Unit 4 : Developing an SEO-Friendly Website & Optimizing for Vertical Search

What is SEO Friendly Web Design ? Why its important

- SEO friendly web design is the practice of creating websites that are fully accessible and indexable by search engines.

- SEO-friendly websites usually get more traffic than websites that ignore search engines.

- Of course, you want to put your users first. But to get the most out of your website, you want to design and develop your website with users AND search engines in mind.

References: https://backlinko.com/hub/seo/seo-friendly-design

- Indexable content (flash file, file with jpg, png, gif are not readable)

- Spiderable link structure (Links after submission of form, links in ppt or pdf)

- Sitemap

Sitemaps

- What Is a Sitemap?

  – A sitemap is a blueprint of your website that help search engines find, crawl and index all of your website's content. Sitemaps also tell search engines which pages on your site are most important.

  – A sitemap is an XML file listing all the important content on your website. Any page or file that you want to show up in search engines should be in your sitemap.

  – Sitemaps can't list more than 50,000 URLs, and they can't be more than 50mb in size. If your sitemap exceeds one or more of those figures, then you'll need to create more than one.

References: https://backlinko.com/hub/seo/sitemaps, https://ahrefs.com/blog/how-to-create-a-sitemap/

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Sitemaps

- There are four main types of sitemaps:

    - Normal XML Sitemap: This by far the most common type of sitemap. It's usually in the form of an XML Sitemap that links to different pages on your website.

    - Video Sitemap: Used specifically to help Google understand video content on your page.

    - News Sitemap: Helps Google find content on sites that are approved for Google News.

    - Image Sitemap: Helps Google find all of the images hosted on your site.

References: https://backlinko.com/hub/seo/sitemaps, https://ahrefs.com/blog/how-to-create-a-sitemap/

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How does an XML sitemap look like?

- XML sitemaps are made for search engines, not humans.

- XML file look like the following.

```xml
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<urlset xmlns="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap/0.9">
        <url>
                <loc>https://ahrefs.com/</loc>
                <lastmod>2019-08-21T16:12:20+03:00</lastmod>
        </url>
        <url>
                <loc>https://ahrefs.com.com/blog/</loc>
                <lastmod>2019-07-31T07:56:12+03:00</lastmod>
        </url>
</urlset>
```

References: https://backlinko.com/hub/seo/sitemaps, https://ahrefs.com/blog/how-to-create-a-sitemap/

What is a robots.txt file?

- What Is a robots.txt?

  - A robots.txt file tells search engines where they can and can't go on your site.

  - Primarily, it lists all the content you want to lock away from search engines like Google. You can also tell some search engines (not Google) how they can crawl allowed content.

References: https://ahrefs.com/blog/robots-txt/

Creating an Optimal Information Architecture (IA)

- A well designed architecture can bring many benefits for both users and search engines.
- The search engines face many technical challenges in understanding your site.
- Crawlers are not able to recognize web pages in the way that humans do (an analogy: https://www.sohu.com/), and thus significant limitations for both accessibility and indexing exist.
- A logical and properly constructed website architecture can help overcome these issues and bring great benefits in search traffic and usability.
- There are two core important principle: 1). Usability and 2). Information architecture

Creating an Optimal Information Architecture (IA)

- **<u>Site Architecture Design Principles</u>**
- When planning your website, remember that nearly every user will initially be confused about where to go, what to do, and how to find what he wants.
- An architecture that recognizes this difficulty and uses familiar standards of usability with an easy link structure will have the best chance of making a visit to the site a positive experience.
- Example: A recipes website can use intelligent architecture to fulfill visitors' expectations about content and create a positive browsing experience.
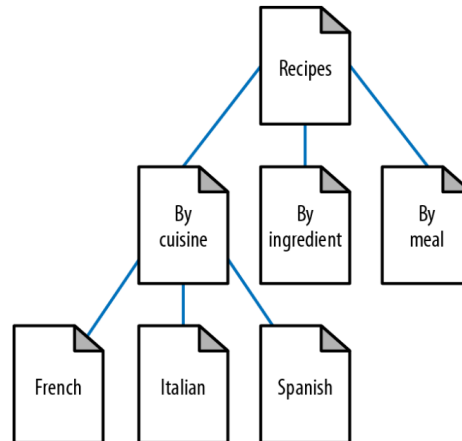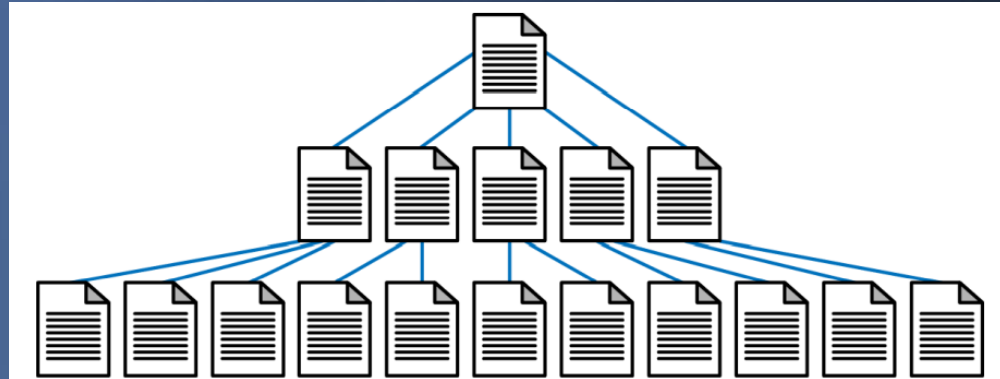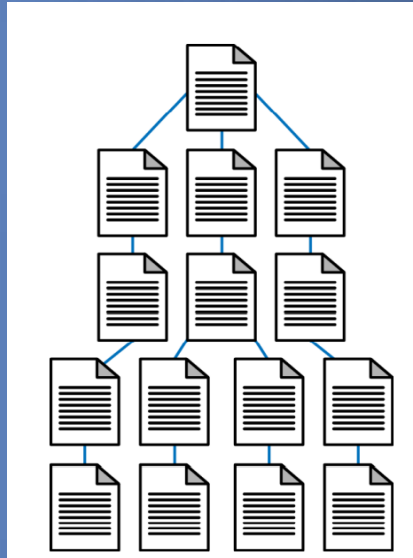
Creating an Optimal Information Architecture (IA)

- This structure not only helps humans navigate a site more easily, but also helps the search engines to see that your content fits into logical concept groups.
- You can use this approach to help you rank for applications of your product in addition to attributes of your product.
- **Flat Versus Deep Architecture**

Optimizing for vertical search

- Vertical search engines focus on specific content on web, including images, videos, news, travel, and people.
- Such engines exist to provide value to their user bases in ways that go beyond what traditional web search engines provide.
- There is a lot of opportunity in vertical search, so SEO professionals should seriously consider what potential benefits vertical search areas can provide to their websites.
- **Optimizing for Local Search**
- Bing released data showing that 53% of Bing's mobile search volume was local.
- Google published data indicating that 40% of its desktop search volume had local intent.
- According to industry metrics, online users typically go to multiple sources to locate, research, and select local businesses.
- Traditional search engines, local search engines, online yellow pages, newspaper websites, online classifieds, industry-specific "vertical" directories, and review sites are all sources of information for people trying to find businesses in their area.
- The opportunity for local search is huge.

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Optimizing Your Website for Local Search

- **How to Optimize for Local Search?**
- If your business is new, you may have to create a new listing.
- By doing so, you will get direct entry to Google Places (also known as GMB) management portal.
- Now, you will probably have to complete a phone or postcard verification step before your listing starts to appear in search.
- Enhancing your Google Places profile is a matter of providing as much relevant data to Google as you can. The most important elements to focus on are business name, address, phone number, website, description, and categories.
- These are the elements that you can influence that carry the most weight in the ranking algorithms.
- Below are key guidelines excel in the Google listing:
  - Business Name
  - Address
  - Phone Number
  - Website
  - Description
  - Categories
  - List your business on local listings (directories and aggregators) like Just dial, India mart and any other available yellow pages.

Optimizing Your Website for Local Search

- **Optimizing Your Website for Local Search Engines**
- Optimizing for local search engines requires same to do list as it is required for normal SEO.
- These factors include having good, specific text in each page's title, tags, meta description, page content, image alt attributes, inbound links, and so forth.

- But some things are specific to local search, such as the following:

  1). If your company has multiple locations, it is not necessary to have a standalone website or sub-domain (e.g., loc1.example.com, loc2.example.com, loc3.example.com) for each outlet.

  2). Have your page title, tags, and content include the business name, the type of business, and the location—for example, Tea Post – Kalawad road.

  3). Be sure to include specifics about the physical location.

  4). Good user ratings are one of the biggest factors for ranking high in a number of the local search engines, particularly Google Maps. Google Maps tracks ratings from many other directory sources such as Just dial, India mart.

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Optimizing Your Website for Image Search

- Optimizing for image search can be a smart strategy for many search marketers.
- Image search optimization does not have to take much time and can yield very good results in less efforts.

There are a few different ways that image search optimization can help to improve traffic and conversions for your site:

1). Subtle reputation management

Images of your products/services/facility assist consumers during the research phase of their shopping.

Providing good numbers of images says you don't have anything to hide, and it will improve consumer confidence in your company.

2). Shopping via image search results

Consumers are searching for products via image search engines because they can rapidly find what they are searching.

If your products can be found in the image search engine, you have an good chance of being found by those people.

With no pictures, there's zero chance of being found in image search.

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Optimizing Your Website for Image Search…

3). Increased chances of showing up in SERP

Performing image search optimization improves your chances of showing up in additional positions on the main search results pages (SERP), as Universal Search pulls image search content into the main SERPs for some keyword search terms.

4). Empowering others to promote you

If you have a flexible enough organization and you hold the legal copyrights to your images, you can allow others to reuse the images in return for promotion of your site/business.

Image Optimization Tips

o You can drag the image of a well-known person or place onto the Google Image search box (http://images.google.com), and Google will attempt to identify the contents and show you other similar images.

o Success in image search optimization depends on using all the signals available to you to increase the search engines' confidence in the content of your images.

o Give particular emphasis to the text immediately preceding and following the image.

o A descriptive caption underneath the image is helpful.

o Make sure the image filename or img src string contains your primary keyword.

o Always use the image alt attribute.

o Use good-quality pictures

o Create an image XML Sitemap to highlight images you consider particularly important.

o Optimize through image sharing sites. (Flickr)

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Optimizing Product search

- Google Product Search is less popular than some of the other Google-owned properties.
- Than also it is important Google Product Search results sometimes make their way into the main web search results (on the SERP) along with blue links.
- **Product search optimization**
- Go to Google Merchant Center
- The most important optimization step is to make sure that your fill all details accurately.
- The price of product must be all inclusive (including shipping, taxes and other charges).
- Update immediately whenever the prices reduces/hiked.
- Remove the product from listing if it is not in stock.
- Use long-tail terms in your titles, particularly for highly competitive products.
- Manage your ratings at contributor sources (such as GSM arena for mobile).
- Always use good quality images of your products.
- Image should be square, with good contrast, and with highlighting the product not background.
- The number of users purchased your product, or had put your product on their shared wish list will definitely increase the chances of your product to display on the top.

Optimizing Mobile search

- Mobile search has experienced a very high growth in the last decade, and this rapid growth is expected to continue.

- It is found that more than 30% of mobile searches initiates immediate action.

- As we are already aware that mobile searchers are impatient with compare to the desktop searchers.

- Design your sight in such a way that it gets loaded very quickly on the mobile phone, as mobile might have low bandwidth than the desktop.

- Give the facility of search box so that users can find things from your website very quickly.

- There lies two approaches 1). Create a mobile version of your content and have it live on the same URLs as the desktop version of your site. 2). The other approach is to have the mobile version of the site live on a separate sub-domain.

- Google employs a different spider for the mobile web, "Googlebot-Mobile," but Bing uses the same crawler to crawl mobile content as it does desktop content (Bingbot).

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Optimizing Mobile search…

- **User-agent detection**

- One of the best practice for mobile site design, and hence for mobile SEO, is to detect the incoming user agent and show the user the appropriate version of your site.

- If you are using the same URLs for your mobile site, you simply show them the alternative version of your content.

- And if you are using a mobile sub-domain you will want to redirect mobile users to that sub-domain.

- **Using the same URLs for your mobile site**

- One of the big advantage of using same URLs for your mobile and desktop sites is that the mobile site effectively inherits the SEO of the desktop site.

- This approach is considered to be the best approach.

Optimizing Mobile search…

- **Setting up a mobile sub-domain**

- Having a mobile sub-domain allows you some additional flexibility.

    Below are some important tips that are specific to mobile SEO:

    Keep in your mind that the pages should be smaller because of the size of the mobile screen.

- In the expert's opinion, use robots.txt in which you block 'Googlebot' from seeing the mobile version of your site and 'Googlebot-Mobile' from seeing the desktop version of your site.

- Make use of a separate sitemap for your mobile sub-domain pages.

- There are some recommendations that hold true regardless of whether you choose a same-URL approach or a mobile-sub-domain approach:

    – Create a small, lightweight, fast-loading site (< 20 KB per page).

    – Use UTF-8 character encoding.

    – Include the word mobile in the title/heading tag (or both).

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Optimizing for videos

- The need of Video search optimization has increased in last 6-7 years, and it is growing exponentially.

- Reason being, availability of low cost high bandwidth internet connections.

- But the problem lies with the video search engines because, they have not yet been able to look inside the videos to tell what their content is from a human "eye" perspective.

- For that reason, they rely on other on-page factors.

- If your site itself contains the video(s), than you are little bit in the advantage as you can write keyword rich description of the video in the webpage itself.

- You just keep all video files in one directory, and may write separate sitemap for videos.

- There are so many video upload sites which allow you to upload videos (every site have different upload policies for the size of storage in time.

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Optimizing for videos…

- **<u>Some best practices:</u>**
- A good thumbnail is a next important thing after a good title of the video.
- Design a thumbnail with a brightly colored background.
- Make sure you include links back to your site so that people know where the video came from.
- Create good quality video with good content which can benefit your viewers.
- Use word 'video' while writing any thing about the video.
- YouTube has title tag display limit of 62 characters, writing beyond this will be a waste.
- Give keyword rich and catchy title of the video.
- Ratings are very important, good rating will attract more viewers to view your video, it will also affect your video ranking.
- Make use of keywords in filename and URL.

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