is how search engines understand your website what they value most.

### Video Transcript

Hello!

Welcome to our introduction to search engine optimisation, also known as SEO.

In this video we'll explain what SEO is, how search engines understand your website, and what they value most. Because when search engines understand your content, it will be shown to many more potential customers.

Every day, millions of people search online, for everything from airline tickets to zoos. That means there are millions of opportunities for businesses to appear in front of potential customers.

Let's say you own a small farm and want to expand by selling your produce online. SEO helps search engines understand better what you have to offer. That means, when someone searches using a word or phrase related to your business, like, say, heirloom tomatoes, you're more likely to appear in their results.

When a search engine returns results some of them are paid advertisements. The rest are unpaid results that the search engines believe are relevant to the phrase entered into the search box. These are referred to as "organic results."

Search engines have formulas, or algorithms, that help them order the list of results. The search engines constantly scour the web for new content and try to make sense of it.

Where your website appears in these results is affected by the words you use on your site (fresh farm produce, for example) as well as other factors—such as how many websites link to yours.

Does this seem confusing? How's this: Think of a search engine like a matchmaker. The goal? To find the searcher exactly what she is looking for on the web.

But how does this work?

To present the best possible results, the engines look for as much information as possible about websites.

They might look at how popular sites are, or what other people or sites are saying about them.

They might consider words on web pages or keywords in the code of a page to better understand the topic.

Each of these components will help search engines find the best match for your search.

Search engines can now also consider the searcher's geographic location. A search from the UK will display a localised set of search results.

Chances are, the same search originating from France will show different results.

And, with the explosion of mobile usage, search engines now consider the devices people use when they perform a search.

But just like a matchmaker who's been in business for years gets better and better, search formulas evolve and add more and more information along the way.

Are you wondering what you can do to make your site attractive to search engines? We'll touch more on this in other videos, but here's a good starting point.

What search engines value most is unique, engaging, relevant content because their job is to find and show the most useful stuff.

So there we have it. Search is a simple thing to use, and many of us use it every day. But what's happening behind the scenes is constantly changing. To effectively promote your website online, you've got to keep tabs on what search engines value most—and make sure your website gives it to them.

As we move along, we'll tell you more about how search engines work and help you create a strategy for improving SEO in order to achieve your business goals.

## 2. The importance of an SEO plan

### Key Learnings

In this step-by-step process to create an SEO plan for your website, you'll learn how to: develop prioritise adjust the plan to best suit your goals.

## Video Transcript

Hi there!

Once you have a good grasp of search engine optimisation (SEO), you are ready to optimise your website. Just follow this step-by-step process to create an SEO plan, and learn how to develop, prioritise and adjust the plan to best suit your goals.

Let's say you want to reach new customers for your fresh-from-the-farm fruit and veg online delivery service.

Your first step should be keyword research—that means finding out what your potential customers are searching for.

Are they looking for organic produce? Weekly fresh vegetable deliveries?

By the way, if you want to learn more about keyword research, check out our lesson about choosing keywords to focus on.

Next, consider related topics. Are vegetarian diets popular? Do requests for gazpacho recipes come up?

This will help make your keywords more specific and a better match to what your customers are looking for. You should do this at least once a year as part of your SEO plan.

Once you've identified good keywords, take a look at how you're doing in search results for those words.

How many of these words and phrases bring up your website on a search engine? Are there specific topics that don't bring much traffic to your site?

This info will help you figure out what's working for you and what's not. If a popular phrase like "fresh farm vegetables" isn't pointing customers to your site, you can address those missing pieces in your SEO plan.

Once you've discovered gaps in your SEO performance, your next step is to think about how to fix them. Maybe none of the content on your site mentions that you can arrange regular seasonal deliveries.

Is no one linking to your site? Perhaps you can invite food bloggers to check out your farm in the hopes that they'll mention you in a future blog post. Make a list of anything you think might improve your SEO performance.

OK, so now you have quite a to-do list. Don't worry. It's just time to prioritise.

It's natural to want to tackle the items that will give you the biggest bang first, but be realistic. Adding an entire section about sustainable farming methods to your site might require hiring a programmer to help, which might cost a fair bit. In the short term, you could post a quick article about the topic on your blog.

The next step? Give yourself a deadline for each task so you're working through your SEO plan steadily throughout the year.

OK, once you've set this plan in motion, don't just forget about it.

Your SEO plan will change over time. But how do you know when it needs updating? One easy way is to check in when you're making other changes in your business, like introducing a new product or redesigning your website.

Also remember that search engines release new features and improve their algorithms. For example, many have made adjustments because so many people now search on mobiles.

Finally, adjust your plan when something isn't working. Is there a web page that's not getting much organic traffic? It may need a refresher.

Are you attracting visitors to your site but not making sales? Perhaps you need stronger calls to action.

Review your results regularly and shift focus to the areas that need help.

And that's how you build an SEO plan.

Let's recap. Start with keyword research to understand what your customers are looking for, then use that info to assess your successes and failures.

Brainstorm solutions to improve your weak spots, and prioritise them.

And never be afraid to redo your SEO plan based on changes in your world and the world of search engines.

Be sure to check out our lesson explaining the SEO process. That has more helpful information to get your plan in motion.

### 3. The SEO process

#### Key Learnings

This video explains the SEO process and the steps you need to take in order to optimise your website, including: discovering what words or phrases people use to search for your products or services improving the content on your site.

#### Video Transcript

Hey there!

In this video we'll explain why search engine optimisation is an ongoing process, and the steps you'll need to take to reach your goals. Such as discovering what words and phrases people use to search for your products or services, and

improving the content on your site.

There is no shortcut for search engine optimisation (SEO), which helps you improve your website's visibility to people who are searching for products or services like yours.

The first step is called keyword research: discovering what words or phrases people are looking for when they are searching for products and services related to your business.

Let's say you have a small farm and have begun a fresh fruit and veg delivery service. Once you know what people are searching for—maybe vegetarian recipes or sustainable produce—you can optimise your content and offerings to better match what they are looking for.

That might mean posting a weekly recipe or writing a blog about life on the farm.

The work of SEO is never done, because trends come and go, users can change their behavior, and search engines evolve over time. Your job is to consider how changes will impact your site and what you need to do to continue to attract unpaid (organic) traffic.

Here are 4 quick tips on how to stay up-to-date on search.

1: Learn how search engines work.

Many have blogs that offer updates on new features, algorithm changes and suggestions on how to better optimise your website.

2: Keep an eye on changes and monitor how they affect your website.

For instance, you might read that the major search engines made a change that improves users' experience on mobile search results. If your website isn't optimized for mobile devices you'd probably want to update your website to be more mobile-friendly.

3: Find inspiration from other websites.

Do they offer free shipping? Are they active on social networks? Do they regularly update their website with photos? Adopt the practices that will work for your own business.

And finally, 4: Talk to your customers. They have the best insights on what content your site is missing, features that are needed, or products they are looking for. Even the way your customers describe your products can be a form of keyword research—they likely use those same terms to search.

And there you have it: the ongoing SEO process. It's simply understanding what visitors want, creating and sharing the content they're searching for and being willing to change tactics when necessary.

## 4. How to choose keywords

### Key Learnings

Choosing keywords is the cornerstone of successful search engine optimisation. In this video, we'll discuss: why you need to do keyword research the difference between short tail and long tail keywords what to consider when selecting keywords.

### Video Transcript

Hey!

In this video we'll discuss what to consider when selecting keywords, so that you can reach your SEO goals and benefit your business.

Choosing keywords is the foundation of successful search engine optimisation. Why do you need to do keyword research? Here's an example:

Suppose someone is looking for fresh berries. What might they search for? It could be simply berries, or it could be strawberries, blackberries, blueberries or raspberries.

If you sell fresh berries, you need to know the terms people use most often when searching. Ideally, you'll match your website content to what people are actually looking for. If you don't, there could be a disconnect: visitors to your site could be looking for one thing while you are talking about another.

There are three things you should consider when choosing the keywords for your SEO plan.

First, frequency, or the number of times a word is searched for. Obviously, you want to include the terms that people search for most often in relation to your products. Just keep in mind that it may be difficult to differentiate your business on highly searched-for terms.

That brings us to our second consideration: Competition. If you have a large, established website, you may be able to appear on the search engine results for high-volume, highly competitive keywords, like fruit and veg.

But new sites have big opportunities too: if you're just getting started, look for keywords that have a bit less competition.

Only a small number of keywords have very high search volume. But there's a large number that have low search volume.

This is what's called the "long tail" of SEO.

While the keyword strawberries might have a lot of competition, a term like get organic strawberries delivered in Cornwall would be an example of a long tail keyword that might give you more immediate SEO results.

For a small business, the long tail is often where you will find your SEO opportunities. It typically takes a website lots of time and focused efforts to appear in the results on searches for popular generic keywords. However, smaller websites may get good rankings for long tail keywords with less effort.

Finally, and most importantly, the third consideration is relevance. The keywords you select should closely match what you actually offer. If someone comes to your site looking for strawberries but you only sell raspberries, they're just going to leave.

Make sure your chosen keywords match the intent of the people who are searching.

How? One option is to use Google Search Console to see which pages appear in search and get clicks. (Stay tuned for our Google Search Console video.)

Through all your SEO efforts, remember the golden rule: Your site's content should be made for your human visitors, not for search engines.

Don't add extra keywords or variations of keywords to your pages. Repeating them unnecessarily is called "keyword stuffing" and is against search engines' guidelines.

So that's what you need to consider when selecting keywords: frequency, competition and relevance. Keeping these things in mind will set you on the right track for successful SEO.

## 5. Setting realistic SEO goals

### Key Learnings

Setting realistic goals for organic traffic and assessing them with measurements that matter will help you strengthen your SEO strategy. In this video, you'll learn: how to define success how to select measurements that matter what tools can help.

### Video Transcript

Hey there!

Does search engine optimisation seem intimidating to you? One way to tackle SEO is to set clear goals, then measure your progress each step of the way.

In this video we'll talk about why it's important to set SEO goals. We'll look at how you should define success, how to decide what to measure, and what tools can help.

When you set SEO goals, you can measure, track and report on the results. You'll know which efforts are succeeding—and which aren't. And then you can adjust things to make it work better.

Let's start by identifying your SEO goals. What are you trying to achieve online? How do you define success?

Imagine you own a small farm. You probably want to sell fruits and vegetables to as many new customers as possible. And you'd like to build relationships with existing customers through good content—and hope they eventually return to buy more fruits and vegetables.

You've just identified three business goals:

Conversions: Turning website visitors into paying customers.

Engagement: Persuading people to interact with the content on your site.

Acquisition: Getting new customers.

Setting SEO goals gives you something to measure to help you better understand how your site is—or isn't—performing.

So how do you find out if you're hitting the mark? Some measurements matter more than others.

For example, it's exciting to be number one in search engine rankings, but it's not a guarantee of success.

Here's why: Let's say your farm website is the first result when someone searches "vegetable gardens." You're getting a lot of visitors to your site—but not an increase in sales.

Maybe that's because people searching for "vegetable gardens" want to plant a garden, not buy your fruits and veg. The lesson? Don't waste effort on keywords that aren't relevant to what you do.

So, if being number one isn't your goal, what is? Let's come up with a few other ways you might measure success. Remember those goals you set above? Look at those.

You can measure conversions by tracking the number of visitors who come to your website and buy fruits and vegetables; or tracking a smaller action that can lead to a sale, like signing up for your email newsletter.

You can measure acquisition and reach by tracking the number of times your business appears in search results—your "impressions"—and how often people click through to visit your site.

And, you can measure engagement by tracking what content your visitors read and interact with, such as leaving comments, or how many visitors become your fans on social media networks.

So how do you track all these things?



Analytics tools and webmaster tools provided by search engines can give you this information—often for free. Most major search engines like Bing, Google or Yandex offer tools like these. They're basically a collection of reports and services that help you track and monitor your website's visibility in search.

Tools like these tell you which keywords bring up your website in the search results, which web pages they link to, and how many visitors click the links to visit your site. This is valuable information if your goal is to attract customers searching for certain terms.

Analytics tools can also be used to better understand visitor behavior. They can answer questions like:

How many organic visitors become customers?

Which web pages or content on your site turn visitors into paying customers?

Which content isn't performing well?

Armed with this information you can adjust your SEO strategy to do better (or evaluate the performance of an SEO agency, if you've hired one to help you).

To sum up:

To understand how your site is performing in organic search results and how it benefits your business, set SEO goals.

To measure the success—or see where you need improvement—track your performance in various areas. Once your goals are clear and you have tracking tools in place, you're well on your way to success with SEO.