# **MGT 6311 SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION TRANSCRIPTS**

## **M5L1 SEO Basics**

>> Welcome to the module on search engine optimization. In a previous module we continued exploring digital channels with a focus on paid search advertising. In this module we will also be focusing on search. But rather than the paid side of search, we'll be concentrating on what is referred to as the organic side of search.

Although search engine optimization does not involve working dollars for advertising purposes, It certainly entails the use of non working dollars to support this digital channel. It's also worth noting the timing differences between paid search and organic search. With paid search, we can begin running ads very quickly. As soon as we've set everything up in the ad platform, all we have to do is wait for approval and they can start running.

Within organic search however, it takes much longer to realize the fruits of our labor. There are too many variables to easily quantify the amount time it takes to optimize for a key word. But I want you to be keenly aware that it can take months of time to see significant shifts in our rankings.

In this first lesson of the merger, I want to discuss the basics of Search Engine Optimization while reinforcing some of the Co Terminologies. So here we want to understand what SEO is. Understand why SEO is important, and why search position matters, and then also provide familiarity with local search and claiming business locations.

Recollect from the module on paid search that we differentiated between the paid and organic search results. Organic or natural results are the ones represented below the red dashed line in this screenshot, and are not directly paid for. These organic results are what we will be focusing on within the search engine optimization module.

From a definition perspective, search engine optimization otherwise known to its common acronym SEO is a process. This process is intended to improve visibility within internet search and increased traffic to a website. So within this module we'll talk further about this process and how we can impact optimization. As a point of clarification, search engine marketing includes both the paid and organic aspects of search.

In many instances marketers are engaged in SEO and paid search simultaneously. Furthermore, paid search can inform our SEO efforts and more on this point later. Based upon recent research, we see that organic links on page one of the SERP account for over 70% of all clicks. The remainder coming from paid search links and subsequent page links.

With respect to page two and beyond results most users are unwilling to navigate through to these pages when they don't see what they're looking for on the first page. Rather, they are more likely to enter in a new search using different keywords. Additional studies indicate as much as 15% of searches each day are new, never before seen by Google.

Thus the overall realm of SEO changes rapidly based upon changes in consumer behavior. Just as we saw in paid search, the position on the search for organic listings has a direct impact on click through rate. As shown here in a study of nearly 2 million keywords across nearly 62,000 websites for both mobile and desktop, there's a direct correlation between CTR and position.

Also take note that once an organic result has reached just the fifth position, it can expect less than 5% of clicks. Therefore, when contemplating SEO as a viable marketing channel and the effort required to optimize for keywords. It's important to consider the likelihood that we can achieve positions 1,2,3 and four, presuming our goal is to realize more than 5% of organic clicks.

Before we dive too much deeper into SEO, I want to point out a situation where the cert displays what is known as local search results. Based on the keyword phrase, Google may also extend the localization of the results by expanding out the places map. Note that these results are displayed using a different algorithm compared with the typical organic results view.

A user's physical location can be derived from the user's IP address or, if connected to WiFi, the WiFi networks IP address. Search engines allow website owners to claim their locations. Google My Business is used to do this for their search and map tools. If a user does not claim their locations through Google My Business, Google may still pick it up if it's listed on the site owners website, and/or from other websites that include the name and address of a business.

This concludes the lesson on the basics of SEO and its importance. In the next lesson, I'll discuss the various factors that affect organic rankings.

## **M5L2 SEO Rank Factors**

>> In this lesson, I'll highlight the ranking factors affecting SEO. Within this lesson, I wanna provide familiarity with key search engine signals, understand SEO success factors, and provide familiarity with the components of Google's ranking algorithm. For search engines to provide the best results and to prioritize them accordingly, the algorithms are written such that they pick up on certain signals including relevance, quality, popularity, user experience, and authority.

Although the details are proprietary and highly guarded, experts in SEO have estimated Google uses over 200 ranking factors to support these key signals. I also wanna point out the fact that aside from branded search terms, search engines are most likely going to return results that are in interior page of a website, meaning not the homepage.

Of course, if someone searches for Home Depot, the search engine will return Home Depot's homepage in the first position within organic results. But if a user searches for a product Home Depot carries, such as dishwashers, interior paint or thermostats, the search engine is going to return a specific page within the website.

Once again, not the homepage because the interior site page will be more relevant and specific to the user search query. Additionally, these ranking factors are a function of both on-page and off-page variables. On-page factors include elements such as keyword density, meta tags, a sitemap, and site performance. Off-page factors include external links from other sites, social media, press releases, and blog and forum mentions.

Rand Fishkin, the founder of SEOMoz which subsequently became known simply as Moz, is an industry guru in SEO and highly regarded by his peers within the realm of SEO. He created an extremely popular pyramid to help other practitioners think about how to establish and improve upon their SEO strategy.

As we can see here, the foundation of SEO is comprised of elements such as crawl accessibility, which makes it easy for search engines to both reach and index content on a site. Having compelling content that aligns with users search queries, and key word optimization that helps the search engine better understand what a website and its web pages are all about.

As you can see, there are additional and in some instances, arguably more complex layers of this pyramid that helps support competitiveness given that there are over 1.5 billion websites on the worldwide web. In addition to attempting to better understand the various ranking factors within the search algorithms, SEO experts also wanna understand their importance and thus the weight associated with the factors.

As we can see here, there are clusters that contain related ranking factors along with an estimate of their corresponding percentage weight. Again, these are estimates but come from a highly credible industry expert. Although a super deep dive of these variables is beyond the scope of this course, it is worth noting that the two clusters having the most weight.

And accounting for roughly 40% of the search engine algorithms ranking factors, are essentially a function of third party website links. Or stated differently, off-page factors. I'll discuss these further in the next few lessons. So this concludes the lesson on SEO rank factors. In the next lesson, I'll discuss on-page SEO best practices.

## **M5L3 On-Page SEO Best Practices**

>> Welcome to the lesson dedicated to On-page SEO best practices. Within this lesson, I would like for you to understand the importance of website structure. Understand how to optimize site images. Understand key HTML tags that impact SEO. Highlight the use of social sharing icons. Understand the general components of an optimized web page and also provide familiarity with featured snippets.

Website should be structured hierarchically such an information is organized logically. The site should have main categories based upon users wants and needs and then subcategories should be related to the main category most associated with it. Not only does this follow an intuitive user experience, it also helps the search engine crawl and index the site pages in their content.

It is recommended the number of sub categories per main category be as balanced as possible, but don't get too concerned if there is some variance. Most importantly and fundamentally, we need to make sure there are direct links to each page we want the search engine to index. URL structure should follow the site structure.

To represent this with an example. Let's suppose you have a website for your restaurants and part of the information you wanna provide includes the address, phone number, a map etcetera for each of your three locations. Therefore your URL structure will follow along with your site structure. And in this case, nest the Castro location page under the locations category.

Remember, we wanna use our keywords within our URL structure where appropriate to help reinforce SEO. It's common for marketers to use imagery to help better express concepts as well as create a stronger emotional response from customers. Although search engines are currently not adept at understanding the text and details of an image, we add the ability to help the search engine understand what's being shown to the reader.

One element we can control are the alternative text attributes associated with the image. These are commonly referred to as Alt tags. This text is placed within the source code and associated with the image. It helps with web accessibility to assist visually impaired users using screen readers to better understand what the image represents.

And it also helps the search engine better understand the image and index it appropriately presuming we provide relevant descriptive text. In principle, the images being used on a web page should be supporting the content of the page. Thus, it makes sense we should be using keywords in the alt tags for the image that aligns with the keywords being optimized for the page.

Best practices include providing a relatively short description 5 to10 words and while including relevant keywords, not stuffing the description with keyword alternatives that wouldn't sound natural if saying them aloud to someone. In case you're wondering, search engines are becoming very adept at what is known as natural speech and combat the use of language on web pages to what is commonly used between people in natural conversations.

Another variable we can control for the image is the title tag and the source code. Just as the name suggests, it's a title for the image and is the text that will be displayed as a tool tip when a user hovers over the image. Again, we wanna leverage the keyword or key words we are optimizing for in these title tags where appropriate.

The image filename can also be optimized. You've maybe had the experience of right clicking on an image on the web to save it and notice some esoteric file name using a mixture of alphanumeric characters. This is actually the antithesis of SEO best practices. Instead, we want to name our images using our relevant keywords.

Also, if using more than one word in your file name, separate them with a hyphen. Otherwise the search engine sees the characters is running together and doesn't understand the relevance. This also applies to using the underscore as a separator. Avoid using it for this purpose. Image alignment is all about making sure the images being used on a web page are relevant to the copy on the page.

Naturally we want to ensure this is the case. It helps with both user experience as well as SEO. And finally, image size can be an important consideration, as it can affect page load time, which impacts SEO. Users don't like web pages that load slowly and as such, neither do search engines.

We want the images to be served in the smallest file size possible relative to maintaining the integrity of the image quality. This may sound like a lot of minutiae in detail, but at the professional level, these details add up and practitioners are looking for every angle possible to get ahead of the competition.

The title tag for a web page is another component of on-page SEO that we can affect. This should not be confused with the title tag associated with images as referenced in the previous slide. The title tag I'm referring to here is for the individual web page itself. This content is displayed in the browser tab, as well as in the SERP as the clickable headline for the result.

As shown, for example purposes here, you can see the team at Moz has specified their title tag to include the copy Beginner's Guide to SEO, Search Engine Optimization, dash Moz. On a best practice stand point, we wanna use our primary keywords and keyword as early as possible in the title tag with the secondary keywords set following it.

If it make sense to include the company or brand name, you can do so at the end by including the pipe separator, which is the vertical line typically found above the forward slash on the keyboard and then the brand or company name. Google typically displays the first 50 to 60 characters of a title tag, so you wanna be thoughtful about length.

While we're talking about HTML tags that are used in the SERP for organic listings, I want to also mention the meta description tag. Meta descriptions are HTML attributes that are used to provide a summary of the web pages content. They appear underneath the blue clickable links in the SERP, thus they sit underneath the title tag.

Google typically caps the link that roughly 300 characters, but this may be less based upon character width. Take note that these tags are not used in search engine rankings, but they are extremely important for acquiring user clicks, as this text can be read by the user. As we see in this example, Nordstrom Rack included the copy.

Shop a great selection of handbags at Nordstrom Rack. Find Designer handbags up to 70% off and get free shipping on orders over $100. Thus they are including compelling copy in CTAs to entice the user to click the link and begin their shopping experience. A couple of final comments on this example and meta description tags.

In the previous slide I mentioned the best practice of using your target keyword early in the title tag and then listing your company after the pipe separator. We see this exact approach here in the title tag displaying handbags, the pipe separator with the space on either side, and then Nordstrom Rack that's following those best practices.

Also with respect to meta description tags, if we do not include them on the page what the search engine will do, is start to crawl copy on the page and insert that in itself. Thus we don't really control what that specific text is, other than the fact that it's text that exists on our page.

That's the importance of specifying very specifically the meta description tags so that we can control that copy. Thus far, I've discussed on-page image optimization, the title tag, and the meta description tag. Now I wanna expand on these points while also talking about keyword usage and some other aspects of a web page that can be optimized based upon search engine ranking factors.

In this example, we see a web page that is being optimized for the keyword phrase Vanilla Donuts. Starting at the top of this example and working our way down, we can see what has been done to optimize the page. First, the keyword phrase Vanilla Donuts is being used in the title tag, and the meta description is being used that also contains this phrase along with supporting copy to entice the user to click through to the website.

On the web page, the h1 tag, which is an HTML heading tag, also includes the phrase vanilla donuts. From there we can see vanilla donuts and variations of the phrase being used throughout the body copy. You'll recall from a previous slide that one of the on page ranking factors is keyword density.

Thus, it's important to use the targeted keyword phrase throughout the body copy, but also in a natural way. So if you were to ask Bob what kinds of donuts he has at his bakery, and got onto the topic about how much you love vanilla donuts, you would expect Bob to discuss them with a reasonable frequency.

Granted reasonable is subjective, but you certainly wouldn't expect Bob to say that vanilla donuts every fifth or sixth word over the course of several sentences. This common sense natural language approach should be used on the web page as well. Additionally, you see the images being optimized just as we discussed previously.

Finally, we see that the webpage URL has been optimized to include the keyword phrase where we see it as bobsbakery.com forward/vanilla-donuts. You want to use the dash separator between keywords and not the underscore. All of these on-page elements are working in concert with one another to hyper optimize around the keyword phrase, vanilla donuts.

Social shares can generate more awareness of your site and its content. And it can lead to backlinks as well, which we'll talk about more in the next lesson. On our site, we can include social sharing buttons to make it easy for users to share the site content across their social media.

From a programming perspective, these elements are very easy to include. Before wrapping up this lesson, I'm gonna also talk about featured snippets as they show up in organic results. Featured snippets are the direct answers you see at the top of the Google search results page that appear in response to some search queries.

Per Google quote, the summary is a snippet extracted programmatically from what a visitor sees on your web page end quote. The results may change over time in a website owner cannot explicitly mark a page as a featured snippet. You can however, opt out of a page being considered as a featured snippet through the use of some code on the web page if there's some reason to do so.

According to recent research, 99% of feature pages rank in the top 10 listings on Google, but 70% of the snippets come from pages outside of the first organic listing. The best way to optimize for this content is to structure it in a way that aligns with what Google is doing from a search engine results page standpoint.

As we see in this example, a question is being posed in a short paragraph of information is being shown. This is an example of a paragraph snippet. Within our content, which can be on a web page or in a blog post, ask the question, which can be in a subheading.

Then immediately follow the question with a one paragraph answer. One study I read indicates the average length of a paragraph snippet is 45 words and the average character length is 293 characters. You can have longer form content around this paragraph, which Google actually tends to favor in general.

But keep the answer paragraph relatively short per these guidelines to help improve the likelihood that your page will be chosen as a snippet. You'll also see Google use a table snippet. Using comparison charts and lists are an easier way to get featured for a table snippet because Google loves structured, number driven content.

From an HTML perspective, use table OL and UL tags, the latter two being the ordered list and unordered bulleted lists. These are all fine for structured use. One more snippet type I wanna share is the list snippet. In your page or blog content addressing a question be sure to use numbers, steps, lists if you are attempting to optimize for the list snippet.

Again, Google loves seeing information structured this way. As referenced earlier on-page SEO includes an array of ranking factors that should be explored in depth from an SEO practitioners perspective. What I have highlighted in this lesson are some of the fundamentals that lay a solid foundation for an effective SEO strategy.

In the next lesson, I'll discuss off-page SEO best practices.

## **M5L4 Off-Page SEO Best Practices**

>> Welcome to the lesson on off page SEO Best Practices. Within this lesson I want for us to understand what backlinks are. Understand the significance of volume of backlinks as well as quality of backlinks. And also provide familiarity with building backlinks and the use of anchor text. Let's take another look at the key components that affect organic ranking.

Again, notice the two largest components, estimated by maths to represent roughly 40% of the algorithm weight are directly correlated to external links, both quantity and quality. So, let's talk about backlinks and what we can do to build backlinks. Simply stated backlinks are links from another website to your website.

Search engines value these links because they send signals of credibility, relevance and significance. As shown in this chart research indicates a relatively strong direct correlation between the average number of backlinks a page has In its organic rank position. Keep in mind this is highlighting the volume of backlinks.

It's not just about quantity of backlinks, however, quality is a huge consideration and the search engines know how to measure quality. There are a few variables that indicate the quality of a backlink. First, the authority of the referring site plays a huge role in determining quality. Authority is based upon several factors including total number of links, and the number of linking root domains.

Keyword targeted anchor text is another important variable for determining quality of a backlink. Anchor Text is the visible and clickable text in a link. By using keywords within the link that align with your web page and sites content themes, the search algorithm is more easily able to align the relevance of the content.

We do have to be somewhat careful about the number of links that contain keyword rich anchor text. Because of the algorithm sees too much of this occurring, they may begin to think that we're trying to manipulate the system. Because it's actually not that common for a third party site to use very specific anchor text.

Rather, they're more commonly just simply going to use an HTTP URL link back to our site. Such engines like to see sites that have similar or related content linking to one another. It establishes credibility. At a human level this makes sense knowing that if people within a given industry we're talking amongst someone and other.

They're likely to refer to other people and other specific events within the industry. Thus there's some commonality of conversation. Also, it's better to have 100 links from 100 different sites. Then 1000 links from one site. There's actually a point of diminishing returns for any given sites ranking power their backlinks for another site.

Let's discuss some of the fundamentals associated with building backlinks. You may hear people in the SEO space talk about creating link bait or link magnets. Which are essentially pieces of content that others will want to reference by way of a backlink. In addition to creating great content, you can also create tools that others wanna use.

For example, if you've ever purchased a home or bought a car, you've probably accessed a special calculator tool to help with the process. Once you have created great content and or helpful tools for people You have to get the word out. There are a lot of techniques to producing so that will depend somewhat upon the industry, you're in.

But the basics of using email,social media and forums to spread the word are all sound considerations. Essentially great content drives the likelihood of backlinks. Content that is useful, Entertaining, Informative, Easily found, and Persuasive all align with best practices here. One of the most common methods for the ongoing creation of content is through the use of a blog.

What many organizations do is create long form content on their blog. That is then broken up into smaller chunks that are seeded out across their social media sites, email newsletters, forums, etc. Organizations can also create valuable white papers and tools that are hosted on their site. They may also provide entertaining elements such as games or videos.

Whatever mix of assets are chosen, simply keep in mind that people enjoy sharing content, and tools that are useful, insightful, entertaining, and so forth. I wanna circle back on the topic of anchor text to discuss this in more depth. As I mentioned earlier, anchor text is the visible, clickable text in a hyperlink.

In browsers, it is often blue, and underlined. SEO friendly anchor text is concise, not generic and accurately reflects the content of the target page it is linking to. More often than not a site owner will not be able to control the backlinks created by other site owners. But in some instances, there may be the opportunity to do so.

When this is the case, we want to obtain the most value possible from the backlink. Let's discuss the different types of anchor text that exist. Exact match anchor text includes a keyword or keyword phrase that exactly mirrors the keywords related to the page being linked to. In the example shown here, we'd expect to see a landing page that has been optimized for the keyword phrase online flower delivery.

Partial match anchor text includes a variation of the keyword on the page being linked to continuing to use an example related to flowers and florists. The anchor text might be, best flower delivery services and link the page optimized for online flower delivery. That's similar but not exactly the same.

As the name suggests, branded anchor text is where the company or organization's brand name is used in the anchor text link. Using the text, shell or College of Business. To link to a page on the shell or colleges website is an example of branded anchor text. Images can also be used as links.

When an image that contains a link has alt text included. The search engine will view the alt text as the anchor text for the image, yet another reason to include alt text for images. In some instances, generic words are used as the anchor text for a hyperlink. For example, the anchor text might be read more, more info here, or click here.

Naked links are when the author simply uses the URL as the anchor. So for example www.scheller.govtech.edu. This concludes the lesson on off page SEO best practices. In the next lesson I'll talk about specifics related to mobile and social SEO.

## **M5L5 Social & Mobile SEO**

>> As we begin to wrap up this module on SEO, I'm gonna talk about the growing importance of social content on organic search, as well as implications related to mobile search. The goals for this lesson are to obtain an understanding of social search factors and also becoming familiar with mobile SEO considerations.

Recollect from earlier in the module that one aspect of off-page ranking factors is associated with social media. And recently estimates indicate this component accounts for roughly 7% of the ranking algorithm. There are several factors to consider when thinking about socials impact on search and SEO. The first component is the impact links have on search rankings.

Both Google and Bing have indicated that the number of times a link to your site is found in social media has an impact on PageRank. Social media profiles are oftentimes found in the SERP, especially when branded searches occur. For example, a recent search for Samsung resulted in their website listed in the first organic position with their Samsung Mobile US Twitter account listed in the second organic position.

Therefore, having social profiles can encourage the likelihood that your brand is listed multiple times on the SERP as well as provide options for the user. Consumers oftentimes use social sites such as YouTube, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, and Twitter to search for information within those platforms. Therefore, we need to be thoughtful about creating and structuring content within these social channels to increase the likelihood our content is returned via the searches Most of us stay logged into our social accounts across devices, whether it be our mobile phones, laptops, or tablets.

In doing so, search engines capture information specific to our individual actions. Therefore, when brands create great content that is liked, commented on, shared, etc, by someone it becomes more likely the search engines will return results to people connected to that person highlighting their social actions. We'll talk more about mobile within digital marketing in a later module.

But I wanna point out a few key considerations related to mobile within the context of search engine optimization. First, I wanna point out that the majority of all web searches are conducted on a mobile device, 68%. Of these mobile searches, 95% of them are specifically done on Google.

In 2015, Google released what is known as the Mobilegeddon update, indicating websites that are not mobile optimized would be penalized in search, not only on mobile devices but on desktop and laptop devices as well. As marketers, we must respond to these changes, while also realizing that having a website that is mobile optimized is likely to translate to a better user experience.

It's important to make it clear to the search engines that you have a mobile version of your site. This is done in one of three ways. You can have a version of your site that's created using M., whatever your website name is.com. There is a code that will check to determine what device type the visitor is using and serve up the mobile version of the site when appropriate.

Using separate URLs was more common a few years ago, but not so much today due to the headaches of maintaining multiple code bases. And poses other SEO challenges, such as the need for redirects. The next option is known as dynamic serving. In this case, we have a single URL, but we use different HTML and CSS based upon device type.

The challenge here is also related to maintaining dual versions of content that can also keep up with new devices. The final and arguably best option is known as responsive design. Here we still have a single URL, as well as the same HTML for each device. As shown here we can see how a page's content is displayed across various devices and sizes using the responsive design approach.

This approach requires a fair amount of site architecture planning and programming but serves up the best results, and is the best option for SEO purposes. There are a couple of mobile specific SEO considerations as well, including having a site that loads very quickly. Per Google, the mobile version of the website should load in less than one second.

This is very difficult for most sites to accomplish, but reducing the page load time as much as possible is very important. It's also important that users can easily read your content without having to pinch the screen to enlarge it. Using font sizes of 14 to 16 pixel height, line links of 50 to 60 characters, short paragraphs, small header images.

And good contrast between the text and background are all considered relevant best practices for great user experience on mobile. If you're embedding video and using animations on the site, you want to avoid using Flash as it will likely not be shown, the alternative is to code it using HTML5.

Social share buttons to make it easy for users to share content across their social networks, which helps us with SEO. Having these buttons persistent within a sidebar, or at the bottom of the screen will help ensure likelihood of engagement. This concludes the lesson on social and mobile SEO.

In the next lesson, we'll cover the process associated with SEO keyword research.

## **M5L6 SEO Keyword Research Process**

>> In this lesson, I want to talk about the process of conducting keyword research. Now that we understand the mechanics of both on-page and off-page SEO, we need to understand how to go about assessing and selecting keywords to target for SEO purposes. So, our goal here is to understand the basic steps associated with SEO keyword research.

Similar to the search campaign planning lesson in the previous module, you'll see a lot of similarities here. We begin the process by brainstorming keywords and keyword phrases that are both relevant to the products and services our organization provides aligned with our business goals, and also aligned with the customers' buyer journey.

Once we have a list of potentially relevant keywords, we wanna assess search volume. So we have an idea of how frequently our potential customers are searching for these terms, which also helps us prioritize which ones are most important to optimize for. We also want to give thought to the likelihood that a user will convert for a given search term once they land on our site, which is a function of our site's content, user experience, and opportunities for conversion.

Keep in mind, a conversion might be watching a video, signing up for an email newsletter, or downloading a white paper versus simply putting a product in a cart and making payment. Finally, we also have to factor in the competition for a given search term. Make note here that our competition is any listing on a cert that is in a better position than us, which may or may not be a direct competitor.

It could be Wikipedia, for instance. Knowing the sites that are listed in the highest positions as part of the process, but we also need to assess how strong their position is. Fortunately, there are an array of third party tools that will help assess page authority. We can also click on the links to assess the on-site SEO strength using the knowledge you now have from the lesson regarding on-page SEO best practices.

This concludes the module on search engine optimization. In the next digital marketing module, we'll continue to address digital marketing channels by covering search advertising. See you soon.